

Growing up in Jesus Name!



**Matt. 6:33 "But seek first of all His kingdom
and His righteousness..."**

Amanda Buys' Spiritual Covering

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GROWING UP IN JESUS NAME!!

INTRODUCTION

There are basically four models of how people grow up in Jesus Name:

1. The Sin Model

The counselor had to find the sin and confront the counsellee. Confess, repent and sin no more!

All problems are a result of one's sin.

- God is good
- You are bad
- Stop it.

2. The Truth Model

The truth will set you free. If some area of your life was not working, it must be because you lacked truth in your life. So the counselor / helper's role was to urge you to learn more verses, memorize more scripture, and learn more doctrine (particularly your "position in Christ"), and then all of this truth would make its way from your head to your heart's and ultimately into your behavior and emotions.



3. The Experiential Model

You have to **get to the pain** in your life – **find the abuse or the hurt** – and then **somehow “get it out”**. “Take the pain to Jesus,” or “give Jesus the pain”. Jesus can be with you in your pain or abuse and can change it. This model emphasizes Jesus' ability to transcend time.

4. The Supernatural Model.

This model had many variations. Charismatics sought instant healing and deliverance; others depended on the Holy Spirit to make the change happen as He lives His life through them.

OUR CONCLUSION:

There is value in all four models, yet we saw many people who had walked with God for years and many who knew much about God's truth, lay people and pastors alike, who had been very diligent about praying, Bible study, and other spiritual disciplines, **BUT they were still hurting**, and for one reason or another, they had been unable to walk through their valley.

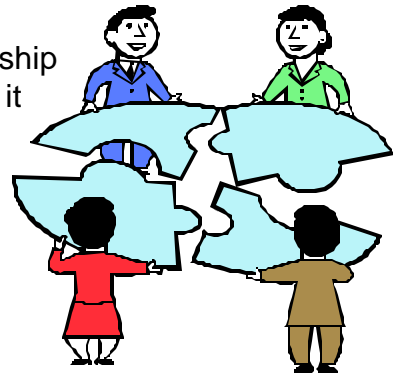
We would teach people about God's love, but their depression would not go away. We would teach them about the crucified life, and their addictions would remain. They would focus on their "security in Christ", yet their panic attacks would be unyielding.

Please do not misunderstand. We often see people improve, learn all about the Scriptures, prayer and repentance, but something was missing. There had to be more.....



CHAPTER 1 – SEEING THE BIG PICTURE BEHIND ALL HEALING.

Spiritual growth is not only about coming back into a relationship with God and each other, and about pursuing a pure life, but it is also about **coming back to life (to be fulfilled in all areas)** – the life that God created for people to live. This life of deep relationship, fulfilling work, celebration and more gives us the life we desire and solves our problems. As Paul says that we are “separated from the life of God” **(Eph 4:18)**



We must be reconciled to life the way it was created to work.

The Bible begins with the ideas of:

1. God as Source,
2. relationship as primary, and
3. God as the authority. We were to live life, but to live it in submission to God, or we would not have to live at all. **Life and submission to God were one and the same.**

1. GOD’S ROLE WAS TO BE THE SOURCE OR PROVIDER; OUR ROLE WAS TO DEPEND ON THE SOURCE.

God’s role was to provide; our role was to receive. God gave us the relationship; we receive intimacy and the relatedness. Our role was designed to be a dependent one. He provides; we depend and trust.

Independence is not an option for us. God existed without us, not vice versa.

The role that we must take in life is not only for dependency, but also against self-sufficiency. Our role is to recognize our limits and to transcend those limits by looking outside of ourselves for help. We are limited creatures, not the Creator, and therefore we are not self-sustaining as God is. Thus we are limited in our ability to live alone, apart from God.

This same limitation applies to our relationship with each other. We are limited in our ability to provide what we need for ourselves without another person to relate to. So self-sufficiency from God is not the only relational limit we have. **We also need other people and cannot live independently from them in either.** We must depend on the outside for love.

2. GOD'S ROLE WAS TO BE IN CONTROL; OUR ROLE WAS TO YIELD TO GOD'S CONTROL OF THE WORLD AND TO CONTROL OURSELVES.

God is in control of the universe and of what happens. He is in charge of the big picture. So many of people's problems come from trying to control things outside of their control, and when they try, they lose control of themselves.

Our control of the big picture is limited. In fact, we have none. But we do have control of our own behavior, and we are to exercise that responsibility. God's role is to be in control of the big picture, and our role is to be in control of our self and our responsibilities.

In short, to maintain self-control.

3. GOD WAS THE JUDGE OF LIFE; WE WERE TO EXPERIENCE LIFE.

Another role that belonged to God was to know good from evil. He had that role and did not want it passed on to humanity. We were not to judge, but to live the good life apart from judging it. We were to experience all that God had given us in pleasure, work, and relationship. Live it to all the limits, but don't try to become God and the judge of it. We were to remain innocent and not even know that we were innocent. God alone was judge, and in a sense He said to us, "Don't assume that role".

4. GOD MADE THE RULES; WE WERE TO OBEY THEM.

God did not consult us on setting up the rules and the design of life. (e.g. he did not ask us if marriage or having to work was a good idea or not!)

WHAT HAPPENED AT THE FALL OF MAN?

1. Adam and Eve became independent from the Source.
2. They lost their relationships.

Instantly they became "naked and ashamed" and covered themselves with fig leaves. Their intimacy and vulnerability had been lost, and their ability to trust each other and have a good relationship was lost also. From that point on, we see humans trading trust, fairness, love, and honesty with each other for alienation, unfairness, adversarial relationships, and dishonesty.

3. They reversed the structure and order

They became their own lord. They became self-sufficient, controlling people and were judgmental and lived by their own rules.

4. They reversed the roles

The roles as God created them:

GOD	Humans
God is the Source	We depend on God
God is the Creator	We are the creation and cannot exist unto ourselves.
God has control of the world	We have control of ourselves
God was the judge of life	We are to experience life
God designed life and its rules	We obey the rules and live the life God designed

AFTER THE FALL:	
THE DESIRE	THE RESULT
We are the source	We depend on ourselves
We are the creator	We exist unto ourselves
We have control of the world	We try to control our world and each other, losing control of ourselves
We become the judge of life	We judge ourselves and each other and cease to be able to experience ourselves and each other
We designed life and the rules	We live any way we want to go

REDEMPTION

God in Christ is “reconciling” all things. He was, and is, bringing it all back to the way it was supposed to be. He redeemed, or got back, His creation and is putting it all back in place. God paid the price to gain it all back. The death penalty for the sin of humankind was laid upon Jesus. This paved the way for God to have it all back and return everything to its rightful order. This is what redemption does for each and every human who applies it to his or her life. **This application of redemption is the process of growth itself: it is of the returning of everything to its rightful, “righteous” place before God. To solve life’s problems and to grow spiritually are one and the same thing.**

1. Return to the Source.

To make a life work, we must turn to the One who makes life work. As we “seek first the Kingdom of God”, we see that all the things of life are “added unto us” (**Matt 6:33**). God is the One who adds life.

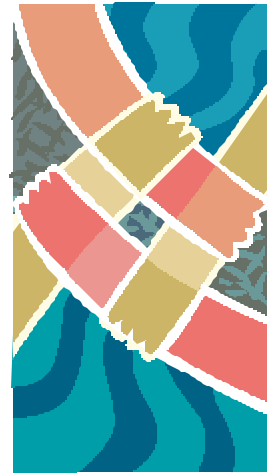
God is the Source of healing and growth. True growth begins with realizing that we are “poor in spirit” and from this humble position reaching out to God and receiving all that He has for us (**Matt 5:3**).

Redemption helps us get to the end of our attempt to provide for ourselves. Instead, we turn to God for strength, truth, healing, care, correction, and a whole host of other things.

2. Return to Relationship.

Everything in life depends on two relationships: They are summed up in **Matt 22: 37 – 40**, the two greatest commandments of loving God and loving others. Redemption puts us back into those two relationships.

- i) It reconciles us into a relationship with God through faith and forgiveness and the **re-establishing of a connection**.
- ii) Redemption brings us back to the rightful restoration of **connectedness with others** as it stresses love, identification with each other through the Golden Rule, caring for one another, forgiving one another, healing one another, teaching one another, correcting one another, and so on.



3. Return to the Order.

Redemption is also **surrender to God as Lord**. To love God first, is the commandment that makes all the others work, for it is the one that ensures I am going to do it all His way. Being redeemed, I **listen** and **obey**. Since this is difficult in my own power, redemption gives me two new sources of power to help me in this newfound obedience. I have God as a Source of power, and I have others to support me. It is no longer just me and my sinful, rebellious nature. I have a new nature in me, one that is empowered by God to follow God and submit to Him, and I have a Body of people to help me to do that as well. For the first time since the Fall, I am in a position to obey God and submit to Him.

CASE STUDY: Example – A very successful pastor.

A very successful pastor – been in the ministry for 10 years and had grown the church from very small into thousands. Had written books and taught seminars on marriage counseling, etc...

TROUBLE!!! Sexual addiction.

They had 3 children and there was very little love left between him and his wife – only the children kept them together. They had little positive feelings about God and little faith that His ways were the answer to their problems. They had followed Him and ended up in a miserable place. They had little personal connection to God. “Where is God in all this?” SCEPTICAL!!!

COUNSELING:

1. Depend on God as Source – moment by moment.

Example: When they would argue, they did not stop and pray and ask God how to resolve it. There was much pressure from the ministry and the pastor's sinful pattern was to relieve himself sexually. He had to learn to turn to God to show him the **source** of his behaviour.

2. Relationship as primary.

They were connected to a lot of people, but not growing. For them, growth equalled learning more truths and working hard in the ministry. They were fighting because of their insecurities from their childhood.

Husband (H) had a harsh background – feared criticism.
Wife (W) feared not being in control.

3. God as Boss.

They gave God the “big picture” of their lives, but controlled their own details day to day. There was not enough love between the two of them to keep their marriage together, but because they both loved God – they were still committed to God and would not walk out on Him. They had to obey God by faith – not their feelings. This saved the marriage.

4. Restoring the Roles.

We have to look outside of ourselves to get the things we need. We depend on God for everything, and depend on others for what we cannot give ourselves. The pastor and his wife had the support from people for the work of the ministry, but not to nourish their souls – people they could call up when **afraid, tempted or hurting**. Pastor learned it was impossible to stay clean without remaining in a humble, dependant position. Leaving the position of being dependent leads to denial!!! You do not need to fight temptation alone anymore – you can pick up the phone and call someone who understands your struggle. You also have regular meetings with your support group which brings stability and sustenance.

5. God in Control, people yielding and developing self-control.

The (W) was in control mode – nagging, getting angry, accusing. } CONTROL!
The (H) tried to make his wife happy all the time.

Pray and ask God what the sources are that are driving you to control. Trying to control others results in loss of self-control. When you trust in God and give Him all control, then you gain back self-control. (H) started to have victory over his sexual addiction as he started to gain control over himself.

6. God as Judge of Life – People experience Life.

Judging vs Evaluating

Judging = “playing God”:

- we place ourselves above another.
- we condemn another.
- we create the standard for another.

We can no longer fully experience each other. When we judge one another, we miss knowing the other person.

(W) talks down to him, condemns him, shames him, makes him feel guilty. Her expectations were too high. She only saw his **failures** and not his **heart**, his imperfections and not his fears, vulnerabilities and passions. He hides behind fig leaves. He no longer felt his need for her or his love.

(H) judged himself, he did not know who he was – he lost touch with himself and his own heart.

For growth to take place, he needs GRACE. Enough grace to open up and bring things into the light to be healed.

Keeping our feelings, weaknesses and failures in darkness, will increase the slavery. Judgment keeps one from knowing oneself and being able to bring **all of who you are** into a relationship.

7. God as Rule Maker, People as Rule Keepers

Eph. 4:32 “32 And become **useful and helpful and kind to one another, tenderhearted** (compassionate, understanding, loving-hearted), **forgiving one another [readily and freely]**, as God in Christ forgave you.”

If you disobey God, your relationship dies! We must align ourselves to God's ways to get out of suffering. Many times we ignore many of God's precepts.

Deut. 6:24-25 “24 And the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes, to [reverently] **fear the Lord our God for our good always**, that He might preserve us alive, as it is this day.
25 And it will be accounted as righteousness (conformity to God's will in word, thought, and action) for **us if we are watchful to do all this commandment** before the Lord our God, as He has commanded us.”

Humble yourself! “Blessed are the poor in spirit.”

Living your own way brings suffering.

MOVING PAST THE BEGINNING

Hebrews 6: 1 – 3: *“1 THEREFORE LET us go on and get past the **elementary stage in the teachings and doctrine** of Christ (the Messiah), **advancing steadily toward the completeness and perfection that belong to spiritual maturity**. Let us not again be laying the foundation of repentance and abandonment of dead works (dead formalism) and of the faith [by which you turned] to God,
2 With teachings about purifying, the laying on of hands, the resurrection from the dead, and eternal judgment and punishment. [These are all matters of which you should have been fully aware long, long ago.]
3 If indeed God permits, we will [now] proceed [to advanced teaching].”*

This scripture explains the elementary teachings about Christ, and how the Lord wants us to go on from there to maturity, or “completeness” (which is the meaning of **maturity** in the Greek text. **Life works when we are being completed, but completion cannot take place without building on the foundational things.**

This scripture says is that the elementary things are repentance, faith, beginning and doctrinal teachings, internal life, and judgment.

To make life and work and to help others grow toward a life that works, we must remember two things:

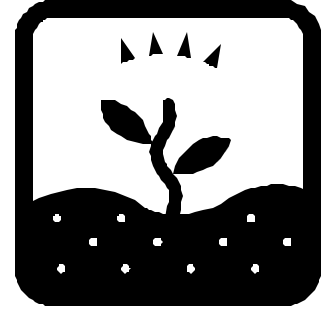
1. There are **foundational principles** without which nothing else works. If we do not live according to the **foundations of the faith**, we will have nothing secure to build upon. If we do not order our growth and the growth of the ones we minister to according to these foundational things, we are building on quick sand.
2. The foundational things are not all there is to growth. There is a process that takes us from the “foundation” to “maturity”, or completeness. We must learn and do more than just the elementary principles of the faith. So often we either learn the elementary things and over time forget them, or we try to make the elementary things the entire picture of growth.

We contend that in order for “growth that makes life work” to truly happen and for people to come to “completeness”, both things must occur. We must order growth according to a firm foundation, and we must also build on the foundation with the rest of God’s provision. We must have the basics in place and then go beyond the basics.



CHAPTER 2 – CONCEPTS TO HELP US GROW.

A relationship with God “grows life”. One of the biggest obstacles to growth is our view of God.



John 14: 8–9 “8 Philip said to Him, Lord, show us the Father [cause us to see the Father—that is all we ask]; then we shall be satisfied.

9 Jesus replied, Have I been with all of you for so long a time, and **do you not recognize and know Me yet**, Philip? Anyone who has seen Me has seen the Father. How can you say then, **Show us the Father?**”

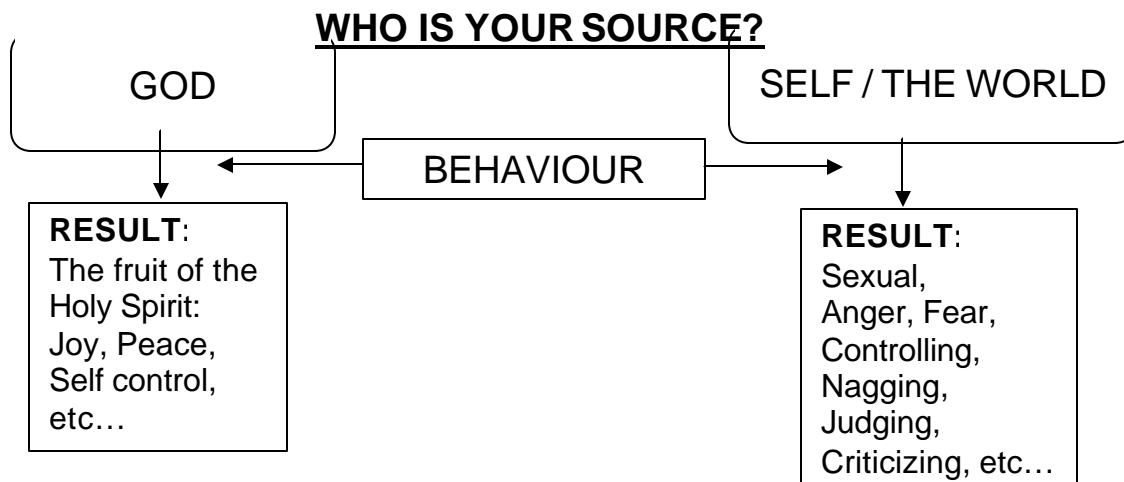
Jesus had been on a mission to show people what God was really like. People must discover that God is for them and not against them. This is what it means to have a God of grace.

Grace is much bigger than just forgiveness – it is **unmerited favor**. This definition has two important implications:

1. **Favor means that God is** for us and not against us. He is on our side and desires good for us and not evil.
2. **His favor cannot be earned**, and even if it could be, we do not have the means with which to earn it. We cannot merit it. Therefore He will freely give us things we cannot provide for ourselves.

To grow, we need things that we do not have and cannot provide, and we need to have a Source of those things who looks favorably upon us and who does things for us for our own good.

Make sure that you are letting people know over and over again and in a thousand different ways that **God is not their enemy, but One who wants to help**. This means teaching “no condemnation” (**Rom 8:1**), even when someone fails, and teaching what it means to have a “standing in grace” (**Rom 5:1**). It also means understanding **God as the Source of Life, not of rules**.



Make sure that favor is really being shown in ways that help people see they are getting “favors that they don’t earn”. Make sure they are not subtly providing their own help. They have to find the favors, the grace, and the resources from outside.

For people to grow they need to get to a place of grace - they must experience a need. They must be aware of death. They must realize that they are “poor in spirit” and in need of God.

Sometimes we must help people get to a death experience for grace to take effect and growth to begin. We must let them (and sometimes help them) reach the end of themselves and find out that things are really bad.

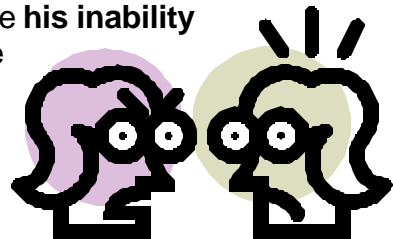
This is contrary to what many counselors and teachers do. We **live in an age** of people wanting to **feel good and avoid pain**, and sometimes we construct ministries geared to making people feel good about themselves. **People need to see that they are powerless and that their only hope is to turn to God.**

HELPING PEOPLE TO SEE THEIR NEED FOR GRACE.

1. Confrontation.

The value of the Law is to show us our need for grace (**Rom 3: 20; Gal 3: 24**). Do not include the Law as a way to get better, but as a way to help people know their need. Those who do not know their need must be confronted with their **denial**.

Confrontation is an important tool to get someone to see **his inability to change** and **to see his need for help**. Many people are too soft-hearted; they give encouragement to someone who needs discouragement instead. **To encourage a powerless person to try harder is one of the worst things you could possibly do.** The best thing you can do is to discourage him from believing that he can do it on his own.



Another use of the Law is to show a person that they are not living up to the Biblical standard of the Word.

2. Reality, Consequences and Discipline.

Allowing people to suffer logical consequences is another way of getting them to realize their need for grace. Sometimes people cannot (or do not) hear the truth of confrontation, and they remained stuck. At those times we often have to allow reality to touch their lives. (See book on Godly limits in Relationships available from Kanaan Ministries.)

Too often in the church, we protect people from the harsh realities of logical consequences that would force them to see the need for grace and what it can provide. Either we feel sorry for them and bail them out, or we fear them and pacify them.

The Bible warns against both:

Lev. 19 : 15 *“15 You shall **do no injustice in judging a case; you shall not be partial to the poor or show a preference for the mighty, but in righteousness and according to the merits of the case judge your neighbor.**”*

No matter what the person’s plight, **we must help him face the truth**. And sometimes that means letting him deal with harsh realities. God uses reality consequences in our lives to get us to see our need for Him and what He has to offer us. Those of us in positions of helping others grow must have the courage to allow people to experience those consequences, or else we may be keeping them from grace.

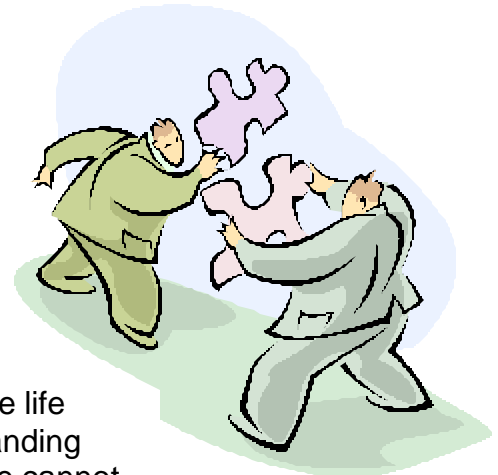
An example is the story of the prodigal son in **Luke 15**. The father allowed his son to choose and then to experience the consequences. The son, after receiving his share of the estate, set off for a distant country, where he squandered his wealth in wild living. After his money was gone, he was forced to feed pigs for a living.

These consequences of the son’s own choices turned him around, helped him see his need, and put him in a position where he could receive the things his father had to offer. This shows that the consequences that lead to grace are an act of grace in themselves (**Heb. 12: 4 – 11; James 1: 2 – 4**). The pigsty was a correcting experience, thus a gift of grace. So, in thinking about growth, **leave room for people to fail**.

PUTTING GRACE AND TRUTH TOGETHER.

1. **We have to seek God if we want life and growth to occur.** Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness so that life could be added to us. Spiritual growth is the foundation of any kind of “life building”.

2. **God is the God of grace.** We sometimes see Him as a religious standard that we must live up to, and we fail to see His true acceptance of us for who we are. **Grace is not just forgiveness.** Grace that leads to true life transformation is one of unmerited favor – the understanding that God is truly **for us** and that He will provide what we cannot provide for ourselves. Grace means that we receive the gifts we need for growth to occur.



3. **Grace** does not come easily, and we do not naturally recognize it. It only **comes in the classroom of God's Law. We encounter the Law of God either through realizing our failure to attain His standard and thus our need for His grace, or through experiencing the consequences of having our lives fall short of the standard. Either way, we die to self.** We must realize that we have failed and that we have no hope of reaching the life we desire in and of ourselves. After that, the Law of God guides us, empowered by grace, to structure life as it was created to be. His principles are truly "a lamp unto our feet".

Grace:

1. The Law – God's Standard
2. Experiencing the consequences.



CHAPTER 3 – JESUS, OUR EXAMPLE OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH

People need **two types of relationships** to grow: the **Divine** and the **human**. In helping people grow, make sure you look for how connected they are to the indwelling Christ. No matter what the issue or struggle, relatedness must come first. Growers need to know that being aware, responsive, and dependent on Jesus is a daily part of life.

Another way that Jesus is essential to spiritual growth is called **identification**. He **serves as a model that can teach and comfort us in many growth situations**.

Biblical principles tell us how people grow; Jesus shows us. He gives us a personal and human example we can see and internalize within our hearts. We have a living, breathing picture of how God wants us to live.

RESPONSE TO SUFFERING

One of the most important tasks of spiritual growth is to understand how to suffer. Although suffering is negative, it is part of life – especially the growth part of life. No one grows to maturity who does not understand suffering. For example, dealing with our hurts, sins, and failures involves pain, both within us and in our relationships with others.

Many times people see Jesus' example as a way to avoid suffering. They focus on His power, glory, and majesty in His role as King of Kings (**Rev. 19 : 16**). They identify with His victory of sin and darkness.

Even though we are in Christ and we know that everything will ultimately be okay, here on earth today things aren't yet okay. We have much work to do before we celebrate the final victory.

1. **Normalize Suffering.**

Jesus shows us much about how to respond to suffering. Most important is that He did not avoid suffering, but saw it as a part of the growth path.

Heb. 5:8 *"8 Although He was a Son, He learned [active, special] obedience through what He suffered"*

We naturally wish to avoid pain and discomfort. For example, if you have never looked back at past hurts and you start to explore your character roots, you may find a lot of pain there. Remembering hurtful relationships and experiences and bringing these to the light of vulnerable relationships (your smallgroup) brings up the pain again, often intensely.

The path to glory is experiencing pain and suffering:

Rom. 8:17 *“17 And if we are [His] children, then we are [His] heirs also: heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ [sharing His inheritance with Him]; only we must share His suffering if we are to share His glory.”*

2. Choose Godly Suffering.

Sometimes people have difficulty understanding when they should suffer and when they should avoid it. A person in a difficult relationship may endure abuse, thinking that this is part of the path of suffering when actually this suffering can injure her soul and also help her abuser stay immune. Some suffering needs to be avoided. **(Prov. 22 : 3)**

Some people will avoid good pain. A woman in a difficult relationship may keep herself from confronting the hurtful person in her life because she is afraid of conflict or abandonment. **Avoidance of conflict or compliance with others are often less difficult than working through issues.**

Jesus is a wonderful example of embracing needful suffering and rejecting that which was not. He understood that **pain must have a purpose**. He chose the path of the Cross because of the fruit it would bear for all of us. Yet He refused to enter suffering that would be inappropriate to His purposes. He escaped, for example, the grasp of those who opposed His teaching, for He knew it was not yet His time **(John 10 : 39)**.

3. Be Humble.

Growers need to learn how to bear suffering themselves. If we are humble, we will be willing to allow something uncomfortable to happen to us if it is the right thing to do. This is because part of being humble means not perceiving ourselves to have rights or privileges that we do not possess. **We do not have to pretend to enjoy the pain, and we should bring others into our experience so they can comfort us in it. Humility is a necessary character trait for bearing pain.**

We often **form defense mechanisms that prevent us from suffering rightly.** Some people deny their experience, trying to be strong and saying, “This doesn’t hurt me”. Others insist their righteousness should prevent their suffering, saying, “Why me? I’ve been good.” Still others attempt to avoid suffering all together, saying, “because this is uncomfortable, I will not experience it”; they thwart suffering’s growth benefits.

4. Depend on God and People.

While we must endure the work of growth, we can't bear it alone. To be comforted, understood, and strengthened, we need God and people with us. Jesus was dependent on God and people. He told us to be like Him and ask God for our **daily bread (Matt. 6 : 11)**. **Yet He also asked His closest friends to be present with Him in His darkest hours (Matt 26 : 38)**.

We can't bear life on our own, nor were we created to.

Jesus did not model independence, but dependence.

RESPONSE TO BEING SINNED AGAINST.

We bring a great deal of pain to our lives by our own transgressions (**sins by us**); at the same time, others inflict much injury on us (**sins against us**).

Here are some tools for the suffering caused by others:

1. Acknowledge the wound, don't deny it.

Jesus never pretended hurtful things didn't hurt. In fact, He spoke to His disciples about His future suffering, which upset them greatly. They were horrified He was being so "negative" (**Matt. 16 : 21 – 22**). Yet He knew they needed to understand the suffering He was to go through. If he had denied His pain, they (and we) would not have understood the cost of His sacrifice. Jesus promises His followers an inheritance with Him if we don't deny suffering, but share it with him:

Rom. 8 : 17 *"17 And if we are [His] children, then we are [His] heirs also: heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ [sharing His inheritance with Him]; only we must share His suffering if we are to share His glory."*

We need to help people open up about the realities of the past and present hurts.

2. Stay Connected, Do Not Isolate.

We tend to withdraw from relationship when we are hurt. Some people are afraid of the dependencies on others. Others feel guilty about burdening friends with the problems. Still others tried to be self-sufficient. None of these responses helps a person heal and grow.

Jesus stayed connected when He was hurt. In the garden of Gethsemane, during one of His darkest hours, He asked for support from His friends.

Matt. 26: 38 *"38 Then He said to them, My soul is very sad and deeply grieved, so that I am almost dying of sorrow. **Stay here and keep awake and keep watch with Me.**"*

3. Love and Forgive, Do Not Retaliate.

People also naturally lash back when they are hurt, and they desire **revenge** on the one who hurt them. Like little children, they will harbor murderous intentions and attempt to retaliate.

We are by nature people who have the “law of retaliation” in our hearts: “an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth” (**Ex. 21 : 24**).

Jesus taught and lived a greater principle:

Matt. 5 : 39 *“39 But I say to you, **Do not resist the evil man** [who injures you]; but if anyone strikes you on the right jaw or cheek, turn to him the other one too.”*

His first response was not to extract revenge, but to give the other person a chance. This is quite unnatural; in fact, it is a work of God in someone’s life to not retaliate against the one who has wounded him or her.

We are called not to take revenge, but to make peace, which is a higher calling.

We are also called to protect ourselves

Prov. 22:3 *“3 A prudent man sees the evil and hides himself, but the simple pass on and are punished [with suffering].”*



We need to look at each situation individually and work out how much to protect ourselves without a vengeance. (See Godly Limits in Relationships available from Kanaan Ministries.)

4. Practice Self-Control, Do Not be Controlled.

Our initial response to being hurt is that we lose self-control. Our getting hurt in a relationship is proof of how little control we have over others in the first place. Many times we transfer power onto the person who has hurt us, which makes things worse.

Good relationships do involve confronting, forgiving, and reconciling. However, some people make the injury and the person who caused the injury the focus of their lives, letting that person control them. In this way they put their hearts under the power of the very ones who injured them.

Jesus handled this in a different way. When others hurt Him, He did not allow it to change His values or direction in life. This is called self-control. **Jesus didn’t give control of His life to those who injured Him. He completed the tasks the Father had given Him, and the last words He uttered before He died from His suffering were: “It is finished!” (John 19 : 30). He was in charge of His life to the end.**

Help your people to develop **self control** even as they work on injuries by others. While they need to confess and process pain, they also need to take back **ownership** of their lives. One of the most important tasks they will have is to repair their injuries. Some may need to learn to receive emotional warmth from others. Others may need to learn how to be separate. Still others may need to learn how to give up self-critical and perfectionistic ways. These are all forms of self-control rather than staying stuck and being controlled by the hurts of others.

5. Deal with all rejection

Rejection consists of several major aspects

Rejection tells us we are unwanted, put aside and refused. It's a feeling of being unloved and not accepted either as a member of a group, by a friend, or sometimes even by the human race. Rejection places a wall around us that repels acceptance even when it is offered.

Rejection reminds us of our desperate need to be loved, while at the same time we're convinced we're unloved and unlovable. This causes emotional torment. Rejection drives love from us, and drives us from love. Even when someone does love us, we still feel rejected. "You're just saying that. I know better. You don't really love me. You only like what I can do for you."

Rejection judges facial expressions and body language, or evaluates nuances, looking for a reason to feel more rejected.

The fear of being rejected is fuelled by the fear of man and by the fear of failure. Rejection, self-hatred, and fear work together. Rejection says: "I'm not accepted." Self-hatred agrees, saying: "There is a good reason for you not being accepted, because you're not worthy of being loved." Then fear says: "If he ever knew what I really was like, he'd hate me."

Rejection drives us to reject love from others. Even if people offer love and acceptance to us, we're unable to believe them and receive it. Giving and receiving love forms the foundation of our relationship with God, others and ourselves. **The cause of all spiritually-rooted disease is the inability to give and receive love. Love has the power to break rejection and fear.**

Rejection tells us that we will never belong. Even though we desire to "be part of something," we never feel like we belong. The sense of "not belonging" is rejection.

Shame and guilt result from rejection, making us feel uncomfortable, so we don't "fit in". We're not "good enough".

A person who is plagued by rejection is given to irrational and continual self-introspection. They walk around with their head hanging down, are unable to "look you in the eye," but seem to always be looking for approval and acceptance from others. They're constantly on guard watching to see if someone notices them.

Rejection produces double-mindedness. “I know God said He loves me, but I don’t feel His love, and He certainly never answers my prayers. I want to believe His promises, but why should I?”

We constantly argue with God’s eternal truth, bolstered by satan’s eternal lies. **Rejection robs us** of our true identity in Christ Jesus, preventing us from becoming the special person that God created us to be. It creates internal instability and restlessness. James 1: 8 say, “A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways.”

Rejection causes us to run and hide, or to search for our identity in all the wrong places. It prevents us from really facing our problems. Ironically, rejection drives us to seek some level of intimate contact with others – through a job, church, groups and individuals – but continuously drives us away from establishing intimate contact.

What began as our own irrational fear of rejection evolves into real rejection.

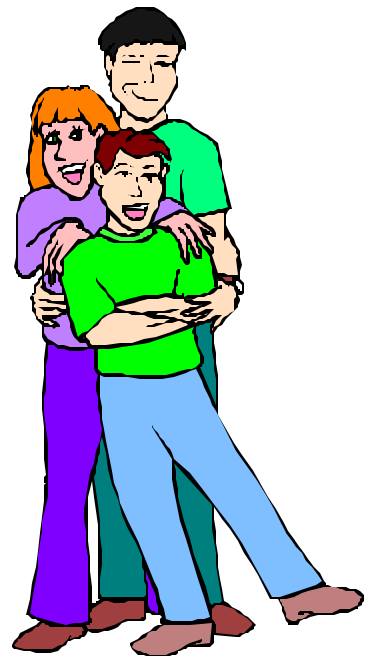
Do you see the many ways that these negative emotions can create an alarm reaction (Please refer to Course 2 – Inner Healing, available from Kanaan Ministries)

The good news is that we do not have to receive rejection. We can choose how we respond.

Receiving the hurt and pain from rejection is idolatry. We cannot prevent people from rejecting us, but **we can** control how we respond. If we have responded by receiving the hurt and pain, **we have fallen into idolatry. It is idolatry because we have given more importance to their words or actions than we have to God’s.**

Anything that we allow to come between God and us is idolatry or a form of occultism. Picture the moon coming between the sun and the earth, thus blocking the sun from view. **This is called an occult moon.** We do the same thing when we allow another person’s actions or words to “block” us from His truth.

Receiving the pain from rejection is therefore a sin. This is an important principle to deeply understand. It will set you free, as you work through it. This means that we do not have to receive the pain. We must learn to remember who we are in the eyes of God, not man. When we are whole and secure in whom we are in God, we will be able to minister to others, instead of being and offended.



CHAPTER 4 – THE ROLE THE BODY OF CHRIST PLAYS IN GROWTH.

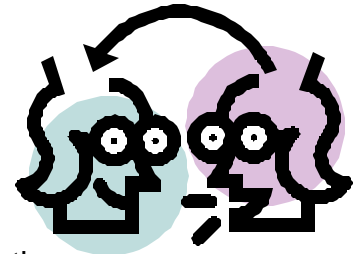
Eph. 4 : 16 “16 For because of Him the whole body (the church, in all its various parts), **closely joined and firmly knit together** by the joints and ligaments with which it is supplied, when each part [with power adapted to its need] is working properly [in all its functions], **grows to full maturity, building itself up in love.**”

1 Peter 4: 10 – 11 “10 As each of you has received a gift (a particular spiritual talent, a gracious divine endowment), **employ it for one another as [befits] good trustees of God’s many-sided grace** [faithful stewards of the extremely diverse powers and gifts granted to Christians by unmerited favor].

11 Whoever speaks, [let him do it as one who utters] oracles of God; whoever renders service, [let him do it] as with the strength which God furnishes abundantly, so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ (the Messiah). To Him be the glory and dominion forever and ever (through endless ages). Amen (so be it).”

God does not give us His grace through supernatural zapping;

- He gives it to us through His people. Many times we wait for Him to speak to us directly when He speaks to us through His people.
- We wait for Him to give us direction in life; He is the strength behind the direction people give us.
- We wait for Him to heal our depression; He sends special people to comfort us.



The church, with its indwelling Spirit, is the real physical presence of Christ on earth today. It is true that where two or more are gathered together, He is present (**Matt. 18 : 20**). It is true that He is inside each believer. It is true that the body is the temple of God (**1 Cor. 3 : 16**).

Sometimes people teach that we don’t need other people at all, that Christ alone is sufficient or that His Word or prayer is enough. They actively and directly lead others to not depend on people at all.

But the Bible teaches that all these things are part of the process of how people grow, including other people. You must have a relationship to grow. Independence from relationship is independence from God Himself, for He is present in His body; it is also independence from the way He designed for us to grow.

If you are helping others grow and you become aware of an area of life in which a person needs something from God, **think of other people as part of the solution.** Look at the Body resources available to that person to get his or her needs met and to grow.

Biblical growth is designed to include other people as God's instruments. To be truly Biblical as well as truly effective, the growth process must include the Body of Christ. Without the Body, the process is neither totally Biblical nor orthodox.



Connection

People's most basic need in life is **relationship**. People connected to other people thrive and grow, and those not connected wither and die. It is a medical fact, for example, that from infancy to old age, health depends on the amount of social connection people have. Infants and older people die from a lack of relationship, and those in the middle suffer and fail to recover from illness.

At the **emotional level**, connection is the sustaining factor for the psyche, the heart, and the spirit. Virtually every emotional and psychological problem, from **addictions to depression**, has **alienation or emotional isolation at its core** or close to it. Recovery from these problems always involves helping people to get more connected to each other at deeper and healthier levels than they are.

Ironically, one problem we often see in the Christian community is that people get more into **religion** and less into the connectedness that the Bible prescribes, with the result that they get sicker. For the same reason many people feel disconnected from God because they have not been connected to His Body.

Col. 2:19 *"19 And not holding fast to the **Head**, from Whom the **entire body**, supplied and knit together by means of its joints and ligaments, grows with a growth that is from God."*

The clear teaching of the New Testament is that the Body of Christ is to be people deeply connected to each other, supporting each other and filling each other's hearts. This connection also impacts people who are in recovery from **addiction or compulsive behavior**. Hardly anyone completely recovers from an addiction without connection to a support system. Some stop their addictive or compulsive behaviors, but their **relational patterns** do not change, and most times they relapse if they do not do group work.

The reason is complex, but part of it is **the alienation driving the addiction itself**. **Ephesians 4: 18 – 19** speaks of the "continual lust for more" caused by being "separated from the life of God"

As people are cut off from others and their souls are starved for connectedness, the need for love turns into an **insatiable hunger for something**. It can be a substance, sex, food, shopping, or gambling, but these never satisfy, because the real need is for connectedness to God and others and to God through others.

When people receive that, **the power of addiction is broken**. This is why many people in the ministry find relief from addictions only after getting into a recovery group. Before that, they had become isolated in the ministry, feeling as if they had to hide because of their position.

We need to see connectedness as the foundation of how people grow.

Discipline and Structure

Sometimes people say, “I don’t have any self discipline”.

The question is: “Where are you going to get it?”

Some people answer: “By disciplining myself”

“If you could discipline yourself, you wouldn’t need self-discipline. You would have it. But you don’t. So, again, where are you going to get it?”

“Self-discipline” is always a fruit of “other-discipline”. Some people get disciplined by other people early in life and then **internalize** it into the character; then they possess it themselves. Other people don’t get disciplined early in life, and they don’t ever have self-discipline until they get it from others and internalize it for themselves. Others discipline us, and then we can do it for ourselves.

1 Cor. 4:7 *“7 For who separates you from the others [as a faction leader]? [Who makes you superior and sets you apart from another, giving you the preeminence?] **What have you that was not given to you?** If then you received it [from someone], why do you boast as if you had not received [but had gained it by your own efforts]?”*

Find an **accountability partner**, join a group to give you specific assignments, get correction and feed back on your assignments, get consequences when you do not perform, submit to the structure of the group meetings no matter what the cost, call your accountability partner when you are tempted to slide, and get the support you would need to motivate you, work through your fears and resistances, and heal the pain that drives the irresponsibility.

Hebrews 12:11 *“11 For the time being **no discipline brings joy**, but seems grievous and painful; but afterwards **it yields a peaceable fruit of righteousness** to those who have been trained by it [a harvest of fruit which consists in righteousness—in conformity to God’s will in purpose, thought, and action, **resulting in right living and right standing with God**].”*

You must get “trained by it”, not try and do it by yourself. And **the Body of Christ is the disciplinary agent**.

God’s plan, His “being there”, operates when His Body comes together to help someone achieve control over his or her life. This is the role of the Body in discipline – to help people regain the freedom (or the “harvest of righteousness and peace”) that comes from self-control. Many times in the Bible we are told that we get discipline, structure, and correction from other people whom God gives us:

Matt 18:15–16 “15 If your brother wrongs you, go and show him his fault, between you and him privately. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother.
16 But if he does not listen, **take along with you one or two others, so that every word may be confirmed and upheld** by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

Gal 6:1 – 2 “1 BRETHREN, IF any person is overtaken in **misconduct or sin** of any sort, you who are spiritual [who are responsive to and controlled by the Spirit] **should set him right and restore and reinstate him**, without any sense of superiority and with all gentleness, keeping an attentive eye on yourself, lest you should be tempted also.
2 **Bear (endure, carry) one another’s burdens** and troublesome moral faults, and in this way fulfill and observe perfectly the law of Christ (the Messiah) and complete what is lacking [in your **obedience** to it].”

Titus 3:10 “10 [As for] a man who is factious [a heretical sectarian and cause of divisions], after **admonishing him** a first and second time, reject [him from your fellowship and have nothing more to do with him],”

....and we are in trouble if we do not:

Prov 15:12 “12 A **scorner** has no love for one who rebukes him; neither will he go to the wise [for counsel].”

As you try to grow in self-control over some area of life, consider the constant role of discipline that others provide.

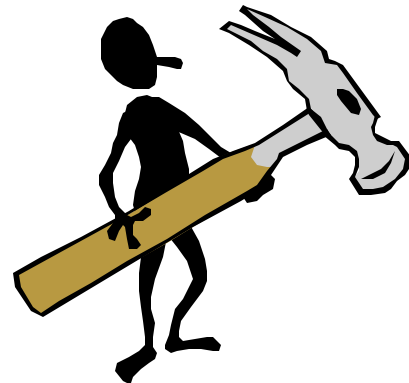
Accountability

Accountability is very important, and the Bible tells us over and over again to build it into our lives. But here is the caution: **accountability is not a cure for lack of self-control**. Often when a man encounters a problem, he is required to join an accountability group. There he is asked a list of questions about how he is doing in various areas to see if he has slipped. If he has, he confesses, he is forgiven, and he commits to doing better. All of this is very important.

The problem with accountability is that all this does is “count”. **Accountability can expose a problem, but it can’t fix it.**

A person with the problem has to **enter the process of discipline** and structure mentioned above as well as **find healing** for what is driving his behavior.

Accountability is only a monitoring system to tell him what he needs more.



When a problem surfaces, the role of an accountability group changes. It is now a group not only to see how a person is doing, but also to see if the person is doing the other things he is supposed to be doing to solve his problem.

Grace and Forgiveness

Grace is something we can't give ourselves. It comes from outside of us, as an merited favor; we can't do anything to obtain grace. **God's uses other people to dispense His grace.** As people use their gifts, they are "faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms" (1 Peter 4 : 10). **God made us stewards over the administration of His grace.**

We have heard it said many times: "I know in my head that God forgives me and accepts me, but I can't feel it in my heart". They have memorized verses on forgiveness, God's love and acceptance, their position of grace, and all the related doctrines. They know the information in their heads, but they are far from knowing it in the hearts. They think this head knowledge is somehow going to sink in to their hearts. This is not the way things work.

The head and the heart work in different ways. The head works by gaining, assimilating, and accommodating new information. We take in data, compare these data to what we already know, and then form an understanding of the new information as we grow in "knowing".

While the head works with "information gathering", the heart works with "experience gathering". We may know what the books say about God's grace, but until we have experienced it, our "knowing" is only in our head.

To experience God's grace, **our hearts have to be connected to it.** We can certainly connect to God "vertically" through prayer, but to feel His grace completely we have to open our hearts to the full expression of it "horizontally" through other people. **To connect fully with the grace of God, we have to go to where it is, and He has chosen to put it into other people.** So those who study the facts of the grace of God and do not experience other people loving them, will fall short in their realization of that grace.

To connect with God's love, we not only need people, but also need our hearts to be available to those people. We have to be open and vulnerable for the grace and acceptance to do any good. Many people "fellowship" with others, but they share so little as they fellowship that nothing happens at the heart level.



2 Cor. 6:11 – 13 *“11 Our mouth is open to you, Corinthians [we are hiding nothing, keeping nothing back], and our heart is expanded wide [for you]!
12 There is no lack of room for you in [our hearts], but you lack room in your own affections [for us].
13 By way of return then, do this for me—I speak as to children—open wide your hearts also [to us].”*

So for growth to occur, it must include experiences where hearts are open with each other. Otherwise, it is just known in someone’s head and never experienced at the levels God has designed.

James 5:16 *“16 Confess to one another therefore your faults (your slips, your false steps, your offenses, your sins) and pray [also] for one another, that you may be healed and restored [to a spiritual tone of mind and heart]. The earnest (heartfelt, continued) prayer of a righteous man makes tremendous power available [dynamic in its working].”*

Many Christians do the vertical confession of 1John 1:9, when they confess to God, but not to others. So they “know” they are forgiven and loved in their head, they just don’t “know” it in their heart. We are made to experience both, and it is one of the reasons that Jesus commands us to love one another.

Grace can be available to us, but we might not be available to grace. We can be around a lot of acceptance and grace, but until the hurt and guilty places of our hearts are exposed, we do not experience grace, and the gap between our head and our heart continues.

Grace must be experience to be known. Many Christians have experience with the Body on Sunday morning in a pew, but not in a private seating when they can share the pain and the vulnerable places of the **hearts**. Yet, this is where healing takes place. Fellowship on Sunday or at the Bible study is great, but **fellowship with the depths of the heart is what heals.**

MERCY by Catherine Brown (www.gatekeepers.org.uk / catherine@gatekeepers.org.uk)

THE BREAD OF HEAVEN – A VISION OF JESUS

Whilst in prayer recently I had a beautiful vision of Jesus with manna in His hands. In the vision, one by one, people approached Christ and took a piece of manna from His outstretched palm. Some ate the manna straightaway and their countenance was instantly transformed; they were just so happy and full of peace and joy! Others put the manna in their pocket, which seemed a strange thing to do. Those who did not eat the manna straightaway seemed to forget they had received a gift of provision from Christ. Others would not even approach Jesus for the manna. They looked so tired and angry. Jesus continually held out his hands, desiring to give his children manna. The ones who refused the manna became full of bitterness and a dark cloud covered them. Jesus was brokenhearted over this.

"THE MANNA IS MY MERCY"

I asked the Lord what the manna meant. He replied, "Child, the manna is my mercy. Mercy is my provision in this hour for my children. There has never been such a need for absolute mercy, because there has never been such a lack of mercy in the world and even in my church. To lack mercy is to walk in the spirit of the world. I have given my grace to the church, that in faith my bride may be robed in mercy.

"At the ends of the Age I will come to judge the quick and the dead, but this hour has not yet come. Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy. Mercy and forgiveness flow down in unity from the throne of Grace. Mercy triumphs over judgment. Above the cherubim, the children of Israel learned that I am enthroned on the mercy seat. The ark of my presence, the altar of faith in your hearts, is still the place of my abiding mercy.

"Mercy is your strong tower in times of trouble. Mercy washes away all roots of hatred and bitterness. My mercy redeems the mindset of man. Mercy is a river, and mercy washes each of my children clean. Mercy is purity and mercy is peace. Mercy is full of love and grace. Mercy is wisdom. Mercy heals cruelty and heals all wounds. Mercy is the meeting point between heaven and earth, because in my mercy I commune with my children. Mercy is the power of the Age to come, poured out in this age. In your frailty, my mercy is your protection and strength. Mercy is given freely to my children in Grace. Mercy is the fruit of loving me and mercy is my Father's gift to His children. Mercy disarms the powers of darkness. Mercy covers all. Mercy triumphs over judgment. My mercy is blood-bought, and my unconditional love and mercy are full of Life.

"Beloved child, my mercy is new every morning. Mercy is part of your Kingdom identity and my mercy releases your destiny, because mercy prepares your heart in compassion for the mindset of the Kingdom and the agenda of your King of Kings. Mercy brings you into the inner courts of my Father and mercy compels you to a lifestyle of kindness and compassion."

WHAT IS MERCY?

1. Compassion or forgiveness shown towards an enemy or offender in one's power.
2. Something to be grateful for.

"The Lord your God is a merciful God" (Dt 4:31). Mercy originates in the Father's heart and flows into ours through the Holy Spirit. God our Father forgives our sins through the atoning sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ. This is a beautiful work of Grace. Jesus said, "Father forgive." There was a cost to mercy, but Jesus paid the price, as mercy and forgiveness flowed like a mighty river from the Cross of Calvary. We are delivered from judgment in God's mercy.

When Jesus taught His disciples about mercy, he taught them that mercy leads to purity of heart and purity of heart releases us to see Jesus face-to-face. God's word inspires us to choose the way of mercy, so that we might become so full of God's mercy that it would overflow from our hearts into the lives of all that we encounter.

"Blessed are the merciful for they will be shown mercy" Mt. 5:7 "Blessed are the pure in heart for they will see God" Mt. 5:8

Forgiveness is an act of mercy. If we withhold mercy it means we are withholding forgiveness in our hearts towards another. God wants us to understand that as we forgive and do not judge each other, then we are able to look at one another in and through the perfection of Christ.

"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you." Mt. 7:1

We are commanded to love one another. Without mercy we become mean, and this in turn permits bitterness to take root in our hearts.

MERCY – THE BREAD OF HEAVEN

"I am the bread of life. Your forefathers ate the manna in the desert, yet they died. But here is the bread that comes down from heaven, which a man may eat and not die. I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world."

"Then the Jews began to argue sharply among themselves, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'" John 6:48-52

Mercy is Jesus' manna (bread), life to us in this world. We cannot survive as believers in this world without the mercy of God. Daily we need to receive a fresh revelation of the mercy of our Father, given to us in Christ. In God's mercy we gain access to the fullness of our heavenly Father's heart. Without mercy operating in our lives, we will lack intimacy with Jesus.

Without a staple diet of bread or rice, we would die. Without God's mercy operating in our lives, we would be dead in our sin. God calls us afresh to the Cross to look again at the incredible, sacrificial cost of mercy. He calls us again to be washed in the blood of Christ and receive His mercy. It requires humility to receive mercy, but what will we choose?

Will we be like the Pharisees, who in their religious bondage, could not and would not receive the mercy of Jesus Christ? Will we be so blind that we will allow this pearl of great price to fall from our hands? Will we be like the many disciples who said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" Will we turn our back on our precious Savior and no longer follow Jesus because we are too arrogant or ignorant of spiritual truth to receive his mercy? Will we, like those lost souls, walk in offense and deny the Lordship of Christ in our lives?

OFFENSE – THE GREATEST OPPONENT TO THE MERCY OF CHRIST

"On hearing it, many of His disciples said, 'This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?'

"Aware that the disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, 'Does this offend you? What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before! The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. Yet there are some of you who do not believe.' Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray him. He went on to say, 'This is why I told you that no one can come to me unless the Father has enabled him.'

**"From this time many of the disciples turned back and no longer followed him."
John 6:60-66**

COMMANDED LOVE – LIVING IN GOD'S MERCY

Perhaps some of you have suffered in this life and may be wondering if there are times when we might justify withholding mercy...broken promises, betrayal, rejection, abandonment, brutality, pain. The answer is an unequivocal 'no'! Christ calls us to total forgiveness, and total forgiveness includes loving the offender in the mercy of God. It is never too hard to forgive, because mercy is a work of grace in our lives. God commands us to love one another. Loving means forgiving, and forgiving means living in the mercy of God.

In my life I have known many instances where forgiveness has not been an easy choice to make. Through many kinds of abuse, violence, and heartbreak Jesus taught me to love -- one offender at a time. Jesus is the bread of heaven and His living word is mercy *in* our souls, *to* our souls, and *through* our souls. Withholding mercy speaks of desiring to inflict punishment on another. To withhold mercy is to place your agenda above the compassion of Christ. Grumbling against another quickly leads to hardness of heart, and hardness of heart soon leads to the sin of offense.

TEMPORARY "SPIRITUAL AMNESIA"

Offense is when we "think" we have a "right" to be angry because someone has hurt us. We hold resentment and unresolved anger in our hearts towards that person, all the while justifying our wrong attitude. We become self-righteous because we place our perception of what we think is "right" above the perfect righteousness of Jesus. We think our opinion, feeling, and insights in a matter are more important than any others. In offense, we suffer from "temporary spiritual amnesia" with respect to the wonderful mercy Jesus has poured into us, that we might also pour into others. Offense distracts us from God's Kingdom agenda and "untreated" offense will consume our hearts with unforgiveness.

LORD, RESTORE OUR "MERCY MEMORY"!

I believe Jesus wants to heal His bride and restore her 'mercy memory'! God calls us to be imitators of Christ and to live a life of love (**Ephesians 5:1**).

"Father, in humility we come to you ask you to forgive us for being hardhearted and for withholding mercy to others in our lives. Forgive us for any time we have walked in offense. We choose now to walk in mercy. Please heal our temporary spiritual amnesia and restore our mercy memory. May your mercy fall on us today like sweet spring rain and bring healing and restoration to all our relationships, beginning first with you. In Jesus' Name we pray, Amen."

Support and Strengthening

When we support something, we hold it up. Support is required throughout the growth process. We will face tasks and realities past our strength and abilities, so we need others to support us.

1 Thess. 5:14 *"14 And we earnestly beseech you, brethren, **admonish** (warn and seriously advise) those who are out of line [the loafers, the disorderly, and the **unruly**]; **encourage the timid and fainthearted, help and give your support to the weak souls, [and] be very patient with everybody** [always keeping your temper]."*

Gal 6:2 *"2 **Bear (endure, carry) one another's burdens** and troublesome moral faults, and in this way fulfill and observe perfectly the law of Christ (the Messiah) and complete what is lacking [in your obedience to it]."*

Support enables people to go through grief, trials, growth, and a whole host of other difficult times. How is this possible? Only through the Body. For this is what the physical body does when one cell suffers.

It sends healing to the injured part of the body. If you have a wounded arm, for example, the body sends antibodies, healing agents, fresh oxygenated blood, white cells, information, anti-inflammatory agents, and so on to that limb. And they do the healing work.

Many people, however, find themselves cut off from the church and the healing and protective functions it provides. In their isolation – or at least the isolated growth plan they are using – they are easy prey for the gates of hell to overpower them. Wolves do not attack an entire herd. They attack the one lamb that has wandered off the path. This is the one who is in danger. As Jesus said, He would leave the ninety-nine to fetch and return the wandering one.

When people try to grow spiritually and emotionally without the organic and metabolic functions of the Body, they are essentially off the path and subject to all the forces of death. Hell does have its way with them until they are returned to the connectedness and healing of the Body.

Col. 2 : 19 *“19 And not holding fast to the **Head**, from Whom **the entire body, supplied and knit together** by means of **its joints and ligaments, grows** with a growth that is from God.”*

Eph 4 : 16 *“16 For because of Him **the whole body** (the church, in all its various parts), **closely joined and firmly knit together by the joints and ligaments** with which it is supplied, when each part [with power adapted to its need] is working properly [in all its functions], **grows to full maturity, building itself up in love.**”*

The Body of Christ heals itself just as a physical body does. Each part has a function in that healing just as a physical body does. The **antibodies** against infection come in the form of **discipline and structure** as individuals who confronted in love help the person stand against the “infections” of sin in her life. They put **boundaries and limits** up against the evil that has overtaken the person, either from within or from others. They help her stand.

Others, with **grace and love**, bring healing **anti-inflammatory agents** to the wound. They mourn with those that mourn (**Rom. 12 : 15**) and flesh out the sickness. They bring **teaching and truth** to the wound and help it to rebuild stronger cellular structure through teaching gifts. And on and on.

This is also why we see very sincere, spiritual people often struggle for years with problems they are trying to overcome by Bible study and prayer. While those are necessary, they are not all that the Bible tells us to bring to the situation. It tells us to bring the rest of the Body with all of its healing agents. Then the limb can be restored to health.

Grieving

One of the most important processes in life is grief. God has designed grief to help us get over things. When bad things happen in life, we have to work through them. Working through bad things is a little like digesting food. In life, we basically digest experience; we walk through it, take it in, use what is useful, and eliminate the waste. When someone dies or when there is another kind of loss or injury in life, we have to be able to work through that experience and move on, leaving our hearts available for new experiences and relationships. We get rid of the hurt and pain by grieving and then keeping the learning experiences that come with it.

Through tragedy we learn about God's faithfulness and how the love and support of others brings us through. We learn that when bad things happen, we can get through them, and then we have hope for the next time. We learn about untrustworthy people so that we can avoid them the next time.



Grief can only be accomplished in the context of relationship. We need others to hold us as we go through the process of “**letting down**” and “**letting go**”. In addition, we must have something **good in hand to be able to let go of something bad.**

If people do not have a support system to attach to, they cannot grieve a good relationship that is lost or a bad one that they need to let go of. People also need the feedback and observations of others to learn from an experience and to contain all of their distortions and emotions. Feedback and containment, as we will see, are essential to the grief process. **As people grieve, they can get well.**

Eccl. 7:3 “3 Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better and gains gladness.”

Grief is God's way of getting us through and past things. And we need others to help us do that. Jesus said: “*Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted*” (**Matt. 5:4**)

Since grief is absolutely necessary for successful moving through life, and since it is an essential part of the growth process, we have to make sure it happens well when helping people grow. The only way it can happen well is in relationship – the way God designed it to work. It is the reason **tear ducts** are in the corner of the eyes. Someone's grief should be evident as he or she looks into the eyes of another person. **It is a relational process.** Get people grieving correctly – with other people – and they can get on with life.

Modeling

We cannot do what we have never seen done. We need models to show us how.

1 Thess. 1: 6 – 7 “6 And you [set yourselves to] **become imitators of us** and [through us] of the Lord Himself, for you welcomed our message in [spite of] much persecution, with joy [inspired] by the Holy Spirit;
7 So that you [thus] **became a pattern to all the believers** (those who adhere to, trust in, and rely on Christ Jesus) in Macedonia and Achaia (most of Greece).”

Got designed humans with a need to see others first do what they need to learn, and **then to internalize that modeling** and be able to repeat it.

The modeling we experience has a lasting effect upon us, for good or for ill. This is one reason why the Bible emphasizes the confession should of not only the sins of the people, but also the sins of the fathers (**Neh. 9 : 2**). We have to see the wrong modeling we are following in order to renounce it.

The goal is to replace the poor modeling with the modeling of people who imitate Christ, the ones in His Body who show us how He would do it; then we can do it the same way. As Paul said, **we imitate those who imitate Him.** His Body carries on His walk upon the earth, and others learn it.

Imperfection and Suffering:

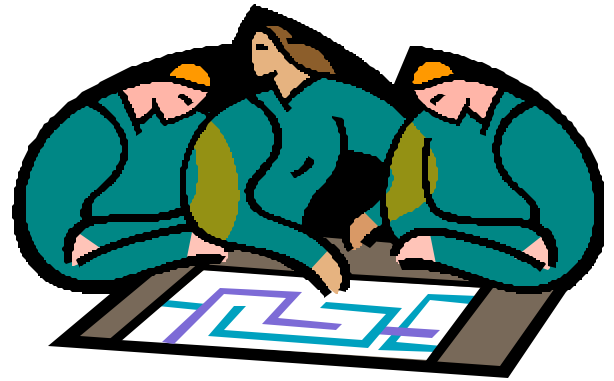
Phil. 3: 12 – 14 “12 Not that I have now attained [this ideal], or have already been made perfect, but I **press on to lay hold of (grasp) and make my own**, that for which Christ Jesus (the Messiah) has laid hold of me and made me His own.
13 I do not consider, brethren, that I have captured and made it my own [yet]; but one thing I do [it is my one aspiration]: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,
14 I **press on toward the goal to win the [supreme and heavenly] prize to which God in Christ Jesus is calling us upward.**”

2 Cor. 1: 8 “8 For we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about the **affliction and oppressing distress** which befell us in [the province of] Asia, how we were so utterly and unbearably weighed down and crushed that we despaired even of life [itself].”

Paul was honest to let others see he too could hurt, despair of life, and not have it all together. When people find out others struggled too, wonderful things happen.

1. They feel less guilty, ashamed, and afraid something is wrong with them.
2. They obtain a more accurate view of the standard they are trying to live up to. Many times the standard is super-human. By seeing others, the standard gets modified to a real person who grows, struggles, does not have it all together, but is dealing with all of it.

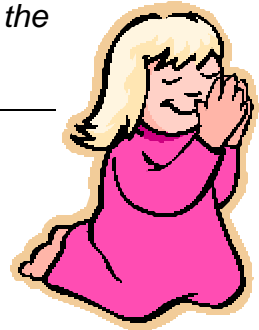
3. They gain **hope and problem-solving skills**. They find through the struggles and testimonies of others that people do get better and they do resolve very difficult problems in life. They see how these imperfect strugglers accomplish all of that. **This gives them a model for getting past what they are dealing with at that moment.**



In other words, they find out that we are all on the same path. While we all have different struggles, one thing is certain: **We all struggle.**

This is one of the best things that the Body can give to one another, the knowledge that we are not alone on our path of struggle. No one is exempt. Therefore no one needs to be ashamed for not having it all together. **Struggle is universal.**

1 Thess. 2: 11 – 12 *“11 For you know how, as a father [dealing with] his children, we used to **exhort each of you personally, stimulating and encouraging and charging you.***
12 To live lives worthy of God, Who calls you into His own kingdom and the glorious blessedness [into which true believers will enter after Christ’s return].”

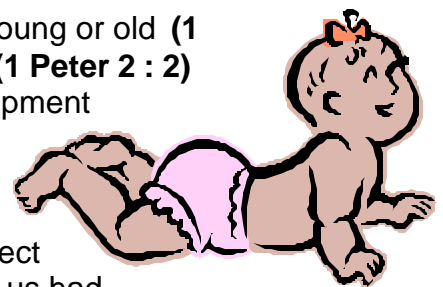


A Complete Make-over

The theology of redemption is one of total destruction, of starting all over again, at birth. We are not to be “improved”; we are to be crucified and born again.

As Paul says is: *“the old has been crucified, and all things have become new”* (2 Cor. 5 : 17; Gal 2 : 20). (Remember, he says “new”, not “complete”, as some would teach). So we need to enter an entire developmental process.

John speaks of us as **“children”** who are learning, whether young or old (1 John 2 : 12 – 14). Peter uses the term **“new borne babes”** (1 Peter 2 : 2) Hebrews refer to **“infants”** (Heb. 5 : 13). The spiritual development path is one of reconciling the creation to the way it was supposed to be.



We were to be born into the human race to grow up to be perfect or “complete” people. But the human race failed, and none of us had made it to adulthood “complete”, for we all came from a dysfunctional family: the human race. We all “missed the mark”, which is the Bible’s term for sin. So God wiped out the old and started over. We have to go through a **rebirth and a re-growing up**, this time in a **new family**. This family is His family, the **Body of Christ**. **In that family we are to get all the things we missed out on the first time.** Nurturance, modeling, truth, love, accountability, development of talents, and more are all to be present in this family to give the babies what they need to grow up to maturity and completeness.

It is all about **character development**, the process of **sanctification**. **And sanctification always happens in a family setting.**

So, in this new family, the family of God, His Body, the developmental process takes place the same way the Bible describes the physical process occurring.

Prov 13: 20 *“20 He who walks [as a companion] with wise men is wise, but he who associates with [self-confident] fools is [a fool himself and] shall smart for it.”*

As people are walking and spending time with good people, they are growing into good people. **God’s pattern has always been about life giving life.** As He breathed life into mankind, and as that life is passed on by mankind from one person to another, so is spiritual and personal growth. It is produced in one and passed on to another. That happens in the Body.

Heb. 10: 24 *“24 And let us consider and give attentive, continuous care to watching over one another, studying how we may stir up (stimulate and incite) to love and helpful deeds and noble activities,”*

Make sure you are in a Body that is growing you up, and make sure you are designing those experiences for the ones you shepherd. If you do that, you are growing people in the way God designed.



CHAPTER 5 – THE POWER OF ACCEPTANCE

What is acceptance, and why is it necessary in order for people to grow? **The Bible teaches that acceptance begins with God.**

Rom. 15:7 *“7 Welcome and receive [to your hearts] one another, then, even as Christ has welcomed and received you, for the glory of God.”*

Christ’s acceptance of us is the model for how we are to accept each other.

The word “acceptance” means “taking to oneself”. It is an invitation. **Acceptance is the state of receiving someone into relationship.** To be accepted is to have all of your parts, good and bad, received by another without condemnation. It applies to all our relationships: with God, others, and ourselves. It is closely related to grace, undeserved merit. **Acceptance is the result of the working of grace.** Because of God’s grace, we are accepted into relationship. It is both a fact and something we are to take into our subjective experience, our hearts.

God originally designed acceptance as a way of life. However, when we sinned and fell from grace, acceptance posed a problem for God. His Holy nature could not accept our sinfulness; yet His love kept him caring about us. So God provided a costly solution: His Son Jesus – fully God, fully man, and without sin – died to atone for our sins (**1 Peter 3 : 18**). This sacrifice appeased the requirements of God’s holiness and restored us to acceptance.

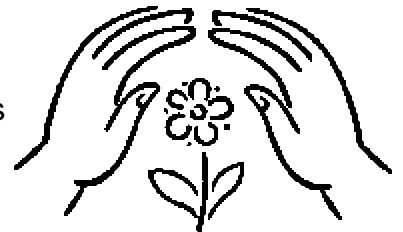
God’s acceptance of us in no way negates or minimizes our badness. In fact, He is able to receive us now, not because we are innocent, but because our debt of guilt has been fully paid, once and for all. So when we are afraid that He will not accept us because we have done something wrong, it is we who, at some level, are negating and minimizing what He has done for us.

There is truly now no condemnation for those who belong to Jesus (**Rom. 8 : 1**).

1. Acceptance Sets us Free to Grow .

The Law has not been done away with; rather, in Jesus, it has been fulfilled (**Matt 5 : 17**). So when we break the Law now, we do not lose our relationship.

NB: We are forever in the state of acceptance.



This truth is so important to spiritual growth. We tend to work very hard to make ourselves good enough for God. **Acceptance does away with the need to prove ourselves worthy and replaces it with an appeal to living on the basis of relationship rather than by performance and good works.**

AGAIN: There is truly now no condemnation for those who belong to Jesus (Rom. 8:1).

When we finally understand that God isn't mad at us anymore, we become free to concentrate on love and growth instead of trying to appease Him. It is one of the most liberating truths in the Bible.

2. Acceptance builds Trust and Relationship.

Acceptance is a bridge to developing safe and growth-producing relationships, both with God and with people. We can't grow unless we are sure that we are both known and loved. Some people like us because they don't know us; some know us, and therefore don't like us. **Relationship can't occur unless both knowledge and love are present. Acceptance bridges this gap between being known and being loved.** It is freeing to understand that being known doesn't ruin a relationship but in fact strengthens it.



The warmth and permission to be ourselves allow us to be more honest and vulnerable and allow us to bring to light parts of ourselves that need to be connected to relationship. Nothing is wrong with advice in its proper place; however, many people simply need to be accepted to gain security, stability, and strength to solve the problems.

Many people are stuck in the spiritual growth because they can't be completely themselves. They may be able to be real about their opinions, happy times, humor, or care for others; however, they think that their depression, sad times, addictions, or neediness are unacceptable to God or people, so they live their lives as though these parts don't exist. We need to experience all of our souls, whether good, bad, or broken; otherwise, what is not brought into the light of God's love and relationship cannot be matured, healed, and integrated into the rest of our character.

Here are some of the parts of our soul that acceptance can bring to light:

- **Needs.** We need to need.

Eccl. 4 : 9 – 12 “9 **Two are better than one**, because they have a good [more satisfying] reward for their labor;
10 For if they fall, the **one will lift up his fellow**. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!
11 Again, **if two lie down together**, then they have **warmth**; but how can one be warm alone?
12 And though a man might prevail against him who is alone, **two will withstand him. A threefold cord is not quickly broken.**”

Acceptance makes it acceptable to feel our incompleteness and spiritual poverty, without shame or guilt.

- **Sins.** By our very nature, we hide our sins even from ourselves. The Law makes us feel that we will incur wrath if our sins are exposed. But when we experience acceptance, we not only tolerate looking at our transgressions, but look even deeper into ourselves for other dark places in which sin resides.
- **Judged Parts.** Certain feelings and aspects of our souls may not be intrinsically sinful. They may be parts that we don't like or accept. **Often we judge ourselves by the way we have been judged.** For example: someone who has encountered a lot of criticism in life for being angry maybe beat himself up when he gets mad, whether or not the anger is legitimate. He may think of himself as bad or wrong for being angry. He will not be able to use his anger to protect himself.
- **Hiding styles.** We also wear fig leaves over parts of ourselves to avoid experiencing negative things. For example, some people intellectualize to stay away from emotions that trouble or frighten them. They live in their heads to avoid their hearts.
- **Brokenness and weakness.** All of us have weaknesses that need to be accepted by God and others to be restored. Many times these frailties aren't sins, but merely inabilities. For example, some individuals may be emotionally **unable to trust and reach out**; others may struggle with standing up to **controlling people**; still others may be **easily wounded by criticism** because of some unresolved need for approval. The healing begins when acceptance makes it safe enough to admit these realities to ourselves.
- **Acceptance Creates Safety to Confess and Heal.** To experience and "be" our sinful or broken selves is only one step in spiritual growth. Another necessary step is to bring those feelings and parts into relationship with God and others. The Bible calls this step "confession", meaning "**to agree with the truth**". **Confessing involves taking a risk with a negative part of ourselves, letting someone else to know about it.** As we experience comfort, identification, and truth without judgment, we begin to heal. God created us to be confessors. This is what it means to "live in the light".

As acceptance increases, so does confession, and with confession comes intimacy and growth.

When you know that risking won't bring judgment, you can try new things. This assurance is the cure for fears of failure.

The Bible teaches that "*solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil*" (**Heb. 5 : 14**).

As we mature, we grow by **practicing** and **trying out new things**. The only penalty, when we are accepted, is failing and re-learning. There is no condemnation. As acceptance increases, so does our awareness of other broken parts of ourselves.

Truly healthy people know they have good parts, but they also know the bad parts. However, they have the acceptance and grace to deal with them in God's process of growth.

- **Accepting Acceptance.**

1. **Be aware of your need.** Take the humble step of confessing your lacks and needs to God and others.
2. **Give up trying to earn love and acceptance.** We are born legalists. In other words, we want to earn love and acceptance. It is less risky than receiving it for free; it helps us think we are in control and can keep us disconnected from relationship. Ask God to shine His light on your tendencies to work for acceptance from Him or others. **Question your motives for working hard in life:** is it because you are already accepted, or because you want acceptance?

Many of us are afraid of acceptance because we try to earn it and we can't, or because we don't want to be vulnerable or dependent on someone.

- **Use acceptance to grow.** Being received by God and others is not an end in itself. It is the beginning of the safety and grace you need to grow personally, relationally and emotionally. It gives you the courage to accept who and what you are, and to take steps to deal with who you are.

Some people, especially those who have been hurt by harsh criticism and rejection, will center their growth on acceptance alone, in a form of "let go and let God" thinking. They will evaluate their friends and spiritual growth partners by how accepting or non-accepting they are. If you ask them why they haven't addressed some particular struggle in their lives, they may say, *"It'll all work out as I receive more grace and acceptance"*. This attitude misses one of the main purposes of acceptance, which is to create an environment in which we can actively face, own, and transform realities about ourselves.

- **Request, don't Demand it.**

Sometimes people think they can require others to accept who they are, and they feel justified in resenting others for not doing so. **Never forget that acceptance is entirely a gift from God and others. We cannot demand it because we do not deserve it.** Humbly ask God and safe people for acceptance, so that you can accept yourself, confess, and grow.

Don't Confuse Honest Feedback with Criticism.

When someone in the growth process opens up and becomes vulnerable, and another person gives her honest feedback, she commonly feels persecuted and wrongfully judged. Many people will even leave relationships because they feel unaccepted. They will say, *"that church / group / counselor is so unacceptable of people. I need to find a place where there is grace."*

While some criticism can be judgmental, **direct loving criticism is a necessary part of spiritual growth**. In fact, where there is no confrontation, growth is seriously hampered. Agreement and acceptance are not equal. You can and should be in an environment in which both total acceptance and clear honesty are operating. The Bible teaches that any relationship that avoids necessary truth telling must take on some responsibility for the results (**Ezek. 3 : 18 – 21**). Do not be afraid of truth; it hurts but heals.

- **Deal with Acceptance Problems.**

If you find someone has a hard time accepting weaknesses in others and **constantly criticizes or judges**, this person may have a judged aspect of his own soul that he can't tolerate. Therefore he externalizes it on to someone else. As Jesus said, he looks at the spec in his brother's eye and not the plank in his own (**Matt. 7 : 1 – 5**). For example, someone who gets upset by another person's neediness may actually be quite critical of his own dependency, perceiving it as being irresponsible or lazy or even weak. His inability to accept his own dependency makes him resentful of others who don't hide that trait.



CHAPTER 6 - THE SOURCE AND RESOLUTION OF GUILT

The resolution of our guilt did not come from our “being good”. It came from Jesus dying and paying the death penalty. As a result, we are reconnected to God. We now have an unbroken and alive relationship with Him. There is no longer any separation and death.

Rom 8 : 33 – 39 “**33 Who shall bring any charge against God’s elect [when it is] God Who justifies [that is, Who puts us in right relation to Himself? Who shall come forward and accuse or impeach those whom God has chosen? Will God, Who acquits us?]**
34 Who is there to condemn [us]? Will Christ Jesus (the Messiah), Who died, or rather Who was raised from the dead, Who is at the right hand of God actually pleading as He intercedes for us?
35 Who shall ever separate us from Christ’s love? Shall suffering and affliction and tribulation? Or calamity and distress? Or persecution or hunger or destitution or peril or sword?
36 Even as it is written, For Thy sake we are put to death all the day long; we are regarded and counted as sheep for the slaughter.
37 Yet amid all these things we are more than conquerors and gain a surpassing victory through Him Who loved us.
38 For I am persuaded beyond doubt (am sure) that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities, nor things impending and threatening nor things to come, nor powers,
39 Nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Notice the key points here: **no charges can be brought against those who are justified by believing in Jesus, and nothing can separate them from His love.**

No condemnation. The verdict is “not guilty”. No separation. No anger or wrath. In other words, those who have a relationship with Jesus have no reason to fear condemnation or guilt. The guilt came from being separated from God and guilt can be resolved by being reconnected to God through Jesus. **The guilt was total and legal, and the resolution is the same.** We go from guilty to not guilty by **believing**. Separation=guilty, and reconciled=not guilty.

How we feel in response to how God sees us is the other side of the coin.

Have you ever been in a relationship when someone needed constant reassurance of your love? Your loved one asked you over and over again if you cared, and no matter what you did to show your love, it did not get through. After awhile you realized that your reassurances were not all that was needed to help the other person. She had a problem in her heart. She had a block to feeling love. To tell her a thousand more times would not solve the problem.

If she were ever going to feel your love, she was going to have to find out what inside of her was keeping her from feeling it.

It is the same in our relationship with God. Our hearts can condemn us even when God does not. We have to ask ourselves the question: **“What are the conditions inside of us that prevent us from feeling forgiveness even when we are surely forgiven?”**

Answers:

1. **Wrong teaching** can keep us from feeling forgiven.
What do you believe when the bible says: “You are forgiven?”
2. **Disconnection from grace.** God has mysteriously wired us so that what was once outside of us comes inside. Based on our past relationships, we learn how to accept or reject ourselves. Our relationships and their messages are internalized in our brains. If people reject themselves or some part of themselves, part of the onset is encouraging them to join a supportive and accepting group so that they can internalize new ways of feeling towards themselves. We need to exchange our critical voices inside for accepting ones. As we do that, **we internalize from each other the grace we need.** When people are in grace settings and truly confessing to each other, their bad parts get totally known, accepted, and integrated. When all of our bad news is known – and loved by grace – it loses its power. **The goal is for grace to know all of our bad parts, and confession to God and others achieves that.** The result is that guilt is dissolved.



3. **False standards.**

It is easy to criticize yourself when you compare yourself with an unreal standard inside your own head. People grow up with unrealistic standards from their parents, the media, or the culture often have an “ideal” person in their head to which they compare themselves, and the result is relentless guilt or shame. Their perfectionistic standard beats them up daily.

Ps. 103 : 13 – 14 *“13 As a father loves and pities his children, so **the Lord loves and pities those who fear Him** [with reverence, worship, and awe].
14 For **He knows our frame**, He [earnestly] remembers and imprints [on His heart] that we are dust.”*

God remembers the standard He measures us by; He knows we are a bunch of **broken strugglers**. Often we forget that. Statements like: “*I shouldn’t feel depressed*” or “*I should be making more progress*”; shows that people are listening to the accusing voice of a false standard.

People, who struggle with making a career or other life endeavour work, often operate under false standards. They expect to be able to do things on the first try, when the reality is that gaining skills and success takes time and effort.

When they hear stories from others about how hard it was to succeed and how many failures and false starts were endured, they can give themselves more grace. Small groups are a great source of encouragement for people. They find that others did not just “arrive” at success but had to work very hard and fail many times to get there. In short, **community helps us see failure as normal.**

Resolving guilt and shame always involves getting people to see themselves as fellow strugglers instead of super humans. The problem is that in our isolation, we rarely find out that what we experience is common.

When people confess to one another, they find that out. They find out that they are not weird and different, but are of just like everyone else: fellow sojourners, fellow strugglers. This cuts down tremendously on guilt.

Weak conscience

A weak conscience can keep us from feeling forgiven. We probably think that that it is a conscience that does not work well or it is too weak to stand up to our impulses. The Bible says **a weak conscience is one that is too strict and is confused on the issues of right and wrong.** Sometimes a weak conscience can convict people of things that are not even real issues (**1 Cor. 8: 7 – 12**)

Usually the weak conscience comes from too strict a background, wrong teaching, a feeling of losing control, or not enough safety for someone to find out what is helpful and real. If people feel guilty for things that are not even issues, they need the safety and grace of an accepting environment:

1. To find out what the Bible really teaches.
2. To face their own appetites and impulses.

As they gain strength that comes from maturity and community, they will not need rigid rules to hold them in check. Self-control takes the place of guilt as the keeper of impulses.

Godly Sorrow versus Worldly Sorrow.

Worldly sorrow can keep us from feeling forgiven. Guilt is not the proper response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. The proper response is Godly sorrow because it is based in love.



2 Cor. 7 : 10 “*10 For **godly grief and the pain God is permitted to direct**, produce a **repentance** that leads and contributes to salvation and deliverance from evil, and **it never brings regret**; but **worldly grief** (the hopeless sorrow that is characteristic of the pagan world) **is deadly** [breeding and ending in death].”*

The angry, condemning conscience is worldly sorrow at work. It is not based in love and does not bring about lasting change and repentance. Worldly sorrow is not based in love, but on oneself and one's own badness. Godly sorrow is the kind Peter expressed after he denied Jesus. Heartbroken for the hurt he caused someone he loved, he moved toward the relationship and reconciled.

The Bible teaches us that when we have sinned, we should not feel guilty, but we should feel sorry. There is a big difference!

Guilt focuses on me. It focuses on how bad I am, not on what I have done to hurt you. If I'm feeling guilty, I am concerned about feeling good again, not about the destructiveness of the problem or the way I may have hurt someone. Guilt is self-directed.

On the other hand, **Godly sorrow focuses on the offending party.** Those who express Godly sorrow empathize with how their behavior has affected someone else. This is why the Bible talks about the wrath of God for the nonbeliever who is still truly guilty, contrasted with His being "grieved" when believers sin. There is no mention or room for guilt, wrath, or condemnation for the believer. Instead of our feeling guilty, **He wants us to be concerned with how we have hurt Him with our sin.**

The difference is amazing! Paul teaches that **Godly sorrow ends up in repentance. When we realize we are hurting someone we love, we change.** Love and empathy change us. We treat others as we would want to be treated. Love constrains us. But guilt actually causes sin to increase. It does not keep anyone in check. It only makes people rebel more (**Rom. 5: 20; 7: 5**)

The Holy Spirit is always about love – how God loves us and how He wants us to love others. **When He convicts us, He is not trying to make us feel "bad and condemned" or, in short, "guilty".** He is trying to get us to see how we are hurting God, others, or ourselves by our behaviors or attitudes. And if we can see that, love will cause repentance.

God is not interested in our seeing how bad we are (He has already done that), but instead in our seeing how we have betrayed and hurt Him.

As Paul says, *"Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God."* (**Eph. 4 : 30**)

Guilt as an Old Voice

External relationships are internalized as part of our conscience (the "voices in our heads") that can accuse and condemn. What was once outside is now inside.

We need to see the reality of our past relationships and work through them. We need to gain insight into them, work through some feelings about them, blame them appropriately for the sin, forgive them, grieve them, and let them go. Then we have to internalize the new "voices" of our support group and others who love and value us.

This is one of the most important dynamics about guilt. **Internal ties and old relationships are replayed inside the soul, and people feel the same feelings they felt with those people until they work through those feelings.** And usually the guilt has to do with the expression of some aspect of one's personhood.

Here are some examples of aspects of personhood around which people have internalized guilt messages:

- Needs
- Weaknesses
- Failures
- Anger
- Sadness
- Sexuality
- Talents
- Strength
- Honesty
- Success
- Independence
- Pain

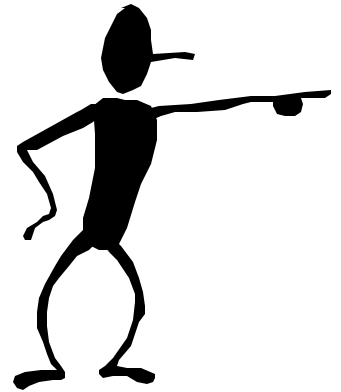
Any aspect of ourselves that is disapproved of or attacked in a significant relationship can come under "judgment", and then guilt attacks that part of the soul from the inside. If a parent, for example, belittles a child's **need for affection**, a punitive voice against that part of the child gets internalized in the child. This is partly how our conscience is formed. Then, until the conscience gets modified, this person will feel guilt whenever he expresses that aspect of himself, even if it is a good part. So many times people have to express themselves in new, safe relational settings to get the healing and encouragement God provides to restore the soul. **A new conscience has to be internalized and developed in new relationships.** Again the Body of Christ does its work.

Anger

Anger is a state of protest and fight. God wired this emotion into us to be "against" something. We use anger to fight injustice, unrighteousness, evil, and other bad things. As the Bible says, love what is good and hate what is evil. It is a good thing to hate bad things (**Rom. 12 : 9**).

Anger is a problem-solving emotion designed to protect what is good and what is valuable. But sometimes people have not expressed anger toward bad things that have happened to them because they have happened in a context in which expressing anger would have been dangerous. So these people deny their anger.

The problem is that is **directional**. It has to be aimed at something. It is supposed to be aimed at injustice or the person who is being unfair. But if this is not possible – for example, in cases of **child abuse** – people will aim that anger at themselves instead. Abused children feel, “*I am bad if this is happening to me.*” They turn the anger that should be aimed at the abuser toward themselves. Other instances of oppressive relationships, like hurtful parenting, cause the same dynamic. “*Do not provoke your children to anger*”, (**Eph 6 : 4**).



So sometimes the cure for guilt has nothing to do with helping people feel “forgiven”. It has to do with helping them **resolve their anger**, to feel it toward whomever or whatever deserves it. When they do that, the **guilt is resolved** because **the guilt was only anger turned toward themselves**, making them seem “bad” when they are not.

The child position

Sometimes guilt is not a problem to be solved; instead, it is a symptom of the position one lives in. If adults have not emotionally grown up to be equal – siblings with other adults, as the Bible teaches (**Matt. 23:8 – 9**), they will experience **peers as parental figures**. They will feel “one-down” to others and therefore **subject to people’s approval or judgment**. It is a perpetual guilty state, as they are always under the judge.

People stuck in this position must see guilt as a sign that they have given other people the position of God-the-parent in their lives. They must move out of the position of being a child under parental approval and be adopted by a God and be answerable to Him (**Gal. 4:1 – 5**). The small group can be the bridge to adulthood for people who are stuck here.

Skills like being assertive, being honest, embracing sexuality, taking risks with talents, thinking for oneself, separating from one’s parents are essential to coming out from under the child position. **Guilt is just a symptom of a person who has never grown up, and the task is to grow up.**



Isolation

1 John 4 : 18 “*18 There is **no fear in love** [dread does not exist], but **full-grown** (complete, perfect) love turns fear out of doors and expels every trace of terror! For **fear** brings with it the **thought of punishment**, and [so] he who is afraid has not reached the **full maturity of love** [is not yet grown into love’s complete perfection].”*

Guilt and the resulting fear are not about feeling “bad about oneself”. They are basically about being separated from love. If people know they are loved, they are not afraid of their “badness”.

They feel accepted and safe, and they do not have to feel “good” about themselves to be safe. Love does that. Love is everything. In the Bible, the opposite of “bad” is not “good” – it is love.

So if people are feeling bad about themselves, the answer is never to get them to feel better about themselves. The self-esteem trip is a dead end. The answer is to have them **feel connected to love**. If they feel connected and accepted, they do not have to feel good about themselves. In fact, they stop being so concerned about themselves all together and get into love instead.

One of the most destructive causes of “guilt” is emotional and spiritual isolation. Always remember this: **An alone self is a bad self.** If someone feels alone, he or she is going to feel “bad”. The answer is not goodness, or more self-esteem. The answer is love.

That is the reason we have the gospel of reconciliation of relationship with God and others instead of a gospel of being “better” people”. If we get reconciled, we will be better, but we won’t be obsessed with it. The “knowledge of good and evil” will not be the big issue; love will be.

In helping people grow in the area of resolving guilt, make sure that you are on a mission to **end internal isolation**. If you find people who feel “bad” about themselves, find the **isolated part of their heart** and give them grace, love, and connection. If you do that, you will cure a lot of the guilt.



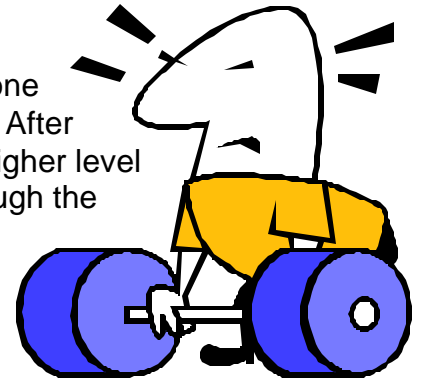
This is one reason why abuse victims feel so bad about themselves. The abuse has made getting close to others and trusting very difficult, and isolation takes over their soul. As a result, they feel like a “bad” person, even when that is the furthest thing from the truth. Love will do away with that state, where as positive affirmations, although important, will fall short. **Reconciliation to love is the answer for guilt of any kind.**

So when you work on your guilt or the guilt of others, remember that it is not a problem, but a **symptom**. It is a symptom of being separated from love. And the solution to this problem is always reconciliation to love. It is simple, yet sometimes very difficult – but as the apostle Paul tells us, **“it never fails” (1 Cor. 13:8).**



CHAPTER 7 – THE ROLE OF SUFFERING AND GRIEF

Physical exercise and suffering is analogous to personal growth and suffering. Pain can bring health. During exercise, one works your muscles past their ability. You stretch their capacity. After your workout, they recreate and rejuvenate and grow back to a higher level of development than before. You tear down to rebuild. And through the process of pain, growth happens.



NO PAIN – NO GAIN!!!

The same God who designed and created our muscles, designed and created our souls. He also created the process of growing them and rebuilding them from the fallen, crippled state. Just as we stretch our muscles to make them stronger, God stretches our souls to grow them into something stronger and better.

Certain suffering tears down aspects of our character that need to be torn down and builds up new aspects that we need in order to live as we were designed to live. So suffering can be good. It can take us to places where one more season of “comfort” cannot.

Prov. 20 : 30 *“30 Blows that wound cleanse away evil, and strokes [for correction] reach to the innermost parts.”*

Bad Suffering:

But suffering can also be terrible. Some suffering is not a “wound..... to heal” Such suffering inflicts evil on a person’s heart and soul and is totally outside God’s desire. Although God can bring good out of the experience, the experience itself is no good at all.

There is **therapeutic suffering**, which is like an operation, the end result being healing. Then there is **destructive suffering** at the hands of evil people. The key is to be able to tell the difference between the two and to apply the right kind of experience to each. Too often in the church those who have been suffering at the hands of evil people have been told that God is trying to teach them a lesson or that what they are going through is a result of their own sin or that it is a part of the growth process.

When a person has suffered at the hands of evil people we need to give them healing, support, love, and comfort. We need to give strength and life support to those who are weak from things that have happened to them. **(1 Thess. 5 : 14).**

We are to bear one another’s burdens and help each other through tough times. Make sure you are not **getting the wrong advice – advice that does not in any way fit the pain. As counselor and friend, make sure you are not ascribing** fault where there is none.

Job 6:14 *“14 To him who is about to faint and despair, **kindness is due from his friend**, lest he forsake the fear of the Almighty.”*

EXAMPLE: DAN

Dan was a successful business man. He built a big business, made many “friends”, was a respected leader and family man. He was a leader in his church.

1. He started developing problems with his business – he was on the brink insolvency. This results in Dan having temper outbursts and bad behaviour. His anger spilled over into his home, and as a result of this, his wife left him.

2. He goes over the edge and the work board tells him to go until he has worked with his anger.

His **anger** leads to **despair** because he could not **control** or **perform** himself out of this situation. He pleaded and begged – no one listened and he became more depressed.

What was his history?

His father had died when he was very young and his mother was a very angry woman. He would nurture himself by using his **talents, brains and charm** to make it through life. He became a star athlete and had a valued status. His entire **life, identity and security base** was built on sand – **performance, admiration and status**. When the wind blew and the storms came, it could not stand.

His marriage was bad and they carried a lot of pain and suffering between them. **It produced no change**. Now he was reduced to where **old coping mechanisms** no longer worked.

GOOD SUFFERING:

The old Dan was dying and facing the pain of isolation. He faced the anxiety of giving up all controlling behaviour. He faced the pain of his losses and hurts – his inferiority and trying to cover it with performance.

He learned to connect with his wife on a deeper level. He retained the talents, but lost his former driven style.

He learned to treat people better. The ways he dealt with stress changed completely.

James 1:2-5 *“2 Consider it wholly joyful, my brethren, whenever you are enveloped in or **encounter trials** of any sort or fall into various temptations.
3 Be assured and understand that the trial and proving of your faith bring out endurance and steadfastness and patience.*

*4 But let **endurance** and **steadfastness** and **patience** have full play and do a thorough work, so that you may be [people] perfectly and fully developed [with no defects], lacking in nothing.*

5 If any of you is deficient in wisdom, let him ask of the giving God [Who gives] to everyone liberally and ungrudgingly, without reproaching or faultfinding, and it will be given him.”

By facing his past, Dan could work through the issues of his old ways of coping. He now had love within his soul and the ability to connect with others, to be real, and to find healing.

Stretching the soul and pushing through.

We all have **cop**ing mechanisms that **cover up pain**, help us deal with **fear**, cope with **relational inabilities**, and help us hold it all together. **Trials** and **suffering** push those mechanisms past the breaking point so we find out where we need to grow. Then true spiritual growth begins at deeper levels, and we are healed. **Righteousness and character take the place of coping.**

This kind of suffering is good. It breaks down and stretches the “weak muscle” of the soul and replaces it with stronger muscle.



Rom. 5:3 – 5 *“3 Moreover [let us also be **full of joy now!**] let us exult and triumph in our **troubles and rejoice in our sufferings**, knowing that **pressure and affliction and hardship produce patient and unswerving endurance.***

*4 And **endurance** (fortitude) **develops maturity of character** (approved faith and tried integrity). And **character** [of this sort] produces [the habit of] **joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation.***

*5 **Such hope never disappoints or deludes or shames us**, for God’s love has been poured out in our hearts through the Holy Spirit Who has been given to us.”*

In this suffering, the **prize we win is character** – a very valuable prize indeed.

When we **exercise, we have to push through**. We keep on pressing to get to a new level. The same thing is true in character growth: we stretch to grow. We **embrace suffering** to reach a higher level. We have to ask others and ourselves to push through some very painful and scary things:

- **Reaching** out from a vulnerable heart
- Making a vulnerable heart **available** to be known
- **Facing hurt and pain** and allowing others to see it and be there in it
- **Taking risks** in new areas of performance
- Taking risks to be more **honest**
- Taking risks in relational **confrontation**



- Dealing with former pain from the past
- Becoming **assertive**
- Becoming **active** in life to get one's needs met
- Taking **responsibility** for our weaknesses and growing beyond them
- Learning to **grieve**
- Learning to **forgive**
- Learning to ask for forgiveness and to make amends
- Learning to **reconcile** difficult relationships

The list goes on and on Maturity and completion are our goals.

The Bible says that we will not get there completely, but at the same time God tells us to press on toward those goals at all times. **(Phil. 3: 12; Eph. 5: 13 – 16).**

This is a good pain – pain that leads somewhere.

Hebrews 5 : 7 – 9 *“7 In the days of His flesh [Jesus] offered up definite, special **petitions** [for that which He not only wanted but needed] and **supplications** with strong crying and tears to Him Who was [always] able to save Him [out] from death, and He was heard because of His reverence toward God [His godly fear, His piety, in that He shrank from the horrors of separation from the bright presence of the Father].
8 Although He was a Son, **He learned [active, special] obedience through what He suffered**
9 And, [His completed experience] making Him perfectly [equipped], He became the Author and Source of eternal salvation to all those who give heed and obey Him,”*

Suffering is the path Jesus modeled for us, and He modeled how to do it right. He went through it all **without sin** and **with obedience**. This is the difference between those who suffer to a good end and those who suffer to no good end at all.

BAD PAIN – PAIN THAT PRODUCES NO CHANGE

Bad pain comes from repeating old patterns and avoiding the suffering it would take to change them, because many times people suffer because of their own character faults. Then other people come along side them and give them comfort or a spiritual pep talk about how God is with them in this testing. They usually frame the experience as the testing of an innocent person. *“Keep the faith”, these people say, “and God will reward you for persevering.”*

The problem is that these people don't tell the sufferers that the **suffering is the fruit of their own character** and is of **no value** unless they see it as a wake-up call.

This is **false martyrdom**. Example: in a divorce recovery group one comes to the aid of the “victim” by saying “that bad ex” instead of making the person see the patterns he or she needs to face to keep from repeating them in a new marriage.

It happens with the false support that people get **when they lose a job because of performance issues** and the friends and family see them as the “**victim**” of a **bad boss or company**.

Rather say: *“Have you thought about what is true about what they said? Have you thought about the pattern in your life of work and jobs that are not going well?”*

That pain is basically **wasted pain**. It is the pain we go through to avoid the good pain of growth that comes from pushing through. **It is the wasted pain we encounter as we try to avoid grief** and true hurt that needs to be worked through. It is the wasted pain of trying to get a person to love us or approve of us instead of facing the loss of this love and moving on.

But in many small groups, people are supported in ways that do not make them face the growth steps they need to take to keep from repeating the mistakes. They are seen as victims and are then set up for failure all over again. Here are some **examples of “bad pain”**:

- **Pain that comes from avoiding pain**, such as psychological depression that comes from avoiding grief, and anxiety that comes from not facing troublesome things inside one soul.
- **Pain that comes from not facing a character pattern** that needs to be changed. Codependent people, for example, **who lack boundaries** and allow themselves to **be used**, suffer wasted and needless pain.
- Pain that comes from **picking the wrong kinds of people to be close to**, in friendship or romance. This pain usually comes from not facing patterns of denial in one’s own life and then having relationship blindness when looking at others.
- Pain that comes from **repeating failing patterns in work and performance**. This comes from not facing weaknesses, irresponsibility, or undeveloped skills or talents.
- Pain that comes from **addictions** and other clinical syndromes.
- Pain that comes from **avoiding growth in general**. Life makes demands, and if we stay immature, we can’t make life work.
- Pain that comes from **not separating from destructive family of origin patterns**, the “sins of the fathers”. Thus, patterns are repeated for another generation.
- Pain that comes from **lack of forgiveness** and not letting go of bad relationships and injuries.
- Pain that comes from **desiring things from the past** that will never come true.
- Pain that comes from **isolation** and not learning how to become interdependent.

The list goes on. The point here is that a lot of pain comes from not facing our own issues that repetitively cause pain. The Bible says: “As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly.”(Prov. 26 : 11).

Luke 11 : 24 – 26 “24 When the unclean spirit has gone out of a person, it roams through waterless places in search [of a place] of rest (release, refreshment, ease); and finding none it says, I will go back to my house from which I came.
25 And when it arrives, it finds [the place] swept and put in order and furnished and decorated.
26 And it goes and brings other spirits, **seven [of them], more evil than itself**, and they enter in, settle down, and dwell there; and the last state of that person is worse than the first.”

As Jesus implies, something needs to happen inside this man’s house. He needs to **fill his house with spiritual growth**, and then there will be no room for darkness to come back in. Not facing the growth that we have to face always leads to further suffering – and the further suffering is usually progressively for the worse. If a person is not facing things, the dynamics and symptoms and relationships get worse as time goes on.

How to avoid Bad Pain and embraced Good Pain.

1. **Do not refer to pain and suffering caused by character patterns as “growth pains”**. Unless you can use this pain as a wake-up call, it is worthless. If you see it as a valid suffering God is putting someone through, or as God’s testing someone’s faith, or as someone being the “victim” of someone else’s mistakes, the pain will be wasted, and it will continue or return. It is not legitimate suffering. It is the fruit of a lack of growth.

Example of bad pain: A person blaming everybody else for whatever was going on in his life. It was never him. None of his problems had to do with his performance, his lack of initiative, lack of action and his keep putting things off. He is still stuck 10 years later. None of the pain and loss for 10 years was redemptive. None taught him anything!

2. **Help people own worthless pain so that it can be redeemed and turned into “good pain”**. If people can see the character patterns causing their pain, they can redeem and change them. If a pattern can be owned, a pattern can be changed. But as long as we mistakenly see it as “legitimate suffering by a victim” nothing good can happen.

3. **Help convert worthless suffering into redemptive suffering**. In other words, help them resolve the issues. Help others see that they are not just victims like the man in the story of the good Samaritan. It is a very human trait to try to avoid the suffering of discipline and growth. We all do it. But the wiser we become, the more we value the pain of growth and despise the avoidance patterns in our lives. Help them face what must be faced and deal with that.

1 Peter 4 : 1 – 2 *“1 SO, SINCE Christ suffered in the flesh for us, for you, **arm yourselves with the same thought and purpose** [patiently to suffer rather than fail to please God]. For whoever has **suffered** in the flesh [having the mind of Christ] is done with [intentional] sin [has stopped pleasing himself and the world, and pleases God],
2 So that he can no longer spend the rest of his natural life living by [his] human appetites and desires, but [he lives] for what God wills.”*

Peter came to see suffering as **armor**. He came to see suffering as **protection** against sin. He came to see that if we go through the suffering we need to go through, then we are done with sin (or at least the sin that had to do with that particular growth step.)

Matt 16:21-22 *“21 From that time forth Jesus began [clearly] to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders and the high priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised from death.
22 Then Peter took Him aside to speak to Him privately and began to reprove and charge Him sharply, saying, God forbid, Lord! This must never happen to You
23 But Jesus turned away from Peter and said to him, Get behind Me, Satan! You are in My way [an offense and a hindrance and a snare to Me]; for you are minding what partakes not of the nature and quality of God, but of men!”*

Peter was not into suffering – Jesus said He was going to die – Peter said it’s not necessary! Jesus said: *“Get behind me satan! You are a stumbling block to Me, you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men.”* *“If anyone would come after Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow Me. Whoever wants to save his life, must lose it, but who loses his life for me will find it.”*

Jesus calls us to **embrace suffering**.

Example continued from page 46:

Back to Dan:

Dan had tried for years to “save himself”. He thought he could **perform** his way around the growth needed, **avoid the pain** of facing his hurts, losses and **character patterns**. Depending on his brain, abilities, etc.

1. His attempts to avoid his pain and save himself by **performing**, promoted the growth of **cancers eating** away at his **soul, his career and marriage**.

2. He had to face his cross, went through the death experience of things he had **lost and character patterns** had to **die**. He found life – being **obedient** to the suffering of growth and **character change**. Dan had no armour against the pressures of marriage and stress.

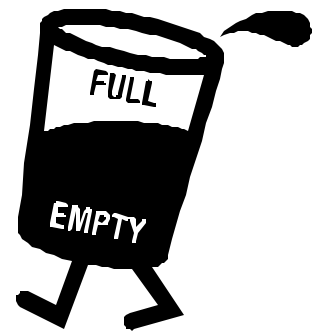
1 Pet. 4:1 *“Arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin”*

How are we to **identify with the sufferings of Christ**?
How are we to **arm ourselves** with this attitude and purpose?

1. We need to “empty” ourselves.

Phil. 2 : 5 – 8 “5 Let this **same attitude and purpose** and [humble] mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: [Let Him be your example in humility:]
6 Who, although being essentially one with God and in the form of God [possessing the fullness of the attributes which make God God], did not think this equality with God was a thing to be eagerly grasped or retained,
7 But **stripped Himself** [of all privileges and rightful dignity], so as to assume the guise of a **servant (slave)**, in that He became like men and was born a human being.
8 And after He had appeared in human form, He abased and **humbled Himself** [still further] and carried His obedience to the extreme of death, even the death of the cross!”

It is a humbling, suffering, life long experience to empty ourselves of the wish to be Godlike. **It is impossible for us to play God, yet we try.** To humble ourselves constantly and to take the role of God’s bond-servant is the path of all growth. Life only works when we are being human. It does not work when we are playing God.



2. We must arm ourselves with the attitude of Christ to submit to God’s will.

“Not my will, but yours be done.”(Luke 22 : 42)

In all growth we have to bend the knee to God’s path for us rather than going our own way. Just as Jesus could have bailed out on going through what He had to do, so can we. And we often do. But if we don’t and instead we submit to God’s will, then we will grow.

The most basic means of choosing our own way and not God’s, is to **decide not to suffer**. Instead, **we choose our own way** by taking Satan’s solution and giving in to the temptation to medicate the pain instead of dealing with it.



Sex, substances (the lust of the flesh), performance (the pride of life, and materialism (the lust of the eyes) help us avoid suffering. But none of these serves as the armor we need.

They lead to suffering that is not redemptive, and eventually they cannot carry the weight of the problems they tried to mask. To choose God’s will, not our own, is to turn from those options directly to the problems themselves.



A more subtle way we choose our own way and not God's is to rely on our old defensive maneuvers. Adam and Eve used a **fig leaf** to hide from what was inside as well as outside, and we continue to do that. To choose God's will and not our own is to **face our defense mechanisms** and give them up. When we do so, we find that we have to deal with our problems. Then some of the deepest character growth happens.

3. Not Returning Evil for Evil.

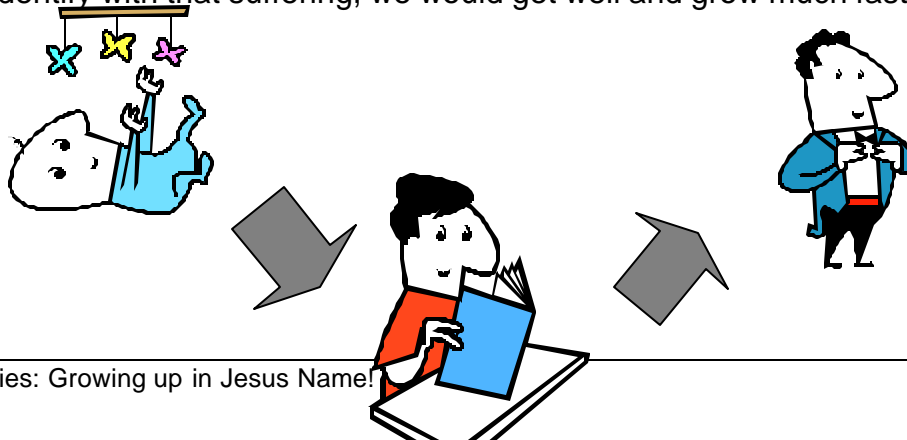
To arm ourselves with the attitude of Christ is **not to retaliate**. We are only as healthy as our ability to relate as God relates. He is **honest, loving, and forgiving, communicates well, is able to be vulnerable**, and so on. This is health. This is righteousness. Good relating=good health.

One of the main problems with people leaving marriages is because they do not work on the issues from their own side of the marriage. Many **marriages** break up because one spouse determines that the "other" is making her miserable, or is too difficult, and leaves. **Two things happen:**

1. The person never grows past her need to have another person be healthy for her to be okay and to relate well.
2. The marriage does not have a chance to work because she did not work on her patterns that could have changed the entire relationship and brought the other person around.

1 Peter 2 : 19 – 23 "19 For one is regarded favorably (is approved, acceptable, and thankworthy) if, as in the sight of God, **he endures the pain of unjust suffering.** 20 [After all] what kind of glory [is there in it] if, when you do wrong and are punished for it, you take it patiently? **But if you bear patiently with suffering [which results] when you do right and that is undeserved, it is acceptable and pleasing to God.** 21 For even to this were you called [it is inseparable from your vocation]. **For Christ also suffered for you, leaving you [His personal] example, so that you should follow in His footsteps.** 22 He was guilty of no sin, neither was deceit (guile) ever found on His lips. 23 When He was reviled and insulted, **He did not revile or offer insult in return;** [when] He was abused and suffered, **He made no threats [of vengeance];** but he trusted [Himself and everything] to Him Who judges fairly."

Jesus suffered through the dysfunction of others and did not allow it to turn Him into one of them. He was concerned with doing the right thing, no matter what was done to Him. If we would identify with that suffering, we would get well and grow much faster.



CHAPTER 8 – GRIEF: GOD’S CURE FOR WHAT ISN’T RIGHT.

Grief is the **toughest pain** we have to deal with. It is the most difficult for us to enter into voluntarily, which is the only way to get into it. The rest of our human experience just happens to us. Hate, injury, anxiety, alienation, and failure all break through, and we suffer. **Grief does not “break through”. It is something we enter into.**

Because of its **voluntary nature**, grief is set apart from other kinds of suffering. The other difference is that grief is the one that **heals all the others**. It is the most important pain there is. This is why **God calls us to enter into it voluntarily**. It heals. It restores. It changes things that have gone bad. Moreover, it is the only place where we can get comforted when things have gone wrong.

Eccl. 7 : 3 – 4 *“3 Sorrow is better than laughter, for by the sadness of the countenance the heart is made better and gains gladness.
4 The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of mirth and sensual joy.”*

Grief is God’s way of our getting finished with the bad stuff of life. It is the process by which “we get over it”, by which “we let it go”. And because of that, it becomes the process by which we can be available for new and good things. The soul is freed from painful experience and released for new, good things.

The soul is designed to finish things. It is designed **to grieve**. Just as a computer is programmed to run a particular path, so our soul is designed to go down the path of grief. Therefore, since it is the way we are made, Solomon tells us, basically, “to get on with the program”. Be sad, and your heart can be made happy. Cry it out, and it will get out. It will be over.

Steps of Grief:

1. The loss itself – Reality

For grief to occur, something has to happen. Everyone is wired for grief and is a candidate for healing, because bad things happen in life. As Jesus said, *“In this world you will have tribulation”*, (**John 16 : 33**). It is a reality in everyone’s life.

- Death of a loved one
- Death of a dream
- Death of the season of life (eg. Children leave home)
- Death of the relationship
- Death of a plan
- Failure
- Not attaining the love or approval of the significant person
- Not being the person one wishes he or she were
- Not getting what we want
- Lost of health due to illness

- Financial reversals
- Death of anything we need, want, or desire, good or bad

2. Protest – I don't want this to be true.

The second thing that happens is the protest of the reality. One way we protest is by becoming numb or denying what is happening. Often when people lose a loved one, they initially feel “unreal”. They feel that “this isn't really happening.” Their emotions have not caught up with the reality. These feelings are a form of protest.

Another way we protest is by screaming, “*No! This cannot be happening!*” It is the “anger phrase” of the grief process.

Then we usually try to change reality. We try to make it not so. The protest turns into **bargaining**. We try to bargain our way out of the reality. We do everything we can to make it not true.

We all recognize this normal, common protest. Less recognizable is the protest and bargaining of less tangible losses. For example, if someone does not feel loved by a parent early in life, he or she might live many years “bargaining” to make that reality not true. *“If I were to perform more, the love will be there. If I were prettier or thinner or smarter, the love would be there.”*

Then he or she finds other people with whom to live out that bargain, hoping to ward off the reality of what was lost a long time ago.

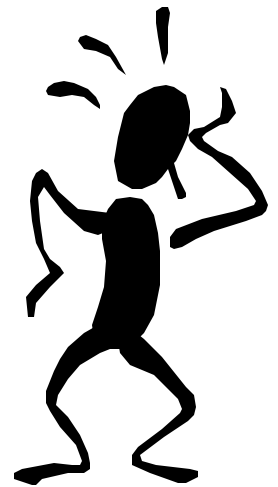


3. Despair or depression – the giving in.

When our protests and bargaining do not work, we realize that what has happened is really true. It is hopeless. It is not going to change. This is the beginning of proper grief; it is an **embracing of the loss**.

Despair in this sense does not mean a total loss of hope – a state of hopelessness – but rather a loss of hope that this is really not happening. We become aware that this reality is not going to change, no matter how much we bargain, wish, or try to make it so. It is reality. When we realize that, we hit bottom.

We have the wish and the reality at the same time. We wanted it, and it is gone. This is a death experience, a real loss. It is giving up the hope that this is not going to be true. And this is the experience no one wants. It is the truth. It is the sadness of the reality itself kicking in.



So we ward this one off, either by reverting to more bargaining or protest, or by acting out in some way. We try drugs, a new relationship, a return to an old one, more trying to perform, or what ever other mechanism is available to us to get away from the truth. The wish raises its head for one more round when it should bow its head to the reality instead. When we bow to this reality, all the air goes out of the balloon.

4. Sadness, loss, and grief proper – letting go and saying goodbye.

When we hit the bottom, when we realize that this really is true, we lose it. We break. And we cry. The sadness is the letting go of the reality. It is saying goodbye to what can never be. But this is the beginning of true healing as well. **The emotional investment in whatever was lost is being given up.** The wish and desire of being “counted as loss”. We are letting go of what cannot be. Reality and our heart, mind, and soul have all come together, and we cry. Tears are shed, and often after many, many tears, we let go. *“I will never have it, so I would let go of the wish”.* And like a leaf falling into a stream, free of the tree that lost it, it goes away.

5. Resolution and resurrection – understanding and becoming available.

The sadness does go away. And, as Solomon said, then the heart is happy. It is happy because it is now available for new things: new desires, new attachments, new hope, new energy, and everything that springtime brings. Winter has passed, and it is the time for sowing new seeds of life.

We also bring to the new year the learning and understanding and experience that we learned in the old. Whether good or bad, what was lost was an experience, and from that we take understanding and wisdom for the rest of life. The process is complete, the person has grown, and the past is now the past and is not affecting the present, except in greater wisdom or the pleasant memories of a loved one who has passed on. **The death experience has given way to the resurrection of a new life.**

IF GRIEF IS SO GOOD FOR US, WHY DON'T WE GRIEVE?

Well, we do. They are called funerals. They are gatherings where we can be sad and begin to process our grief. Funerals were a regular part of God's family practices with the children of Israel, and we have continued that practice, although we have limited funerals severely.



The phrase “time of mourning” is one that appears several times in the Bible. The Israelites saw it as the right thing to do.

Eccl. 3 : 4 *“4 A time to weep and a time to laugh, a time to mourn and a time to dance,”*

We usually hold funerals only when someone dies, but we also need to grieve other things. The problem is that we don't often see those experiences as losses. So we stay in denial or protest for a long time.

Another important reason people cannot grieve the way they need to is that they **lack resources**. In short, grief is a letting-down and a letting-go. And we cannot let-down and let-go if we are not being held up. If there is not enough love to sustain us, both inside and out, then we cannot let go of anything, even something bad.

“Why doesn’t she just let it go?” “Why doesn’t he just get over it?”

The reality is that often they can’t because they don’t have the resources, either internal or external, to do it. For example, in surgery you can only go under the knife if there is a live support keeping you alive while the surgeon does his work.

We need two things for grieving:

1. **We need love, support, and comfort.** As Paul says, *“Mourn with those who mourn.”*

Rom. 12 : 15 *“15 Rejoice with those who rejoice [sharing others’ joy], and weep with those who weep [sharing others’ grief].”*

The Bible recognizes that **grief is only done in community**. Otherwise we stay stuck in the despair or the wishing because we do not have the love to hold us up in order for us to let go of what we have lost.

2. **We need structure.** We need **time and space** for grieving. We need **structured activities**. There is a time, a place, a space, and some tasks to do that structure the experience. God put tear ducts in our eyes. **Grief is a relational experience**, and our pain has to be seen eye to eye with another person. Someone should be looking at us when we are crying, and we should be looking at him or her. Then we know that we are not alone and our tears are seen and heard.



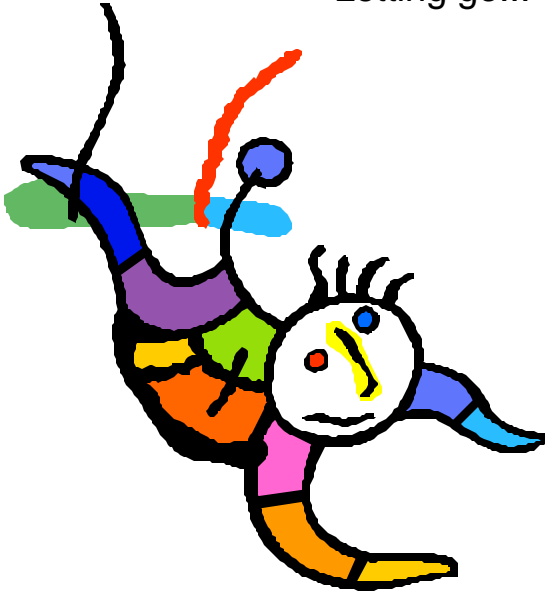
Matt 5 : 4 *“4 Blessed and enviably happy [with a happiness produced by the experience of God’s favor and especially conditioned by the revelation of His matchless grace] are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted!”*

Being heard, empathize with, understood, and supported gives the life support needed to go through the surgery of grief. To do that, however, you are going to need to get out of the vacuum. You have to have support and structure to get to a new life. If you do, the dead truly are raised. The mourners truly are comforted.

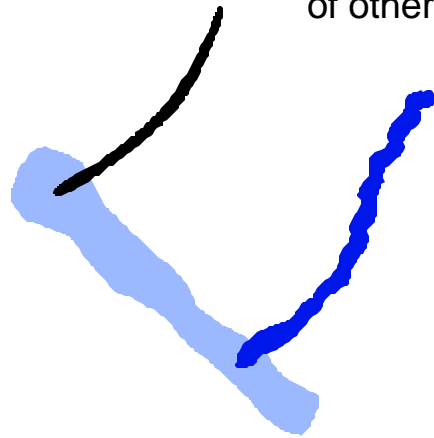
Ps. 30 : 5 *“5 For His anger is but for a moment, but His favor is for a lifetime or in His favor is life. **Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.**”*

GRIEF:

Letting go...



Being held up
by the support
of others...



... to be able to embrace
a new beginning

THE ISSUES OF FACING DEATH OR SEPARATION

There are many types of deaths to be dealt with, each having its own issues:

- Miscarriages
- Abortions
- Infant death
- Death due to tragic accidents
- Serious illness
- Death of older persons
- Divorce
- Romantic Break-up
- Close friendships

How to face death / separation:

1. Agree with God that it is all right for this person to be gone.
2. Deal with guilt over past relationships or unfinished business.
3. Release from any bonding to the person.
4. Cope with the pain of separation.
5. Allow yourself to grieve.

Steps to Healing of Grief:

- ☞ Acknowledge the truth of what happened.
- ☞ Allow yourself to feel the pain.
- ☞ Experience Jesus in the separation event.
- ☞ Give your pain and damaged emotions to Him.

DIVORCE, SUICIDE OR REBELLIOUS SEPARATION

This can wound a person even more than the normal death of a loved one since it involves the choice of a living person to abandon his or her family. There is the pain of loss as well as the pain of rejection. Added to this is usually a burden of guilt over how things might have gone differently.

With these kinds of separation there are underlying spiritual principles or laws that have been violated. The consequences of the sin of that event and those sins that led up to it must be dealt with thoroughly.

Suicide carries even more pain. It is so final. The act of suicide is inherently anti-relational and can produce gaping personal wounds. **Unanswered questions abound: “How could Daddy just leave us like that?”** This kind of pain is the most intense kind of anguish, wounding and anger.

Both grieving and forgiving often takes longer. Self-forgiveness and forgiveness of God – for allowing the events – may be especially difficult.

CHAPTER 9 – THE FRUIT OF GROWING – BECOMING A RIGHTEOUS PERSON

When most people turn to God to improve life, **they look at what He is going to do for them.** If they struggle at work, they ask God for a new job or career or account. If they struggle in relationships, they look to God to bring them a relationship to change the person they are with. If they are depressed or addicted, they look to God for healing and deliverance. We all look up to the sky and want Him to make our lives better. And He will. But the tough reality is that while He does give us jobs, relationships, and the blessings, He also wants to make us better as well.

1. Some of the things we want from God are fruits of our becoming more mature and righteous as we work with Him. If we don't process these things, the reason may be that we are not changing and growing in the needed ways. **For example, I may want a job, but if I am not becoming responsible, I won't get one.**
2. God often only gives us things we are **mature enough to use.** So until we grow, we will not have them.

Having the life and the growth we're looking for involves our **changing into people who do things God's way.** Our goal of becoming that kind of person:

Eph. 4 : 22 – 24 *"22 Strip yourselves of your former nature [put off and discard your old unrenewed self] which characterized your previous manner of life and becomes corrupt through lusts and desires that spring from delusion; 23 And be constantly renewed in the spirit of your mind [having a fresh mental and spiritual attitude], 24 And put on the new nature (the regenerate self) created in God's image, [Godlike] in true righteousness and holiness."*

Phil. 1 : 9 – 10 *"9 And this I pray: that your love may abound yet more and more and extend to its fullest development in knowledge and all keen insight [that your love may display itself in greater depth of acquaintance and more comprehensive discernment], 10 So that you may surely learn to sense what is vital, and approve and prize what is excellent and of real value [recognizing the highest and the best, and distinguishing the moral differences], and that you may be untainted and pure and unerring and blameless [so that with hearts sincere and certain and unsullied, you may approach] the day of Christ [not stumbling nor causing others to stumble]."*

Heb. 12 : 11 *"11 For the time being no discipline brings joy, but seems grievous and painful; but afterwards it yields a peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it [a harvest of fruit which consists in righteousness—in conformity to God's will in purpose, thought, and action, resulting in right living and right standing with God]."*

These are the three characteristics of people who do things God's way:

- a) They put off the old ways of doing things and turn to the ways that God does things (**repentance**).
- b) They seek more and more to understand and gain insight into what is best (**understanding and insight**).
- c) They commit to the pain of discipline in order to grow (**discipline**).

Turning from worldly ways to Kingdom ways.

a) Repentance .

When people look for the life they want, **they must understand that this life is found in doing things God's way**. But how we communicate the importance of seeking the ways of God, and how to motivate them is very important.

Two basic ways to motivate people to change are the "**religious**" way and the "**reality**" way. In the religious way we tell people they should do the right thing because it is the right thing and it is wrong not to do the right thing. But being "right" has never been a strong motivator for people to change. They have always been more interested in doing things "their" way then the "right" way.

The other problem with the religious way is the human response to "should".

When we tell people they "*should do this and that because it is right*", they naturally rebel.

Rom. 7 : 9 – 11 *"9 Once I was alive, but quite apart from and unconscious of the Law. But when the commandment came, sin lived again and I died (was sentenced by the Law to death).*

10 And the very legal ordinance which was designed and intended to bring life actually proved [to mean to me] death.

*11 For sin, seizing the opportunity and getting a hold on me [by taking its incentive] from the commandment, **beguiled and entrapped and cheated me**, and using it [as a weapon], killed me."*

Something about being under the commandments – the "shoulds" – inspires the sinful nature to rebel.

The Bible tells us to give up this approach, and it re-affirms the "reality" way. The Word does not tell people to do the right thing just to be good or because it is right. It tells them to do it **so that they will live**.

Rom 8 : 13 *"13 For if **you live** according to [the dictates of] the **flesh**, you will surely **die**. But if through the power of the [Holy] Spirit you are [habitually] putting to death (making extinct, deadening) the [evil] deeds prompted by the body, you shall [really and genuinely] live forever."*

To live – to have the life we desire – we have to live according to God's ways. It's reality.

People who see God's way as the Only Way will have life:

- They see **honesty** not just as a **virtue**, but as the only way they will ever have **intimacy**.
- They see **facing pain and suffering** not as something that the counselor wants them to endure, but as the **only way** out of a **depression** or an **addiction**.
- They see **confession and ownership** of their faults not as something humiliating and guilt inducing, but as the way to grow and reach their goals.
- They see listening to **feedback and correction**, not as someone telling them they are bad, but as receiving a gift that is going to bring them life.
- They see living a **life of sexual purity** not something they should do to avoid God's being mad at them, but as the only way to find satisfying love.
- They see **forgiveness of others** not as a Law, but as a path to freedom and reconciliation.

In other words, **these people see the right way not as some religious rule God is handing down, but as the way to life.** For example, people do not turn from drugs, alcohol abuse, and smoking because these acts are sinful, but because of the death and destruction those behaviors bring. People take a hard look at divorce because of the research concerning the long-term effects of divorce on children and because of the high divorce rate of second and third marriages.

For any of us to be motivated to grow, we must see doing things the "right" way as the **only way** life is going to work. Otherwise, doing things the right way is just too much work and, in the short term, not as gratifying – like the guy who knows for years that he should get healthy, but never does until he has a heart attack and almost dies. After that, he sees health not as a "should", but as the way to stay alive.

Thus, the lesson that we must take for ourselves is seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness, not one of having to "be a good Christian", but one of finding the true path to life.

As Jesus said, *"I came that they might have abundant life."*

Deut 6 : 20 – 25 *"20 When your son asks you in time to come, What is the meaning of the testimonies and statutes and precepts which the Lord our God has commanded you?"*

21 Then you shall say to your son, We were Pharaoh's bondmen in Egypt, and the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand.

22 And the Lord showed signs and wonders, great and evil, against Egypt, against Pharaoh, and all his household, before our eyes;

23 And He **brought us out** from there, that **He might bring us in** to give us the land which He swore to give our fathers.

24 And the **Lord commanded us to do all these statutes**, to [reverently] fear the Lord our God for our good always, that **He might preserve us alive**, as it is this day.

25 And **it will be accounted as righteousness** (conformity to God's will in word, thought, and action) **for us if we are watchful to do all this commandment before the Lord our God**, as He has commanded us."

God gave the Israelites all of these "religious laws" so that their lives will work well and they would prosper. He does the same for us. This is one of the toughest things to understand. In our own lives we need to seek God's Kingdom and His Righteousness, not to be good, but to stay alive.

For people to grow and find life worth living, they must do the **two things** to which Kingdom and Righteousness refer. They must seek the ways of God (how His Kingdom operates), and they must live and internalize those ways for themselves.

To find His ways is to find the Kingdom; to live His ways is to find righteousness.

Matt. 5 : 3 – 11 "3 Blessed (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous—with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are **the poor in spirit** (the humble, who rate themselves insignificant), **for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!**

4 Blessed and enviably happy [with a happiness produced by the experience of God's favor and especially conditioned by the revelation of His matchless grace] **are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted!**

5 Blessed (happy, blithesome, joyous, spiritually prosperous—with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) **are the meek** (the mild, patient, long-suffering), **for they shall inherit the earth!**

6 Blessed and fortunate and happy and spiritually prosperous (in that state in which the born-again child of God enjoys His favor and salvation) are those who **hunger and thirst for righteousness** (uprightness and right standing with God), **for they shall be completely satisfied!**

7 Blessed (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous—with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) **are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy!**

8 Blessed (happy, enviably fortunate, and spiritually prosperous—possessing the happiness produced by the experience of God's favor and especially conditioned by the revelation of His grace, regardless of their outward conditions) are the **pure in heart, for they shall see God!**

9 Blessed (enjoying enviable happiness, spiritually prosperous—with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of their outward conditions) are the **makers and maintainers of peace, for they shall be called the sons of God!**

*10 Blessed and happy and enviably fortunate and spiritually prosperous (in the state in which the born-again child of God enjoys and finds satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of his outward conditions) **are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake (for being and doing right), for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!***

*11 Blessed (happy, to be envied, and spiritually prosperous—with life-joy and satisfaction in God's favor and salvation, regardless of your outward conditions) are you when **people revile you and persecute you and say all kinds of evil things against you falsely on My account.***"

People who want to experience the true growth revealed in the Bible will shift 180° from the ways of the world to the ways of the Kingdom, because only the ways of the Kingdom work.

The Kingdom of God, which seeks weakness, brokenness, righteousness, and purity of heart, is altogether different from the kingdom of this world, which seeks power and victory. From a growth perspective, the only path to make it all work is the path of the Kingdom, not the path of the world.

If we could see things the way the Bible presents them, we would not be so opposed to "holy living". Let us look at the **Beatitudes** as a good blueprint for the good life:

Teachings from the Sermon on the Mount:

- Live a life of good deeds in the community, where they have an effect, and show what God is really like.
- Keep God's ways and show others how to do the same.
- Be better than the hypocrites.
- Don't just avoid killing people; avoid also the internal attitudes that kill, such as anger, hatred, and name calling.
- Make amends with those you have hurt and work out your conflicts with others.
- Don't just not cheat on your spouse, but stop cheating inside your heart with lust and pornography. Love your spouse purely.
- Run from the things that will destroy your life.
- Keep your marriage commitment, and work it out. Don't just ditch a spouse for no good reason.
- Be a person of your word, and people will trust you.

- Don't return evil for evil. If someone is bad to you, don't hurt them back. Try to give something good.
- Don't just do good to those who do good to you. Be a good person. Do good to everyone.
- Don't do good things just to get attention, but help other people.
- Don't be religious for show. Be spiritual in the privacy of your own heart.
- Pray to God with real words in a real way. Revere Him, ask for what you need, ask Him to bring good to the world and to protect you from the evil. Confess what you have done wrong, and ask for forgiveness. Then give the same forgiveness to others who have wronged you. This is only fair.
- Don't be materialistic. Invest time and money into things that would last forever, like God's ways and people.
- Get your spiritual sight examined so you see life correctly.
- Don't worry about life. Seek God, and become the best person you can be. The life that happens when you do that is the one you would want any way.
- Stop judging other people. Worry about your own behavior first.
- Guard the good things of your life and heart from those who would want to hurt you.
- Seek life and what you desire and need. Go to God, and ask Him to lead you. Then you will find it. Trust His care for you.
- Treat other people in the exact way you would want to be treated. If you do that, you won't need a lot of other rules in life.
- Remember that the path to real life is not easy and not a lot of people find it.
- Beware of false spiritual teachers. You can tell the real ones from how they live and what happens to the people who follow them.
- Be real and true about your spiritual life with God. These are the only people He will acknowledge.
- Build a life on what Jesus taught and you will have a solid life on which to stand. No matter what happens, you will always make it through.

This is not about religion, but about a healthy life: reality.

b) Understand and gain insight

People who do things God's way is seeking understanding and insight.

Phil. 1 : 9 – 10 “9 *And this I pray: that your love may abound yet more and more and extend to its **fullest development in knowledge and all keen insight** [that your love may display itself in greater depth of acquaintance and more comprehensive discernment],*
10 *So that you **may surely learn to sense what is vital**, and approve and prize what is **excellent** and of **real value** [recognizing the highest and the best, and distinguishing the moral differences], and that you may be untainted and pure and unerring and blameless [so that with hearts sincere and certain and unsullied, you may approach] the day of Christ [not stumbling nor causing others to stumble].”*

The phrase “*knowledge and depth of insight*” means at least two things:

1. People should always be learning the ways of the Kingdom and all the things God tells us to do. People need to be taught the principles of relationships, healing, and life.

But, knowledge is not enough!

2. We need to know **how to apply that knowledge** to our own lives in an in-depth way so that we can develop the purity that would lead to the fruit of righteousness. Gaining insight includes work, feedback, correction, digging inside our hearts and souls, and prayer, specifically about our own character dynamics and patterns.

Ps. 19: 12-13 “12 *Who can discern his lapses and errors? **Clear me from hidden [and unconscious] faults.***
13 ***Keep back Your servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me! Then shall I be blameless, and I shall be innocent and clear of great transgression.***”

Ps. 139: 23-24 “23 ***Search me [thoroughly], O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts!***
24 *And see if there is any wicked or hurtful way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.*”

We are not able to see and understand ourselves by ourselves. Insight comes from God and others.

Prov. 20:5 “5 *Counsel in the heart of man is like water in a deep well, but a man of understanding draws it out.*”

NB:

People are never going to grow by listening to a sermon once a week and then just go about the business. They must **gain deeper knowledge about God's ways (His Kingdom) and also find out how those ways apply to their own issues in life (His Righteousness)**. They need to discover what is true about them, and they need feedback about how their patterns work and what to do differently. Then they can grow.

c) Discipline

Many times we look for a “quick fix”. We want what we want right now. We may want our pain to end, our career to take off, or a relationship to get better. But the clear teaching of the Bible, life, and all the research is that **growth takes time**.

Heb. 12:11 *“11 For **the time being no discipline brings joy, but seems grievous and painful; but afterwards it yields a peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it [a harvest of fruit which consists in righteousness—in conformity to God's will in purpose, thought, and action, resulting in right living and right standing with God].”***

We all want the “harvest of righteousness”. We want to be well, and we want the fruit it brings to give us the good things of life, as **Matthew 6:33** says. But we must realize that to receive the fruit we want, we must commit to discipline.

We must go to a small group for many seasons. We must dig around in our souls week after week to change the dynamics that are ruining our lives.

All this takes time, and often it is not fun. What true growers learn, as we talk about suffering and discipline, is that **the pain is temporary and the fruit is long lasting**. Know that it all takes time; know that there will be pain and suffering. Pain is the path to greatness. It hurts to grow past it or out of it or to have it removed. But this kind of pain is good, and it will not return again. And the lessons we learned will last forever.

Seeking God first means that we know Him as the God of grace who is **for** us. He is the One who will provide what we need, and we must give up our own self-help programs. But we can't just have Him and have it all done. We also have to be changed into people who can produce the fruit of the life we desire, and we do that by finding His ways and learning to live in them.

God is not only a God of grace. He is also a God of truth. And getting well means that we have to discover a lot of truth and follow it. Seeking righteousness truly does bring it full circle. **Life is designed with laws that govern relationships and success**. Laws govern healing and growth. Seeking righteousness is not at all a religious trip. It is about learning and becoming life itself, and in the end the “right” way is the only way.

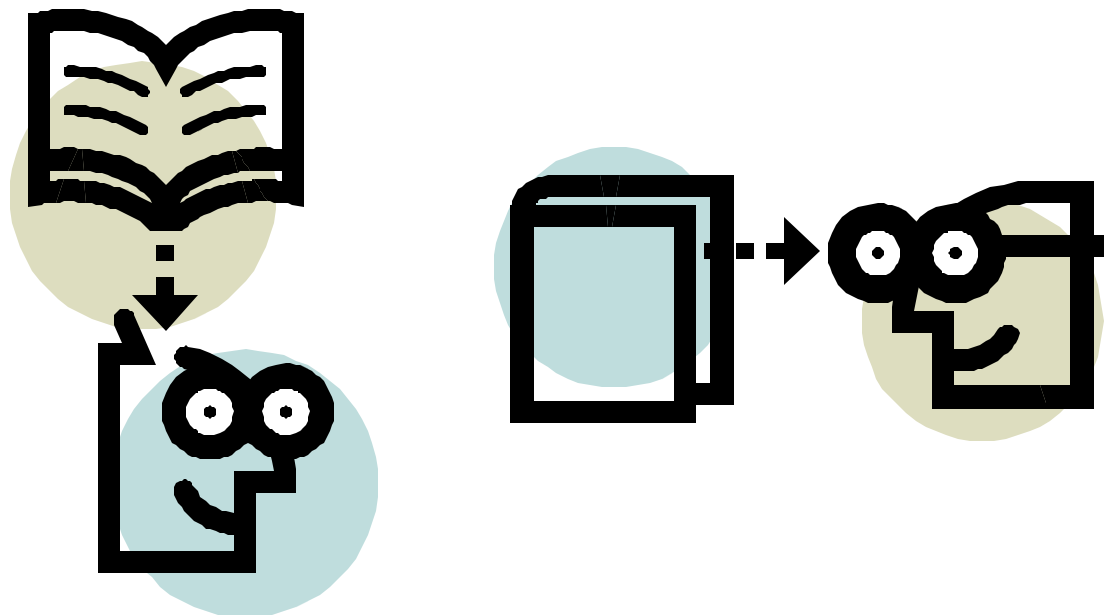
SEEKING RIGHTEOUSNESS: (applying it practically)

- Seek life and what you desire and need. Talk to God, and ask Him to lead you. Then you will find it. Trust His care for you.
- Treat other people in the exact way you would want to be treated. If you do that, you won't need a lot of other rules in life.
- Remember that the path to real life is not easy and not a lot of people find it
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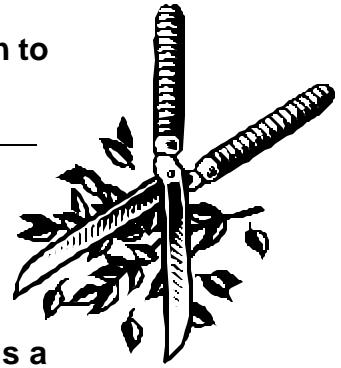
People who do things God's way is seeking understanding and insight.



CHAPTER 10 – THE VALUE OF PRUNING: DISCIPLINE

The Bible teaches that everyone needs discipline and correction to grow.

Prov. 3: 11 *“11 My son, **do not despise or shrink from the chastening of the Lord** [His correction by punishment or by subjection to suffering or trial]; neither be weary of or impatient about or loathe or abhor His reproof,”*



Along with all the other elements of growth we deal with, **discipline is a necessity**– in fact, **a principle one**.

The Bible has many meanings for the word discipline, such as chastening, correcting, instructing, reproof, and warning. The word **disciple** refers to one who is in the **learning process**. **Discipline in its broadest sense is training for a person to learn self-control in some area of life.**

The word discipline describes both the process and the result. God disciplines us so that we will be disciplined people. We go through external correction and consequences so that we will make discipline a part of our internal life and experience. We become disciplined by being disciplined by God and others. Why do we need to be disciplined to learn self-control?

Because we are not in control of ourselves. Like children, we go astray, make mistakes, and need parameters.

So discipline is one of the necessary ingredients of spiritual growth. It applies to every area of life in which we are not operating as we should, from attitudes to relationship conflicts to faith struggles. For example, a very highly organized and focused person might have a problem being emotionally available. When he is upset or stressed, he might have a pattern of withdrawing love from those who need him. Loving correction and reminders from others when he is doing this can make him more aware of it so that he can take responsibility for the issue.

Self-control provides a structure for love. People who have internal discipline have learned to run their lives in such a manner that God's love flows through them in very fruitful, fulfilling ways. They display qualities such as honesty, responsibility, faithfulness, and dependability. They are not slaves to their impulses. If love is the heart of the person, discipline is the skeleton, giving a person form and protection.

You know discipline is painful. Many people enter a small group, for example, with the idea that they will be loved, supported, and understood. Any good small group provides these things.

But if this is all the group provides, members can become **well-loved infants**, unable to solve the life problems with which they struggle. Often it is because they lack the necessary elements of discipline and correction.

Some people fear that discipline means punishment, condemnation, judgment, or even abuse because others may have hurt them in the guise of discipline. Thus they avoid discipline. But God's view of discipline differs greatly from that. One of the Greek words used in the Bible for discipline has a meaning that includes "**nurture**". **Discipline assists in loving and growing us up. It is driven not by anger or punitiveness, but by caring.**

Heb. 12 : 6 *"6 For **the Lord corrects and disciplines everyone whom He loves, and He punishes, even scourges, every son whom He accepts and welcomes to His heart and cherishes.**"*

Submitting to discipline is difficult because we must allow something to be done to us. We can't provide discipline for ourselves; it is just not inside us. We have to let it occur to us, and then we grow from it. This might mean giving someone permission to confront us when we are unloving, or agreeing to be in a group that will tell us the truth about ourselves. A certain loss of control and self protection is necessary when we want to learn discipline. God never makes growth a process we can fully control. It takes faith (**Hebrews 11**).

Although discipline is a process we receive, it does not mean we are passive in it. We also need to **take initiative** and **be active**.

1 Cor. 9 : 27 *"27 But [like a boxer] I **buffet my body** [handle it roughly, discipline it by hardships] and **subdue it**, for fear that after proclaiming to others the Gospel and things pertaining to it, I myself should become unfit [not stand the test, be unapproved and rejected as a counterfeit]."*

We are an active part in the discipline we allowed to happen to us.

God disciplines those He loves. A lack of being disciplined means a lack of being loved. However, if we stay in the correction process "correctly", we will grow in love, faith, and responsibility. **Discipline provides a structure for growth.** However there is another important element that helps us open to growth and discipline: **spiritual poverty**.

Discipline Busters:

Sadly, we tend to sabotage the growth process.

How?

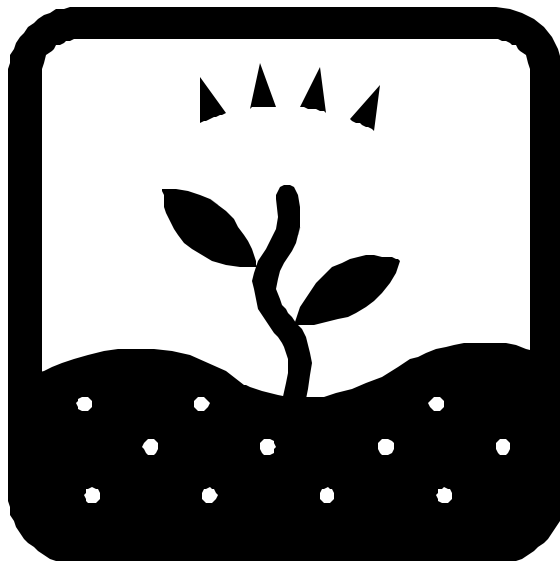
1. Denial – not admitting the truth.
2. Rationalize – make excuses.
3. Minimization / Dilute it.
4. Blame – points the finger away from self.

At the heart of all these points is our attempt to remove a bad aspect of ourselves from us. This is called PROJECTION.

Matt. 7:1-5 refers to **removing the plank from our own eye** before **focussing on the speck in our brother's eye** .

People project so that they will not have to experience the discomfort of their own weaknesses and sin. The person they project onto is seen as dangerous, stay away from them, controlling.

Projections divide people and stop growth.



CHAPTER 11 – SPIRITUAL POVERTY

Spiritual poverty is about living in reality. A good way to understand this is to think of spiritual poverty as experiencing our state of incompleteness before God.

This can be due to weaknesses, unfulfilled needs, emotional injuries and hurts at the hands of others, and our own immaturities and sins. It has to do with those parts of ourselves that are not what they should be and that we cannot repair in our own strength. When people experience at a deep level their neediness, incompleteness, and dependency – the way they actually are – they are often overwhelmed. When our eyes are open to our brokenness, we do not “*feel better about ourselves*”; rather, we feel that something is terribly wrong.

Jesus calls this a “blessed” condition because it helps us get closer to God. Our state of incompleteness drives us outside of ourselves to God as the Source of healing and hope. When we are comfortably independent, it is easy to avoid our need for God.

Brokenheartedness is related to spiritual poverty. Brokenheartedness is a state of being wounded or crushed by some loss, person, hate, injustice, or circumstance. When a person is downcast because of an emotional, relational, or career injury, he is brokenhearted. God has special tenderness for this condition:

Ps 34:18 *“18 The Lord is close to those who are of a broken heart and saves such as are crushed with sorrow for sin and are humbly and thoroughly penitent.”*

Brokenheartedness often brings about a sense of our spiritual poverty as it shows us our need. Spiritual poverty is a rich part of the spiritual growth process.



Spiritual poverty is required for a saving faith.

No one can become a Christian who does not admit, at some level, their “lostness” and hopelessness in freeing themselves from the prison and penalty of sin. So to come to saving faith, we must be broken. What often happens, however, is that we accept Christ as Savior because of our brokenness and then we live our Christian lives as if we were whole. Although we have God dwelling inside us, we all still have **unfinished parts** that need to become **mature** and **sanctified**.

Col. 2:6 *“6 As you have therefore received Christ, [even] Jesus the Lord, [so] walk (regulate your lives and conduct yourselves) in union with and conformity to Him.”*

Spiritual poverty drives us to find solutions for our neediness and, ultimately, to find God. Those who know they are truly needy are more motivated to look beyond themselves to the Lord.

For example, those in need often become humble in spirit, due to the difficulty of the condition. From there, it is a short step to finding God in so many ways.

Ps. 69:32 *“32 The **humble shall see** it and be glad; **you who seek God**, inquiring for and requiring Him [as your first need], let your hearts revive and live!”*

Many people who would not otherwise have invested much time in God’s ways have sought spiritual solutions to their problems. Need and emptiness moved them toward Him after they had exhausted their own resources.

This helps to explain why the Bible spends so much time blessing the spiritually needy and confronting the spiritually complacent. Without poverty, there is no motivating hunger. **Lukewarmness** is the hallmark of someone who has not yet become poor in spirit and therefore is not hungry. Jesus had harsh words for the lukewarm church of Laodicea:

Rev. 3 : 17 *“17 For you say, I am rich; I have prospered and grown wealthy, and I am in need of nothing; and you do not realize and understand that you are **wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.**”*

Spiritual poverty helps us endure the pain of growth. Spiritual growth is **hard work**. It requires **sacrifice, suffering, loss, and commitment**. It is the narrow gate that relatively few enter. It means losing your life, including all the old comfortable patterns, to find your life in Christ.

Poverty makes it hard to go backward in the process. Once your eyes are opened to your need, it is difficult to live as though you had none. It is as if a door has been opened that can’t be shut.

Spiritual poverty and broken-heartedness drive us to emotional connectedness, both to God and to safe people. Coming to the end of ourselves reduces us to a childlike state of need and helplessness, which Jesus said is good.

Mark 10:15 *“15 Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive and accept and welcome the kingdom of God **like a little child** [does] positively shall not enter it at all.”*

Children by nature are relationally orientated. When they are in trouble or pain, the first thing they do is reach out for a protective, comforting parent. They instinctively seek out relationship without even thinking about it.

One of the blessings of spiritual poverty is that it helps restore us to God’s design of a relationally based life. We learn to receive comfort, support, and acceptance from others, which then strengthens us to continue.

Relationship is the fuel of life. We need to internalize great amounts of relationship all during our life time to persevere and grow.

Spiritual poverty helps us into the deeper life. Our brokenhearted state also provokes us to move beyond spiritual immaturity into a deeper walk of faith. Although we all begin our spiritual lives as babes, God did not intend for us to stay at in that state of development forever. We ought to move from elementary things to maturity in Christ. The deeper walk takes us into many areas; the wonders of the Bible, the complexities of our own character, personality, and issues.

Spiritual poverty does not allow us to stay shallow. We don't "arrive" in the faith, although we do mature and change. We're always moving forward or backward.

Spiritual poverty helps us find the right issues to heal. Physically hungry people are not always hungry for the same things. They may desire meat, vegetables, or fruit. In the same way, spiritually hungry people are not always hungry for the same things. Spiritual poverty can help us find particular areas of need and growth.

Becoming poor in spirit is one of the most unnatural things we can do. It is the opposite of being victorious and having it all together. Yet it is our only hope for spiritual growth. Actually, our task is more realizing our poverty then becoming poor, as we are already in need whether we know it or not. It is better to seek this quality ourselves then be forced to face it by difficult circumstances.

Being in touch with your spiritual poverty is it gift from God because it brings forth things He wants to see in you and because it accomplishes His purposes. Ask God to bless you with spiritual poverty, for "theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (**Matt. 5:3**). He will give you and yours the sense of incompleteness, a need that keeps you closer to Him.



Become an honest person.

Do an honest review of your past and present life. Look for patterns of avoiding pain, denial and problems, staying away from truthful people, and trying to put a positive spin on negative things in your life. Be honest about tendencies to shy away from need and to move toward pride and self sufficiency.

Look closely at those negative things you might be avoiding:

- **Sins.** Look at selfish, rebellious behaviors and attitudes. Although you have been forgiven for them, they still require confession and repentance. Look especially beyond your behaviors into the dark areas and motives of the heart: withdrawal of love, vengeance, envy and blaming.
- **Hurt and losses.** All of us not only have sinned, but also have been sinned against and injured. Look at significant people in your life who have hurt you. Also, look at failures and losses in life, such as medical, financial, or career losses.
- **Weaknesses.** Identify character flaws that hamper your life, things you do that you can't stop doing. This might include irresponsibility, control, fragility, people pleasing, and perfectionism.

Try not to be too legalistic with this short list, as there is much interplay between categories.

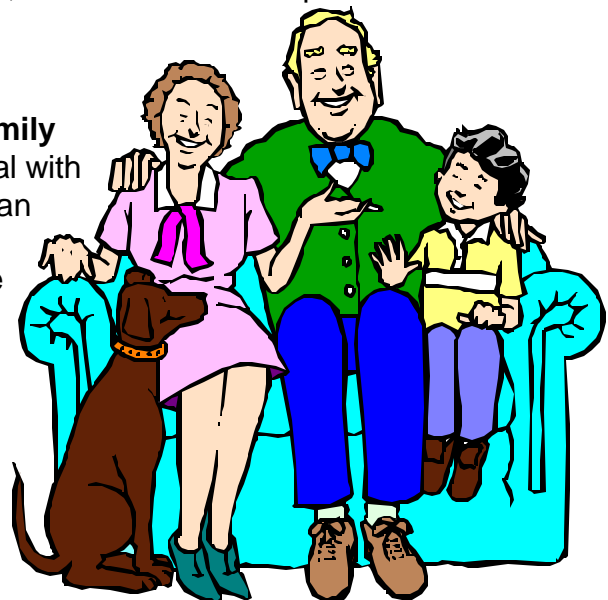
The teachings of the Bible on the topic.

Look up terms such as “poor in spirit”, needy, and brokenhearted. Learn what the Bible teaches about them. Get feedback from others.

One characteristic of hungry people is that they surround themselves with others to help them with their dependency. For them, the normal Christian life is one in which people get together, share vulnerabilities, and fill each other up.

Family time: Building character.

Regular family-night meetings where the family meets to talk about the upcoming week, deal with problems, read the Bible and pray. This time can also be used to build character during which each member of the family helps the other one remain “poor in spirit”. Each member of the family has to own an issue or weakness that needs the help of God and others to work out.



- Selfishness
- Withdrawing when upset and not talking about the problem.
- Irresponsibility in household chores.
- Work too much and not playing with the family enough.
- Chronically lateness
- Annoying someone and not stopping when the person asks us to.
- Not coming when called.
- Nail biting.
- Getting angry too easily.
- Taking the children on errands and calling it “quality time”.
- Problems having regular devotional time.
- Making promises and not keeping them.
- Fighting instead of talking about problems.



We must ask the other family members, **“What do I do that really bugs you?”** The issues are discussed and they pray for each other. The next week every one reports on his or her progress. We ask, **“How did I do this week?”**

Mutual support, vulnerability, and ownership have all happened during our character time.

Seek a whole-hearted experience of Brokenness.

Poverty of spirit requires more of us then just admitting with our minds we are incomplete and needy. It also affects our entire self, especially the **heart**. Realizing our condition before God is an overwhelmingly emotional experience, involving feelings such as dependence, grief, and remorse. Seek this experience in the same way you seek God:

Deut. 4 : 29 *“29 But if from there **you will seek** (inquire for and require as necessity) **the Lord your God, you will find Him** if you [truly] seek Him with all your heart [and mind] and soul and life.”*

God reminds us, time and time again, that He likes neediness. Take a faith step and open up your soul to God and safe people. Spiritual poverty is the only way to be filled with what He has for us.

CHAPTER 12 – THE NATURE OF OBEDIENCE.

One of the central meanings of “to obey” in the Bible is “to hear”. **Hearing and doing what God says are deeply interrelated:**

Deut 13 : 4 “4 You shall walk after the Lord your God and [reverently] fear Him, and **keep His commandments and obey His voice**, and you shall serve Him and cling to Him.”

When we hear God as He is, rather than as we desire Him to be, we move toward true obedience.

A basic definition of obedience, for spiritual growth purposes, is to be “God directed”, not “self-directed”. **Obedience is to look outside ourselves for our purpose, values, and decisions.** This essential stance of life admits that God knows better than we do how to guide our steps. And it is the only way to truly live, for He is life itself. One of God’s greatest desires for us is that we may love the Lord our God, listen to His voice, and hold fast to Him. For the Lord is our life. **(Deut. 30:20).**

For many people, however, obedience means “to be deprived and withheld from”. It means they have to adhere to rules and be self-disciplined. In their eyes, God basically says, “*Be really good and don’t do any fun stuff,*” with no real benefit, except maybe in Heaven.

Obedience leads to very good things for us. As we travel down God’s paths of conducting life, we reap many benefits. In fact, both survival and prosperity – major aspects of the good life – depend on obedience:

Deut. 6 : 24 “24 And **the Lord commanded us to do all these statutes**, to [reverently] fear the Lord our God for our good always, that He **might preserve us alive**, as it is this day.”

The results of obedience and disobedience are very different:

Isa. 1:19 – 20 “19 If you are **willing and obedient**, you shall **eat the good of the land**; 20 But if you **refuse and rebel**, you will be **devoured by the sword**. For the mouth of the Lord has spoken it.”

How is this so? God designed life to be lived a certain way. When we follow His way, life works better.

Prov. 14:15 “15 The simpleton believes every word he hears, **but the prudent man looks and considers well where he is going.**”

All of life

Some people compartmentalize obedience into their religious or moral lives. For them, obedience is relating to God and doing what is right. This view misses the full and comprehensive path God has for life. The Bible teaches and guides on the areas of life: gifts, ministry, money, sex, love, and so on. This is why people pursuing spiritual growth often feel as if they have “come alive” when they see that God speaks to their emotional, personal, and relational lives as well as their spiritual lives.

All of us.

Not only does **obedience** deal with all of life, but it also encompasses all of us, both inside and out. Obedience is far more profound than simply refraining from external sins such as lying, stealing, and committing adultery, though it certainly includes those. **Obedience has also to do with submitting our values, emotions, and hearts to Christ’s Lordship. God asks for no less than total commitment:**

Matt. 22 : 37 – 38 *“37 And He replied to him, **You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind (intellect).** 38 This is the great (most important, principal) and first commandment.”*

There is nothing more important, and nothing more demanding. In fact, it requires our lives, which then saves our lives. The external and internal nature of obedience helps us to grow up spiritually.

Take, for example, the man who avoids intimacy because he has difficulty trusting people. This avoidance causes him problems in his marriage, work, and friendships. Part of him wants to be vulnerable, but he is afraid he will be hurt or controlled. Part of him wants to be distant and safe, but he gets lonely. His entire life oscillates between these two poles. This condition disrupts his life and hurts people around him.

Suppose the man enters the spiritual growth process with some good people. He becomes aware of these two conflicting parts of his heart. Here is where the two types of obedience help heal him. Customarily, when he grows closer to someone emotionally, he quickly distances himself by getting busy or watching TV. This is a safe escape from feeling his needs. So he is encouraged to call a member of his group on the phone when he feels the need to isolate. He commits to an external behavior: stay in contact with people. This commitment keeps him from withdrawing and thus avoiding the tension of his feelings.

At the same time, he is internally opening by confessing his fears of closeness and his desires to be free and distant.

As he does this, the understanding and safety of the members of his support group help him integrate his two conflicted parts. He learns to set good limits so he won’t be controlled. He learns to be vulnerable and yet free in his relationships.

Thus, the external obedience keeps the tension of his feelings contained and tolerable while the internal obedience heals his conflicts.

Obedience also helps us deal with both the causes and the fruits of spiritual immaturity or deficit.

The person who is growing, needs to understand the importance of obedience. Here are a few of the essential tasks for the grower:

1. Surrender to the Lordship of Christ.
2. Follow him daily.
3. Deal with your character issues.

Obedience, or God-directedness, is a lifelong process central to spiritual growth. Stay close to what God says regarding your ways, relationships, and inner issues. Those who follow God's voice generally realize that it is ultimately the only way to go, as did the apostle Peter, who said:

John 6: 68 *"68 Simon Peter answered, Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words (the message) of eternal life."*

When we learn the ways of obedience, we enter the path of growth. Yet that path is not without danger. We need to understand how to handle the problems of sin and temptation as well.



CHAPTER 13 – SIN IS MORE THAN EXTERNAL DEEDS.

Sin is not just about something we do; it is not just behavior. It **encompasses the roots of behavior as well**. Too often we think of sin only in external terms, not internal.

Luke 11: 39 – 40 “39 But the Lord said to him, Now you Pharisees **cleanse the outside of the cup and of the plate, but inside you yourselves are full of greed and robbery and extortion and malice and wickedness.**

40 You senseless (foolish, stupid) ones [acting without reflection or intelligence]! Did not He Who made the outside make the **inside** also?”

Unresolved anger and hurt can turn into bitterness or lust. Hatred for authority has probably ruined more careers than lack of training.

Mark 7: 20 – 23 “20 And He said, **What comes out of a man is what makes a man unclean and renders [him] unhallowed.**

21 **For from within, [that is] out of the hearts of men, come base and wicked thoughts, sexual immorality, stealing, murder, adultery,**

22 **Coveting (a greedy desire to have more wealth), dangerous and destructive wickedness, deceit; unrestrained (indecent) conduct; an evil eye (envy), slander (evil speaking, malicious misrepresentation, abusiveness), pride (the sin of an uplifted heart against God and man), foolishness (folly, lack of sense, recklessness, thoughtlessness).**

23 **All these evil [purposes and desires] come from within, and they make the man unclean and render him unhallowed.”**

Many illnesses, failures, addictions, relationship difficulties, and destructive behaviours originate in these motivators. As Jesus said, the fruit comes from the tree. To look inside and resolve these issues is the key to having the outside be good. If we are full of “crummy” stuff, then we will exhibit crummy behavior; the same holds for good stuff.

The truth is, though, that all of us have crummy stuff within us. It is part of the fallen nature, the sickness of sin. If we are ever going to get well, we have to have the safety to look inside, confess it, grieve it, repent of it, and “*put off our old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of our minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness*”
(Eph. 4: 22 – 24).

We have to be made new from the inside out, and that begins with facing how ugly things are inside.

We all need a place where we can say, “*You won’t believe how sick I am! Let me tell you about this thought I had to day.*” We need to make this kind of confession normal. Then we can begin to clean up our insides.

Unresolved hurt is going to do just that – hurt. The person who is brokenhearted and not getting healed is in pain. **Often this person will do something to ease the pain.** He may feel strong cravings for sex, for food, or alcohol to make himself feel better.

He may feel driven to work and achieve at the expense of his loved ones. He may lust after material things, and he may strive for power to cover up his feelings of being small. Whatever the “drug” of choice, unresolved hurt can tempt a person to sin. The hurt is not the sin. **The sin is the way that the person deals with the pain and emptiness.** Is the result of trying to meet a valid need in a sinful way.

This is an often overlooked aspect of temptation about which the Bible teaches us. We’ve read in **Luke 4** that Jesus was led into the desert to be tempted. He was deprived of all things human – no companionship, food, or meeting of basic needs.

And when he was in this state of deprivation, Satan tempted him. Satan went to Jesus and offered Him ways to feel better when He was at His weakest point.

This is exactly how temptation occurs. **Satan tempts us at our weakest moments and in our weakest areas.** We need something, or we are in pain. And the temptation answers both of those for the moment. **If someone needs love or is lonely, the deceptive sin of illicit sex (the lust of the flesh) can momentarily masquerade as love. If someone needs validation, the lure of power and the “boastful pride of life” can trick him into feeling as if his existence is worthwhile because of that power.** If someone is feeling “not good enough”, the lure of materialism and the “lust of the eyes” can momentarily dull that pain.

1 John 2: 15 – 16 *“15 Do not love or cherish the world or the things that are in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh [craving for sensual gratification] and the lust of the eyes [greedy longings of the mind] and the pride of life [assurance in one’s own resources or in the stability of earthly things]—these do not come from the Father but are from the world [itself].”*

The world has its solutions for need and pain, and we can all be tempted to resolve our hurts with those. We depend on man-made gods instead of the One True God. Again, it is a problem of dependency. Sin is failing to depend on God and not saying yes to His grace in all its various forms. **Meeting our needs our way is idolatry and never works.** Our model is Jesus, who in His deprived state did not meet His needs through sin, but by dependence on God.

Heb. 4: 15 *“15 For we do not have a High Priest Who is unable to understand and sympathize and have a shared feeling with our weaknesses and infirmities and liability to the assaults of temptation, but One Who has been tempted in every respect as we are, yet without sinning.”*

So, sometimes we fail to understand that deprivation can be the weak state that makes us susceptible to carrying out what the sinful nature tells us to do. Christians can try to deal with someone’s sin by dealing just with the bad behavior and not dealing with the need or the pain driving it. We deal with the “bad”, but we do not add the “good”. Overcoming sin is never just about doing away with badness; it is always also about adding goodness.

Jesus came to do away with death, but He also came to give us life. This is why the Bible tells us to “put off the old” and “put on the new”. It is part of what Jesus was saying when He said He did not come into the world to judge the world, but to **save**, to **heal** and **restore** it.

Therefore we need to respond to people’s sin by looking beyond the sin nature to **what is motivating and driving the sin**. The ultimate reality is that sin is driven and perpetuated by being cut off from “the life of God”.

Eph. 4: 18 – 19 *“18 Their moral understanding is darkened and their reasoning is beclouded. [They are] alienated (estranged, self-banished) from the life of God [with no share in it; this is] because of the **ignorance** (the want of knowledge and perception, the willful blindness) that is **deep-seated in them**, due to their **hardness of heart** [to the insensitiveness of their moral nature].
19 In their **spiritual apathy** they have become **callous and past feeling and reckless** and have abandoned themselves [a prey] to **unbridled sensuality**, eager and **greedy to indulge in every form of impurity** [that their depraved desires may suggest and demand].”*

When we are separated from the life of God, we don’t have a life at all, and we seek to fill that vacuum in other ways. The life of God includes, among other things, support, connection, honesty, talents, healing, confession, repentance, correction, and discipline. So if people are hurting, they need to find the healing God provides through Himself and His people. When that happens, and the hurt is dealt with, the temptation subsides. The need is no longer there, and the ability to resist is greater. Strength and life have replaced neediness.

If people’s hearts and minds were full of the life God provides, there would be a lot less room for temptation. Some of what is behind “badness” is not so bad after all. It is a well of good needs and hurt and pain that people try to “medicate” in bad ways. This excuses none of the sinful answers we seek, and neither does it excuse the partial gospel we give to people as answers to their sin. If we and the people we help are going to have victory, it has to come from all God has offered, and that includes taking care of the needs and the pains that are not connected to His life.

AVOIDING SIN.

None of this happens very easily, however. In the mean time, temptation is still around. It does not go away, and we are not to sit around and wait for it to subside while we are “getting well”.

Pray

Matt 6: 13 *“13 And **lead (bring) us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.** For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.”*

Matt 26: 41 “41 All of you must **keep awake** (give strict attention, be cautious and active) and **watch and pray**, that **you may not come into temptation**. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”

Flee and escape.

1 Cor. 10: 13 “13 For no **temptation** (no trial regarded as enticing to sin), [no matter how it comes or where it leads] has overtaken you and laid hold on you that is not common to man [that is, no temptation or trial has come to you that is beyond human resistance and that is not adjusted and adapted and belonging to human experience, and such as man can bear]. But God is faithful [to His Word and to His compassionate nature], and **He [can be trusted] not to let you be tempted and tried and assayed beyond your ability and strength of resistance and power to endure, but with the temptation He will [always] also provide the way out** (the means of escape to a landing place), that you may be capable and strong and powerful to bear up under it patiently.”

1 Cor. 6: 18 “18 **Shun immorality and all sexual looseness** [flee from impurity in thought, word, or deed]. Any other sin which a man commits is one outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”

2 Tim. 2 22 “22 **Shun youthful lusts and flee from them**, and aim at and pursue righteousness (all that is virtuous and good, right living, conformity to the will of God in thought, word, and deed); [and aim at and pursue] faith, love, [and] peace (harmony and concord with others) in fellowship with all [Christians], who call upon the Lord out of a pure heart.”

A lot of people do not practice the scriptures. **The Bible puts a huge emphasis on getting away from the temptation.** It talks about fleeing it so that we don't fall prey to it. It implies that it is a very dangerous place to find ourselves, and the best advice is **to run from it**. While we are to resist temptation when we do encounter it, it is **better not to flirt with it at all**. So if you have a weak area, or you are working with someone who has one, encourage fleeing.

People tempted **by sex** should flee the situations in which they will be tempted, like being alone with someone who is dangerous for them. **Alcoholics** should flee the bar. **Pornography addicts** should stay off the Internet in private places. Get away from tempting things **before** the temptation, not after. RUN!!!

If you are not there, you can't be tempted. And when you find yourself in danger, don't just stay and try to win. Instead, run from it – flee it – treat it as dangerous.

What is sin?

- **Independence** – moving away from dependence on God as the Source of life and trying to meet our own needs apart from God and His people.
- **Loss of relationship** – isolation from God and others.

- **Boss** – not submitting to God and obeying Him.
- **Control** – trying to control others or things we can't control, resulting in a loss of self-control and a failure to yield to God's sovereign control.
- **Judging** – moving away from being real and experiencing life and others, and moving toward judging self and others.
- **Self rule** - trying to design life on one's own terms.

Sin always appears as some form of independence from God and a taking over and usurping His roles. Don't get confused by the distraction that individual acts of sin can cause. There is the deepest sickness that only humbling one's self before God can cure.

The two great Commandments in the Bible are of loving the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and loving your neighbour as yourself. It is important to realize that when you sin, you do not only hurt yourself, but **you also hurt the lives of others around you. This sin is then a lack of love for your neighbour.**

In your fight against sin, no matter what it is, remember the Law of love. No matter what someone is struggling with, most likely someone else is being hurt by the sin. Addictions hurt the family. Lust hurts the marriage partner. Irresponsibility hurts many people. **There are no victimless crimes**, and in helping people with sin, the Bible affirms a strong message: **think of how your behavior is affecting other people and that will motivate you to stop when rules won't.** Remember, all the Law and the Prophets rest on the ultimate Law of Love.

There are no new ways of dealing with sin, for God gave us The Way a long time ago – HIS NAME IS JESUS!!



CHAPTER 14 – THE IMPORTANCE OF ACTIVITY.

Action is always an integral part of growth. Spiritual growth does not “happen” to us; it requires a great deal of blood, sweat, and tears. Our sanctification is a combined effort between God and us. God has certain tasks to do such as preparing our hearts, setting up the circumstances, and bringing forth results from the growth work.



Phil. 2: 12 – 13 “12 Therefore, my dear ones, as you have always obeyed [my suggestions], so now, not only [with the enthusiasm you would show] in my presence but much more because I am absent, **work out** (cultivate, carry out to the goal, and fully complete) **your own salvation with reverence and awe and trembling (self-distrust, with serious caution, tenderness of conscience, watchfulness against temptation, timidly shrinking from whatever might offend God and discredit the name of Christ).**

13 [Not in your own strength] for it is God Who is all the while effectually at work in you [energizing and creating in you the power and desire], both to will and to work for His good pleasure and satisfaction and delight.”

We work out our salvation, meaning **we diligently execute our responsibilities in growth**. All the while, in mysterious and often invisible ways, God works in us for His purposes. He does the many things we cannot do for ourselves, for which we depend on Him. This co-labouring is not at all as if God is simply doing things to us, like a surgeon operating on an anesthetized patient lying on an operating table. It is more like certain forms of brain surgery, in which the patient is awake and working with a surgeon, telling him what he is experiencing as the surgeon probes and cuts one way, then another. We are partners in our own spiritual surgery.

Most of the time, growth requires action. **In only one period of our life can we be totally passive, receptive, and dependent, and that is in the womb.** For nine months the **unborn** baby is developed, protected, and fed. But even in the first year of life, babies take part in getting their needs met.

Ownership.

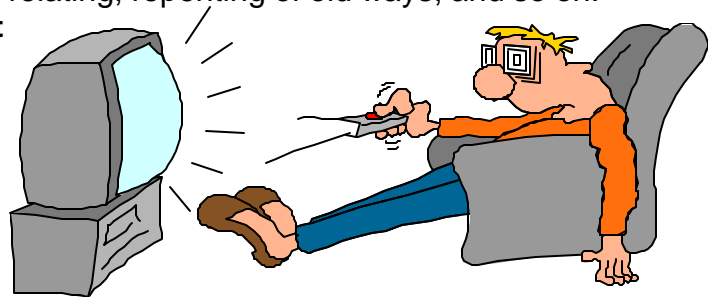
When we are active in our growth, we tend to take more responsibility for our lives. **The experiences of being involved, learning, taking risks, and talking to others about our lives increases the level of ownership we have in the process.** When people are passive about their growth, they tend to let others control them and see forces outside of them as being in charge of their lives.

Understanding the past helps them to see what parts are their fault (denial, rescuing, fear of loss), what parts are the other's fault (control, withholding of love, non-acceptance), and what parts are the products of living in a fallen world (death of a loved one, a chronic illness). **Ownership means that the person comes to the realization that her life is her problem and that her growth is the solution.** This process often takes time, as people sort out their feelings about the nature and the cause of their issues.

Passivity

Many people struggle with actively pursuing spiritual growth. When people allow life to happen to them when they react to others rather than taking the initiative, they take a passive role. **Passive people who also have dependency-needs often have real problems growing. They desire and value relationship and support, which is a good thing, but they seek it only for connectedness, comfort, or safety.** They are less able to use relationships as the fuel to solve problems, take risks, or execute responsibilities.

Some people with passive, dependent tendencies will initially come alive when they join a growth group, because they receive support for, and acceptance of, their struggles. They become attached in very good ways to the members of the group; however, the closeness becomes an end in itself. They do not make significant progress in confronting problems, learning new ways of relating, repenting of old ways, and so on. **They use the love they receive to protect themselves from life rather than to engage fully in life. Sometimes they develop a bottomless hunger for love that, no matter how much they receive, never leaves them satisfied.** This is the problem of the passive position.



God addresses passivity as a problem, not the virtue. In the **parable of the talents**, the master gives money to three servants before leaving town. Two servants actively invest their money while the third passively buries his in the ground. Upon returning to town, the master rebukes the third, saying:

Matt 25: 27 – 29 *“27 Then you should have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received what was my own with interest.
28 So take the talent away from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents.
29 For to everyone who has will more be given, and he will be furnished richly so that he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have will be taken away.”*

The master received no return on his investment from the third servant.

God gives **us time, talent, and treasures** in life to glorify Him in many ways, such as expanding His Kingdom, growing closer to Him and others, and having fruitful jobs. To develop our souls (His investment), we must take risks and initiative. Passivity negates risk and initiative and, ultimately, growth. The passive position keeps us safe, but we are not getting all God has for us.

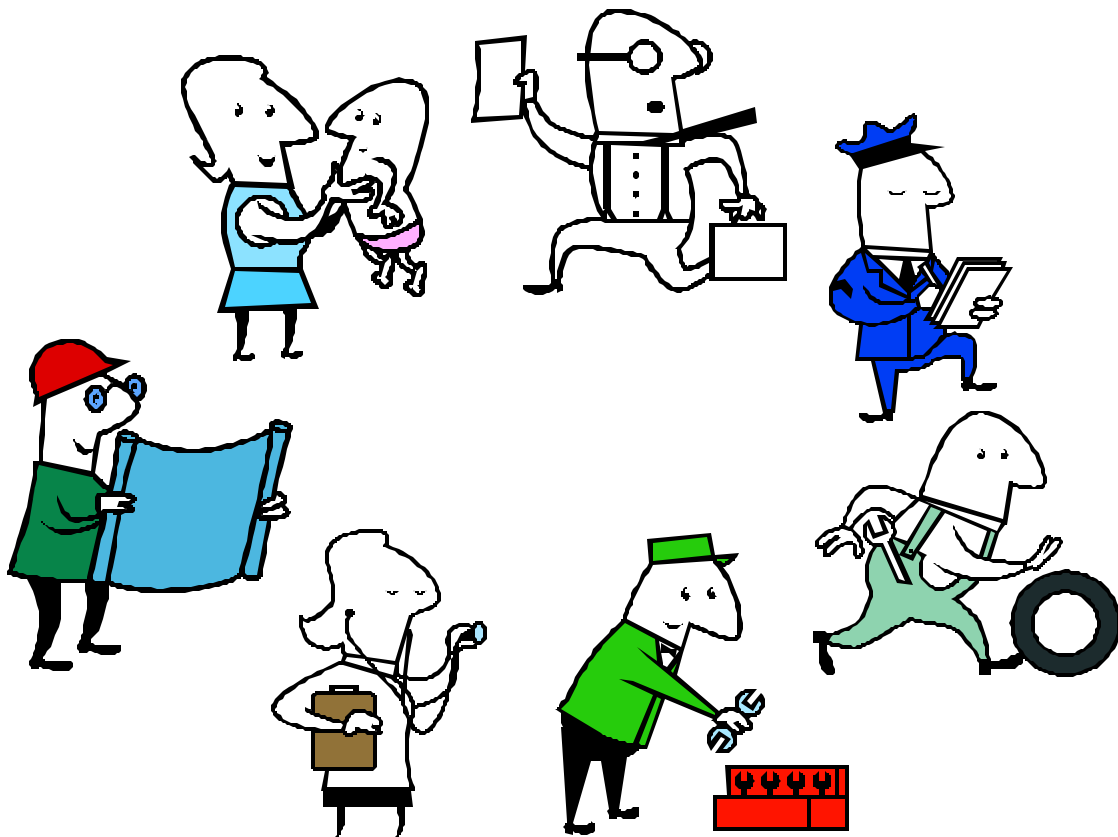
God has His job, and we have ours. When we try to do God's or demand that He do ours, we run into problems. An example of the first problem would be someone who tries to use will-power to stop a drinking problem instead of submitting to the spiritual growth process. An example of the second would be the person who waits for someone in his life to become aware that she is being hurtful, without saying anything to her.

This **confusion of job responsibilities** always needs to be clarified.

The following people were very active, involved, and working in the Kingdom:

- **Moses** judged the people's legal matters.
- **David** drew up battle plans.
- **Paul** traveled far and wide to preach the Good News.

Their lives were full of effort and work. They were good people who experienced the holiness and mystery of God, had deep relational connection with others, and lived actively in the real world.



CHAPTER 15 – WAITING FOR THE HARVEST – TIME.

Why does growth takes so long?

People will often enter the growth process with great hope and excitement and then, somewhere along the way, become discouraged that they aren't achieving results as soon as they would like.

Someone is still struggling in a marriage; another is unable to open up emotionally to God and others; still another is unable to set appropriate limits; and someone else may be tormented by the pain of the past.

So many growers expect that, if they read their Bibles and do the right things, they will instantly and permanently change. They are disappointed when this does not happen. They may feel God has let them down or they are doing something wrong, when in fact everything may be proceeding as God planned it.

- **Time is a necessary ingredient of growth!**

Teachings that only emphasize **deliverances**, for example, can create people who become nonfunctional in real life, dependent not on God and His maturing ways, but on an **event** to heal them.

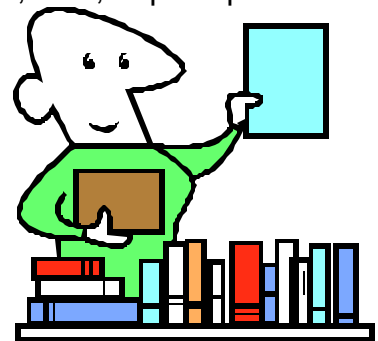
- **Experience versus intellectual learning**

Spiritual growth involves the **whole** person. All of our parts need to be exposed to God's love and healing: heart, soul, and mind. This means that growth is much more than cognitively understanding or memorizing a fact, idea, or principle.

Understanding and memorization are simply the mind working, which is a necessary but insufficient component of growth. If that were all that was involved, growth would be a much faster, cleaner, and simpler process. Simply learn a list, and you are healed.

- **Taking in grace and forgiveness**

Out of the principles of growth, internalizing God's grace and forgiveness take the most amount of time. It is much more natural for people to try to earn God's love or to learn a habit or ritual. **It is unnatural for us to live by grace and forgiveness. That which is not natural requires more time.**



- **Internal verses external change**

Remember, that if you are helping others in the sanctification process, you are working with internal changes of heart and life. These changes cause true character growth. **It is from the inside out, not from the outside in.** As hearts are transformed, they also transform the external life. But this takes time.

- **The place of the past**

An **unresolved issue may mean that part of a person's soul is still in the past.**

When a person struggles, he experiences some aspect of himself as a split off and lost in an injured or unloved state. This part is still stuck in the original state in which it was hurt. It is as if the person grew up on the outside, but left the part of himself behind, still alone or attacked or overwhelmed.

- **Most spiritual, emotional, and relational issues have a history**

People do not generally have struggles out of the blue. Someone's parenting problems, guilt issues, and faith doubts all have **roots in the past.**

- **Forgiveness requires a past**

One of the most important elements of helping people grow is forgiveness. **When we forgive, we cancel the debt of another,** and we are free to live without the need to exact revenge on another. **When we receive forgiveness, we experience God's freedom from our sin and guilt.**

However, if the past is not relevant, there is nothing either to forgive or to be forgiven for. Some Christian circles teach that we ought to forget the past and press on. They quote Paul's personal story of ***"forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead"* (Phil. 3: 13)** as an example of not dealing with the past by looking ahead. Yet, in that same passage Paul talks about all the things in his past he had to deal with, such as self-righteousness, pride, and contempt for others **(vv. 4 – 8).**

You need to help your people see the value of understanding their past both factually and emotionally as a key to forgiving.

At some point, having owned the issues, people need to let go of debts, feel sadness about the past and losses they can't change, and receive forgiveness for what they have contributed. This is often a sign that they are well on the road to resolving a particular issue, as grief means they now have enough love inside them to tolerate letting go of someone or something they have lost.

- **Good fruit**

As the inside grows, so ultimately should the outside. You should see better relationships, emotional experiences, and connectedness to God. These aren't signs that one is done growing, but they are certainly signs that things are moving in the right direction.

- **Deepening**

Growth never ends on this earth. People will find new areas of growth as God helps them search their hearts. Often you will find that the process may begin with some external crises (such as a marriage conflict or an emotional issue). **As the crisis is resolved, some people will think growth is over. But the wise ones will know that the real work is just beginning, and they will look long and hard at the person in the mirror:**

James 1: 23 – 25 *"23 For if anyone only listens to the Word without obeying it and being a doer of it, he is like a man who looks carefully at his [own] natural face in a mirror;
24 For he thoughtfully observes himself, and then goes off and promptly forgets what he was like.
25 But he who looks carefully into the faultless law, the [law] of liberty, and is faithful to it and perseveres in looking into it, being not a heedless listener who forgets but an active doer [who obeys], he shall be blessed in his doing (his life of obedience)."*

They will go deeper inside their soul, bringing more and more to the Light of God's healing grace.

**Father God, help us to grow up into the Image and likeness of
Your Son, Christ Jesus, our Lord!**

Resources:

Boundaries: Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend
Parenting your Adult Child: Ross Campbell and Gary Chapman
How people Grow: Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend
Hiding from Love: Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. John Townsend
Tired of trying to Measure up: Jeff Van Vonderen
Connecting: Larry Crabb