



Redeemed

From Bondage
To Freedom



Have you ever struggled to stop doing what you don't want to do anymore? Do you know and love an addict? Or someone struggling to stop doing what they don't want to do anymore? The principles of ***Redeemed*** will help you grow in Christ no matter where you are in your journey with Him. We didn't write it as an academic or intellectual exercise; it is the story of our redemption from our own addictions and idolatries.

Redeemed is not just a personal workbook. Each chapter includes a "Learn," "Study," and "Talk About" section. The "Talk About" sections provide conversation guides for your disciple-making relationships. So please, grab two copies and make the time to work through it with someone you love. You can help him or her become more like Jesus Christ. As will you.

Thank you for caring, and welcome to ***Redeemed***.

Bob and Ruth Froese

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Welcome and Introduction

Now it's time. Time to move from a dark, destructive kingdom into God's wondrous, glorious Kingdom. We're talking about the One True God, who changes our lives forever when we know Him as Lord and Savior.

If you've ever struggled with thoughts or behaviors that troubled you, habits that became destructive, or behaviors that held you in bondage—drugs, alcohol, gambling, food, no food, self-harm, pornography, fantasy, negativity, bitterness, hatred, anger—this workbook is for you. It targets your healing at a deep level—the heart level, or inner-man. That's good news, because it means you can be assured of lasting success.

True and lasting change begins when a heart decides to take God seriously. Are you exhausted and defeated? If so, the Bible's powerful wisdom is not primary in your life (Psalm 119:10, 30, 34-35, 52, 77). The God of the Bible has spoken. He never changes. He taught us the way of freedom. We need to pay attention.

"Redeemed" is based fully and foundationally on what God has said. Although folks may want to place the Bible behind psychological textbooks or observations, we will learn that biblical counsel does not need assistance or explanation from psychological counsel.

Listed below are three foundational principles for you to embrace and live by. If you do, the processes of this workbook will prove effective in freeing you from bondage.

1. **Christianity**—First of all, to understand God's perspective on "addiction" and how He brings lasting change into your life, you must be a follower of Jesus Christ, a Christian. Jesus changes who you are. You must change who you are to change

what you do. If you don't know Jesus yet, keep reading to learn more.

2. **The Bible**—Secondly, you must believe and trust God's Word as supreme over all other sources of wisdom.
3. **The Holy Spirit**—Thirdly, like all Christians, you change and grow. God gives grace to obey His Word through the power of the Holy Spirit. You become more like Jesus, as a new creation.

Call It What It Is

God offers power to live in freedom from bondage, even when we are overtaken by a substance or "addiction." There are physical effects of withdrawal from alcohol and mind-altering substances, but physical effects are not the biggest problem. God defines our biggest problem as sin. We can understand this better by remembering that the physical enslavement wasn't the beginning of the "addiction." It started with one foolish decision, one rebellious indulgence, one mind-numbing escape. It started with one sinful choice.

You must change who you are before you will change what you do. It is the work of Jesus in you to change who you are.

We sin because we like it. It's fun. That's why we don't change. But when we understand and embrace the truths we'll be learning, we will be empowered to victory. We will know true joy, and we will fight the battle from the position of victory.

Tragically, we have removed the word "sin" from much of our speech. We'd rather talk about diseases, or be diagnosed with disorders. Why

did Jesus Christ have to die? Was it for a "disease" that was not our fault to begin with? No, God would not have punished His Son for us unnecessarily.

When we take full responsibility for sin, we are embracing hope, because there is a Savior. But, if we excuse compulsive or enslaving behavior as a "disease," we are negating our personal responsibility, and we are running from hope.

You're Not Alone

Your struggle is a common one. All of us feel the tug of enslaving habits. We have hearts that love to want. John Calvin called the human heart an "idol factory." Tim Keller said it this way: "What the heart most wants the mind finds reasonable, the emotions find valuable and the will finds doable. What makes people into what they are is the order of their loves – what they love most, more, less and least."¹

We all desire what we love the most. When folks habitually fulfill certain desires, there can be physical effects of bondage. If this is your situation, it is unique to you but not out of the ordinary. Don't let yourself think that your case is so unique that

what works for others won't work for you. If that's what you're thinking, be honest, and admit that you are also thinking, "I won't change."

That type of defeated thinking reveals that you love the bondage behavior more than you love anything else. Please be encouraged to continue in this workbook all the same.

¹[Tim Keller, "Preaching: Communicating Faith in an Age of Skepticism," p. 159]

“Redeemed” is not another self-help resource, rather, it can be useful as an obedience resource, to obey Jesus’ parting command: Make disciples. Each topic/chapter is divided into three sections: “Learn,” “Study,” and “Talk About.” The “Talk About” discussion ideas call for conversation with a mature Christian. You don’t need someone trained to walk through this, just someone who is confessing sin and growing in obedience to Jesus Christ. It’s best to connect on a regular basis. Plan to meet once a week, and cover one topic/chapter per week. It is not God’s plan for anyone to struggle alone; His people work together for His glory.

Four Proven Processes

“Redeemed: From Bondage to Freedom” guides you through four dominant processes. God Himself says that these four processes provide everything we need to be equipped for a godly lives.

If you are one who says that you can’t change, here’s what you need to face up to—you aren’t a Christian. Every Christian can change. Stop looking to yourself to save yourself. It’s true that you can’t do it, but there is One who can save you, only One, and His name is Jesus Christ.

The four processes you’ll be learning will bring about change, for today and the future. The new orientation will bring new belief and thought patterns, and the skill to change dysfunctional, sinful relationships and behaviors.

Speaking of Relationship

The support of a mature Christian friend as you walk through the processes of this workbook will be very helpful for you. However it is only because of Jesus Christ, and only in relationship with Jesus Christ, that you can be assured life-long change with successful completion of “Redeemed.”

Jesus Christ

Our goal in writing this workbook is that Jesus Christ, the One who is Faithful and True, will become your High Ruling King (Revelation 19:11-16).

Endurance

If your bondage includes chemical dependency, you should have endured detox before beginning this book. Now hang in there and work through this entire book (Romans 5:3-5).

Scripture

The four processes of this workbook, and the philosophy behind them, are based foundationally and fully on the Word of God (2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Urgency

Now is the time for change. Don’t lose the sense of urgency. There may not be another chance (Romans 1:28).

Support

You don’t need to go it alone. This workbook calls for a godly and true Christian friend to talk through the **Talk About** portions of each topic/chapter. Decide together when and where to meet. If you do not yet have this person in place, please ask a biblical counselor, friend or a biblical pastor to help in your choice.

Are You Wondering?

Are you wondering about those four proven processes? They flow from 2 Timothy 3:16-17, where God says that the four processes will provide what we need to be fully equipped. To familiarize yourself with them, turn to the index. Notice the four sections into which this study is divided: **The Real Story**, **Convincing Conviction**, **Transforming Correction**, and **Freedom Training**.

Are you wondering what to expect each week? To begin with, you’ll read a teaching segment called **Learn** to help you understand the topic. This will be followed by **Study**, so you can dig into Scriptures which form the basis of **Learn**. We don’t want you to take our word for it, rather, check out what God says! Do **Study** on your own, but first ask God to prepare your heart to accept His Word and open your mind to understand His Word. If you struggle with the **Study** section at all, please ask your Christian friend for help. Finally, there’s a page for each topic/chapter called **Talk About**. It includes discussion questions to stimulate thinking and provide conversation with for disciple-making. In Part 3, you are also given two **Work Out** worksheets which will be helpful to work through together with your mature Christian friend.

Redeemed: From Bondage to Freedom can be used as biblical counseling resource. You may want to copy the **Work Out** worksheets and use them along the way. The completed worksheets can serve as a wonderful record and reminder of God’s faithfulness during the journey of delivery from bondage. Truly, Jesus Christ our Redeemer frees us from the pit of bondage!

Study Introduction

Have you been introduced to Jesus Christ?

JESUS

If you have met Jesus, and have chosen to follow Him, use the space below to write down your story. The questions will guide you. If you have not yet met Him and chosen to follow Him, please simply read the Scripture verses.

Romans 3:23, 6:23 ...all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Before Jesus saved you, when did you realize that you were condemned to death because of your sins?

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

Describe how you came to realize and believe that Jesus Christ endured the punishment you deserve.

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

When and where did you decide that you would choose to believe God? Describe the joy and relief of placing your faith in God's reward—forgiveness of sin and eternity with Him for those who seek Him.

Titus 2:11-12 For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age...

What is the means of God by which He saves and trains us? List ways you have been trained to renounce "ungodliness and worldly passions," and live "self-controlled, upright, and godly." List ways you still need to be trained.

Titus 2:13-14 ...waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.

What are you waiting for? Whom are you looking forward to meeting? Describe what you are most looking forward to when you see Jesus.

1 Peter 1:13 Therefore, preparing your minds for action, and being sober-minded, set your hope fully on the grace that will be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

How does the great hope of seeing Jesus Christ face-to-face lead you to think about "addictions"?



The Real Story

What is The Real Story?

Why am I alive? People ask this question, searching for meaning. The answers they arrive at are varied, but only one answer satisfies. God, who gave life to humans in the first place, is the only one who can satisfactorily answer why we live.

Have you asked God the wonderful question, “Why did You make me?” His fantastic answer comes loud and clear. In Isaiah 43:7, and many other passages in the Bible, God tells us that we were created for His glory. You live for this reason: To glorify God.

God made humans to be glorious little images of Himself (Genesis 1:26-28). In the perfect world that God created, Adam did not have a sinful nature and a sinful heart. In God’s image, Adam was able to live as a little image of God. How? Only one way. By doing what God had told him to do. God warned Adam that if he disobeyed, the result would be loss of God’s glorious life—death. Adam chose to disobey God (Genesis 3), thereby dooming the earth to the decay of death. This catastrophic tragedy is known as “the Fall.”

Adam gave birth to children “in his own likeness, after his image” (Genesis 5:3). Because he chose sin, every human being is born with a sin nature (Romans 5:12). That means mankind is defiled, frail, prone to fail, miserable, and mortal. Instead of living in the image of God to glorify Him, we become shriveled, self-serving, and self-absorbed images of ourselves with one goal: Glorify self.

As time passed, the generations born to Adam became really serious about not being little images of God. By the time Noah built the ark, he was surrounded with people who didn’t want to look like God. The Bible describes them as only evil in their thoughts.

Hundreds of years later, God singled out a special group of people: Israel. They were to be His image and likeness—different than everyone else—because they would obey God as their High King (Exodus 19:3-8). Israel was responsible for showing the rest of the world that God was glorious and that the choice to worship other gods was a horrible choice.

church. He calls the church a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a people of God’s own possession. It is our job to visibly represent an invisible God as His body (1 Peter 2:9). The church has the opportunity to imitate His incredible glory, by worshipping and obeying Him (John 14:21).

Fact is, everyone ever created will be worshipping God for eternity,

It only takes a glimpse of God’s glory. See Him, long for Him, be satisfied in Him. You’ll no longer want the isolation caused by destructive, addictive behaviors.

The great nation Israel would surely be wise and eager to obey their great God. He set up a covenant with them, with statutes and judgments to obey in worshipping Him (Deuteronomy 4:1-8, Hebrews 9:15). God warned His people: “Don’t start making other images to worship. You are meant to be images that glorify Me. Don’t forget that you are My people, and that I am a consuming fire, a jealous God. You are called to loyalty. I will bless you beyond experience, but I do not want you to seek joy anywhere else. I want you to glorify Me.”

Within the nation Israel, the Old Testament reveals that there were some who waited and watched for that blessing. On the whole, though, they didn’t do it well. But God was merciful. He provided the greatest, most undeserved blessing, not only to Israel but to all who believe. That blessing is Jesus Christ.

Within the church, the New Testament teaches that Jesus is coming back for those who are eagerly waiting for him (Hebrews 9:22). Although God isn’t finished with Israel yet (He will fulfill all His promises to them), He has chosen at this time to extend the gracious opportunity to worship and glorify Him as His people to the

bowing to Jesus and acknowledging Him as God. Those who obey willfully now, will continue worshipping God when they get to heaven. Those who don’t obey now, will worship God for eternity while suffering the torment of hell (Philippians 2:5-11).

The end of the story is that Jesus will come back and defeat His enemies, everyone who does not glorify Him. Romans 3:23 and Romans 1:21 say that sin is defined as not glorifying God. Every choice boils down to this: Am I thinking/saying/doing this for self-glory? or, Am I thinking/saying/doing this for God’s glory?

Those caught up in “addictions” habitually seek self-glory. In the end, self-glory is always destructive. Eyes glaze and chill. Faces harden to steel. Arms hang woodenly from drooped shoulders. Thoughts squander into obsession for one more experience of pleasure or relief that will never feel as good as before. But still the “addict” obeys the demand for self-glory. This master whips the “addict” into deeper destructiveness—a synthetic drug, a deeper cut, a longer workout, a newer game, a glitzier casino, an edgier porn site—but the

moment of numbness or high is only an illusion of glory. The illusion is a lure, a snare, a trap into deadly danger.

We are created for glory, and so we seek glory, but there is only One whose glory is safe to seek. There is only One whose glory will satisfy the desires and longings of our hearts. The only way to fulfill our longing for glory is to obey Jesus Christ. As you read the following realities of Christ's earthly life and how they impact you, be motivated to live for God's glory.

Jesus came to earth.	Imagine leaving eternal glory. The Prince of the Universe voluntarily took on the weaknesses of human skin and bones. He entered earth the same way every human does, covered in blood and mucus. From a cosmic castle to a feeding trough. From Creator of mankind, to helpless dependence on a young girl He created (Colossians 1:16).	Why did Jesus come to earth? Because He loves you (John 3:16).
Jesus lived a sinless life on earth.	Jesus always did what His Father wanted. He submitted Himself to the sin cursed authority of the people He came to rescue from the curse of sin. He touched the infected horror of leprous skin. He was hungry. He was homeless. Yet in all the frailties of humanity, in temptation without end, He was gloriously sinless (1 Peter 2:22, 1 John 1:1).	Why did Jesus live without sinning? So that He could be your righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).
Jesus obeyed His Father, all the way to the cross.	Jesus Christ's body was crushed and beaten. His skin was bruised, stripped, ripped off (1 Peter 2:23, Isaiah 53). It was meant to humiliate Him, to be horrible. It was murder. Can you imagine Jesus experiencing the taste of our sin, the feeling of our guilt, the bearing of our punishment in His Body? Worst of all, the Father turned His back on Him, and all the Father's wrath was poured out on Him. Why? So that He could share His glory with us.	Why was Jesus stricken, crushed, bruised and afflicted? Because it was the pleasure of the Lord to bruise Him and save us (Isaiah 53:11).
Jesus was resurrected.	God the Father sacrificed God the Son as payment for sins. From the very beginning, the Father planned to provide victory over Satan and sin (Genesis 3:15). The power of sin, the power of death, the power of problems, the power of addictions, the power of a body that doesn't do right—all the power of evil was broken the day Jesus conquered death and rose back to life.	Why was Jesus resurrected? So that we could be like Him, be resurrected from death, and be in His glory.
Jesus rules in Heaven, and He intercedes for you.	Jesus is in heaven now, sitting at God's right hand, preparing an eternal home for His followers. Each one who accepts His death as payment for sin, and receives Jesus as Lord of his or her life will spend eternity in Heaven, face-to-face with glory. There will be no crying or pain, only glory (Revelation 21:4). God gives us what we want. We must want the glory of God and choose to glorify Him by obeying (He knows this is impossible on our own, and He intercedes to make it possible.) If we want self-glory, we are choosing hell's eternal damnation and weeping.	Why does Jesus pray for us from His ruling seat next to the Father? Because His glory is mercy to those who believe and therefore glorify Him.

When Jesus returns, everyone will know there is a glorious High King—King of kings and Lord of lords—and He will rule with an iron fist (Revelation 19:11-16). At that point, it will be too late to become part of His victorious army. The choice will have been made. You must choose now whether you will be in His Kingdom, rather than in hell. Begin now to worship and serve Him, rather than His defeated enemy, the deceiver who hates you and wants you to worship your desires; who works overtime with the goal that you spend eternity in hell too. Choose today to worship and obey Jesus as your glorious Master.

Jesus Christ

Study The Real Story 1

What's the real story about Jesus?

Jesus loves you more than you could ever imagine

I want to know this Jesus who loves me

Matthew 3:17 -- And behold, a voice from heaven said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased."

How does God the Father describe Jesus? From where is God speaking? The answers reveal that there is a bigger picture involved than your life and experience.

John 5:39 -- You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me.

Here we have Jesus saying, "Please allow me to introduce myself." Where does Jesus send us to learn more about Him? What connection does Jesus make between Himself and eternal life? Compare this verse with John 14:6.

John 6:51 -- I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. And the bread that I will give for the life of the world is my flesh.

In this verse, it is Jesus talking. How did He give His flesh?

John 8:12 -- Again Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not live in darkness, but will have the light of life."

Who does Jesus claim to be in this verse? In your experience, what do darkness and light have to do with the bondage of "addictions?"

John 10:30, 14:7-9 -- "I and the Father are one." ... "If you had known me, you would have known my Father also."

Who does Jesus claim to be in this verse? Who are those who deny Jesus Christ and His claims actually against?

Colossians 1:15-16 -- He [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through Him and for Him.

What does Paul this verse teach about Jesus' role in creation? What is the responsibility of a creation toward its creator?

Mark 8:29 -- And He asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered Him, "You are the Christ."

Peter was Jesus' friend who spent three years walking with Him, and after His resurrection, preached the sermon that started the church. What did Peter know about Jesus?

John 1:29 -- The next day he saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!?"

This verse is John the Baptist talking, who was Jesus' cousin. How does John describe Jesus?

John 1:1 -- In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen His glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.

The writer of this verse is John the Apostle. Write down what John wants you to understand about Jesus.

Talk About The Real Story 1

Luke 5:18-25 -- And behold, some men were bringing on a bed a man who was paralyzed, and they were seeking to bring him in and lay him before Jesus, 19 but finding no way to bring him in, because of the crowd, they went up on the roof and let him down with his bed through the tiles into the midst before Jesus. 20 And when he saw their faith, he said, Man, your sins are forgiven you. 21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to question, saying, Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but God alone? 22 When Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answered them, Why do you question in your hearts? 23 Which is easier, to say, Your sins are forgiven you, or to say, Rise and walk? 24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins--he said to the man who was paralyzed--I say to you, rise, pick up your bed and go home. 25 And immediately he rose up before them and picked up what he had been lying on and went home, glorifying God.

You can be part of the real story!

Read Luke 5:18-25 (above) out loud. How did Jesus love the man who was lying on a bed?

What authority did Jesus want to prove in verse 24? What did Jesus do to prove He has authority to forgive sins?

Review what you learned about Jesus in your study on the previous page. Discuss the connection between who Jesus is and His authority to forgive sins.

Jesus paid the punishment for our sins by dying on the cross so that He is able to forgive our sins. Jesus' love for us is proven in His forgiveness of our sins. Read John 3:16, and discuss the connection between forgiveness and love.

Jesus loves the world, and wants everyone to be saved, but those that never confess their sins and receive His forgiveness never accept His love. Discuss why it is so important for an "addict" to believe and receive the love of Jesus in order to walk in victory over the "addiction."

Talk about why those, who have not received the love of Jesus and have never known His forgiveness, would balk at accepting that addictive behavior is sin.

What is the last thing that happened as a result of this incident between Jesus and the paralyzed man? Did the once-paralyzed man fulfill his purpose in life? Talk about how his forgiveness glorified God, and how your forgiveness would do the same.

Am I Part of the Real Story?

God's purpose for you, to glorify Him, does not depend on rules; as a matter of fact, you and I could never keep enough rules to glorify Him. It depends on being in a relationship. You need to have a relationship with God in order for His purposes to become yours.

The relationship with God is based on love. In God's love relationship with you, He reveals Himself and His purposes to you, and invites you to join Him. Then you choose to do His will, rather than yours.

How Do I Enter that Relationship?

Before you read on, pray. Ask God to give you a ready heart to receive the following truths:

- God is holy. His right response to sin is wrath (Romans 1:18).
- God defines sin as not being thankful and not honoring Him (Romans 1:21).
- Every human sins, thereby deserving God's wrath—death (Romans 3:23).
- God offers life, in the form of a free gift (Romans 6:23).
- God gave that gift when, because of His love for you, Jesus took God's wrath on Himself for your sins (Romans 5:8).
- Ask God to save you from the wrath your sins deserve, and He will (Romans 10:13).
- Confess Jesus as Lord (Romans 10:9-10).

God Loves You

God is love. All real love comes from Him. God's love is perfect and complete. God's love is consistent and unchanging. God's love is unfailing and never exhausted. God loves you because you are His creation, not

because you deserve it

God showed us what perfect love looks like when Jesus paid the price and took on Himself the penalty for our sin (1 John 4:10).

You will want to have God's love for you when you hear and believe the bad news. The bad news is that you and I deserve God's wrath, not God's love. Apart from Jesus Christ, we are doomed.

We didn't start life in a neutral position, and then shift into sin. We were born in sin, and then we kept choosing sin. Because of our sin, we are headed towards eternity in hell. If God is perfect and just, and He is, He must and will pour out His wrath on everyone who doesn't listen to and obey the truth about Him (Romans 1:18). It is not possible in any way, shape, or form to save yourself from this deserved punishment.

However, because God is also love, He performed an unfathomable act of mercy. He crushed His perfect Son, Jesus Christ. Because God loves you, He punished Jesus instead of you (Romans 5:8). He made a way for you to be saved from His just wrath—believe and receive Jesus' punishment for your sin. There is no other way than by accepting this gift by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9).

The blood that spurted and dribbled and poured from the slaughtered body hanging there on the cross was for you. Jesus took that beating to pay for your sins. Why?

Because He loves you. God paid a great cost to be able to invite you into a love relationship with Him.

A Right Relationship with God

You aren't automatically a child of God. The choice must be made to receive God's love by faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. You must trust that Jesus died for your sins, by confessing that you are a sinner and by believing that you are forgiven.

What does it mean to confess? Confess means "agree with God about my sin."

Jesus said He came so that you and I would repent and believe (Mark 1:15). What does it mean to repent? Repent means "complete change beyond former thought and behavior."

When you have received God's love, you confess your sins whenever you do not think right or act right. You forgive people who sin against you, because you have been forgiven. This shows people that Jesus Christ is Lord of your life, and that you trust in your heart that you are saved. Also you tell people that Jesus is your Savior (Romans 10:9-10).

When people mention sin of your past, you can honestly say, "Yes, I did that. But I am free from bondage to it. Jesus forgave me for it, and I am changing." If you have sinned against another, you go to that person. You

Do you believe that God loves you and so Jesus died for your sins? Do you confess that you are a sinner and repent of your sins? Do you receive Jesus as your Savior?

If so, you will deny yourself and live the new life that God has created, with Jesus as your Master and King.

confess that you have sinned against him or her. You tell him or her that Jesus has forgiven you, and humbly ask whether he or she would be willing to forgive you. God's Word tells us to seek to be reconciled with those against whom we have sinned (Matthew 5:23-24).

God says another surprising thing. He says that when we believe, we are completely and legally righteous. Not only does Jesus take our sins on Himself and bear the punishment we deserve, He also gives us His perfect righteousness. This is called double imputation.

The moment you believe, God is not your Judge any more. Rather, He becomes your Heavenly Father and you become His adopted child. Not only is this adoption unchangeable, but also it comes with an incredible inheritance—eternal life in Heaven and

all the benefits that are due a son or daughter.

New Life

Let's back up a moment, and think about double imputation. How can God call us righteous? After all, we needed the cross because of our sin. When God saves us, He makes us into new creations. We are not the same person we used to be (2 Corinthians 5:17-21). We do not have to sin anymore. We can joyfully obey God and live for His plan and purposes, as a matter of fact we will. When God looks on His children, He sees the reality of Christ's imputed righteousness, and He empowers us by His grace to become more like our big brother, Jesus.

When God saves you, until the end of your life on earth, you are in

the process of being changed to reflect Jesus' righteousness, by God's grace, in the power of His Holy Spirit. The Christian lifestyle is full of daily repentance and training in biblical thoughts and actions. God's love for you compels you to live for His glorious kingdom (2 Corinthians 5:14). You learn to die to yourself and live for Him (Romans 6:11). Instead of doing what you want, you deny yourself (Luke 9:23). You no longer live for your own plan, but for God's.

Do you believe that God loves you and sent Jesus to die for you? This is the prayer that God hears: "God, be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13). Have you admitted your sins and asked for God's mercy? Admit that you have lived without thanking and honoring God in all things. Tell Him you believe in Jesus as your Savior and want to be in a relationship with Him where you will obey Him as your Lord.



Saved by God's
grace
through
faith
in the
blood
Jesus bled for me.

Jesus, write me into Your story

Let me know that I am Yours

Philippians 3:8-9 -- Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith --

What has surpassing worth over everything else?

When we gain Christ and are found in Him, do we have a righteousness of our own? What does our righteousness depend on? How does Romans 3:21 explain this truth?

Philippians 3:10-12 -- that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

What is the "it" of these verses? The "it" of these verses refers to the righteousness of Christ which we have through faith in Christ, the righteousness of God that depends on faith. Clearly, we do not have a righteousness of our own that would bring us into the power of Christ's resurrection. Yet, here we are told to press on to make Christ's righteousness our own. What is the motivation as to why we are to press on?

In Romans 4:5 we learn about what is NOT the road to righteousness. What is NOT righteousness?

In self-destructive types of "addiction," such as cutting or anorexia, the "addict" has written a personal law and has come to believe that he or she must keep his or her own "rules." How does the truth of Christ's imputed righteousness counter this thinking?

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

Breathe a sigh of relief that we are expected to give a "no" answer to the following question: Will we ever come to the point of fully making Christ's righteousness our own?

What is the one thing we are to do about our past?

At the same time, what is the one thing we do as we move forward into the future?

Talk About The Real Story 2

John 3:14-21 -- And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, 15 that whoever believes in him may have eternal life. 16 For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. 18 Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God. 19 And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their works were evil. 20 For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his works should be exposed. 21 But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his works have been carried out in God.

What Jesus said about what really matters

Read aloud just the first two verses of John 3:14-15 above. To understand what Jesus is referring to, read Numbers 21:6-9. The name to whom Jesus is talking in John 3 (Nicodemus) was very familiar with how God told Moses to lift up the serpent, and how those who looked up to him for life, lived. Talk about what it must have been like to have been bitten by a snake, then looked up to the serpent and been healed.

Now read John 3:16. Why would Jesus precede John 3:16 with a reminder of God's saving those that looked up at the lifted serpent, and lived?

Read John 3:17-18. Who are the condemned people?
Do people who have done certain "bad things" have greater condemnation than others?
Do people who do certain "good things" have less condemnation than others?

In what ways is it easy to think that we are more condemned or less condemned?

Read John 3:19. Why do people choose darkness? Talk about temptations in your life to love darkness.

Read John 3:20. Why do people not choose light? What things in your life would you not want exposed?

Read John 3:21. When people do what is true and come to the light, are the good works they do of any credit to them? No. From Luke 18:19, who is the one who is good? Talk about what you have studied from Philippians 3:9.

What is the second word used to describe Jesus in John 14:6. Truth seems frightening, but when you receive Jesus Christ as your Savior, you come to love the truth. Truth becomes your first piece of protection (Ephesians 6:10-13). Truth is the first thought you choose (Philippians 4:8). In what ways are you tempted to think things other than the reality of Jesus, are true?

Who is God?

Why did God make us? God says He made us to glorify Him (Isaiah 43:7). To glorify God is to show people the reality of God by how He makes our lives different. When we catch a glimpse of God, we are filled with awe and apprehension. When we consider God's character, we admire and adore Him. From awe, apprehension and adoration flows imitation. Thus we live in ways that are thankful, obedient, and glorifying to God.

Only God is safe to glorify because only God is glorious. When we glorify ourselves, we destroy ourselves.

We must see God as He truly is because every desire and behavior, bad or good, flows from what we believe. Faulty and deceptive beliefs result in destructive desires and behaviors. Trustworthy and right beliefs lead to God-glorifying desires and behaviors.

Is God your God? Consider the glory of your God.

My God is Everlasting

God is everlasting. That means He exists endlessly, backward and forward. He has never been less, smaller, or not as perfect (Psalm 90:2). He has never and will never cease to exist. Contrastingly—I am like a cobweb that is ended by a gust of wind or a swipe of life's hand. I am always nearly over, one day nearer my earthly end. But I have hope in God's everlastingness.

I hope, because God has a past history (preceding creation) into which He has written my name. In that history, He has proven Himself strong and faithful. I hope because He calls and empowers me to endure my present days with patience. I hope because He has brought me into His eternal future existence; not as a beggar who cheats and sneaks

in behind someone important, but as a blood-bought and beloved friend, child, searched-for-and-found lost lamb.

My God is Immutable

God is immutable, unchangeable. God has never changed and can never be changed (James 1:17). His love will not fail. His wrath will not diminish. I dare not focus on God's love without recognizing His wrath, lest I not love and know the One True God. Never speak of His wrath without His love in your heart. Know the comfort and assurance that the God who never changes has made promises that will never fail. And, since God's attitude toward sin never changes, be spurred on to take His Word seriously.

My God is Omnipotent

God is omnipotent. God is all-powerful. He is able to do anything consistent with His unchangeableness and His perfection (Revelation 1:8, 2 Corinthians 6:18). I am frail and limited. It would be utter foolishness to compare or try to fathom God's power by comparison with even the strongest of us or the most brilliant of us.

As unable as I am to define God's power, He has revealed it in His Word. His power creates complex physical reality without the lift of a finger, simply by a word. God's power preserves life, flexing strong over death's chronic bombardment in resurrecting Christ from the dead and resurrecting faithful followers (2 Corinthians 13:4, Romans 1:16).

Doubters, those who do not live in the power of God, will see believers raised in the ultimate power of bodily resurrection (1 Corinthians 6:14). Doubters, those whose daily lives are not changed by God's power, need to see believers triumphing in the

face of daily trials and surrounding evils (Ephesians 1:19). When I act without God's power, I must confess my sin and let repentance move me into God's omnipotent power stream.

My God is Omniscient

God is omniscient, He knows everything perfectly. There is nothing God needs to learn. God cannot learn because there is nothing He doesn't already know! Everything that happens is related to His perfect knowledge (Psalm 147:4; Matthew 11:21; Psalm 139:16). Nothing I think, do, or say, can be hidden from God. No sin is hidden from God—not sin I commit, nor sin others commit. God knows it all, and yet He cares and loves me. I bask in this. I am known, intimately and truly, and yet I am loved.

My God is Omnipresent

God is omnipresent. God is everywhere always in all parts of the world. God is always near us, nearer than our thoughts (Psalm 139:7-10). No person can escape the presence of God. There is no place where anything can be apart from God.

In the presence of God I can know true joy, peace, rest, and an aching beauty found nowhere else. In times of sin, I quickly repent, because I welcome the sense of shame and guilt that is inflicted by God's presence.

My God is Sovereign

God is sovereign, flowing from His self-existence. Because God is the origin of all things, He is completely and totally in control of all things. Nothing exists or happens apart from His sovereign ruler-ship (Psalm 135:6, Acts 17:24-27). While it can be difficult to comprehend God's

It only takes a glimpse of God's glory. See Him. See the isolation wrought by destructive, addictive behaviors. Compare this to sweet longing for God. This then, God, was what you'd been looking for all along. He satisfies fully. Be content in Him.

sovereign will and rule over all things, because He has redeemed me I accept this truth and rest in it (Isaiah 55:9). Given that God is sovereign, I know that it is an impossibility for me to control things which are outside the realm of my God-given ability and responsibility to control. Thus, rather than stressing out in the futility of trying to manipulate and change things over which I have no control, I step away. I let God be God.

God is sovereign even over the hurts others inflict; He can use them for His good purposes. When I recognize God's sovereignty, I back off from defending myself. Rather, I trust God to use my pain for His glory.

The Greatness and Glory of God

The above attributes of God are so great that we quickly recognize they are impossible to fully imitate. Yes we will

live forever in eternity, but our lives had a beginning point, unlike God's eternality. Our wasting-away bodies make it impossible to imitate God's consistent unchangingness. We seek for knowledge, thinking it to be power, but too often all knowledge does is feed pride and remove wisdom. We may be in a position of rulership over other humans, but it never flows from self-existence.

We've learned about great and glorious attributes of God by which only He is characterized. How do we reconcile the obvious fact that we aren't unchangable, and all-powerful, and all-knowing with the fact that we are created as little images of God, and commanded to imitate God the way children parrot a parent?

We must also study attributes of God which we can imitate. In the personal study section that follows, we

will consider some of the goodnesses of God, the aspects He empowers us to imitate.

The Goodness of God

But before we dive into our Bibles to study God's goodnesses, a warning is in order. There is a movement to define God by experience or pragmatism. Apart from what Scripture says about God, folks often say, "This is how I have experienced God and what I will imitate." Academia or psychology often teach us to define our own choices of what to imitate.

We must go to God to see God. We dare not trust experience, nor education, nor theories, nor studies. He has revealed Himself to us! The Most High God has chosen to write about Himself so that we could know Him. It is deception to seek to know Him apart from what He has revealed in the Bible.

So, let's love and submit to the Bible, grateful that God has not left us to the whims of our hearts. We can know who our God is, with rock-solid certainty.

Holy,
holy,
Holy
is the
LORD
of hosts,
the
whole
earth
is
full
of
His
glory.



Who God is, changes me...

Please read the listed verses, and then write them down in your own words, noting especially what you learn about God.

My God is truth
John 17:3

Titus 1:2

God is the supreme and ultimate reality, who overrides every other preception of truth. As the source of truth, it is impossible for God to lie or deceive. In God there is only faithfulness and consistency, never falsehood or misconception.

My God is righteous
Psalm 71:19 15:17, 129:4

Acts 17:31

In God, righteousness and justice are the same thing. God is perfectly just and right (Deuteronomy 32:4). God is the definition and absolute standard of righteousness and in Jesus Christ, we see God's righteousness in flesh.

My God is love
John 14:21

Romans 8:28-39

Love seeks the good of another. Love in God is seen in the personal sacrifice of His Son, for the good of everyone who believes.

My God is holy
1 Samuel 2:2

1 Peter 1:15-16

God is perfectly pure and set apart from all that is common or unclean. When we see God's holiness, we are faced with our depravity.

My God is good
Psalm 33:5

Romans 8:28-29

God's goodness is connected to what is eternal, and is revealed in His Son, Jesus Christ. God's goodness is seen in us only when we are in conformity to His Son. Therefore, God defines as good anything that makes me look more like Jesus Christ,

My God is... and therefore I am changing... changed...

Before you begin to discuss the questions, read the verses aloud.

God is truth—John 17:3, Titus 1:2

God cannot lie or deceive because He is the supreme and ultimate reality, who overrides every other preception of truth. In what ways has God revealed truth to mankind?

In my life, how have I been deceived to think that His truth isn't real for me?

In my life, what could I change, or what could be changed, so that I better imitate God's truth?

God is righteous—Psalm 71:19 15:17, 129:4, Acts 17:31

God is perfectly just and right (Deuteronomy 32:4), God is the definition and absolute standard of righteousness and justice or fairness. We do not define righteousness or fairness or justice based on experience or personal ideology. In my life, how have I created personal standards or definitions of what is right?

How have I tried to define fairness apart from God's mercy?

How have I set myself in the position of judging, of defining what is just?

In my life, what could I change, or what could be changed, so that I better imitate God's righteousness?

God is love—John 14:21, Romans 8:28-39

Love seeks the good of another. Love in God is seen in the personal sacrifice of His Son, for the good of everyone who believes. How has God loved me?

In my life, to whom have I not shown love by doing only what is good for that person?

In my life, what could I change, or what could be changed, so that I better imitate God's love?

God is holy—1 Samuel 2:2, 1 Peter 1:15-16

God is perfectly pure and set apart from all that is common or unclean. In view of God's holiness, have I recognized and admitted my depravity?

In my life, what could I change, or what could be changed, for me to better imitate God's holiness?

God is good—Psalm 33:5, Romans 8:28-29

God defines as good anything that makes me look more like Jesus Christ, and therefore, gives Him glory. In what areas of my life must I be changed in order to be more like Jesus Christ?

Worship God or Idols

There is only one God, but there are many idols. Whatever you or I choose to adore more than God becomes a personal idol—drugs, dads, dogs, and on it goes. Destruction is always the end result of worshiping anything except God.

We were created in God's image. What does it mean to be an image? An image is a likeness or a reflection. The Creator intended His creation (that's us) to act like Him because we worship Him. But He won't force it on us, it's a choice. Worship is never forced, it's a choice. What do we choose? We worship ourselves and other creation. The problem is, any worship other than our intended purpose, to worship God, is self-destruction and harmfully enslaving. Addictive.

Today we're going to learn the real issue of addictions. And we will see that really we are all addicts. The real issue is worship. If you repeatedly choose self-destructive, enslaving behaviors, you are worshipping something created; you are not worshipping the glorious Creator. The real problem is not that you have a disease, the real problem is that you are an idol worshipper caught up in idolatry.

God knows this. When the Bible describes an idol worshipper or idolater, the words are just those we would use to describe an "addict."

they tried to do it in secret, God knew, and He warned them over and over. All the while, they stubbornly refused to listen. God even sent a lion to show them that their idol worship only meant trouble. Read about it in 2 Kings 17:9-41. Israel despised God's warnings (vs. 15). They made metal images and worshipped astrology (vs. 16). They offered up their children for the sake of the idol (vs. 17). (Today many children are being sacrificed because parents are "addicted" to drugs or work or...). Eventually, they tried to mix worshipping God with their own gods, but that never works, because God is the One True God and He can only be worshipped as the One True God.

God caused the Israelites to lose their land, removing them from the lure of their temptations. He invited those who survived to pray to the God who can save (Isaiah 45:20).

The people were stupid and foolish! They picked up new idols from the nations that had captured them, serving idols made of wood. Half the tree they used for firewood, and half the tree they worshipped (Jeremiah 10:1-10). They could have been worshipping the Most High God, their Creator and King!

Eventually, the Israelites took idols into their hearts (Ezekiel 14:3-5). They became strangers to God because of their idols.

description of idolatry doesn't match a description of addictions that you would find at a treatment facility or class on "addictions."

- DENY—They ignore even repeated warnings about the harm of the idol (addiction)—2 Kings 17:15.
- DECEIVE—They deceive (lie, steal) in order to get their idol (addiction)—2 Kings 17:15.
- DISEASE—Diseases and plagues break out among them, and they don't care if they are filthy—Psalm 106:29-38.
- DEGRADE—They prostitute themselves to get the idol (addiction)—Psalm 106:39.
- DESTROY—They loathe food and harm their bodies—Psalm 107:18.
- DELUSION—The idols (addictions) provide false dreams and empty consolations. Eventually, the idolater (addict) wanders the streets aimlessly—Zechariah 10:2.
- DISGRACE—Personal disgrace is preferred over not having the idol (addiction)—Isaiah 42:17.
- LOSS OF SENSES—The idol (addiction) has a mouth but doesn't speak, eyes but doesn't see, ears but don't hear...etc. Those who worship the idol (addiction) become likewise unable to speak, see, hear, feel, smell, walk—Psalm 115:4-8.
- IGNORE RESPONSIBILITY—The idol (addiction) is sought so relentlessly that the idolater (addict) does not fulfill his or her responsibilities—Jeremiah 2:5.
- HOPELESS—Hope is forsaken in favor of the idol (addiction). The idolater (addict) hopelessly refuses to seek the steadfast love and forgiveness of God—Jonah 2:8.

The root problem behind defeating, destructive behaviors is idolatry. Embrace this truth. Confess your sin. Gain true freedom from addiction in the only way that really works: Worship God.

The Bible Describes Idolatry (or Addiction)

The nation Israel, God's special nation, sinned against Him. They worshipped and served idols. Though

Results of Idolatry (or Addiction)

Now we'll see how the Bible describes the results of idolatry. You'll be surprised! See if the Bible's

Addiction is nothing new. God is very familiar with what we think of when we hear the word addiction, and God is very familiar with people who choose addiction.

In weeks to come, we'll see how the Bible gives us the perfect plan to deal with idolatries (addictions). God does not give us hopeless diagnosis', medications, therapies, rehabilitation, or recovery. God makes us new! God gives us a new heart and a new spirit (Ezekiel 36:26-27)!

Many Types of "Addictions"

There are many kinds of idols that we invent and worship. Our hearts can create an idol from whatever it is that we want, crave, obsess over. Addicts

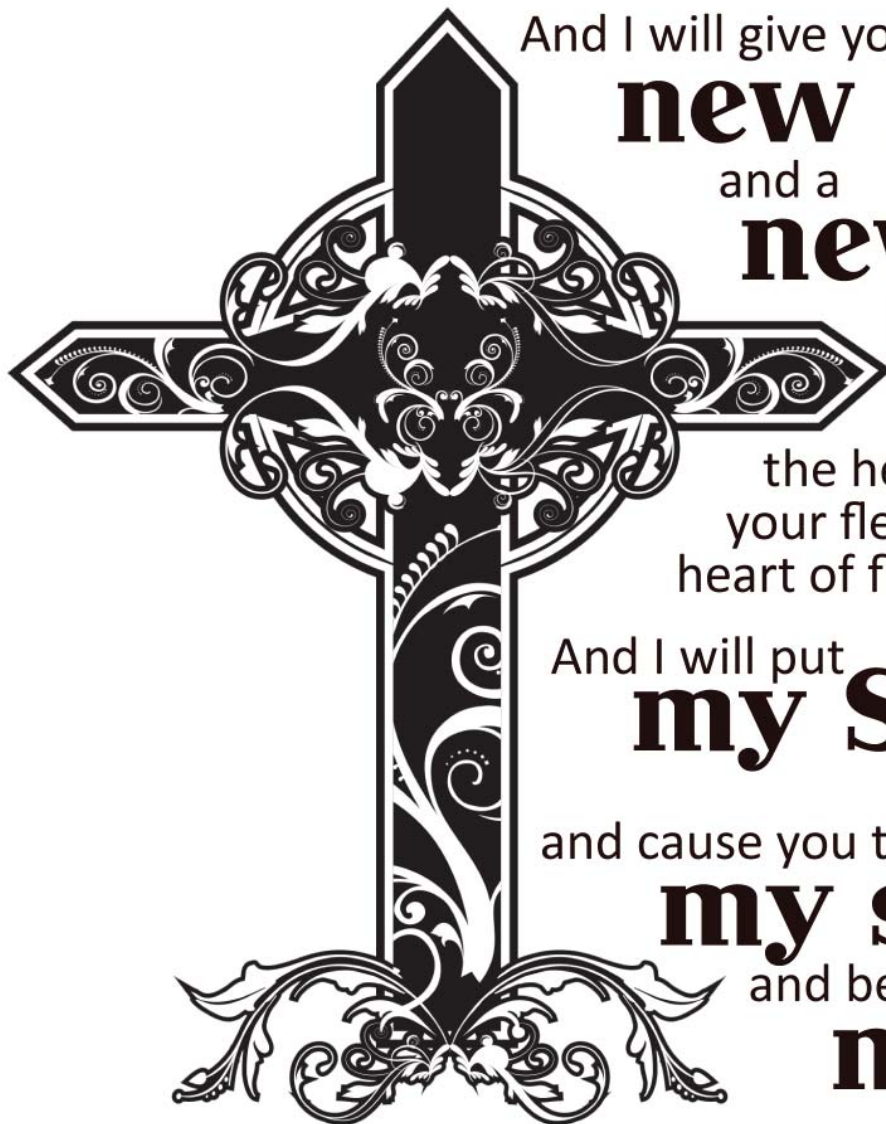
choose addictive behaviors because their hearts crave something. Even if you don't think you are an addict, this is still an important principle for you. Sinners choose sin because our hearts crave something. We need God to show us and help us understand the idols our hearts have created, to which we cling so stubbornly and defeatedly.

Physical Effects of "Addiction"

Most Christians who have been involved in addictive behaviors still deal with physical cravings. Don't let these physiological difficulties discourage you. Understand that you are involved in a violent battle. There is pain in war.

But remember, you battle from the position of worshipping the One True God, who puts a new spirit within you and a new heart within you. When you stop bowing before the idol, when you stop worshipping what you want from your "addiction," you have the Holy Spirit of the Living God, who is able to raise the dead, empowering you. This does not mean it will be easy, it does mean that all the power you need is available to you.

It also means the choice is yours. The power to deal with and overcome the physiological affects of your "addiction" is available to you. Self-control, not your own strength but the strength of the God you worship, is possible.



And I will give you a

new heart

and a

new spirit

I will put within you.

And I will remove
the heart of stone from
your flesh and give you a
heart of flesh.

And I will put

my Spirit

within you,

and cause you to walk in

my statutes

and be careful to obey

my rules.

Ezekiel 36:26-27

Idolatries, Idolatries

Idolatries, Idolatries

Something matters most for anyone involved in self-destructive habits or enslaving behaviors. The habits and behaviors are a way to get the something that matters most to the person caught up in the habit or behavior. What is being worshipped? Is it the habit, the behavior, or the something that matters most? It's the something that matters so much. This definition might be helpful: Your idol is anything you are willing to sin to get.

Think about it. If you smoke, do porn, or gamble to get a rush, perhaps you worship pleasure. If you drink, or cut to get away from and momentarily forget other pain, you might worship escape. If you over-eat or under-eat, over-shop or under-shop to have control, could be you worship control. The smoking, porn, gambling, drinking, cutting, eating, shopping—these are all just tools that you use to help you worship your idol.

What can stop you from worshipping an idol? Rehabilitation facilities cannot. Not even consequences, such as losing your children or home or family can stop you from worshipping your idol. Sometimes folks say, "When God fixes my heart, I'll stop," but that kind of thinking cannot stop you from worshipping your idol. What can stop you from worshipping your idol? We worship our way into our "addictions," we have to worship our way out. You need to replace worshipping your idol with worshipping the One True God.

Worship, Worship, Worship

Worship, Worship, Worship

Ezekiel 36:26-27 -- And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

When God gives you a new heart, what does He do with your old heart?

Ezekiel 36:27 -- And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules.

The Bible teaches that God gives you a new heart, and then you choose to worship Him instead of the idol, by the power of His Holy Spirit. What changes in a Christian because of the Holy Spirit and His power?

If you have not received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior, you do not have the power of the Holy Spirit in you to be able to worship God and glorify God. Even if you looked as if you were doing right, it would not be from the right motive, to glorify God. If you are not sure whether you have looked to Christ alone for salvation, please read again (aloud) pages 14-15, the chapter entitled ***Am I Part of the Real Story?***

The new heart God gives you is alive, and like anything alive, requires care. You must fill it with God's Word.

Psalms 119:9, 11 -- How can a young man keep his way pure? By guarding it according to your word. I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.

How are you protected from sin?

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

What must happen to your old self so that you can be free from the enslaving habits and behaviors?

Talk About The Real Story 4

Matthew 5:29-30 -- If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body be thrown into hell. 30 And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. For it is better that you lose one of your members than that your whole body go into hell.

Dead to sin

Romans 6:11-13 -- So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus. 12 Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, to make you obey its passions. 13 Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Dead to my idol. Alive to my God.

Whether you are a new Christian and just beginning the battle, or whether you have previously received Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and still embroiled in the thick of the struggle, there's something you need to understand. As you wrestle temptation, your identity is in Christ. Your life is in Christ. You are alive to Christ and you are dead to sin.

Read Matthew 5:29-30 (above). Jesus gave us two word pictures that stress the importance of staying away from things that might lead us to sin. He deliberately overstated how we may not look at things that might lead us to sin, or place our hands anywhere near what might lead us to sin. Jesus pointed out where we will end up if we keep sinning. Why do you think Jesus used hell to motivate us?

Read Romans 6:11-13 (above). Sin wants you to obey its passions. But God says we are dead to sin, and we do not to present your body to sin as its tool any longer. To whom are you commanded to present your body?

How would it look in your life to present your body to God, rather than to sin. Write down and discuss ways do you need to make radical changes in your life to avoid temptation. (NOTE: This does not mean literally cutting out your eye or cutting off your hand but it means cutting out what you see and touch that connects you with sin.) In other words, what habits do you need to change?

Consider your schedules. What is the best time to read your Bible every day? If you are a working man or woman, perhaps early in the morning before preparing for work. If you work very early, perhaps on break. If you are a young Mom, perhaps as your children are napping. How will you be accountable to read the Bible daily?

Whenever you find yourself struggling, start to pray. Proverbs 3:3-4 is a wonderful passage to pray through. Tell God that you trust Him with all your heart and will not listen to your thoughts. Tell God that you acknowledge Him and will worship Him. Then talk to Him about what you are doing differently than before, confessing your struggle and asking Him to keep you on the straight path. Write out your prayer here:

And, whenever you find yourself struggling, after you have prayed, call your mature Christian friend immediately (and have a back-up in case that person isn't available). Ask him or her to pray for you and to encourage you to think biblically and to do what glorifies God. Write the name of the friend(s) whom you will call here:

Fight Idolatries

We need to fight our idolatries. This requires spiritual violence. Thankfully, we are fighting in the victory of the powerful Ruler of rulers, King of kings, and Lord of lords—Jesus Christ.

Do you remember back in Genesis that God said He made us in His image? We have messed that up totally, haven't we. We have chosen rather to reflect the image of Satan, through idol worship. The Old Testament uses a very appropriate term for these idols—graven images. Graven means something that is deeply carved and firmly fixed. Indeed, our idols are graven into us.

But, there's an answer to our graven idolatries: Jesus, the right and perfect image of God (Colossians 1:13-23).

God wants to make us more like His Son Jesus Christ. This requires full

dependence and complete reliance on Him, through the grace of Jesus Christ, by the power of the Holy Spirit. Read the acronym JESUS, at the bottom of the page.

For those of us that are entrenched in enslaving habits or who are coming from excessive substance abuse, our fight includes dealing with physiological cravings. Handling these painful and debilitating physical consequences of choosing "addictive" behavior is part of our responsibility. While the battle may rage stronger, we can depend on God and He will empower us to endure and overcome as we worship Him rather than our idol.

Jesus and Genetics (Genetics = I was born this way)

In order to think thoroughly about destructive mindsets and

enslaving behaviors, we need to cover the question of genetics. Sometimes you hear folks say, "I was born this way. I can't help it." Likely someone has told them they are burdened with a genetic predisposition or condition. We tend to appreciate this worldly thinking, after all it takes us off the hot seat.

Let's look at a few ways the Bible addresses this issue:

- We are created and saved for the purpose of glorifying God and doing good works (Ephesians 2:10).
- Everyone is born with a genetic defect that destines us to die, and with a sin nature that causes us to sin (Romans 5:12, 3:23).
- Some sins cling to some of us more closely, or beset us more easily (Hebrews 12:1). Some have been told they have a genetic predisposition towards a besetting sin, such as alcohol or mood-altering drugs. A father may have been an "alcoholic," or a mother may have handled her problems with prescription anti-depressants. Doctors have at times said that the "buffering enzyme" when some people feel "out of control" is missing. Maybe. But still, there's that initial visit to the bar or liquor store, or that choice of the doctor known for writing prescriptions. Everyone is still responsible regarding how temptation is handled.
- Please pay attention to this serious warning from Dr. Mark Shaw in "The Heart of Addiction:"
Neurologists think there is nothing in the body that can act as a buffer for crystal meth (methamphetamine) resulting in its highly addictive properties and huge potential for dependency. This drug is ruining lives like no other

Jesus Christ
Endurance
Scripture
Urgency
Support

Have you come to know the One who is Faithful and True as your Ruling King (Revelation 19:11-16)?

Good job of hanging in there, especially if your battle includes physiological cravings. Stick to it, and keep letting this trial grow you (Romans 5:3-5).

Every word of God is right (Psalm 33:4). Be suspicious of statement such as "God told me" without Scriptural foundation. Are you reading God's Word regularly?

Don't lose the sense of urgency. You don't know whether there will be another chance for you (Romans 1:28). As God changes you, be used in other's lives.

The body of Christ works together. Have you become part of a church yet (Hebrews 10:24-25)? You need the support of discipleship and you need the discipline of submission to biblical authority.

illegal drug ever has, so I urge you to never try it. It's also known as crank, ice, and meth. Many who study it think that users of this drug become physically addicted after the first time.

As those who trust Jesus Christ for salvation, no matter what our genetic predisposition, we are all in the process of growing and changing to be more like Jesus. Everything that happens in our lives is put there by God as a good thing, to change us to be more like Jesus (Romans 8:28-29). As we worship God rather than idols or graven images, we are being changed into the image of Jesus Christ.

What are some of the idols you worship instead of worshipping the One True God? Ask yourself which of these you want so much they'd motivate you to sin:

- Comfort?
- Feelings?
- Pleasure?
- Ease?
- Control?
- Security?
- Approval?
- Accumulation/achievement?
- Dignity/respect?
- Affection/attention?
- Authority/power?
- Acceptance/adulation?

- Manipulation, lying, stealing
- Anger, depression
- Laziness, anxiety
- Under-eating, over-eating
- Self-harm, excessive exercise
- Drugs, alcohol
- Shopping, internet
- Bitterness, resentment, anger
- Sex, pornography
- Gaming, virtual world
- Gambling, abusing people

The behaviors that are labelled "addiction" are really just tools we use to worship our idol. Let's say a gal worships affection. When she doesn't think she has enough from her parents, she will give her body to a guy just for affection. Let's say a guy worships pleasure. He likes the feeling from crack, and ignores his responsibilities for one more hit.

Do you want to worship the idol more than you want to stay away from self-destruction? The use of tools to worship idols destroyed the nation Israel. They lost their homes and freedom in order to set an example for us (1 Corinthians 10:6-7).

- Rather than worship God, they worshiped other gods.
- The sinful actions became sinful habits.
- They became dominated and enslaved by sinful habits.

Let the nation Israel teach us that we desperately need to fight

An idol is anything that motivates us to sin; anything that we choose over glorifying God; anything that stops us from giving Him thanks.

How Can I Know?

How can we measure whether we are worshipping God or worshipping idols? Ask yourself two questions:

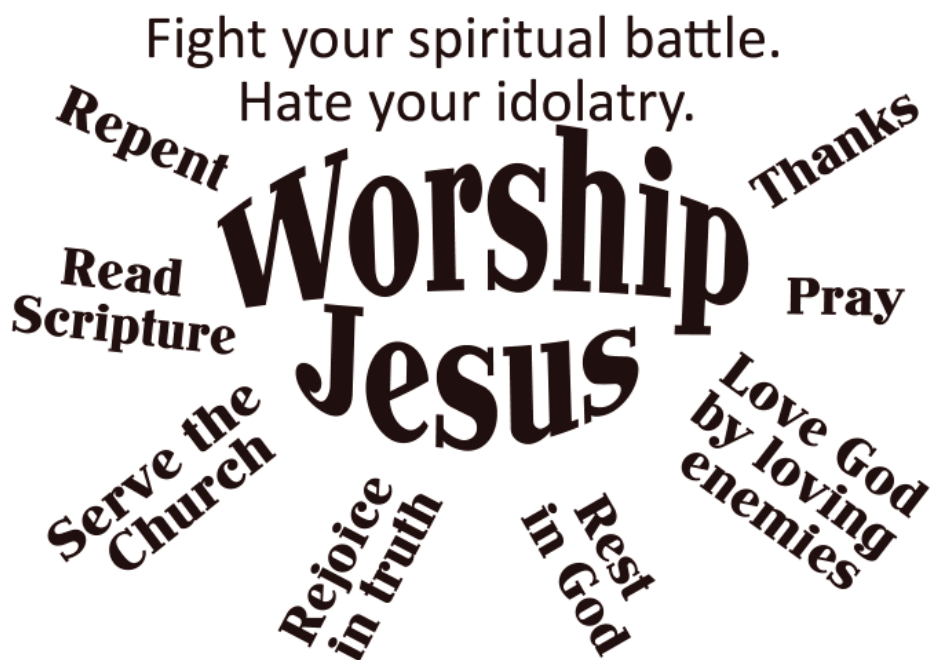
1. What do I want so badly that I'm willing to sin to obtain?
2. What do I sin because I can't or don't have it, or because it doesn't happen?

Whatever we sin to obtain, or whatever we sin because we didn't obtain it—this is our idol.

This takes courage. Be brave. Admit what motivates you to sin. When we identify what we want so deeply we will sin for it, we can know what we truly worship.

Tools

Bondage behaviors are nothing more than tools by which we worship our idols. We find many tools, or sinful habits, to use in serving our idols, such as:



Invite the Violence

Enforce the Fury

Welcome the War

This is neither the time nor the topic for passivity. When it comes to fighting idols, we must wage spiritual violence. We must arm ourselves for battle with the mighty fervor and fury of our God and His omni-powerful Holy Spirit.

Take the Offense Against Temptation

Begin by identifying the idols that tempt you.

- ☐ Comfort? Certain feelings? Pleasure? Ease?
- ☐ Control? Security? Approval? Accumulation/achievement?
- ☐ Dignity/respect? Affection/attention? Authority/power? Acceptance/adulation?

Circle the ones over which you are most likely to sin.

1 Corinthians 10:13 -- No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

Cross out the word "temptation in the line above." Write over it the name of the above idol(s) which you checked.

Have you endured particular difficulty regarding that idol? Have you felt that your right to that idol has been denied you? What "stresses you out"? In what unique ways has your life been harder because you did not or do not have what your heart so longs for?

1 Corinthians 10:13 -- God is faithful.

In what areas of your life have felt forgotten, or tended to believe that God is unfaithful to His promises?

1 Corinthians 10:13 -- And He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.

We considered a list of tools often used worship idols. Circle those you have chosen in the past.

- Under or over eating
- Manipulation, lying, stealing
- Anger, depression
- Laziness, anxiety
- Drugs/alcohol
- Shopping/internet
- Sex, pornography
- Gaming, virtual world
- Gambling
- Others _____

By choosing your tool, you evidenced that you think you've been given more than you can handle. Your behavior reveals that you have thought your sinful tool was your only option to deal with the extreme pressures of your life.

1 Corinthians 10:13 -- But with the temptation to _____, He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

After "temptation to" write the names of the idol(s) you checked at the top of the page. Escape does not mean running away. You will be able to endure it, to stand under it, to battle it. How does the temptation caused by this idol seem unsolvable? What do you believe is difficult about enduring it?

Talk About The Real Story 5

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

Flee Idolatry

1 Corinthians 10:14 -- Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

You are Loved. So, Hate Your Idols

Name the personal idol(s) which cause you to be tempted: _____

1 Corinthians 10:13 -- No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

Step back and consider this objectively. How is what you face similar to what others face?

1 Corinthians 10:13 -- God is faithful.

List evidences of God's faithfulness in your life. Begin with salvation from hell. Include the church because the gates of hell will not prevail against her, and include the name of a godly Christian friend who tells you the truth.

1 Corinthians 10:13 -- And He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability.

List resources that are already present in your life to help you deal with the tools you have used. In what ways could you more faithfully avail yourself of the church and of biblical counsel?

1 Corinthians 10:13 -- But with the temptation to _____, He will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

What specific Scriptures address the tool you have used to worship your idol? (If you are not able to find these, please ask your pastor). This is the offensive weapon you need to pick up and wield against the temptation. Consider 2 Timothy 3:16-17 and Psalm 119:11 and talk about how to put those Scriptures to use in your life.

Identify and discuss changes in your thinking that would empower you to endure your situation.

1 Corinthians 10:14 -- Therefore my beloved, flee from idolatry.

Talk about your personal plan to hate and repel and run from the idols you identified.

Rule and Authority

We've been learning about the purpose for our lives—to glorify God as His image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27). We've identified that we glorify Him when we obey the Bible's specific commands and live by its principles.

Today we'll be looking at the very first command God gave to men and women. In Genesis 1:28 God commanded that we multiply to fill or replenish the earth, then subdue and rule it. In the command to multiply, we've done a pretty good job of multiplying physically, while struggling with multiplying spiritually—that is, in disciple-making (Isaiah 53:1-12, Isaiah 54:1, Matthew 28:19-20). This study is one attempt to encourage faithfulness in disciple-making.

The second part of the command is to "subdue and rule" the earth. Some translations use the terms "rule and have dominion." Let's consider the meanings of these words, in light of the verses prior to Genesis 1:28.

"Subdue" or "rule" refers to taking every thought, deed, and feeling captive to the authority of Jesus Christ's Lordship, as a reflection of God's image/likeness.

"Rule" or "have dominion" means to willingly assert authority, when and where that would be a reflection of God's image.

A Problem

There's a problem with this second part of the command right off the bat. It might be one of the reasons we like to ignore it and focus rather on having more babies.

The problem with authority and rulership began when Satan decided he did not like the way God was ruling. Satan thought he should have more say in matters than God had designed him to have (Isaiah 14:12-14). Jesus

saw Satan fall from heaven, like lightning (Luke 10:18).

Then Adam and Eve chose to agree with Satan's attitude toward God, and ever since that tragic day we are fallen people. One of the affects of our fallenness is that we have a problem with authority.

All too often we assert authority when we must subdue. An example in our personal lives occurred when we lived in our first apartment. The apartment complex rules called for curtains with white liners. My objection to that rule revealed that I (Ruth) wanted to rule, when I needed to subdue my rebellious thoughts about choosing my own type of curtains.

Or, we become passive when we need to assert authority. This is apparent in parenting cases where the children are in control.

Our post-modern culture denies objective truth. It trains us to say, "This is my truth, and that is your truth." In this mindset, each person is his or her own authority. The worst part of this deception says, "There is no such thing as ultimate authority." All around us there is a steady and growing suspicion of authority. When authority is thus undermined, there is no landing pad for the gospel. There is no room for a God who pours out wrath on those who reject His authority—apart from belief in Christ's atonement—and who requires submission of His people.

So we do well to stop and consider the importance and the implications of the Genesis 1:28 command regarding rule and dominion.

Feeding Wrong Rule

Why do we rule wrongly and become passive? Often because we've embraced a victim mentality.

Those who choose a victim mentality allow the sin of others to define who they are and what they do. They live as victims of their circumstances, rather than ruling and having dominion over their lives.

It looks like passivity. It looks as if our response should be empathy and compassion. But the passivity is really rebellion. Victim thinkers live with eyes focused on other's sin, but Scripture says our eyes need to be on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2).

Victim thinking is an attempt to control people or situations. Victim thinking is as self-destructive an addiction as any. It justifies the abdicating of right rule and dominion, and it is rooted in rebellion against God's command to subdue and rule the earth.

Solution

So, we've unearthed a problem. Jesus never left it at that, did He? He gives the solution. Remember our first command to rule and have dominion over the earth? In his first sermon, Jesus taught us how to obey that first command. The way to rule the earth in the image and likeness of God is through meekness, or humility (Matthew 5:5). The reward? Inherit the earth.

Not only does humility resist Satan, but humility also submits to God's authority (1 Peter 5:6-8). Right rule and dominion only takes place under God's authority, which comes to us in the form of a human face. In order to submit to God's authority, we will submit to human authority—the only disqualifier will be if we are told to sin.

Submission to authority is the beginning of ruling and having dominion. No-one can lead who does not first follow. No-one can rule who does not first submit. Jesus modeled this for us, submitting all the way to the cross (Philippians 2:8-11).

God's command that we rule and have dominion followed just after our being created in His image and likeness. As God's image, everything about us,

to change and grow in submission to human authority.

We live in the balance between ruling and having dominion, between

therefore we are all sinners. There is no perfect authority.

When we don't submit to authority because it is imperfect, we are revealing our rebellion. Now, that is not to say that we submit to authority into sin. Ephesians 5:22 teaches wives to submit as to the Lord. Acts 5:29 teaches citizens that obedience to laws of the land must be fulfilled in submission to God.

However, often our problem with authority isn't because we're being asked to sin, it's because we are rebellious. It's because we are being ruled by our idolatries. We need to subdue our desires in humble obedience to earthly authorities.

Just to recap, often it's victim thinking that allows us to justify rebellion. Victims don't rule their desires and obsessions, they worship a destructive idol called control. Victors do rule their desires and obsessions, and humbly submit to authority.

As redeemed rebels who choose to worship God rather than our idols, in the power of the Holy Spirit, we can subdue and rule over our idols. We can change our desires and obsessions and begin to worship. Victims become victors as they are ruled by God's Word in submission to the Great High King, the One True God.

Submission to authority is the beginning of ruling and having dominion. No one can lead who does not follow. No one can rule who does not submit.

including our thought-lives, would be submitted to what God tell us. In this manner, God's Word would then be held high and all would see the glory of His authority.

But, we chose sin and death. Our sin nature constantly tempts us to rise up in proud misuse of the command to rule. Tragically, warped rulership and wrong dominion characterize our earth. For now. The story is not over.

In the end, God's people will rule the earth with Christ (Matthew 19:28-30, 1 Corinthians 6:2, 2 Timothy 2:12, Revelation 1:6, 5:10).

We will rule with Christ under God's ultimate authority, which means we will rule after being judged by our submission to Christ (Romans 14:10, 1 Corinthians 3:11-15, 2 Corinthians 5:10, 2 John 1:7-8).

submitting and taking authority. The balance of order is found in God's Word. As we study the Bible, God teaches us wise ordering of every aspect of our lives—our homes, our bodies, our desires, our motivations, our jobs, our families, our finances.

God is serious about submission to our earthly authorities. He commands submission to:

- Government
- Employers
- Christ
- Husbands
- Parents
- Church leaders
- One another in His church

God gives us the responsibility of ordering our lives His way in rulership and submission, in leadership and followership. Rather than fulfilling that responsibility, a victim mentality reacts to the imperfections of authority. It is a fallen world, God knows, and

Earthly Authority

While we live on earth, those of us who are redeemed by God choose

The crisis of **authority** is in a way a bigger crisis than the crisis of truth. Postmodern culture is a system in which authority is undermined; but God is a Judge to whose authority all will be held accountable. Postmodern thinking is dangerously destructive because it explains away the validity of **authority.**

The **GOSPEL** becomes unimaginable because to avail it, one must accept God's **authority.**

The Bible becomes irrelevant because to obey it, one must believe it as absolute truth. Church becomes impossible because to be part of it, one must willing ascribe authority to its elders.



God's First Command: Rule

Right Rule Accepts Authority

Do you like this topic? Mostly, we like the part about taking rule (at least when we feel like it), but not the part about accepting authority. No matter. God is serious about authority. Our response to authority is a fundamental evidence that reveals whether or not we have accepted God's free gift of salvation.

Responses to authority have very little to do with the problems of imperfect authority. All of us are under imperfect authority. In a fallen world there will be no perfect authority. First our parents and teachers failed us. Then a boss, or a husband, or a pastor failed us. Still, God calls for our obedience.

Responding with rebellion not only results in discipline, it also removes joy. Escaping by numbing the pain is not only ineffective, it is also destructive. Every Christian can respond to authority in ways that glorify God.

In your Bible, read the following passages. Write down the type of response God commands to the various types of authority:

Ephesians 5:1-3—Children to parents

Ephesians 5:22, 1 Peter 3:1—Wives to husbands

Hebrews 13:17, 1 Corinthians 16:15-16—Church members to pastors

1 Peter 2:18—Employees to employers

Romans 13:1-5, 1 Peter 2:13-14—All people to government

Ephesians 5:21, 1 Peter 5:5—All believers to one another

James 4:7, Romans 6:13—All believers to God

Please note that no human authority is given God's absolute authority. If your authority asks you to sin, you must respectfully refuse to sin. However, in every other request, submission is the right response. In the face of authorities' failure, (such as in 1 Peter 3:1 where a husband does not obey God or in 1 Peter 2:18 where an employer is unjust), God still requires submission from Christians.

Proverbs 21:1 -- The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord; he turns it wherever he will.

What does this verse teach, even about leadership that we believe to be poor?

Acts 17:26-27 -- And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place, 27 that they should seek God, and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him. Yet he is actually not far from each one of us...

Why does God place difficult authority over us? What response does He want from us?

Are you concentrating more on your authorities' relationship to God than on yours? Are you focused more on how you are being ruled than on ruling your responses?

God Ultimately Rules Everyone

Submit to His Authority

The subject of authority provides wonderful opportunity for discussion, particularly for those that indulge in self-destructive or "addictive" behaviors. All "addictions" begin with an act of rebellion. It is key to think well about rule and dominion. To worship God is to submit to His authority. We must rule our desires and submit all our responses to God's authority.

Genesis 50:20 -- As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good...

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

What is the truth about authority that we believe to be poor? Talk about responses that would evidence that you are resting in God's sovereign goodness.

Matthew 7:3-5 -- Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 4 Or how can you say to your brother, Let me take the speck out of your eye, when there is the log in your own eye? 5 You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye.

What is in your eye when you are critical of authority? What is in your eye when you disrespect authority?

Respect authority

1 Timothy 2:1-2 -- First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, 2 for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way.

Write down your prayer for those in authority over you.

1 Peter 2:21 -- For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

Jesus Christ set an example of obedient submission to God. In what ways do you need to embrace suffering so that you too may set this example? (If you are experiencing physiological consequences of an "addiction," memorize this verse and recite it at least 20 times per day, and every time you desire to return to your sinful behaviors).

1 Peter 3:8-11 -- Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing. 10 For whoever desires to love life and see good days, let him keep his tongue from evil and his lips from speaking deceit; let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it.

Talk about ways to return good for evil. This requires planning ahead. First pray, then determine ways to be helpful, and decide when they will be put into practice. Be accountable for the fulfillment of those actions.

Masculine Feminine

Does God have an opinion about masculinity and femininity? Does it even matter? Can't we just proclaim the Gospel without tackling this topic?

This is a topic of great importance to God, given how often He deals with it in Scripture. While the message of biblical manhood and womanhood is not central to the Gospel, neither is it peripheral. Right from the beginning and all through Scripture, God carefully and thoroughly provides definitions and commands regarding masculinity and femininity, and the interaction of men and women.

When we warp God's view of the roles of men and women, we malign the Gospel (Titus 2:5). To worship God and live in the Gospel's power is to understand and embrace what God has designed for men and women.

God chronicled only two chapters for us about earth when it was perfect and pure, free from sin and death. Those few paragraphs could have included any of a zillion spectacular subjects, but God chose to expose His plan for how a man and woman interact for His glory—equal in personhood with different roles. Not every man or woman needs to marry, but for those who do, the only way which glorifies God is when a biological male leads and protects his biologically female wife who helps and submits to him. This order is so important to God that He gave it to us in a clear cut description.

Masculinity and femininity are important to God. Since the day He spoke mankind into existence, He has changed neither His thoughts nor His commands.

Satan's actions show he knows this topic is important to God. Think a moment about the effort Satan expended (and continues to expend) to undermine God's order. In Genesis

3, he approached the helper not the leader. The first temptation included defiance against the structure God had set in place. Tragically, Eve stepped right in and overstepped her feminine role as helper, while Adam abdicated his masculine role as leader/protector.

When God cursed Adam, it was because he heeded his wife to disobey God. God's curse on Eve included the fact that women would desire to supersede their role. In the fertile soil of the curse on women, the feminist movement rose up and defied God's plan and authority. A generation of woman took up the cry that women need and can trust no other authority than personal truth. As feminism dug in its heels, a torrent of unrestrained rebellion against God's definitions of masculinity and femininity was unleashed.

Now, more than ever, this is a topic of significant relevance. At this point in time, discontentment with God's plan rages among both men and women. Any heart bending toward same-sex attraction or gender dissatisfaction easily finds affirmation and community through social media, the blogging highway, and a generally smaller world.

Why do hearts follow homosexual attraction or gender dissatisfaction? Because they reject God's sovereign rule and authority. God hates all sin, including the sin of discontentment or dissatisfaction with being a man or woman, because it is rebellion. Our hearts

crave something opposed to God, preferring to worship other gods.

Even more than with other idolatries or "addictions," it seems that those caught up in

the homosexual and transgender movement are attempting to justify what they cling to. We have not seen drug users rushing to stake claim of church pulpits. But Satan's deception regarding the gender issue has so affected "churches" that there is a succumbing to the pressure to give positions of leadership to those who have not yet repented of rebellion against God's order and authority regarding men and women.

The root issue is not a gender question, a roles question, a sex question, or a marriage question. It is a question of whether we will love God, trust and obey His Word, and worship Him. When we submit our hearts to Him in confession (confession means full agreement with God and His Word, therefore we hate sin as He does), He gives a new heart that loves and obeys and worships the One True God.

But first, before we can come to the point of confession, we must understand God's Word regarding masculinity and femininity. One of the reasons role differences matter so much is because that is one way in which humans image God (remember we were created to be little images of God). Role differences have nothing to do with inferiority or superiority of personhood, indeed Scripture clearly points out that men/women are equally images of God and heirs of God's grace (Galatians 3:28-29, 1 Peter 3:7). Role differences are actually a great privilege! First Corinthians 11:3 outlines how a husband's leadership imitates the Father, and a wife's followership imitate the Son. A wife submits to her husband as the Son submits to the Father—not into sin, not into illegal acts such as physical abuse.

When we minimize God-given role differences for men and women, or try to take on the role of the opposite sex, we suffer not only

confusion but also great loss. Danger and chaos would characterize a surgical room where a nurse usurped a surgeon's role. Likewise as men and women have swapped roles, homes and families have broken down. Our culture is tragically but not surprisingly characterized by emotional distress, gender confusion and discontentment, homosexuality, and sexual abuse.

Why is it not surprising? Because long before homosexuality became a peer pressure in high schools, and long before insurance companies covered gender reassignment surgery, we negated God's intended meaning of masculine and feminine personhood. Women argued submission away as a cultural issue. Men noticed that women could lead well enough, and backed away. We denied the beauty of manhood and womanhood as God had defined it.

Take a quick biblical tour. Prior to sin, role differences are a wonder of God's perfect creation. Throughout the Old Testament, women are lauded when they uphold male leadership. Three examples include Deborah (in Judges 5 she praises the leaders and in Hebrews 11 God praises Barak), Sarah (in 1 Peter 3 she is commended for following her husband), the Proverbs 31 woman (in Proverbs 31:23 we learn the purpose of her hard work, to help her husband). The New Testament consistently commands role differences, tracing the reason back to creation, not the fall (1 Corinthians 11:3, 8-9, 14, Ephesians 5:31-32, 1 Timothy 2:13-14). It is a result of the fall that neither men nor women naturally think God's way about roles.

In submission, God provides women the privilege of reflecting Christ's submission to the Father. In a lack of submission, they imitate Satan (Isaiah 14:13-15). In leadership, God provides men the privilege of imitating Christ's headship of the church.

Most importantly, when we consider God's definitions of masculinity and femininity, we must bring to bear the mercy of Christ's cross. "Generation Z" faces temptations older folks have never heard of, and they will fall. "Baby Boomers" always could figure out ways to be hip to the scene, and they'll try anything in the name of cool. Men will fail in their attempts to provide sacrificial, loving leadership.

Women will rationalize why they aren't able to live in submissive, respectful followership.

When God in His grace shows us that we've denied His authority, we desperately need a healing balm. It's available, but in only one place—in the stripes of Jesus Christ (1 Peter 2:24).

Quickly confess and repent of the slightest twinge of discontentment with, or rebellion against, God's wisdom. Scripture is God's authority over us. We must all expect to be confessing and repenting and forgiving sinful distortions of masculinity and femininity. Grace and mercy for all our sinful human limitations and defiance are the interaction that bears witness to the healing stripes of Christ on the cross.

Confession and forgiveness is the stuff of Gospel interaction. Repentance, in submission to the authority of God's Word, opens the door to relationship with God, brings about godly marriages, and energizes every God-glorifying relationship.

Defining Masculinity God's Way

Biblical masculinity manifests in protective love that guards from sin, unlike Adam who fell silent behind Eve when she was tempted. Man bears, as his leadership responsibility, the benevolent upholding of woman's honor and good. To this end, he is assertive about Scripture, without condescension, authoritarianism, self-promotion, or self-exaltation. Biblical masculinity is known by sacrificial service.

In his rulership role, a biblical husband takes the risks he considers necessary for the protection and provision of his wife and family. He deals with consequences himself, be they good or bad, affirming his wife as his helper but not his crutch. He accepts not only the weight of financial responsibility, but also the burden of final say, refusing the laziness that drives unilateral decision-making. He takes initiative in disciplining children. Avoiding any inordinate relationship, his sexual pursuits are reserved for his wife, and orchestrated with strong tenderness that images the strong pursuit of God toward mankind.

Defining Femininity God's Way

Biblical femininity welcomes, affirms, and nurtures the strength and leadership of biblical masculinity. It willingly assumes reticence, knowing that when Eve was deceived to abdicate her helper role she led her husband and our world into sin and death. While avoiding inordinate relationships and passions, biblical femininity offers kind-hearted, loyal support to biblical male headship in the church and home, thus encouraging the rise of biblical masculinity and femininity. Respect, amenable words, generosity, loyalty—not only does a biblically feminine woman embody these qualities, she also teaches them to younger women in the church.

A godly wife brings the joy of biblical femininity into her interaction with her husband, choosing agreeable responsiveness, gentle submission, and undaunted respect toward him. Her followership is characterized by loving her husband more than all others (except God), with a determined but quiet-hearted refusal to sin, or to run interference once he has made decisions. Her helpship is such that by her life she strengthens biblical masculinity in her husband, as well as builds respect for her husband.

God's Authority and Our Masculinity/Femininity

What does God want from us? That we worship Him, not our idols. Be suspect of the slightest deviation from a biblical definition of masculinity and femininity to which your heart is drawn. Whether legalistic extra-ordering, or liberal under-ordering, beware. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. God has not hidden His wisdom, but has revealed it in Scripture where absolute truth rings loud and clear in every illustration, narrative and command.

God's heart about masculinity and femininity has been revealed and will never change, but God will not force us (Romans 1). We do not choose whether we are created male or female, but we do choose whether we will worship our Creator. Worship of the Most High God requires that we live out biblical masculinity and femininity. In whatever ways our hearts wanders from biblical masculinity and femininity, let's repent and embrace biblical masculinity and femininity.

Role of a Man Role of a Woman

Personhood Equality Role Differences

1 Timothy 2:8 -- I desire then that in every place the men should pray, lifting holy hands without anger or quarreling.

Titus 2:2, 6-8 -- Older men are to be sober-minded, dignified, self-controlled, sound in faith, in love, and in steadfastness.... Likewise, urge the younger men to be self-controlled. 7 Show yourself in all respects to be a model of good works, and in your teaching show integrity, dignity, 8 and sound speech that cannot be condemned, so that an opponent may be put to shame, having nothing evil to say about us.

Answer the following questions from the above Scriptures. Further Scriptures on masculinity include Isaiah 3:12, 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, Ephesians 5:25-33, Colossians 3:19, 1 Timothy 2:8-3:1-7, 2 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 2:2, 6-8, 1 Peter 3:7.

Fear God -- How is the biblical man's relationship with God defined? What words describe a man who seeks wisdom?

Trustworthy to do others good -- What words describe how a man treats people?

Work -- How is the work of a man described?

Teaching and speech -- What does a man show by his teaching and speech? How does this guard from enemies?

Titus 2:3-5 -- Older women likewise are to be reverent in behavior, not slanderers or slaves to much wine. They are to teach what is good, 4 and so train the young women to love their husbands and children, 5 to be self-controlled, pure, working at home, kind, and submissive to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be reviled.

Proverbs 31: 30, 11-12, 27, 20, 26, 25, 23 -- Charm is deceitful, and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the LORD is to be praised... The heart of her husband trusts in her, and he will have no lack of gain. 12 She does him good, and not harm, all the days of her life... She looks well to the ways of her household and does not eat the bread of idleness... 20 She opens her hand to the poor and reaches out her hands to the needy... 26 She opens her mouth with wisdom, and the teaching of kindness is on her tongue... 25 Strength and dignity are her clothing, and she laughs at the time to come... 23 Her husband is known in the gates when he sits among the elders of the land.

Answer the following questions from the Scripture verses above. Further Scriptures on femininity include Proverbs 31, 1 Corinthians 11:3-16, 14:33-35, Ephesians 5:22-25, 33, Colossians 3:18, 1 Timothy 5:10-13, 1 Peter 3:1-6.

Fear God -- What evidences that a woman fears God?

Trustworthy to do others good -- How does the trustworthy woman treat her husband? Other people?

Work -- How is the work of a woman described?

Teaching and speech -- What does a woman teach? How does she speak? What is her attitude?

Men glorify God through biblical masculinity

Women glorify God through biblical femininity

When it comes to masculinity and femininity, we have clear direction from God in His Word for the ordering of our lives. Either we accept and follow the truth God has given us, or we distort and disobey what He has said.

When we disobey God and our lives become unglued, whether sooner or later, the world offers labels and diagnosis to explain both the disobedience and the ungluing. Until 1973, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) named homosexuality “sociopathic personality disturbance,” and until it was removed in 1987, it bore the label “ego-dystonic sexual orientation.” For those with dissatisfaction or unease about gender, the early DSM versions created the label “gender identity disorder” which the most recent DSMV has renamed “gender dysphoria.” Why do labels such as “disturbances,” “disorder,” or “dysphoria” indicate a lack of interest and trust in God’s authoritative truth?

A good two-thousand years ago when Jesus walked our earth, He faced distortions of masculinity and femininity. In one conversation, when He’d been asked a question regarding divorce, He answered that God’s plan from creation was marriage, not divorce, and any unfaithfulness to one biological male married to one biological female would be adultery. The disciples thought such marital fidelity would be difficult.

Matthew 19:10 -- The disciples said to him, “If such is the case of a man with his wife, it is better not to marry.”

Jesus agreed, and then, unasked, He took it a step farther. Jesus knew His creation, and knew we’d be wondering. You see, it’s nothing new that there are folks who do not naturally embrace their biological gender. In a fallen world, there have always been folks who encounter biological difficulty, from birth, when it comes to faithful marriage to one person of the opposite biological gender. And so Jesus gave us answers.

Matthew 19:11-12 -- But he said to them, “Not everyone can receive this saying, (referring back to God’s created plan where one man and one woman marry and remain faithful) but only those to whom it is given. 12 For there are eunuchs who have been so from birth, and there are eunuchs who have been made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Let the one who is able to receive this receive it.

For worshipers of God, Christ’s words are definitive. What would the lifestyle of a eunuch who truly lived for the sake of the kingdom of heaven be like? Craft your answer based on 1 Corinthians 7:7 and the life-style example of Paul (Philippians 4:10).

NOTE: Regarding submission, the spirit of willingness to yield can never be into sin. If a husband asks a wife to fall under willful sin, or disbelief, she must always obey Christ. Her respectful attitude must show him that she does not enjoy resisting him, and longs to follow him in righteousness. Any type of domestic assault is sin and a crime (Romans 13:1-5). An abused spouse needs to remove self and any children, find safe shelter, and seek the help of legal authorities and church elders.

God’s glory and our good are inseparable

We understand from Scripture the purpose for which men and women are created—to glorify God, whether married or single. We are not created for self-glory. Fulfillment or exploration of sexual desire (in any context other than marriage to one person of the opposite created sex) is the seeking of self-glory. Achieving resolution to gender identity dissatisfaction is also about self-glory. It is the amazing and wonderful truth that when we embrace God’s ways and worship Him in biblical masculinity and femininity, not only do we become more an image or reflection of God’s glory, but also some very special and good gifts become ours. You see, God’s glory and our good are intertwined. Read aloud and discuss the good gifts of God listed below:

- When those who struggle with unease or dissatisfaction about their created gender decide to worship God and renew their minds through God’s word, then they repent of and cease attempting to physically alter their bodies. As is, they live joyfully within the biblical definitions of their created sex (1 Corinthians 7:17-20).
 - ☐ As men who then lead, they fulfill the great need for protection in our world (Isaiah 3:12).
 - ☐ As women who then follow, they know the quiet spirit for which others only long (1 Peter 3:3-4).
- When those who have pursued sexual attraction outside of marriage to one person of the same or opposite created gender decide to worship God and renew their minds through God’s word, they either remain single and expend their energy for the kingdom, or they marry and remain faithful to a person of the opposite gender.
 - ☐ Faithfully married men and women enjoy the sexual union as an act of worship to God wherein they provide protection and pleasure for the other (1 Corinthians 7:1-5, Song of Solomon).
 - ☐ Faithfully married men and women create the setting where children best learn obedience, where children are shown God’s glorious power and faithful love, and where children are surrounded by a living picture of Christ’s love for the church and the church’s response to Christ (Deuteronomy 6, Ephesians 5:22-6:4).

Speak God's Language

People want to help. One way they have tried to help is by creating diagnosis for those caught up in destructive habits or addictive behaviors. They reframe experience and behavior as symptom of disease or disorder to which they assign diagnostic labels (until a more current diagnosis fits the symptoms).

But God never changes. His order remains true order. God is very clear that we must have a "God-centered" view of all things, such as how we make choices, including the choice to pick up addictive, self-destructive habits (Colossians 2:8). Christians need to view the world's descriptions and assessments through the lens of God's Word.

One way to notice whether we are influenced more by God or by the world is in our language. When the Bible provides a description, we need to use biblical language. Watch what happens when we compare the world's language of "addiction" and God's language of "idolatry."

"Addictions" are thought of as rooted in disease which requires recovery. Recovery is a return to a normal position or condition. There is no culpability for return to a previous state, as the root cause does not flow from personal responsibility.

"Idolatries" are described as rooted in sin which requires transformed worship. Transformation is an act of God in which the individual is responsible for renewal of the mind, to test and discern the will of God (Romans 12:1-2).

The chart on the right points out striking differences between recovery and transformation. The Bible says that Christians are being transformed into Jesus' likeness, from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). What a message of pure, brilliant hope!

WHEN WE TALK RECOVERY

- Our focus is man-centered.
- We look for a secular treatment facility that will provide humanistic, man-centered programming, and ongoing treatment with self-help or 12- step groups.
- We agree that man is born with genetic predisposition that leads to inevitable results, and man is inherently good, but turns bad due to the "addiction" and must "recover."
- We don't view "addiction" as sin, rather a disease condition that will always be present and therefore change will never be complete.
- We have no hope that the disease of "addiction" will ever be fully cured.
- We adhere to philosophy that originated in recent centuries, whereby destructive habits are labelled disorders, or "addictions" are labelled diseases.
- We think "addictions" are a sickness outside the "addict" that overtakes them when they use the mood-altering substance.
- We seek to turn the "addict" back to a previous starting point, as though you have stumbled and need to recover yourself.
- The goal of recovery, which can mean "to cover again," does indeed often result in replacing one "addiction" with another. Often addicts become involved in cross-addiction.
- Standard is some other person and human model of behavior.

WHEN WE TALK TRANSFORMATION

- Our focus is God-centered.
- Choose a medical facility or detoxification unit for physical symptoms, then a facility that biblically involves the church for discipleship (Matthew 28:20).
- We agree that man is born with a sin nature and receives a new nature upon salvation (2 Corinthians 5:17).
- We view addiction as a sin condition that will always require confession and forgiveness, with repentance and the empowerment to change (1 John 1:8-10).
- We know hope; the old ways can die, and the inner man transformed into a new creation who lives by a new power (Romans 6:1 – 8:15).
- We agree with Solomon, the wisest man ever to live, who voiced God's view nearly 3,000 years ago, that addictive choices are a sin problem (Proverbs 23).
- We think addictions are a worship problem that leads to use of a mood-altering substance, to which the body responds in natural ways (Isaiah 44:20).
- We teach to put off the old, renew the mind, and put on the new (Ephesians 4:22-24).
- "Transformation" includes giving up habits, accepting consequences, confessing movement towards addictive thinking, and submitting self to the process of repentance (Titus 3:3-8).
- Standard is Jesus Christ and God's Word.

Compulsive or Habitual?

Another set of words that we need to think well about are “compulsive” and “habitual.” Webster’s dictionary defines “addiction” as “persistent compulsive use of a substance known by the user to be harmful.” To arbitrarily label behavior as “compulsive” sounds as though there is no responsibility, yet God holds each person individually responsible (Ezekiel 18:30-32).

A better definition of “addiction” is found in the World Book encyclopedia, “the condition of being a slave to a habit.” “Habitual” and “enslaved” are biblical words. When Paul talked about sins that he did not wish to do but found himself doing, he described that type of habit as enslaving (Romans 7:21-23).

When our thoughts flow from the biblical concept of habits and captivity, we can consider how we become habituated. Here’s the progression of

captivity to a destructive habit:

- Action (rebellious)
- Habit
- Life-dominating, automatic behavior

It all begins with one rebellious action that feels good to the performer, and does not glorify God. Before long, it becomes a satisfying habit, and eventually so automatic that it seems “compulsive.” In reality, enslaving habits are planned in advance and rooted in a self-centered, rebellious heart.

centered, rebellious heart.

Sound harsh? Not so. Study the chart below. This is the hopeful way of looking at behaviors that enslave and take us captive. To label behavior as compulsive is to say we can’t really change. That’s harsh. To admit that habitual behaviors are rooted in selfish hearts is the beginning of transformation.

God’s Word explains that any enslavement can be replaced by productive habits for real and lasting change (Romans 6:16-19). If you are

Quite simply, physical addiction occurs when you repeatedly satisfy a natural appetite and desire with a temporary pleasure until you become the servant of the temporary object of pleasure, rather than its master.

Mark Shaw (The Heart of Addiction)

Understanding enslavement as a disease means we are working with a physical weakness. Understanding enslavement as a worship problem means we are working with a self-

caught up in “addictive” behavior, admit your self-centered rebellion, stop shifting responsibility, and begin to live in hope.

When I think my destructive habits are rooted in physical weakness, disorder:

I tolerate my weakness or disorder, or try to manage it through therapy or medication.

I am not motivated to engage in spiritual battle.

Jesus’ role is limited to helper, and failure is a very real and accepted possibility.

When I understand that my habits are rooted in my self-centered, rebellious heart:

I hate my sin and know that I need to be transformed by God’s grace through the power of the Holy Spirit.

I understand there is a cosmic war being waged, and I must engage in spiritual violence that begins with confessing the sin of my innermost being and daily preparing for battle—with prayer; with reading, thinking about, and obeying God’s Word; with being an active part of God’s church.

I battle from the position of victory. The reality I embrace is that nothing can separate me from the love of God. When I fall, I will repent and rise again and I will ultimately win. I will win in the power of Jesus Christ who is the One True God, High King, Lord of my life, Redeemer who atoned for me, Savior who rescued me, Shepherd who comforts and guides me, Conqueror who has defeated sin and death, and who is the One by whose power I fight and win.

Jesus

God wants to transform you

However, He will not force you

In Luke 15, people were angry with Jesus for eating with "sinners." Jesus answered them by telling three stories, called parables. In the parables, God plays three characters: a shepherd, a woman, and a father. Jesus characterizes God as the kind of God who searches for lost people. The shepherd searches for his lost sheep. The woman searches for her lost coin. He also shows us that God gladly welcomes into His presence those who are repentant. The father waits to welcome the run-away boy. In all three parables, there is rejoicing over the return of the lost. Jesus' goal is that sinners be brought to repentance (Mark 1:14-15).

Luke 15:3-7 -- So he told them this parable: 4 "What man of you, having a hundred sheep, if he has lost one of them, does not leave the ninety-nine in the open country, and go after the one that is lost, until he finds it? 5 And when he has found it, he lays it on his shoulders, rejoicing. 6 And when he comes home, he calls together his friends and his neighbors, saying to them, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found my sheep that was lost.' 7 Just so, I tell you, there will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who need no repentance.

How many of the shepherd's one hundred sheep had to be brought to safety?

What did the shepherd do when one was lost?

What did the shepherd do when the lost sheep was found?

Luke 15:8-9 -- "Or what woman, having ten silver coins, if she loses one coin, does not light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she finds it? 9 And when she has found it, she calls together her friends and neighbors, saying, 'Rejoice with me, for I have found the coin that I had lost.'

How many of the woman's ten silver coins had to be found?

What did the woman do when one was lost?

What did the woman do when the lost coin was found?

Read the following passage, and underline any ways that you identify with the younger of the two sons.

Luke 15:11-24 -- And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants."' 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate.

God actively pursues people

His rescue reaches the rock-bottom

We must respond with broken repentance

Read aloud Luke 15:11-24 (on bottom of previous page).

How many of the father's sons had to return before the father rejoiced?

What did the father do after the son left (verse 20)?

Did the father go searching for the son?

Why do you think the father waited for his son to come home rather than searching for him?

Luke 15:10 -- Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents."

Luke 15:10 divides the two lost rescues from the return of the prodigal son. Why do you think the shepherd searched for the sheep, and the woman for the coin, but the father did not search for the son?

Why was the sheep in Luke 15:3-7 in need of rescue?

Why was the coin in Luke 15:8-9 in need of finding?

What happened when the son hit rock-bottom?

Describe the response of the waiting father when his son came home. Compare it with the response God gives you when you come to Him in repentance.

Rejoice in God's glorious presence. Bask in His free-flowing grace. Revel in pure worship. There's only one way to get there—humble repentance. In Rosario Butterfield's book, *Openness Unhindered: Further Thoughts of An Unlikely Convert on Sexual Identity and Union with Christ*, she states, "You cannot bypass repentance to get to grace. Christ is manifest in our humility, not our disobedience." What's your low point, the eating with pigs that brings you to where you see yourself in humility?

Read below the end of the parable about the two sons. This is the part of the parable that is directed at the angry men who didn't want Jesus to reach out to "sinners." We can only guess about the lifestyles of the lost "sinners." It may certainly have been "addiction" behavior. The message for them was of hope and salvation. For those who were angry? The lesson they needed to learn was about the hopelessness of entitlement and its sister sin, bitterness.

Luke 15:25-30 -- "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!'"

**Are you reading
your Bible and
praying every
day?**



Convincing Conviction

Journey to the Heart

Today we're taking the hardest journey, the journey inside ourselves.

Oh, there are easy fixes too. Change your behavior. Give yourself a good talking to. Move away and start over. For a while it might work. Things might be different. But eventually, you end up right back where you started, more discouraged than ever.

On the other hand, if you are willing to work hard because you want to glorify God, and if you will take the difficult journey inside yourself, you can begin to change and keep changing.

When we look into our hearts through the eyes of the Bible, there's hope (Hebrews 4:12). It won't be easy. You'll see things that you want to deny or defend. To let God's Word pierce your heart will hurt at first. But it's the kind of hurt that heals, and it's the kind of healing that brings true, lasting hope.

Why We Do What We Do

All of your behaviors, choices, and conversations, whether good or bad, flow out of the beliefs of your heart. It's been said, "You do what you do because you want what you want. You want what you want because you believe what you believe." Do you believe the God of the Bible sent Jesus to die and take the punishment for your sin? Do you believe Jesus rose again so that you could become a new creation in Christ? A new creation in Christ changes every day to become more like Him.

Whether you change or not has little to do with behavior, and a lot to do with your heart. When your heart wants Jesus with a desperate dependence; when your heart wants to worship Jesus because He matters

to you more than anything else; when your heart wants most of all to love and worship the sovereign Creator and Most High God, your actions will follow.

The Heart

The word "heart" means two things. There's your physical heart, the organ that pumps blood through your body. We'll call that heart your outer man. Then, there's the spiritual heart, the inner man part of you that will never die (John 10:28, Titus 1:2, 3:7). Your inner man heart is the place deep inside you that produces thoughts, passions, desires, appetites, affections, motivations, and obsessions.

God has made you a wonderful mix of inner man and outer man. When you have problems with your physical parts, your outer man, you need to visit a medical doctor. Praise God for the wisdom He has given trained men and women to help with our outer man illnesses. It is biblically irresponsible not to care for your outer man under the attention of a qualified physician.

However, we may not allow medicine, whether scientific or wholistic, to care for our inner man. When you have problems with your spiritual parts, your inner man, you need the healing of Jesus Christ. The Word of God says that it provides everything we need to be equipped for successful lives of godliness (Joshua 1:8, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 2 Peter 1:3-4). Inner man healing requires the stripes of Jesus Christ (Isaiah 53:5).

Outer Man, Inner Man, and Trees

You are an inner man encased in an outer man. You are a heart with a body that will die and turn into

dust, but your heart will keep living, either in heaven or hell (Matthew 25:46). What matters most is what's happening in your heart. When your heart wants to love and worship God, your inner man health will flourish.

We're going to think about three trees to understand this better. You can read more about this teaching by Tim Lane and Paul Tripp in *How People Change*.

Start by comparing yourself to a tree. This is a biblical idea (Psalm 1:3, Jeremaih 17:5-8). What determines whether a tree (symbolic of our lives) will be dry and dying, or fresh and growing? The roots! (Symbolic of our hearts.) How does a tree prove whether it has bad or good roots? Heat, or drought (symbolic of times of trial or difficulty).

Tree 1 = Dry and Dying

This tree is prickly and dry. None of us enjoy the fruit that it bears—anger, rage, bitterness, manipulation, rebellion, sinful habits, mistreatment of my family, isolation, etc. That bad fruit starts with the tree's roots, although they are underground where no one sees. The bad fruit comes from the bad root.

Likewise, my behavior comes from my bad heart that no one sees. Why is my heart bad? Because it worships idols. Especially when a trial or difficult situation comes my way, I pick up my go-to tools and get busy worshipping my main idol. As a result, I bear only the destructive, empty fruit of sinful behavior. The dreadful fruit comes from the root, my idol-worshipping heart.



Tree 2 = Fresh and Growing

This tree is luscious and fresh. It bears fruit that we would all enjoy—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, self-control. That good fruit starts with the tree's roots, although they are underground where no one sees. The problem is that we attempt to attain the good fruit without fixing the root. The good fruit, which becomes even sweeter during times of difficulty, comes from the good root.

What makes the root good? The good root is watered by Jesus' living water through God's Word (John 4:10-13, 4:24, 7:38, Psalm 1:2). Good fruit (thoughts, actions, and feelings) results from a heart that is fed the living water of Jesus Christ. When Jesus offered this water, He connected it with a heart that worships God in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

Trials are a great way to know what's going on in my heart. When trials come and I bear good fruit, it's because I'm worshipping God, not idols, and I'm obeying His Word by the power of His Holy Spirit.

Tree 2 requires Tree 3. Otherwise, The good fruit on Tree 2 is fake, and it will someday be revealed as a fake (Colossians 3:1-4).



Tree 3 = The Cross

This tree is a brutal, cruel tree. On it hung the bloody and beaten body of Jesus Christ. He came to earth to die, so that when we become dried up and shriveled like Tree 1, we can confess, repent, and be changed (1 John 1:9). Confess means "seeing my sin the way God sees it," in other words, it means I hate my sin. I agree that my sin requires the punishment of hell, but I also agree

that Christ's atoning blood can rescue me from hell.

When I confess (agree with God) about every aspect of my bad root and bad fruit—which happens moment-by-moment and day-by-day, as sins come to mind—He gives me repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). Repent means "complete change beyond former thought and behavior."

Do you see that your fruit and root are bad? Of course they are. There's only one way to good fruit and root. Confess your sin and look to Jesus on the cross for forgiveness. Let His living water feed your heart as you read the Bible every day.



The prickly, shriveled heart worships idols. Idol worship is all about self-love and self-protection and self-comfort. Idol worship disregards what Jesus did for us on the cross.

The fresh and growing heart worships God through Jesus, by loving Him and loving others. It seeks to obey and glorify God because it's main focus is to worship God. This heart is so in love with Jesus for what He did on the cross, that worshipping Him comes above and before self.

Heat and Living Water

Bad fruit tells us that our hearts want to love ourselves more than God. Bad fruit tells us that we want to worship our desires more than worship God. That's why the heat of trials or difficulties is so helpful to us. Since our responses (or fruit) are shaped and grown by what's going on in our hearts, the fruit we bear

during trials reveals what's going on in our hearts.

When we realize that our fruit is bad, we have the opportunity to come once again to the cross for the healing and cleansing of confession and forgiveness, to bear the new fruit of repentance. We need the Gospel—that Christ died, was buried and rose again according to the Scriptures—every single day (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). Trials show us with every bad-root, self-loving thought that we need the Gospel. We need to confess and repent at the cross. Trials are as crucial to our clinging to the Gospel as sun is for trees (Romans 5:3-5, Romans 8:28-29, Hebrews 12:11).

Trees need not only sun but also water, living water. When our hearts long to love and worship God above all other desires, we are empowered by the streams of living water that flow from Jesus Christ. This is the power supply that never dries up—drink and you will never thirst.

You can drink living water every day. Learn Scripture. Obey Scripture. Let it be your authority. That is the only path to worship God. Jesus' promise of living water feeds us so that we can fulfill the Father's desire to be worshiped, and we can do so in spirit and in truth.

The Israelites tried worshipping apart from God's truth. It was idolatry. If we try to worship God apart from His Word, it is also idolatry. Our hearts need to be watered by the living water of God's Word. Then we worship the Lord of Glory in glorious, never-thirst-again worship.

How Jesus waters our hearts

What's going on in your heart?

John 4:10-11, 13-14 -- Jesus answered her, If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water. 11 The woman said to him, Sir, you have nothing to draw water with, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? ... Jesus said to her, Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, 14 but whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

When Jesus met a woman at the well, how did He offer hope to her?

What did Jesus promise to whoever drinks of the living water?

John 7:38 -- Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.

How does a heart come to have living water?

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

Are we supposed to assume that we are doing just fine? Why or why not?

Luke 6:43-45 -- For no good tree bears bad fruit, nor again does a bad tree bear good fruit, 44 for each tree is known by its own fruit. For figs are not gathered from thornbushes, nor are grapes picked from a bramble bush. 45 The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Why can a bad tree not bear good fruit?

Where are our words rooted?

Compare Luke 6:45b "...the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" with John 7:38 (above). One heart produces evil, recognized by what the mouth speaks, and one heart overflows with living water. Which describes what your heart produces—evil, criticizing, complaining words or living, edifying, thankful words?

How does the truth that "out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks" provide a good test to examine ourselves and see whether we are in the faith?

Am I worshiping Jesus or lies?

Believing lies blocks living water

Jesus said His Father seeks those who worship in spirit and truth. Our hearts are prone to believe lies. Which of the core lies in the left column below is your heart prone to believe? Think about how the lie stops your heart from worshiping and obeying God, and so bears bad fruit. Ask your mature Christian friend to help you be honest.

Note that the lies are connected to three desires: “I want to feel better,” I want to have more,” and “I want to be more.”

Core lies my heart is prone to believe:	What fruit happens when I focus on this lie? What actions do I choose when life is happening in opposition to the core lie I believe?
A heart that says “I want to feel better” believes:	
<i>I need comfort. I must avoid pain and discomfort.</i>	
<i>I must feel good. I need easy and fast ways to get rid of sadness, guilt, self-deprecation, worry.</i>	
<i>I need pleasure. I must avoid self-denial, and avoid discomfort. I must feel like I enjoy feeling.</i>	
<i>I need my life to be easier. I must avoid work, discipline, and hardship.</i>	
The heart that says “I want to have more” believes:	
<i>I need control. It’s better to rebel against authority than lose control.</i>	
<i>I need more security. Whatever I have to do to meet my definition of safety/security is worth it.</i>	
<i>I must have approval. I’ll do whatever it takes to get the approval I believe I need.</i>	
<i>I must have more stuff/food/beauty/achievement. I’ll do whatever it takes to get it.</i>	
The heart that says “I want to be more” believes:	
<i>I must be treated with dignity. I’ve been so wounded that I have no choice but to react as I do.</i>	
<i>I must have more affection. I must escape/rage/degrade myself to get it.</i>	
<i>I must have more authority, knowledge, power. I need to know more, and control more.</i>	
<i>I am not enough. I am worthless. I am no use to myself or to other people in my life.</i>	

Battle of the Heart

Troublesome things, our hearts. God says we can't really understand them. The mess of it all is that we are deceived by our own hearts (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

We've all heard and maybe even said, "So-and-so has a good heart." Well, that's not something we can know about a person. Apart from God, it is our nature to be deceptive, prideful, and self-absorbed.

If you've been around children learning to talk, do you remember the first words they uttered? No one deliberately taught them to say "No!" "Mine!" or "More!" Those words came straight from the little darlin's hearts. You see, people are not basically good. Apart from God's work in our hearts, we are all rebellious, selfish, and greedy, proven by every "No," "Mine," or "More."

Blinded by Our Hearts

Blindness to the reality of our own hearts leaves us blissfully unaware of our own contribution to problems. But, when it comes to the faults of others, especially those in authority over us, our focus is laser sharp. There's a problematic dynamic at work in our hearts.

We need the Bible to reveal to us just what is going on in our hearts. Scripture is living, active, sharper than a sword. Scripture can pierce between every joint and marrow until it reaches and discerns our motives, desires, thoughts, intentions (Hebrews 4:12). God knows every desire and thought of our hearts, and His Word can show it to us.

The Battle for the Heart

The draw to worship idols is much more powerful and deceptive than we realize. Deep inside us, we are self-serving and sinful. We can not

try harder and do better, or look into our hearts and pull out goodness. We are drawn to lies that help us worship our desires. Ever since Adam and Eve chose to sin, our natural choice is sin. Do you accept this biblical truth? It is the starting point for fighting the battle inside us. When we know our utter depravity and wretchedness, we can know that we need the righteousness of Someone good and righteous and perfect and holy—Jesus Christ..

When Jesus Christ rescues you, you are no longer defined by whether you do or don't do your addiction. You are defined by Jesus' righteousness, and you are empowered to live in His righteousness by His Holy Spirit.

Paul, who wrote much of the New Testament, described it something like this:

"I'm so disgusted. I'm such a scumbag. I keep doing what I hate doing. This is not me; this is sin inside me. I want to do right, but I continue to do wrong. I'm so sick of it. It's like a war inside me. I'm a prisoner. I am wretched (Romans 7:15-20)."

Do you ever feel that way? Good! Then you can know the hope and power that Paul knew. Here's how he became a victor:

"But thank you. Thank you Jesus! Although in and of myself I'm a wretched wreck, you are my righteousness. By your Spirit's power, I am rescued from the body of death and sin that imprisons me. You give me the trials so I can be more like You, Jesus. I am dead to sin, but in You I can live well. As an adopted child of God I will be changing while I'm on earth, and I will live forever in Heaven (Romans 7:21-8:4).

Only Two Types of People

There's a wickedness in our hearts that doesn't like Paul's thinking. We'd rather say, "I have a disease and can't help the choices I make," than take responsibility. It was our own wicked heart that picked up the tools to worship our idol! It's time to admit that we have worshipped idols, and instead we must worship God. No matter how badly you've sinned, no matter how

many times you've worshipped your idols, God is loving, merciful, patient, and gracious. But we must agree that we are at fault, and that God is not.

There are two types of people. First, there are those who cry out to Jesus in their need, who accept Him as their personal Lord and Savior.

- They agree with God about their sin and do not defend or deny it (1 John 1:8-10).
- They believe in their hearts and confess with their mouths that they are forgiven through Jesus Christ as a gift of God's grace (Romans 10:9-10, Eph. 2:8-9).
- They are empowered by the Holy Spirit to worship/serve God (Ephesians 2:10).
- They know Jesus is their goodness and righteousness, so they don't live based on their past but strive daily to be more like Him (Philippians 3:12-14).
- They are faithfully part of Christ's body on earth, the church (1 Peter 2:9-10).

Second, there are those who deny or justify sin and see no need to be redeemed. They have not yet received Christ's salvation.

- They trust their good deeds to outnumber their bad and get them into heaven; they do not have a Savior to trust.
- They seek wisdom outside of the Word of God, and cannot properly understand the principles of the Bible (2 Corinthians 1:18).
- They worship/ serve self.
- They do not have the Holy Spirit to empower them.
- They define God and His Son Jesus differently than the Bible.
- They might attend church occasionally, but not as part of it or to learn to obey the Bible.

In the end, there will be only these two types of people. The result of the battle will be all that mattered. Will you have worshipped God or idols? Take courage. Fight to worship God.

Courage for the Battle

When David needed courage for the battle, he talked to himself. He said, "Soul, remember one thing. You are forgiven" (Psalm 103:2-3). Of what would such a king, who wrote all those beautiful worship psalms, need to be forgiven? He had neglected worshipping God in his heart—then he neglected his kingly responsibility, he watched a beautiful married woman bathe, he had sex with her (his position was one of great power so it may have been rape), he murdered her husband. Fact is, he sinned his way into a deep mess. Just like the rest of us. But when we confess our sins, we are forgiven and then we change (2 John 1:9-2:6).

Remember two things. First, when you confess and repent you are forgiven. Second, those who are redeemed have the righteousness of Christ. It is a sure bet that you will become more like Him, because that is your reality.

Dealing with the Guilt of Failure

If you are a Christian who falls to chemical involvement (whether using, abusing, or dependent), you will rightly have a greater struggle with guilt than a non-Christian in the same boat. The struggle is good. The battle is a positive thing, a sign that the Holy Spirit is at work in you. Be encouraged. It is good to be humbled by failure, but you may not allow discouragement about it to keep you in bondage. Let the battle humble you to repentance.

The struggles are part of the intense war that Paul described in Romans 7. When you sense the battle raging, wage holy war. Read Romans 7:15-8:1. Pray. Hate and run from temptation. Get into the presence of a mature Christian.

Jesus said He came to preach repentance and belief (Mark 1:15). Admit and repent of the sin of focusing on temptation, of not running away from temptation. Focus on Jesus Christ, and what He did so that His blood sprinkles you clean (1 Peter 1:2).

War-time Victor or Woe-filled Victim

There's a way of thinking, or a mentality, that feeds addictions and idolatries. This is something different from the way we often think of the word "victim," when we refer to someone who has had a crime perpetrated against him or her, such as rape or child abuse. All of us, even those who suffer such horrific tragedies, are faced with the choice between being a war-time victor or a woe-filled victim.

Pretend we are all named "Vic." The choice we all make is whether our last name will be "tim" or "tor." The choice is made in our mind, in the way of thinking or mentality that we choose.

To choose a victim mentality is to be doomed. Victim thinking is deadly in its self-focus and self-absorption. Victim thinking feeds addictive thinking. Victim thinking does not receive or extend God's forgiveness. It lives to focus on self, not please God. Victim thinkers chase hard after idols and self-focused desires.

In Christ, you can and will choose victor thinking. Jesus chose to be crucified for the purpose of joy, and we must focus on Him so that we do not grow weary and lose heart (Hebrews 12:2-3). The cross and the grave are empty. Empty! Death has been defeated! God calls us to be glad and rejoice, to give honor to His Name. No matter what happens to us here on earth, it is our reality that we will ride behind Him in the ultimate victory parade (Revelation 19:7-16). Yes, there is a war going on, but it has ultimately been won. The fight to live in faith begins with acceptance of the reality that in Christ you are a victor.

The chart below introduces differences between victor thinking and victim thinking.

War-time Victor Thinking	Woe-filled Victim Thinking
I need to pray for and show kindness to my enemy.	I've been treated badly. I'm offended and hurt.
I will not listen to or trust my thoughts, apart from Scripture.	I can think of good reasons why I need my addiction (idolatry).
If I do this today, how will it affect the people in my life?	I need to feel good now, and that's all that matters.
I need to pray about and thank God for everything in my life.	The best solution to my troubles is pills (cut, gamble, etc).
I need help to see the truth about my heart.	What problem?
I confess that I have used addictive tools to worship my idol.	I'm not an addict or an alcoholic. I can stop anytime.
The Bible defines sin for me, also how to live well.	If you define the terms my way, what I do isn't sin.
There's no one to blame but me, I am responsible.	It's not my fault, if you had my life, you'd drink too.
God's grace trumps sin here on earth. I am free from bondage. I have an eternal hope.	My life is never going to get better, so I may as well do what makes me feel better for a little while.

Study Convincing Conviction 2

Deadly Victim or Biblical Victor

Consider the statements or thoughts below, and rate yourself as to how often you think in that manner.

"I've been treated badly. I've been belittled very badly, and I should be offended and hurt."

♥Always ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever ♥Never

"I can think of plenty of good reasons why I need to drink (or do drugs, shop, gamble, be bitter, do porn, etc).

♥Always ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever ♥Never

"I live for the moment. Things are so bad right now that I need to feel better, and that's all that matters."

♥Always ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever ♥Never

"I'm not an addict. I can stop anytime."

♥Always ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever ♥Never

"I don't have a problem."

♥Always ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever ♥Never

"The best solution to my troubles is pills (etc). That's the only time my mind is at peace."

♥Always ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever ♥Never

"The way I see it, what I do isn't sin."

♥Always ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever ♥Never

"My drinking/drugs/porn is because of my spouse/job/family. What I do is nothing compared to what they do to me.

♥Always ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever ♥Never

"My life is hopeless anyway. I may as well do what it takes to feel better for a little while."

♥Always ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever ♥Never

Victim
of
others

Talk
myself
into it

Serve
myself

Denial

Denial

Drug it

Approve
of it

Blame
others

Lose
hope

Read the Scriptures in this column and write down how the verse(s) teach you to think.

Romans 12:20-21

Joshua 1:8

Galatians 6:7-9

James 1:14-15

1 John 1:8, 10

Philippians 4:6-7

Psalms 119:9, 119:105

Colossians 3:12-13

Romans 5:21

Talk About Convincing Conviction 2

Romans 7:18-23 -- For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19 For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I keep on doing. 20 Now if I do what I do not want, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 21 So I find it to be a law that when I want to do right, evil lies close at hand. 22 For I delight in the law of God, in my inner being, 23 but I see in my members another law waging war against the law of my mind and making me captive to the law of sin that dwells in my members. 24 Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

War Power

Romans 7:24, 8:1-6, 13-14 Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord ... 1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. 3 For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, 4 in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. 5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit set their minds on the things of the Spirit. 6 For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. ... 13 For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. 14 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.

Warriors, Empowered in Jesus

Read Romans 7:18-21 (above) out loud. Underline the word “law” in verse 21. Paul says that his flesh rebels so regularly and predictably that it can be described as law—it is an abiding principle in Paul’s life that he sins. Have you ever sensed the frustration that Paul expresses in these four verses over your own sin?

In your Bible, find and read Romans 3:23. How many people are affected by sin?

Read Romans 7:22 (above) out loud. Paul finds delight in the “law” of _____. With what part of himself does he delight?

In Romans 7:22-23 (above), underline the words “war” and “captive.” The law of sin and the law of God are at war inside Paul. His mind wants to obey God, but his body wants to sin so much that he is captive to it. Have you recognized this battle within yourself? Describe it here.

In Romans 7:24 (above), underline the word “wretched.” Read the verse aloud, the cry of a wretched, distressed, miserable man. It is the longing of his heart to be rescued. Is this the longing of your heart? Write a prayer expressing your longing to be rescued from sin.

In your Bible, find and read 1 John 1:9. When you confess your sin, what will God do?

Hallelujah! God forgives and cleanses us when we confess our sin. Now we will talk about the war power that belongs to those who know Jesus as Savior and Lord. Read Romans 8:1-6 (above) out loud. Underline every instance of the word “Spirit.” We must have our mind set on the Holy Spirit to walk in His power. He is our war power. In Romans 8:14 underline the word “led.” We are the soldiers in the battle who must obey their leader in order to win the battle. What will it look like in your life to be led by the Holy Spirit?

Read Romans 8:13 (above) out loud. In your Bible, find and read Colossians 3:5. These verses talk about our responsibility to put sin to death. What sin must you put to death?

Stand against Satan

The battle for your heart is a great war. There are attacks coming at you from three enemies. You don't always recognize which one is attacking, and sometimes it's all three! While you don't necessarily need to differentiate or label which enemy is coming at you, you do need to deal with them well. With God's Word and the power of His Spirit, you can and you will.

Here are your three enemies, each of whom God empowers you to battle and beat:

1. Satan
2. The world around you
3. The world inside you

The Enemy Satan

Today we'll look at victory over Satan. The Bible warns us about him, describing him as a liar and a prowling, devouring lion (John 10:10, Matthew 25:41). However, often Christians have a wrong view of him. While Satan can put temptation in your path, if you are a Christian, he cannot exercise power over you. Jesus defeated Satan on the cross and Christians have been crucified with Christ (Colossians 3:3, Galatians 2:20).

In relation to the enemy Satan, James 4:7 commands two things. First, submit to God's will. Maybe you are already praying daily for victory. Fine, but that's only the passive part of it. You must also actively submit to obeying what the Bible teaches.

Second, resist the devil. A lot of people think we should rebuke the devil in prayer, but resisting is an active thing. Praying is a passive thing. After you pray you have to take action. Since the battle ground is in your mind, the way to resist the devil is to replace your thoughts about him with truth. In Matthew 4:4, 7,

and 10, we see how Jesus resisted Satan. Each time Satan came to Jesus, He responded with, "It is written..." You can't allow your mind to think what Satan wants you to think. Recognize his lie, renew your mind with Scripture, and replace the lie with God's truth.

Seven Ways to Resist Satan

1. By belting yourself in truth (think of a restraining seat-belt).
2. By wrapping your heart in the reality of Christ's righteousness.
3. By being at peace with God and prepared to share it.
4. By shielding yourself with faith.
5. By protecting your mind with the salvation God has given you.
6. By thinking about and repeating Bible verses.
7. By steadfastly praying every day.

Belted In Truth

What is truth? Jesus said "I am truth." (John 18:37, John 14:6).

When you wear the belt of truth (Ephesians 4:13), your thoughts focus on the truth that Christ has defeated sin and death (Hebrews 12:1-3). This begins with being honest about your own sin, otherwise why should you bother focusing on Jesus?

Can you easily list ways your spouse has mistreated you, your boss

is unfair to you, your parents abused you, or your children have deserted you? Then you are not wearing the belt of truth. To be truthful is to admit that my sin against God is worse than others' sin against me, and to agree with God that His rescue by blood atonement is enough for all sin—whether my sin or others' sin.

Wrapped by Righteousness

Righteousness is by judgment. Consider the Hebrew word for righteousness—in Hebrew, the same word means righteousness and justice. As the ultimate Judge of all, and He will judge all, God is the definition, source, and manner of righteousness. Christ was righteousness in flesh.

We wear righteousness by faith. Not our own righteousness, but Christ's imputed righteousness. It belongs to all believers (just as our sin belongs to the cross). This is the great encouragement that you will resist Satan: You are wearing the righteousness of Christ, and Christ has defeated sin. Although none of us ever attain Christ's righteousness until heaven, we wear it more closely every day (Philippians 3:9-14).

So, take courage, you are well guarded. But do not take off Christ's righteousness and wear sin. When you fail, and you will, confess immediately, and be cleansed. That sin burden belongs at the cross. Leave it there and keep wearing your new reality.

True = Sovereign Master

Righteous = Righteous Judge

Peace = God with Us

Faith = Faithful and Truth

Salvation = The God who Sees

Adonai Elohim

Shophet Tsaddiq

Emmanuel

Emet Elohim Emet

El Roi

Walking in Peace

Are you at peace with God? You weren't always. The conflict we have with God, our rebellion against His Word and His people, has to be reconciled for us to be at peace (2 Corinthians 5). But if you've trusted Jesus to save you from your sin and put your faith in God and His Word, you're no longer an enemy of God.

As one at peace with God, you confess your sin. You repent with every conviction. You forgive others as you've been forgiven. This is what it means to wear the Gospel of peace: You interact with others based on the Gospel. Here's how Gospel interaction looks: You confess quickly because you know Jesus bore your sins on the cross; you change daily because you tap into the power that raised Jesus from the dead; you forgive those who sin against you because you want to live in the peace of Christ.

The path of sharing the Gospel will not always be smooth or easy. You may be laughed at or persecuted. You will be tempted to be silent about Jesus. We sure do need to be prepared (Ephesians 4:15, 2 Timothy 2:3).

Shielded by Faith

In the Hebrew word for faithful and true, there is the implication of a deep pillar, anchored so deep that not even a tsunami shakes it (2 Thessalonians 3:3). Take refuge in the Rock that is God, rather than the flimsy, self-constructed shelters which

an "addict" or an "idolater" trusts (Psalm 46:1). Even a tiny bit of faith in the God of the Bible is faith that is unchanging and unshakable.

Such faith is not found in our natural thoughts, emotions, or common sense (Proverbs 3:5-6). This faith is rooted in the everlasting, abiding Word of God (Proverbs 30:5-6).

Protected by Salvation

To think about your salvation every day is to think future rather than focusing on the problems at hand. If you are saved, salvation covers you here and assures a secure future in heaven.

The helmet of salvation identifies you as Christ's in the way you think. Is your identity found in Christ? Then you are protected by the God who sees.

In Genesis 16:13-14, Hagar, abandoned and given up for dead, met God. He saw her affliction and saved her. Have you met Him and accepted His salvation?

Wielding the Weapon—Scripture

Repeatedly, think and say Bible verses that convict and change your thinking. This is the offensive armor piece that you hold out before the enemy, as Jesus did when Satan tempted Him (Matthew 4:4).

When you encounter problematic situations, Don't rely on your own thinking, rather turn to, think

about, and speak God's Word to yourself (Deuteronomy 29:29). When you waken in the morning, make it a habit to read or recite Scripture before you even raise your head from the pillow. When you go to bed at night, read Scripture until you fall asleep. During the day, preach Scripture to yourself and speak it to others.

Doing Guard Duty—Prayer

Be steadfast to pray. The peace of Christ will guard your heart and mind as you raise every potential worry or care before God in prayer. Scripture teaches that you must pray constantly and about everything, and do so with thanks (Romans 12:12, Philippians 4:6-7, 1 Thessalonians 5:17-18). As you cast all our cares on God, remember that He cares for you (1 Peter 5:8-9).

We are also to pray for one another, that we would be bold in telling the truth of the Gospel (Colossians 1:9, 4:2).

Stand Against Satan

As the list below becomes the daily habit of your life, you will be empowered to stand firm against this enemy (Ephesians 4:10-11).

1. Belted in truth
2. Wrapped in righteousness
3. Walking in Gospel peace
4. Shielded by faith
5. Protected by salvation
6. Weaponing with Scripture
7. Guarded by prayer

Strong in the Lord



Do not be deceived...

There is a battle for your soul

There is a battle going on; the most important battle imaginable. We have been deceived in the battle for your souls. Bad things have seduced us—they have felt good and they have been fun. Righteousness has not held our interest. We have not fought victoriously.

Did you know that all people spend eternity worshiping God? Yes (Philippians 2:10-15). Satan and all those he lures into hell will spend eternity burning with agonizing weeping and gnashing of teeth. Satan wants to deceive you so that you lose the battle and spend eternity with him in hell's torment. You don't have to let Satan deceive you. You can stand strong. Here's what you must do:

Ephesians 6:14a -- Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth...

Circle the word "truth." Read Philippians 4:8 and write down the first thing upon which we must set our thoughts.

This business of thinking and wearing truth takes practice. David practiced it in Psalm 103:2-4. What was the first important truth that he did not want to forget, about which he preached to his soul?

How John 14:6 help us think about the truth that we wear the forgiveness of Christ?

Ephesians 6:14b -- and having put on the breastplate of righteousness...

Read Philippians 3:8-14 and Romans 3:21-26. Underline the word "righteousness." Did you notice that Christ Jesus is our righteousness and that we attain righteousness by faith? Faith does not look back, but rather presses on forward to become more like the righteousness that God imputed onto us when He justified us.

In Hebrews 12:23 we see that amazing truth that in Heaven our spirits will be made perfect, but here on earth we will need to press on.

Read Titus 2:11-12. How will your life look when you wear the breastplate of righteousness?

Ephesians 6:15 -- and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace.

Read Mark 1:14-15. When Jesus began proclaiming the Gospel in Galilee, what two things did He tell people to do?

Don't make the mistake of thinking you only need to repent and believe one time and you're all set. These are shoes you need to wear every day. Shoes mean you walk in repentance and belief. You need the gospel every day. In every relationship, you must be ready for action, ready to repent and ready to share your faith in the God who is peace.

Ephesians 6:16 -- In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one.

Read Psalm 3:3. What happens to our heads when we hold the shield of faith?

Ephesians 6:17 -- And take the helmet of salvation...

Protect your mind by thinking about your salvation every day. In Romans 1:16, Paul says he is not ashamed of the Gospel. Why? What power does it affect?

Overt and covert operations

Scripture: Undeniable overt weapon

Prayer: Powerful covert weapon

Scripture

Ephesians 6:17 -- and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God,

A sword is wielded in offense. Jesus wielded the sword of the Spirit, the word of God, in Matthew 4 when Satan tempted Him. To aggressively wield a weapon in attack, you need to know your weapon. What Scripture tackles the temptations that you face? Please talk about this with a mature Christian friend, whom you also ask to pray for you. Write down the verse(s) here:

You need to learn by memory and repeat this passage to yourself numerous times each day, and during every moment of temptation. How will you hold yourself accountable to doing so?

Prayer

Ephesians 6:18-20 -- ...praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, 19 and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, 20 for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.

How often are we to pray?

What are we to pray that we will boldly proclaim?

For whom are we to pray?

Write down your prayer for the saints, especially for those who pray for you.

The Enemy Around Me

Your second enemy is the world around you. Our world is full of lures tempting us to worship other gods. God is the one and only true God, and He is serious about being the one and only God we worship.

Enemy World

The world is full of enemies. Anything you are willing to sin to get, or sin if you don't get it, is your enemy. Whatever you desire so much that it makes sense to sin to get it, or sin if you don't get it, becomes your personal idol.

The idols are powerful because you may or may not be aware of them. To identify the desires that you idolize, think about what stops you from wanting to please God. Typically it's what you will argue about, or become upset about, the trigger that preceded early picking up of "addictive" behavior. Your desires that become your idols are dangerously deadly to you (James 1:14-15).

people. He wanted to bless them, and make them great, and make them a blessing to the whole world, so that they could show other nations the greatness and glory of God. God gave them holy and awesome statutes and rules to protect them (the first was to have no other gods). "Listen," He pleaded, "Take care, keep your soul diligently, watch yourselves very carefully, take care lest you forget." He said, "What other great nation is there, that has statutes and rules so righteous as all this law that I give you?" (Deuteronomy 4:1-9).

Why was it so important for Israel to keep God's statutes and rules? God wanted to show them His steadfast love. No other god could ever give steadfast love. But if they disobeyed and worshiped other gods, He could not be their God. As the one and only true God, He cannot share His glory (Exodus 20:4, Deuteronomy 5:8).

The people of Israel had personally witnessed the power of the Most High God.

O, they knew God all right, by experience. However, they didn't do the things God required. They didn't honor Him as the One True God, their only God. In choosing other gods—idols—they chose not to enjoy the blessings of relationship with God. They became useless in their thinking. Their hearts were darkened. They worshiped created things rather than the Creator (Exodus 32:1-6, Romans 1:18-25).

God gave them what they wanted. It destroyed them, but worship cannot be forced, it is only worship if it is by choice. The idolatry of addiction becomes forced worship, as physical effects whip the user on. Worship of God is all about choice, rewarded by love and joy.

We choose to follow the world and its idols in exactly the same manner as Israel. God never forces us. The choice is ours. Worship the One True God, or not. You get what you want. Only be warned—worshiping idols will destroy you, just as it destroyed Israel.

I am the LORD, that is my name; my glory I give to no other, nor my praise to carved idols. Isaiah 42:8

Israel and Enemy World

Do you know why God gave us the Old Testament? It is full of amazing pictures, or stories, of the great nation Israel, and its horrible failures. These pictures warn us about the world and its idols. God said He gave us these true stories so that we will run from idols (1 Corinthians 10:6-7, 14).

Think about what happened to the nation Israel. They were the little no-count nation with whom God set up a relationship as His special

- God had rescued them from Egyptian bondage, from being forced to bear the beatings of slavery and the killing of their own sons.
- They had walked across the Red Sea on dry ground, then turned and watched the water churn in and drown the enemies chasing them.
- They had heard God thunder from the mountain, and seen the stone tablet on which God Himself had etched Ten Commandments.

Warnings, Second Chances, and Consequences

God gave the nation Israel many warnings, and made sure they knew they would be cursed if they worshiped idols and disobeyed God's statutes and rules (Deuteronomy 9:12, 27:15). He said their deluded hearts would make it impossible for them to be able to tell the difference between truth and lies. He urged them to remember what a great and mighty God He is and to return to Him, for He had redeemed them (Isaiah 44:9-23).

God gave Israel many chances. Samuel called the nation to return and worship and serve God (1 Samuel 12:20-25). Jeremiah begged them to return and remove

the detestable idols (Jeremiah 14:1-2). In the index of your Bible you see the names of many prophets, from Isaiah to Malachi. Their job was to plead with Israel to return to worshiping and glorifying God.

God gave Israel consequences, the results of their disobedience was no secret. He warned them that if they worshiped idols, they would have horrible devastations and punishments (Leviticus 26:1, 27-35). There would be great harm (1 Kings 14:8-10). They would be taken captive, so that they would know for sure that God is the One True God (Ezekiel 6:9-10).

Even with all the warnings, second chances, and consequences, the nation Israel did not turn and worship God. But God never left them hopeless. Always there was a future hope. That hope is the same as our hope. There would always be One to whom they could turn, if they cast away their idolatries, and worship. Likewise, there is One whom we can turn and worship (Isaiah 31:6). They did not need to, nor do we need to, remain stuck worshipping our enemy world and its idols.

What About Us?

Idolatries hook us the same way they hooked the great nation Israel.

- They weren't content with where God had them, but wanted something different.
- They sinned to get what they wanted, and the sin became habitual.
- The sinful habits became life dominating.

How can I know if something in the world has become my idol? Ask ourself these questions:

- Do I want it so much that sin makes more sense than obedience?
- Do I get so upset when I don't get it, that I talk myself into sin?

Before we answer those questions, we need a biblical definition of "sin." The definition in Romans 1:21 is helpful and concise: Sin is anything that does not honor/glorify God and sin is any attitude that is not thankfulness.

Gulp. We're all guilty. Right? Of course. If we will be honest, there are many things about which we are willing to stop honoring God. There are many things about which we grumble or complain. These are the idols.

Sinful or enslaving behaviors—spending, body image obsession, drug and alcohol use, inordinate relationships, sex outside marriage, attention grabbing, food abuse, and more—these are tools by which we serve our idols. The tools are anything we use to help us cope, escape, get comfort, be in control, give us identity, apart from God.

These tools are your enemies, and the world is full of tempting enemies to lure you away from God. By the power of the Holy Spirit, you will battle and overcome (Romans 8:13). How? There are people and places you must completely avoid, such as bars, neighborhoods, parties, or places where you once purchased drugs. If you see a luring image on TV or the phone screen, turn it off. Listen to music that helps you praise God in your heart. You need to want the glory of God more than you want the enjoyment of sin.

My glory I give to no other



Three Faces of Enemy World

1 John 2:15-17 -- Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. 16 For all that is in the world--the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eyes and pride of life--is not from the Father but is from the world. 17 And the world is passing away along with its desires, but whoever does the will of God abides forever.

In 1 John 2:15 (above), circle the word “love.” What may we not love?

The first and greatest commandment is that we love God with every part of us—our heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37-38). Why may we not love the world?

Write down the three categories of world in 1 John 2:16 of which we must beware:

In the boxes below, under each of the three desires of enemy world, idols are listed. To which are you susceptible? Circle the “thoughts” that ring familiar for you and/or the tools which have tempted you.

Desires of the Flesh “I want to feel better”	Desires of the Eyes “I want to have more”	Pride of Life “I want to be more”
Idol: Comfort <i>“I need comfort. I must avoid pain and discomfort.”</i> TOOLS: Laziness, Pain killers, Mind numbers	Idol: Control <i>I must be in control. If I surrender this, I will lose the control I need.</i> TOOLS: Anger, Rebellion, Cutting, Anorexia, Bullying	Idol: Dignity/Respect <i>I must be treated with dignity. I’ve been so wounded that I must react as I do.</i> TOOLS: Numb self, Sabotage or expect failure in relationships, Fear, Anxiety, Rebellion
Idol: Feelings <i>“I must feel good. I need easy and fast ways to get rid of sadness, guilt, self-deprecation, worry.”</i> TOOLS: Drugs, Alcohol, Shopping	Idol: Security <i>I need to have more security. Whatever I need to do to keep safe and secure is worth it.</i> TOOLS: Lying, Stealing, Restrict life	Idol: Affection/Attention <i>I must have more affection/attention. I must do whatever it takes to gain it.</i> TOOLS: Sexual promiscuity, Act out, Pluralization and abusiveness in relationships
Idol: Pleasure <i>I need pleasure. I must avoid self-denial, and avoid discomfort. I must feel like I enjoy feeling.</i> TOOLS: Drugs, Alcohol, Cutting, Porn, Excessive exercise	Idol: Approval <i>I must have approval. I must do what it takes to sense approval, whether by my own or others’ standards.</i> TOOLS: Bulimia, Social media (stage) obsession, Plastic surgery, Excessive exercise	Idol: Authority, Power <i>I must have more authority or power. I need to be more, know more, and control more.</i> TOOLS: Disrespect, Role rebellion, Gender confusion, Plow over people
Idol: Ease <i>I need my life to be easier. I must avoid work, discipline, and hardship.</i> TOOLS: Laziness, Avoidance of work, Using people, Manipulation	Idol: Accumulation/Achievement <i>I must have what I want/achieve the things I want to achieve, even if I have to sacrifice people/relationships.</i> TOOLS: Irresponsible shopping, Debt, Gambling, Overwork	Idol: Acceptance, Adulation <i>The people in my life must think highly of me (my boss, my parents, my husband, my pastor).</i> TOOLS: Isolation, Manipulation, Enabling, Bitterness, Resentment, Addictions

Talk About Convincing Conviction 4

Scripture Beats Enemy World

For each of your circles on the previous page, place a star inside the corresponding box on this page. One box at a time, prayerfully read the Scriptures. Write down the new thoughts with which you must renew your mind. With your Christian friend, talk about each box, and ways God is teaching you to battle your enemy. Write down your plan of action for obedience, ask your friend to pray for you each day, and hold yourself accountable by calling him or her and asking for prayer anytime you are struggling to obey.

Desires of the Flesh "I want to feel better"	Desires of the Eyes "I want to have more"	Pride of Life "I want to be more"
Idol: Comfort TOOLS: Laziness, Pain killers, Mind numbers How God wants me to think: Romans 5:3-5	Idol: Control TOOLS: Anger, Rebellion, Cutting, Anorexia, Bullying How God wants me to think: Ephesians 4:31-32	Idol: Dignity/Respect TOOLS: Numb self, Sabotage relationships, Fear, Anxiety, Expect failure in relationships How God wants me to think: Proverbs 28:26
Idol: Feelings TOOLS: Drugs, Alcohol, Shopping How God wants me to think: Philippians 4:4 Ephesians 5:18-19	Idol: Security TOOLS: Lying, Stealing, Restrict life How God wants me to think: Ephesians 4:28	Idol: Affection/Attention TOOLS: Sexual promiscuity, Act out, Pluralization and abusiveness in relationships How God wants me to think: 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Proverbs 5:20-21
Idol: Pleasure TOOLS: Drugs, Alcohol, Cutting, Porn, Excessive exercise How God wants me to think: James 1:2	Idol: Approval TOOLS: Bulimia, Social media (stage) obsession, Plastic surgery, Excessive exercise How God wants me to think: Romans 12:3	Idol: Authority, Power TOOLS: Disrespect, Role rebellion, Gender confusion, Plow over people How God wants me to think: Proverbs 28:14 Hebrews 12:14
Idol: Ease TOOLS: Laziness, Avoidance of work, Using people, Manipulation How God wants me to think: Colossians 3:23	Idol: Accumulation/Achievement TOOLS: Irresponsible shopping, Debt, Gambling, Overwork How God wants me to think: Philippians 4:11-13	Idol: Acceptance, Adulation TOOLS: Manipulation, Enabling, Bitterness, Resentment, Addictions How God wants me to think: Luke 9:23 Hebrews 12:15

The Enemy Inside Me

Your third enemy is the most dangerous, because it is right inside you: your own flesh, your thoughts, your longings, your desires. The Bible says that before you were saved, you were a slave to sin. You practiced being good at sin, just as a baseball player practices his swing. In all of us, there are established habits that must be replaced.

The practice of sinful habits begins in our thinking. Sometimes sinful thought processes have to do with responses to painful trials. For example, we might cope with pain by covering it up through anger and anxiety. From there it's an easy move to other addictive habits, such as drugs, anorexia, porn.

Pain, Heartache, Woundedness

Pain is distressing. Often those caught up in "addictions" began their habit in order to stop feeling pain. Some of the tools folks use to numb or replace pain include drugs, alcohol, cutting, sex, porn, food. Addictive behaviors can numb pain, for a short while anyway, but the feeling wears off and the pain is still there, frightening the user back into the addictive behavior. Eventually, for alcohol and chemical use, physiological consequences factor in.

The purpose of pain is to humble us and bring us to our knees in dependence on God. The Bible teaches us not to fear pain, but welcome it as discipline from God (Hebrews 12:4-9). There's hope when we think of pain as a trial to change us and develop character in us (Romans 5:3-5). While pain in itself is not an enemy; despair, self-pity, or attempts to numb or cover pain, are enemies. Pain either makes you better or bitter.

Self-confidence, Pride

Confidence in self, or anything other than God, is an enemy. Jesus said we must be poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3). Self-confidence and pride are antithetical to the truth that we are crucified with Christ, that we no longer live, but Christ lives in us (Galatians 2:20, Romans 6:1-6, Colossians 3:2-4). When we are confident in ourselves, we stand weak and endangered. When we admit our own weakness and confess self-confidence, we can rely on Christ's strength.

Quite simply, physical addiction occurs when you repeatedly satisfy a natural appetite and desire with a temporary pleasure until you become the servant of the temporary object of pleasure, rather than its master.

Mark Shaw (The Heart of Addiction)

Anxiety

Anxiety defined is "a feeling of nervousness, apprehension, fear, or worry." Anxiety is another tool that we use to numb the feeling of pain (Psalm 139:23-24). There are good fears—such as fear of God, fear of danger, fear of the consequences of sin; but there are also sinful fears that become worry and anxiety. Think differently about trials. They are not your enemy. Think of them as a gift from God, by which He is calling you to depend and rely on Him in obedience (James 1:2, 17).

For victory over the sin of anxiety, begin by counting every trial you encounter as joy. How do you count a trial as joy? You use the mind God gave you. You tell yourself how to feel. You pray about the trial every single time it comes to mind (Philippians 4:6-7). You preach truth to yourself by memorizing and reciting Scripture.

Anger

Anger is defined as "a strong feeling of displeasure and belligerence aroused by a wrong." Since anger is a common emotional response to pain or situations we don't like, responses of anger are natural, an easy habit (Proverbs 29:11, 22).

Anger shows itself in a number of ways—most by external explosions or by internal smoldering (Ephesians 4:31). During an explosion of rage, the angry person feels strong, right, and powerful. But afterwards, he

feels badly, and rightly so. Uncontrolled rage is a destructive, sinful response.

Internal smoldering is another self-destructive way to deal with being wronged. Internal anger is bitterness, which we will see brings nothing but trouble. Rather, the energy of anger must be used for God's glory! In the fourth section of "Redeemed," there will be a training opportunity so we can learn how to use the energy of anger productively, for God's glory.

Bitterness, Resentment

Resentment is defined as "bitter indignation at having been treated unfairly." "Fair" is a subjective word, and those thinking like victims can skew almost any situation into being unfair.

Feelings of bitterness and resentment often fuel "addictive" behavior and/or enslavement

relapses. It's been said that bitterness is like feeding yourself poison and hoping someone else dies from it. Bitterness is always a prison, and the one who is bitter is the captive. When you are bitter and resentful, you stop the grace of God in your life, and you defile those whom you impact (Hebrews 12:15).

The solution for bitterness and resentment is forgiveness.

The Victorious Weapon Against Bitterness: Forgiveness

Forgiveness is defined as "lifting the charge of guilt from one who has wronged me because Christ has

lifted the charge of guilt from me, choosing to no longer require payment for the debt someone owes me because Christ has paid my debt by His blood." Christians forgive in a completely different manner than non-Christians. Christians forgive because they've been forgiven by the blood of Christ (Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13).

Have you ever heard someone say, "You need to forgive yourself"? The person who says that has not yet considered a gospel definition of forgiveness. You can teach him or her to trust God and accept Christ's forgiveness. When you don't feel forgiven, or you don't feel like

forgiving, remember the cross of Christ and the price He paid there to make forgiveness possible.

The columns below give you a chance to think about lies and truths regarding forgiveness. When you read the lies, you may not recognize them as lies. Forgiveness is an area where Satan the deceiver has been busy working to obscure truth. He does not want us to live in gospel forgiveness that bring Christ's death on the cross and it's victory over Satan, sin, and death to reality in our lives. If you don't recognize the lies as lies, please study the Scriptures carefully so that you can come to the point of thinking the truth about forgiveness.

Lies Truths

Lies about forgiveness		Truths about forgiveness
If I forgive, there will be no justice, and the one who sinned against me will go free.	Revelation 19:15 Deuteronomy 32:4 Romans 12:19	God only knows what is just and God will justly punish all sin. Those that never repent of their sin will be punished for eternity when Jesus Christ returns and rules with a rod of iron.
Forgiveness is denial. It means I act fake, as if nothing ever happened.	Hebrews 9:14 Colossians 2:14	Forgiveness is never denial because it is based on Christ's punishment on the cross. Jesus never minimizes sin. A horrible, deadly, and serious payment is required for forgiveness of sin, which Jesus paid in great agony and pain.
If I forgive, I will be vulnerable to the same thing again.	Psalm 1:1 Mark 11:25 Proverbs 1:7	Forgiving doesn't mean the person is safe and must be trusted. It does mean that I no longer dwell on the sin in my mind, and I no longer talk about it. It also means I trust God and live according to His wisdom. Although it may be wise for me never to go near that person again, I must still have an attitude of forgiveness toward them. I do not want to be a fool who despises Christ's wisdom and instruction regarding my need to forgive.
My un-forgiveness is justified because I am right. If I forgive, they will never see the wrong and never repent.	Matthew 6:14-15 Matthew 18:21-35	Un-forgiveness hurts me. When I do not forgive I choose to let the sin of another person define or control my life. Instead of denying myself, taking up my cross, and walking in victory, I become bitter. Ultimately, the greatest danger is that when I don't forgive, Jesus said I won't be forgiven.
Forgiveness always means reconciliation.	2 Corinthians 5:14-20	Forgiveness is granted by the one who has been sinned against and chooses to cancel the debt because his or her own sin debt has been canceled by Christ's shed blood. However, although the one sinned against has already forgiven the sinner, there will not be reconciliation until the sinner confesses the sin and asks forgiveness. Reconciliation happens when the sinner asks forgiveness and it is granted in an attitude of forgiveness, because of Jesus Christ and His mercy. While always the goal, reconciliation cannot be forced. When both sinners are right with God, there will always be reconciliation between them.

Fighting the Enemy in Me: Fear

2 Timothy 1:7 -- For God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Does fear come from God?

In place of fear, what three things does God give us a spirit of?

Fighting Fear God's Way

Replace fear with a spirit of power:

Acts 1:8 -- But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.

Read Acts 1:8 (above). Who is the power of God?

Write out your prayer asking God's Holy Spirit to empower you so that you do not have a spirit of fear.

Replace fear with love:

1 John 4:18-21 -- 18 There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love. 19 We love because he first loved us. 20 If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen. 21 And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother.

Read 1 John 4:18. What does love have to do with fear?

Read 1 John 4:19. Why do we love?

Read 1 John 4:20-21. Do I have a choice about whether or not to love? Not if I love God. If I love God, it's because He loved me first and sent Jesus to die for my sin. I receive His love by confessing my sins and being forgiven. That is why I can love the people in my life, because I can extend the loving mercy that God has shown me to them. What would it look like for you to love rather than fear?

Replace fear with self-control:

Proverbs 25:28 -- A man without self-control is like a city broken into and left without walls.

Read Proverbs 25:28. What does my life look like when I don't control myself?

No wonder we are fearful. We don't control our thoughts! We open ourselves up to enemy attacks! You can take steps to control fear. One step toward self-control of fearful thoughts would be to choose a verse that you have memorized, such as one of the verses above or 2 Corinthians 10:5, and recite it every time a fearful thought threatens your mind. Continue to recite it until the fear subsides, even if you have to say it a hundred times. If you don't have it memorized, write it out instead of reciting it.

Fighting Specific Fears

I experience the following...	This fear has affected me and my relationships by...	I will replace this fear with obedience in power, love, and self-control by...
FEAR OF PAIN/DISCOMFORT ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever		
FEAR OF REJECTION/ABANDONMENT ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever		
FEAR OF POVERTY ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever		
FEAR OF FAILURE ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever		
FEAR OF CRITICISM ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever		
FEAR OF LONELINESS ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever		
FEAR OF INTIMACY ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever		
FEAR OF ABUSE ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever		
FEAR OF POWERLESSNESS ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever		
FEAR OF _____ ♥Often ♥Sometimes ♥Hardly ever		

1 Thessalonians 5:18 -- And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with all

If you are not able to do the above, rather than fearful (or fainthearted), you are perhaps idle (rebellious), or weak. Talk with your mature Christian friend about any rebellion in you that might stop you from prayer, love, or self-control. If you are weak, ask your brother/sister to uphold you and hold you accountable. Confess sin and walk in repentance.

Surrender Pain to Blessing

No one can argue that we live in a fallen world, where people sin against us. Life on earth is marked by the experience our own personal sin, and the experience of other's sin.

Therefore, we all know pain. We all know heartache. We've been hurt in relationships, and we've been hurtful in relationships. We've been hurt by the selfishness, pride, and indifference of others; and we've been selfish, proud, and indifferent. Perhaps you've known greater woundedness than others—serious defilements against your body or crushing corruptions against your heart. At some level, we all experience pain because we live in a sin-cursed world.

A few pages back, you read: "While pain in itself is not an enemy, wrong thinking about pain is an enemy." You can't look inside yourself for how to think. The enemy inside you will choose resentment, anger, anxiety. It's the enemy inside you that catastrophizes heartache, pillages pain, and wastes your woundedness.

You are not alone. Humanity has been thinking in defeating ways for thousands of years. Jesus, knowing the importance of learning to think for glory rather than gore, crafted His first sermon to help us counter our destructive thought processes. He did not preach a set of rules and regulations, but rather provided a description of the thoughts we need to think and a definitive statement of the life that is blessed.

Blessing is a deep, abiding inner condition that no circumstance, not even the worst, can take away. The condition of blessing is joy and peace. An unstoppable inner joy. An undefilable inner peace. Sound good? "Yah," you say, "but it makes

no sense to me." Good. That means you'll keep reading if the sub-headers sound a little off to your way of thinking, right?

Poor in spirit

The first blessed way to think is "poor in spirit." What? Yes. The "poor in spirit" are wrong, and willing to admit it. Being "poor in spirit" means coming to a place of complete humble brokenness over our personal sin, where we see our own sin without focusing on other's sin against us. We see it! Our desperate need and spiritual helplessness! Then, we grab the lifeline offered by Jesus Christ our Savior—and the kingdom of heaven is ours.

Blessings to you who are poor-in-spirit, who mourn, who are meek, hungry, merciful, and pure-hearted, who make peace yet are falsely accused.

Those Who Mourn

Being broken in spirit leads to a state of sorrow, which is exactly what Jesus talked about next. He told us that we'll be blessed when we mourn. He was not talking about the mourning of loss and grief, but rather about godly sorrow over our sin that leads to repentance. In the place of godly sorrow, or mourning, we hate our sin. Worldly sorrow, on the other hand, just means we don't like the consequence of our sin, we are sorry we got caught.

When we mourn our sin, we can be comforted. Rather than living in guilt, confession leads to being cleansed. Godly sorrow totally removes guilt. There's no tail behind us, no condemnation. We are talking about real, ultimate comfort.

The Meek

When your mourning leads to repentance, you give up control and surrender your opinions and ideas. You become a living definition of what it means to be meek (another word for meek is gentle). When we force our opinions onto others, we are not meek. When we insist on our rights, we are not meek. Meekness gently bows to God's Word. It lays down opinions and gives up control. It's scary to lay down rights you've clung to, it's frightening to give up control. But remember, you are giving it up to the One True God, the God of the universe. Jesus said the benefit of giving up control is that you inherit the earth.

No longer can addictions dominate you. The earth, and its fears/phobias, can no longer control you. When you become meek, when you surrender, a void grows in you, a hunger.

Hunger and Thirst for Righteousness

Do you yearn for more of God? Do you crave to meditate on and read His Word, to learn from it and do what you've learned? His Word's teaching fills the huge void which mourning our sin and becoming meek has left in us. Jesus said that when we hunger and thirst for righteousness, we will be satisfied, we will be abundantly filled. Only God's Word and His holiness can replace emptiness and longing.

Mercy

As you hunger for holiness, you will change. You will see people differently. You'll be able to have mercy like Jesus. Do you forgive others? Here at the beginning of the sermon, Jesus said if you are merciful you will obtain mercy. Later in the same message, He said that if you forgive you will be forgiven, and that if you don't forgive you won't be forgiven (Matthew 6:14-15). When you are forgiven, there's no room for bitterness. No longer a victim, now a victor, you have Christ's mercy and you do forgive the one(s) who sin against you.

Pure in Heart

Here we arrive at "pure in heart." Because you have forgiven others, you can see them purely, as God sees them. You love with a pure heart. You focus on wise and kind ways to treat others, rather than focusing on how they treat

you. Jesus said that the benefit of being pure in heart is a face-to-face meeting with God in Heaven. And here on earth, you'll have new eyes to be able to see what God is doing in other's lives.

Peacemaker

With eyes that see God, you lay down the expectations you have placed on others. The result is that you can be a "peacemaker." Not a wimp-out peacekeeper, but a God-serving, glory-making peacemaker. The benefit? As son or daughter of God, you have kinship with other sons and daughters in the family of God, because you bring only peace into relationships. Nothing points to Jesus more than the unity of the church (John 17:21). The greatest gospel declaration of your life is the unity you build as a peacemaker in the body of Christ.

Persecuted for Righteousness' Sake

Are you ready? You will be looked down upon, insulted, falsely accused. You will have lies spoken about you, because of Jesus. Not because you are quirky or difficult, but because you think and act like Jesus, in His name. And it's OK. You are a victor, not a woe-filled victim. There's a joy in suffering like Jesus that can be told only by those who have shared in it.

Jesus told us we will have suffering. We will have heartache. We will have pain. We will be wounded. But, and this overrides it all, He also took the stripes that heal us (1 Peter 2:24). When we focus on the pain, become angry, resentful, or bitter, we will not be blessed. When we choose to be poor in spirit, to mourn meekly, with hunger and thirst for righteousness that evidences itself in mercy, purifies our hearts, and makes us peaceful, there's a blessing that covers and overrides persecution, pain, heartache and woundedness.

Blessed are the:	Thoughts that put you on the path of blessing:	Thoughts that put you on the path of misery:
Poor in spirit	<i>"I am broken. I bring absolutely nothing to the relationship with Jesus apart from my personal wretchedness."</i>	<i>"I'm basically a good person. If I would just get over my woundedness I would be of great benefit to Jesus and others"</i>
Mourn	I BELONG TO THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN <i>"I have godly sorrow for my sin"</i>	I DO NOT BELONG TO HEAVEN <i>"Other's have treated me too badly."</i>
Meek, gentle	I AM COMFORTED <i>"I will surrender."</i>	NO COMFORT <i>"You should hear the terror I've endured."</i>
Hunger and thirst for righteousness	I WILL INHERIT THE EARTH <i>"I need to be more like Jesus, my ruler."</i>	EARTH RULES ME <i>"I am who I am and I can't help it."</i>
Merciful	RIGHTEOUSNESS FULLY SATISFIES ME <i>"No one owes me anything, I will forgive for I am fully satisfied in Christ's righteousness."</i>	I AM EMPTY <i>"Forgive, are you nuts? You obviously don't know yet how badly I've been hurt."</i>
Pure in heart	I HAVE OBTAINED MERCY <i>"My wretched heart is clean."</i>	I AM BITTER <i>"I haven't sinned much. I need to focus on others' sin against me."</i>
Peacemaker	I SEE GOD <i>"By the grace of God, I can live at peace with everyone as much as depends on me."</i>	I DO NOT SEE GOD, RATHER OTHER'S SIN <i>"This dissension is not my fault."</i>
Reviled, persecuted, falsely accused	I AM A CHILD OF GOD <i>"I get to suffer like Jesus."</i>	I AM NOT A CHILD OF GOD <i>"I am characterized by my pain."</i>

Perspective on Pain

Today's study is about Joseph, who seriously experienced the pain of abuse, rejection, and false accusation (Genesis 37-50). The abuse Joseph endured at the hands of his brothers culminated by being thrown into a pit to die. Fortunately, his older brother showed mercy and rather sold him to become a slave in Egypt. Joseph worked hard and faithfully for his owner, however, one day his owner's wife tried to tempt him sexually, and when he refused she accused him of accosting her. Joseph ended up in prison for something he did not do. In jail, he again worked hard to gain favor with his jailor. He assisted fellow inmates who promised to help him, but they forgot and he stayed imprisoned for two more long years.

When Joseph was finally freed from prison, God gave him such wisdom that he became assistant to the Pharaoh, a position that afforded him power to punish anyone. He worked very hard to store up food, so that Egypt had food while surrounding countries suffered famine. His father and brothers began to starve and travelled to Egypt in search of food. When they arrived, they didn't recognize Joseph because he had become so regal and mighty.

We'd all expect Joseph to punish them, but instead he was kind to his abusive brothers. However, and this is important, he didn't gush all over them and return to being their little whipping boy. Wisely, he watched them and he tested them to see if they'd changed. After several tests, he was convinced.

Genesis 45:4-8 -- So Joseph said to his brothers, "Come near to me, please." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt. 5 And now do not be distressed or angry with yourselves because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life. 6 For the famine has been in the land these two years, and there are yet five years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. 7 And God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you many survivors. 8 So it was not you who sent me here, but God. He has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt.

In Genesis 45:4 (above) who asked whom to be in a relationship again?

From the above verses, what was Joseph's attitude about his brothers' sin against him?

From the above verses, whom did Joseph know was in charge of his life? How did Joseph convey the truth of God's sovereignty to his brothers?

Although Joseph was mighty and powerful, he was not proud. He humbly acknowledged that God was doing something through the problems. Read the statements in the following list and check next to any ways in which you are proud.

- A proud person responds to painful circumstances with anger or anxiety.
- A proud person defines his or her life as being victimized by the offender.
- A proud person finds ways to numb the pain, without regard as to whether self or others are hurt.
- A proud person goes back to the person who mistreated him or her, without watching for change first.

Genesis 50:19-21 -- But Joseph said to them, "Do not fear, for am I in the place of God? 20 As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today. 21 So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones." Thus he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.

In Genesis 50:19 (above) Joseph told his brothers not to be afraid. How would he treat them?

Whom was Joseph trusting that allowed him to show kind wisdom to those that had abused him?

From Joseph's statement in the above passage, what did God do with the evil of man?

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

In the above passage, circle the three-letter word that describes how many things in your life can work for good. Absolutely nothing happens that God can't turn into good. In Romans 8:29 (above), we learn the reason why God works the "things" in your life for good. Whose image is God conforming you towards?

In your life personally, how do you think God wants to use your pain or woundedness to change you to be more like Jesus?

How Blessing Battles Pain

POOR IN SPIRIT -- Psalm 51:17 -- The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. (Also, James 4:6-10, Psalm 32:3-5)

What kind of heart does God want you to have?

The first step toward blessing is to realize and admit that you are wrong, sinful, and broken. Talk about the lie we typically believe, that we need to think better about ourselves or raise our self esteem. How does spiritual wretchedness lead us to full dependence on God and joy in God?

Why would high self esteem lead us away from the kingdom of God? Why would Jesus say that the poor in spirit are in the kingdom of God?

MOURN -- 2 Corinthians 7:10 -- For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death. (Also, 1 John 1:9)

Have you experienced godly sorrow for your sin? Talk about how confessing sin (agreeing with God by hating sin as He hates sin), leads to repentance (totally new way of thinking and acting.)

Why would Jesus say that those who mourn over sin will know comfort?

MEEK -- Psalm 37:11 -- But the meek shall inherit the land and delight themselves in abundant peace.

What kind of people inherit the land?

Meekness, or gentleness, does not insist on thinking the old way, rather meekness embraces humility. ‘

Talk about how meekness and humility are necessary for ruling and having dominion on earth.

HUNGER AND THIRST FOR RIGHTEOUSNESS -- Psalm 19:9-10 -- The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring forever; the rules of the LORD are true, and righteous altogether. 10 More to be desired are they than gold, even much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and drippings of the honeycomb.

Discuss the satisfaction of obeying God's word. Have you been reading your Bible every day?

MERCIFUL -- Matthew 6:14-15 -- For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

If you are resentful, you are not merciful. Talk about how you would need to confess your own sin to be able to extend mercy towards others.

PURE IN HEART -- 1 Peter 1:22 -- Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart. (Also, Colossians 3:12-13, Ezekiel 36:26-27)

A pure heart is one without hidden motives or unconfessed sin. How do you purify your heart?

What is the result of purifying your heart?

PEACEMAKERS -- Hebrews 12:14-15 -- Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled.

Can we be peacemakers if we are bitter? Do you know the joy of responding peacefully rather than retaliating?

REVEILED, PERSECUTED -- James 1:2 -- Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds.

How does blessing come from rejoicing in Jesus even when people mistreat you?

Surrender Pride to Trust

We think that people owe us kept promises. We think parents owe their small children protection and care. We think spouses owe reliability and romance. We think an employer owes us compensation or the government owes us provision. But the reality is, most people have experienced broken promises. They've placed trust in a person who broke that trust.

The danger is that we let broken trust by people impact our trust in God. Without resolute trust in God, we react to broken trust with rage, fear, anxiety, anger, helplessness, and/or depression. Walls go up between us and the people in our lives. We feel rejected and we reject. Mistrust of God becomes misery and we justify self-gratification as if it were our right and the only logical response—attention-seeking, sex, food, sugar, alcohol, drugs, smoking, achievement, work, things, bitterness.

Trust in People vs. Trust in God

Which of the statements below best describes what you expect from people?

- I expect that I will not be hurt by other people.
- I expect to get hurt only if I am mean or unkind to others.
- I expect that I will get hurt even if I try hard to avoid it.

The fact is, no matter what we do, some folks will treat us wrongly. We must stop responding as victims. We can be victors, and here's how.

The Bible says that if we trust people, we are cursed (Jeremiah 17:5). It's foolish and destructive to rely on promise-breaking people. We must trust the One True God (Jeremiah 17:7, Proverbs 3:5-6). Unless people are walking in the Spirit, they will be selfish and we will be hurt (Galatians 5:16). In our

sin-cursed world, promises to us will be broken, whether the promise had been spoken or whether it was simply there by way of the other person's position in our life (such as a parent). But God never ever breaks a promise.

Pride

God is always completely trustworthy. What stops us from trusting God? Pride stops us from trusting God, and surrendering control of our lives to Him.

Pride is this: A high or inordinate opinion of ourselves. We insist that our thoughts (desires, lies) are higher than what the Creator of the universe says. Pride says:

- God isn't doing a good enough job of my life. I deserve better.
- I will manage things my way.
- I want to be god.

How do you know when pride is rising up so high that you want to be the god of your life? When the enemies within rise up—despair, self-pity, anger, anxiety, fear—pride is at root. Have you ever thought about what your responses are really saying? See which of the following, from a list by Ed Welch in *Crossroads*, you recognize in yourself.

- When we are full of rage, we are saying, "God isn't good."
- When we feel sorry for ourselves, we are saying, "God isn't good enough."
- When we complain, we are saying, "I deserve better."
- When we fear, we are saying, "God can't be trusted."
- When we don't love others, we are saying, "God's not good to me, so I don't have to be good to others."
- When we lie, we are saying, "I can hide from God."
- When we are depressed, we are saying, "God doesn't care."

The ultimate pride would be to deny identifying with anything from that list. We all rise up in pride. Every time we trust people we are rising up in pride. Every time we move forward in self-confidence instead of God-confidence, that is pride. Every worried, anxious or fearful thought is the result of pride. Every mistrust of God is rooted in pride.

Dr. Mark Shaw, author of *The Heart of Addiction*, was asked, "What top three problems must an addict face?" His response was, "Pride, pride, pride."

Pride That is Obvious

What kind of pride is obvious? When a person boasts, you recognize arrogant pride. Some folks walk into a room and immediately begin a conversation that revolves around their own greatness. Some folks think they are bigger than rules, and boastfully break them without remorse because they say the rules are not fair. Pride that is obvious often wears a face of rebellion. It's not hard to recognize boastful pride.

Pride that is obvious often exhibits itself in resentment and sinful anger. We become angry with others when we aren't treated as someone who is great; we even become angry at ourselves because we aren't as great as we think we are. When we learn to humble ourselves, we will have learned a great secret for battling sinful anger and resentment.

Pride in Reverse

Pride in reverse is self-pity. The self-pity type of pride says, "Poor me. I deserve better than what is being given me from God," or "I deserve that people should treat me better," or "Poor me, why do I have so much misery?" or "Poor me, all I want is

a little peace.” It’s natural and easy to give in to the self-pity enemy that lives inside us all.

depressants, gambling, fantasizing, cutting, binging and purging, doing crank, porn use—all these are purely

the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ... 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

You have 100% control over every thought. Recognize the pride that drives them, and take captive every thought of rebellion, self-pity, and selfishness.

When you learn not to give in to self-pity, you will have gained a weapon to battle depression! You can think right, with thankfulness, in all situations. Then you can do what’s right and persevere in it. The result will be blessing—love, joy, peace.

Pride Inside

The pride inside us is selfishness. It isn’t obviously pride, it isn’t self-pity, it is just plain a desire to gratify self without consideration of others.

The selfish type of pride says, “I’ll gratify myself. I need to feel good more than I need to think about how it affects others.” Going to a crack house, running up a credit card you can’t pay, picking up a six-pack for after dinner, starving yourself, manipulating doctors for prescription pain-killers or anti-

selfish behaviors. But the harm of selfishness extends beyond self. It hurts all your relationships—with the Lord, with those who depend on you, with those who love you.

Pride and The Mind

What you feed your mind with is the most influential force in your life. And you have 100% responsibility for your thoughts. That’s right, you can completely control every single thought.

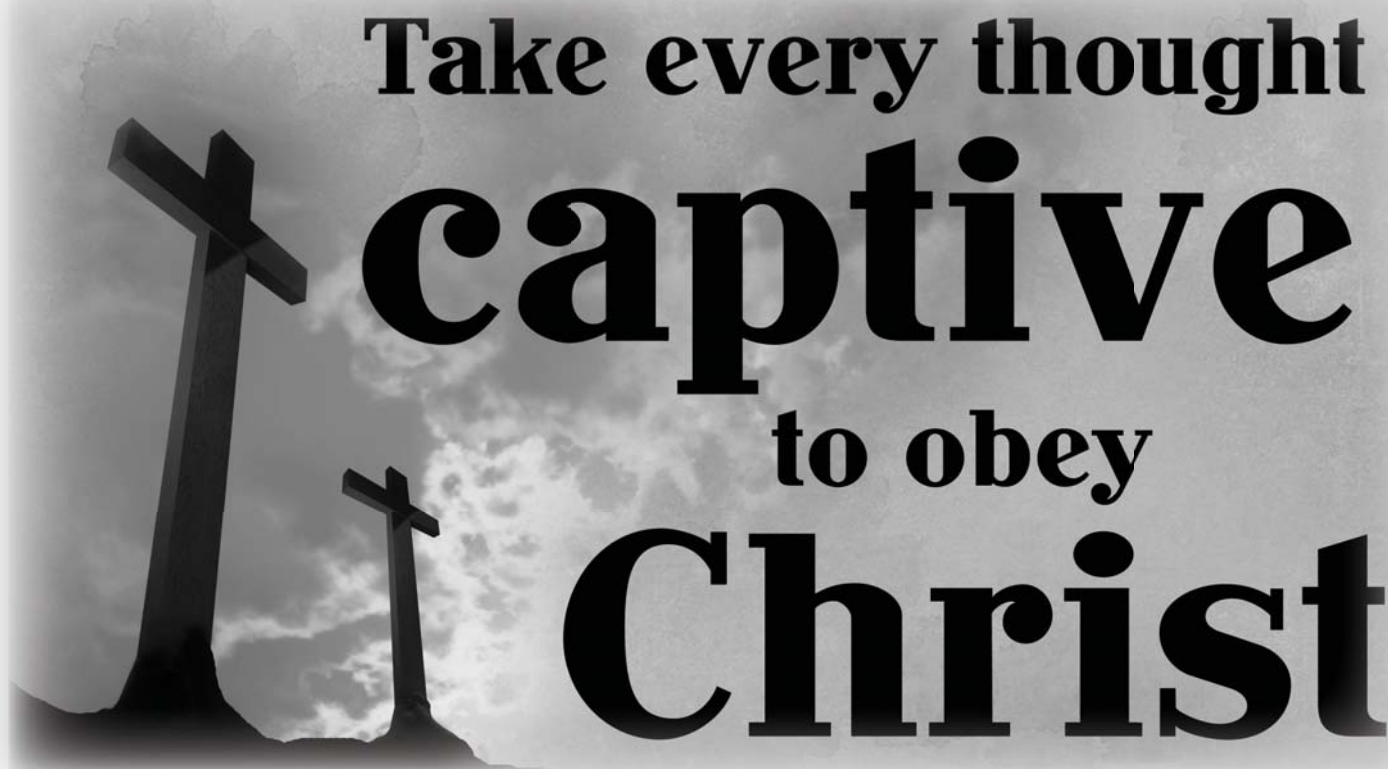
Here’s how God tells us to take our thoughts captive:

For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against

Jesus says, “Let me control your mind.” He crashes into the stronghold skyscrapers that have defined us. He counters the core desires to which we have clung, the lies behind which we’ve hidden and felt so deceptively safe. He finds the last bastion of our rebellion, the most wild and unruly places where we harbor pride. And there He demands that we surrender to His control.

Christians are growing and changing to look more like Jesus Christ, as little images of God. God is never sinfully angry; His wrath is right and good (Revelation 19:15). God never pities Himself; even on the cross Jesus was joyful (Hebrews 12:2). God is never selfish; He loves you so unselfishly that He crushed His own Son to save you from the righteous anger and wrath He must pour out on sin (Isaiah 53:10-11).

When we confess our sin of pride, we can stop putting our trust in self or in other people. As we trust God fully we can work to bring every thought into obedience to Christ.



Trust in God / Trust in Other

	Trust in God		Trust in Other than God
Proverbs 3:5	I trust in the Lord with all my heart, evidenced by praying and acknowledging Him ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Job 31:24-28	I trust in gold. Either I worry, keep my mind on my money, or incur unnecessary debt. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever
Psalms 37:5	I commit my way to the Lord and trust in Him. I wait for Him to show me the right thing to do. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Psalms 20:7	I trust in chariots. I have to be going somewhere or achieving something. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever
Psalms 37:3	I trust in the Lord. My trust is not in the government, so I fulfill my responsibility to vote and pray for our leaders. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Psalms 44:6	I trust in bows. If our country doesn't improve its armed forces, I am going to be upset. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever
John 12:36	I put my trust in the light. I will freely confess my own sin. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Psalms 49:6	I trust in wealth. I can buy my way out of a problematic situation. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever
Isaiah 12:2	Surely God is my salvation...I will trust. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Psalms 49:13	I trust in myself. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever
Proverbs 30:25	My trust is in the Lord to keep me safe. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Psalms 118:8	I trust in man. I remember every person that has offended me. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever
Psalms 115:9	I trust in the Lord to be my help and shield. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Micah 7:5	I trust in neighbors. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever
Proverbs 1:7	I trust in God's wisdom. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Proverbs 14:12	I trust in myself and my wisdom. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever
Psalms 33:21	I trust the Lord's holy name and rejoice in Him. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Isaiah 42:17	I trust in my idols. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever
Psalms 28:7	My heart trusts in God and I am helped. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Jeremiah 13:25	I trust in the Lord to be my help and shield. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever
Psalms 22:4	I trust in the God who delivers. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Jeremiah 48:7	I trust in my deeds that I perform. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever
Psalms 9:10	I trust in the One who never forsakes. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever	Ezekiel 33:13	I trust in beauty. ♡Often ♡Sometimes ♡Hardly ever

When I Trust God I'm Humble

When I Don't Trust God I'm Proud

Before you begin to discuss the questions, read 1 Corinthians 3:21-4:7 aloud together.

Pride is empty.

In *The Freedom of Self Forgetfulness*, Tim Keller states that “there is emptiness at the center of the human ego. The ego that is puffed up and over-inflated has nothing at its center. It is empty.”

We are most satisfied and fulfilled in our lives when we most delight in God (Psalm 34:8), and we are the emptiest when we refuse to trust God. Discuss ways, antithetical to trust in God, in which you have previously attempted to fill the feelings of emptiness. And, talk about ways in which you would trust in God.

Pride is easily hurt.

When we say, “My feelings are hurt,” in reality, there is nothing wrong with our feelings. It is our ego that hurts. Ego is always drawing attention to itself. Every focus or thought, no matter how small, about how we look or how we are treated is ego paying attention to itself. Our feelings don't hurt, they are fine. The problem is with our ego or our sense of self—there's something wrong with our pride. It needs to be humbled.

Pride is fragile. It is fragile because it is overinflated. Tim Keller writes, “A superiority complex and an inferiority complex are basically the same. They are both results of being overinflated. The person with the superiority complex is overinflated and in danger of being deflated; the person with an inferiority complex is deflated already. Someone with an inferiority complex will tell you they hate themselves and they will tell themselves they hate themselves. They are deflated. To be deflated means you were previously inflated. Deflated or in imminent danger of being deflated—it is all the same thing. And it makes the ego fragile.”

In what ways have your hurt feelings revealed your prideful heart?

Pride is readily worried or anxious.

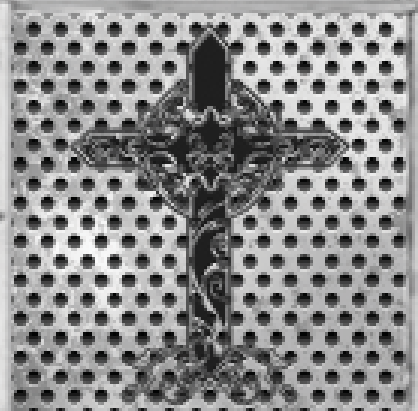
To trust God is to surrender control to Him. To rest in God's sovereignty is to allow Him the imminent control that is His.

Draw two circles, one within the other. In the smaller circle, write the word “Obey.” That circle represents areas of your life over which you need to take responsibility. In the larger circle, write the word “Trust.” Your areas of responsibility are surrounded by elements of life over which you have no control. Those are areas in which you must surrender pride, and in humility, say, “It's OK. I trust God.”

Talk about aspects of your life that belong in the “Obey” circle, about which you need to get busy obeying God's Word. Be sure to include the responsibility of prayer. Then talk about aspects of your life that belong in the “Trust” circle, in which you need to trust God.

Trust & Obey

**Are you reading
your Bible and
praying every
day?**



Transforming Correction



Freedom from Guilt

Now it's time to move into the beautiful story that only God can write—moving from guilty to glorious.

We'll begin by resolutely fixing our thoughts on Jesus Christ on the cross (Isaiah 53:7-9). Think of the brutal beating Jesus endured as He was driven to the cross. Think of the excruciating agony He suffered as they crushed Him onto the cross. Think of the unbearable isolation from the Father He experienced hanging there on the cross. Think hard about perfect Jesus, carrying your sins in His body and depositing them into hell.

All sin will end up punished in hell. You have one of two choices:

- Jesus takes your sin upon Himself and you go to heaven forever.
- Your sins go with you to hell and you stay in hell forever.

Those are the only options. If you don't choose Jesus, you have chosen to pay your own penalty for your sins. God will never force Himself on you. He will crash into you like a train wreck, not willing that you should perish, but the choice is ultimately yours.

Sin is death. Blood is life. God requires the shedding of blood to pay for sin (Hebrews 9:22). In the Old Testament, God's people offered animal sacrifices to cover sin, but when Christ became the final sacrifice, He abolished animal sacrifices. His blood is the final sacrifice. Christ's blood pays our penalty, fully cleanses us from our sin, and provides the only way of entrance to Heaven (1 John 1:9).

Think of Jesus, watching the Old Testament animal sacrifices from the glory of Heaven. With every lamb's scream, He saw what He would be doing for us. Still, He came. The sinless, spotless Son, Lamb of

God, came to sacrifice Himself for us.

We are the guilty ones. In Psalm 32:3-4 David describes the experience of being trapped inside the guilt of his own sin:

For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. Selah.

But David doesn't stop there. He also describes the solution, in Psalm 32:5:

I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. Selah.

We think of guilt as something bad, but actually it is a gift to us from the Holy Spirit (John 16:8-9). Without guilt, we'd be comfortable to live in sin. We need the heavy hand of the invisible giant guilt, as long as we follow through and allow Jesus to bear the sin of which we are guilty.

How does it happen that your sins are put on Jesus, the innocent one? There's only one way. You confess your sin. Confessing your sin means agreeing with God about your sin. When you see your sin the way God sees it, as horrible enough to deserve the most brutal beating ever endured, then you are confessing your sin.

Sin is not just actions we perform that harm others. Sin includes thoughts and desires that don't worship God above all else, and any thought or action that contradicts God's Word.

Take Steps To Confess Your Sin

First of all, let your mind agree with God, "Yes, I have sinned." Do any of the following sound familiar to you?

- "I doubt God would do what He says in the Bible."
- "God doesn't mean what He says."
- "I take the Bible to mean something different."
- "No one will ever know."
- "It's not really sin, it's my disorder."
- "If I leave my spouse, things will be different."
- "It's so-and-so's fault."

These are defenses we build that are as old as Adam and Eve (exactly how they handled things in Genesis 3). They don't work, only make things worse. So, agree with God. Hate your sin.

Second, talk to God about it. Tell Him you agree with Him. Name the sin specifically to Him (Proverbs 28:13). Ask Him to forgive you. Trust His promise to forgive you (1 John 1:9). Thank Him for forgiving you, especially if guilt over a sin of which you have repented tries to creep back into your mind (Psalm 103:2-3).

Third, confess it to the appropriate people. Who are the appropriate people? Whoever is affected or hurt by your sin and as widely as it is known (Matthew 5:23-24, James 5:16). If it is a sin in your mind, confess it to God. Confession of sin is to be public if it is already known or when it will edify others. If it came out in words or actions that affected or hurt others, you need to confess to them.

Confession of sin does not include:

- Excuses or possibilities
- Reasons or blaming
- "I'm sorry if I sinned"

Confession does include:

- Acknowledging hurt
- Accepting consequences
- "I sinned against you. Will you please forgive me?"

Fourth, repay what is due. If you've stolen, give back more than you took (Luke 15:18-19, Proverbs 6:30-31). If you've offended, find a way to make compensation. If you've hurt, look for ways to promote healing. This fourth step is part of the repentance to which confession leads.

seven differences are listed between what the Bible calls "godly sorrow" over sin, and "worldly sorrow" over sin (2 Corinthians 7:10-11). As Jesus said in Matthew 5:4, mourning our sin leads to comfort. Repentance leads to freedom from bondage, the great comfort which assures you that God is at work in your life.

Consider some of the ways God describes His forgiveness:

- He removes forgiven sin as far away as the east is from the west.
- He buries forgiven sin in the deepest part of the sea.
- He washes the forgiven sinner whiter than snow.
- He makes what was red as crimson white as wool.
- He cleanses your unrighteousness.

Once you've confessed sin, you need to rejoice in God's forgiveness. You learn lessons and you live by those lessons, and you move forward (Philippians 3:12-13).

To be forgiven is so sweet that honey has no taste in comparison. But there is one thing sweeter, and that is to forgive (Mark 11:25). Because you've been forgiven, you can and do forgive.

Beware Fake Confession

If you have just remorse or regret, that is not confession. Judas regretted that He sold Jesus, but he didn't confess his sin (Matthew 27:3). Other biblical examples of remorse without confession include Esau, Pharaoh, and King Saul.

Peter denied Jesus, however, he readily confessed. Jesus forgave him and even gave him a job. Peter became the first preacher for the church (Acts 2). Other biblical examples of true confession include King David, one of the thieves on a cross, and Paul.

If your thoughts are focused on the situation and how hard your life is because of it, that is not confession. Also, if you are sorry because you got caught, that's not confession either. If you don't like feeling guilty, that's not the same as agreeing with God. Confessions that flow from worldly sorrow lead to death.

Another form of worldly sorrow is to ascribe guilt to yourself for a sin that someone else has committed. Often folks who feel shame after being sinned against may struggle with this. Please see a biblical counselor to help you work through this well.

When we confess our sin in godly sorrow, we are grateful that God convicted us of guilt. We recognize and freely admit our own guilt, with hearts focused on Jesus Christ and His death on the cross. We sorrow that He had to take the punishment, knowing that we, not He, deserve the punishment. Such godly sorrow leads to repentance and deliverance, freedom from bondage!

God Grants Repentance

When you confess your sin, you do not continue in it. You change. The word "repentance" means a way of thinking that is beyond the old way, which results in changed behavior. In the table below, entitled "Repentance,"

What Does Forgiveness Mean?

Once your sin has been confessed, don't wallow in guilt any longer! God is not ever the one who brings confessed sin to your mind. God chooses not to remember it.

Repentance

When you've confessed and repented of sin, here's what will be true about you (based on 2 Corinthians 7:11):

EARNEST GODLY SORROW

You freely admit your sin, and don't hold back parts of it.

EAGERNESS TO CLEAR YOURSELF

You tell people you've changed, and stay away from tempting people/places.

INDIGNATION

You hate what you once enjoyed.

FEAR

You have a fear of sinning again rather than fear of what others think or say about you.

LONGING

You aren't angry, rather sorrowful with a deep lasting desire to be different.

ZEAL

You work hard to change your desires and thoughts.

VINDICATION

You readily accept the consequences.

If you haven't confessed the sin, or have stopped agreeing with God, here's what will be true about you:

You make excuses, defend the sin.

You are lazy and careless about being around temptation.

You miss the fun of the sin.

If you stay away from the sin, it'll just be because you're embarrassed over being caught.

You are angry—at the mess, others, at yourself—but don't hate the sin.

You make little or no effort to correct your heart and change your thoughts.

You act sorry to avoid consequences.

Guilt and Forgiveness

What's the Truth about Guilt?

John 16:8-9 -- And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment: 9 concerning sin, because they do not believe in me;

Jesus wanted us to have the Holy Spirit so that He could convict us. That means God convicts us of our guilt, by His Holy Spirit. So is guilt a bad thing or a good thing?

Guilt is very helpful for us! The only time guilt is a bad thing is when we don't resolve it in confession of sin. The cure for guilt is forgiveness, which is a gift from God through Jesus' death on the cross by which He redeems us. People who are plagued by guilt are not willing to confess sin and ask forgiveness. They refuse to believe Christ's atonement.

When you consider the sins of your past, you must separate areas of guilt from areas of innocence where you may feel shame. Many of us have known the pain of wounds inflicted by the sin of others. If you feel guilty about sins committed by others against you, of which you are innocent, your heart is listening to lies. It's time to confess the sin of listening to those lies. The world tries to tell us there is false guilt of which we are not truly guilty. You need to ask where you stand before God and whether you are culpable before Him. What matters is what God thinks.

The question is, are you guilty or innocent before God? In situations where you are innocent but feel shame over what happened, please know that Jesus understands. He was perfectly innocent all the way to the shameful cross, where He hung naked and beaten. As you begin to think more about Christ on the cross, you will not grow weary or lose heart over what happened (Hebrews 12:3). In the next section, you'll be working more on how Jesus heals you.

This week, please take time to complete not only this page but also the "Work Out" charts on the next pages, before you meet for discussion with your Christian friend.

What's the Truth about Forgiveness?

Psalm 51:7-10 -- Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. 8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. 9 Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. 10 Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me.

Describe what God did with David after he confessed:

Psalm 103:10, 12 -- He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. ... 12 as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.

In the above verses, what do you learn about God's forgiveness?

Isaiah 1:18 -- "Come now, let us reason together, says the LORD: though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they shall become like wool.

What does the Lord do with confessed sin?

Isaiah 43:25 -- "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.

What does God do with transgressions and sins that have been forgiven?

Micah 7:19 -- He will again have compassion on us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea.

Where are our forgiven sins?

Acts 26:18 -- To open their eyes, so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.'

What does the power of God do with our sins?

Your Freedom Story

Forgiveness and Cleansing of Sin

Here is where you begin looking at your story, in the context of how God is writing you into His grand and glorious redemption story. Maybe your response is, “My life is far from grand and glorious.” That’s a good response. Apart from God, all any of us can do is make a filthy mess out of the stuff of our lives (Romans 3:10-14). Some people’s messes are more culturally acceptable than others, but all of our lives are filthy wretched messes unless we are living for God’s glory.

There is hope for everyone, no matter what a mess we’ve made of our lives! God’s story is grand and glorious and perfect and lovely and good.

Great, Glorious, Grand, Guiltless

God wants you to be part of that glorious redemption story. And in it, He wants you guilt-free. He wants that freedom for you so badly that He crucified His perfect Son. Don’t believe it? Read the verses below.

Isaiah 53:10-11 -- Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities.

Christ bore your iniquities, as the righteous servant who makes many to be accounted righteous (notice we are not the ones who are righteous, we are accounted as righteous because of Christ’s imputed righteousness).

Read verse 11 again please. Although God’s soul is in anguish over the crushing grief of offering His Son for our guilt, when He sees many righteous, He shall be _____. This is our God. A God who is **satisfied** to impute His Son’s righteousness onto us. Be awed. Be eternally grateful. Be humbled. He wants that freedom from sin for you. It satisfies Him.

God wants to take the things that have happened to you in your life, all of it, and work it for good by changing you to be like Jesus Christ, as you have studied in Romans 8:28-29. Keep that goal in mind as you work through the next two pages.

The Bible teaches that we’re foolish if we don’t seek to understand (Proverbs 18:13, 15, 17). What the next pages afford is an opportunity to more thoroughly understand your struggles. The chart has you consider the core desires of your heart at various stages of your life, and sinful ways you have coped with not having your desires met. (The next section looks at ways others have sinned against you, so please do not include that in today’s work.)

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to convict you of areas where you are guilty. Perhaps He will bring to mind events where you have hurt someone, or neglected responsibilities. Even deeper, the Holy Spirit will convict you of desires and longings that do not worship God.

As you complete the chart on next page, Include each time you took part in some form of behavior with potential for bondage (see the column to the right). Think specifically about what was going on in your life at that time, and what you wanted. Also write down each time you escalated in the behavior, or took a step farther in—for instance, lashing out in anger, dishonoring your wife or disrespecting your husband, thinking negatively or bitterly, or indulging in gossip.

Bondage behaviors can include:

Alcohol use

Anger, rage

Bitterness, resentment

Cutting, self-injury

Computer gaming

Drug use - illegal, prescription, or over-counter

Fantasizing

Food - Over-eating or bingeing

Food - Under-eating, purging, or diet pills

Gambling

Illicit sexual activity

Inordinate internet use

Laziness, lying

Negative thinking

Overspending

Pornography

Inordinate phone use

Stealing, cheating

TV bingeing

Workaholism

The Sin of Your Heart

Take note of any time that you took part in some form of sinful behavior. There is a list of bondage behaviors on the previous page. Also include any form of rebellion toward God’s Word and authority, any form of complaining, or any form of self-glorification.

Age	Event	What happened	What I longed for, desired, or wished would happen	Sinful ways I reacted to getting or not getting what I desired

Confession Worksheet

You will benefit greatly from discussing these pages with your mature Christian friend after you have completed them (James 5:16).

Areas in which I am convicted of sin	My sin was	I have confessed to God (Pray Psalm 51:2-10, asking for mercy)	I have confessed to those against whom I sinned

Healing of Wounds

Healing of your wounds is available through the cross. If you don't believe that, you don't believe the Bible (Isaiah 53, 1 Peter 2:24).

Plenty of popular teaching on the topic of wound healing is likely well-meaning but definitely destructive. Time does not heal all wounds. A thorough remembrance does not heal wounds. Therapy does not heal wounds. Grieving, or following all of a prescribed set of steps for grieving does not heal wounds.

Wounds are horrible. Wounds seethe with hurt and spew pain into our lives. Wounds fester, stink, and get infected. Anyone who's been abused as a child, beaten by a spouse, betrayed by a trusted one, robbed, raped, or ravaged is well aware of the pain of wounds. The Bible does not skirt wounded-ness. It takes long hard looks at difficult narratives. It does not silence or squelch the stories of wounded women. They are given a voice and healing.

You can be one of the healed ones, but healing comes at a great cost. The price for the healing of our wounds is a horrific, crushing, shame-filled murder. Think of the worst picture you've seen of the naked, bruised, and bleeding Christ on the cross. Picture yourself there, standing under the dripping blood. That is where your healing is found. There is no other place or way to be healed from wounds caused by sin.

To begin, you must see the things that have hurt you the same way God sees them. He calls them sin. You have been sinned against; but don't stop there.

Next, you must see how seriously God hates sin, and what He did for your healing. By His stripes we are healed (1 Peter 2:24). Think back to before the cross. God hated sin so much that He had to punish it. The punishment would have to be horrific and torturous. Think of

how God thought about sin from the other side of the cross. He had to be separated from it, for He is holy and without sin. The easy and perfectly just way to take care of it would have been for sinners to be damned to hell. It does not make sense for sinners to be forgiven.

But, God is love. He does not want any of His creation to be punished. The solution would hurt Him terribly, yet that did not stop Him. When Jesus was hanging on the cross, He could have stepped down at any time, but He wanted to die on that cross so that sinners could be forgiven. Jesus Christ—Son of God—hung limp and torn on that horrible cross as God poured out His wrath on sin, to bring the healing that sin requires. When the beating stripped the skin off Jesus' body, it was for our healing. We do not need to suffer from the wounds of the sins of others, because Jesus took the beating for it.

Healing of Wounds Is Only Found At the Cross of Jesus Christ

Sin's debt can only be paid by the shedding of blood. It is by Jesus Christ's finished work on the cross that we are forgiven for our sins, and no longer defined by our sin, and we are able to be forgivers who are no longer defined by sin against us.

True healing is found in the stripes of Christ alone, healing that is thorough and eternal.

When we forgive on the basis of the cross, here's what we do: In imitation of the mercy of God that He extended in forgiving our sin, we choose to lift our charge of guilt from the sinner, by willingly cancelling their debt against us, as a gift. We make three promises, as God does toward us:

1. In our thoughts, we will not dwell on the sin or replay it in our mind.
2. In our speech, we will not talk about it with the forgiven person or with others.
3. In our actions, we will not allow it to embitter us against the person and act in resentment toward them.

That's how God forgives us, and that's how His stripes make it possible for us to forgive others and so be healed from the wounds they have inflicted. When we forgive others, we cancel the debt they owe us, because we understand that blood has been shed—either Christ's or theirs. If we accept Christ's blood as payment for our sin, we must also accept it as payment for others' sin. When we aren't able to forgive others' sin against us, it's because we haven't confessed our own sin and been forgiven by Christ's blood (Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13).

Jesus taught us to pray this way: "Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us." After He finished that prayer, He kept talking. He said, "Yes, I was serious about that. If you don't forgive those who sin against you, I don't forgive you." (Matthew 6:14-15). So you see, there is no option but to forgive those who have sinned against you. When

we do forgive, we find ourselves healed.

We forgive on the basis of Christ's blood as we have been forgiven by Christ's blood. If we forgive on any other basis, we are playing god and cheapening Christ's blood. Here's an example of how we can forgive, from **Peace-Making Women**. The authors relate how

Jessica's father had sexually molested her when she was a child. This is Jessica's testimony:

Why do I forgive him? Because I am a sinner. I have sinned against the Lord, yet He has completely washed my sin away. On that basis, I can forgive my father, even for this horrible thing, because it is a small debt in light of my great debt to God and because of the fact that my sins have been washed away by the blood of the Lamb."

If The Sinner Hasn't Asked, Does That Mean I Don't Have to Forgive?

Jesus Christ has a heart, or attitude, of forgiveness for us at all times, but we don't receive it until we want it. Christ is always ready to forgive, but we don't receive that forgiveness until we ask.

We don't own forgiveness, it is rooted in Christ. Like Jesus, we must have hearts, or attitudes, of forgiveness for those who have sinned against us at all times, but they don't receive it until

they want it. Also like Jesus, we can't transact forgiveness with one who hasn't asked.

Just as God doesn't forgive you until you confess, you don't tell a person you have forgiven him or her until he or she confesses (1 John 1:8-10). However, if you don't have a heart or attitude of forgiveness, you can't have a relationship with God (Mark 11:25).

Our relationship with God is based on forgiveness of our sins, which He provided for us while we were His enemies (Romans 5:8). When we don't have a heart of forgiveness for our enemies, we aren't being like Jesus, which means we aren't in His family yet. As siblings grow in likeness of their big brother, Christians grow to be more like Jesus (Romans 8:29).

How often do we forgive someone? Whether in attitude or transaction, we handle it like Jesus handles us. How often does Jesus forgive us? He is always ready to forgive us, even many times in the same day (Luke 17:3-4).

Unbiblical Ideas about Forgiveness

Forgiveness doesn't excuse sin. Saying, "It's OK," is dishonest. Sin is never OK. We must admit how bad the sin was, not minimize it.

Forgiveness is not trust. Forgiveness doesn't foolishly trust the person who sinned against you. Remember how Joseph wisely tested his abusers.

Forgiveness is not the same as forgetting. Instead, we choose not to think about it (Jeremiah 31:34).

The Feeling of Forgiveness

To forgive as Jesus does is to focus on joy in Jesus. At the cross, Jesus provided the way for us to live in the healing of forgiveness, and this gave Him joy during His suffering. When we think like Jesus, we don't forgive because we feel like forgiving, rather we forgive because we rejoice in obeying God (Luke 17:3-10, Hebrews 12:2-3). Jesus went to the cross for the joy of forgiving us, and the only way to share in that joy is to obey and forgive.

To be a Christian
means to

forgive

the inexcusable because God has

forgiven

the inexcusable in you. This is hard.
How can we do it? ... By meaning
our words when we say our
prayers each night, "Father,

forgive

us our sins as we

forgive

those who sin against us."

We are offered

forgiveness

on no other terms. To refuse means to
refuse God's mercy.

~C. S. Lewis



Wounds and Forgiveness

There's one question folks often ask after confessing their sin and asking forgiveness. It's important to have a clear answer to that question, before we look at how forgiveness impacts our woundedness. Here's the question:

- "I have confessed my sin, have been forgiven, and my life is evidencing repentance, but I still feel guilty. What's going on? Am I really forgiven?"

What's With Our Wallowing in Woundedness?

When we wallow in sin that we have confessed, it looks like this: We still talk about it, think about it, and/or respond to people on the basis of it. Sadly, it happens quite often. We find ourselves wallowing in feelings of guilt after we have confessed and asked forgiveness. Why do we wallow in confessed sin? Some of the reasons are listed below, along with solutions:

- Your feelings might have become more important to you than facts.
Solution: Bring your feelings under the authority of God's Word (Luke 17:8-10).
- You might not have truly forsaken the sin.
Solution: Stop dabbling. Ask God to give you a holy hatred for your sin.
- You might have a wrong view, instead of seeing confessed sin as God does.
Solution: Memorize and recite Psalm 103:8-12 until you are able to think biblically.
- You might be prideful, thinking your sin is bigger than God's forgiveness and grace.
Solution: Confess the sin of pride, and believe that what Jesus did on the cross is enough payment for your sin.
- You might think you need to forget about it, but you don't.
Solution: You do have to choose not to think about it. That's what God does (Jeremiah 31:34, Hebrews 8:12).
- You might not believe God's promise that He forgives whatever you confess (1 John 1:9).
Solution: Confess your unbelief as sin, and trust God that He forgives!

Why are we talking about our own forgiveness issues when this chapter is about the sin of others against us? Because if you wallow over your own confessed sin, if you still talk about it, think about it, and/or respond to people on the basis of it, you are likely to do the same regarding the sins of others against you. And then following will be true of you:

- You wait to feel like forgiving before you forgive.
- You are waiting for change in the other person before you forgive.
- You are not accepting of how freely God forgives.
- You are pridefully condemning, thinking the other person's sin is bigger than God's forgiveness and grace.
- You think you need to forget about it, but are convinced that you can't.
- You don't believe God's promise that He is ready to forgive whatever you confess (1 John 1:9).

Forgiveness is complete and final. It is the way to have victory over the enemies inside us. The work you'll be doing on the next pages, to gain a heart of forgiveness, is the key to victoriously battling pain, pride, anger, resentment, bitterness and anxiety. When you have a right attitude about your own forgiveness, here's how you forgive those that sin against you:

- You don't wait to feel like forgiving before you forgive. You know that forgiveness is a matter of obedience.
- You don't wait for change in the other person before you forgive. You know that forgiveness is because of Christ's blood.
- You are accepting of how freely God forgives. And in gratitude, you freely forgive as you've been forgiven.
- You are humbly gracious, in reflection of God's forgiveness and grace.
- You refuse to let your mind dwell on the person's sin against you.
- You believe God's promise that He is ready to forgive whatever is confessed (1 John 1:9).

The sin of others against you can leave you feeling shamed and full of grief. Shame from the sin of others is very different from the shame of guilt. God hates the sin of others' against you even more than you do. Not only will He punish them, He will fully vindicate you (Psalm 135:14). Vindicate means to completely clear of blame or shame.

At the cross, when you have known the forgiveness of Christ for your own sin, there is full and complete healing for anything and everything you have suffered because of the sin of others against you.

How Forgiveness Heals

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

I Have Been Crucified with Christ Therefore, I Forgive as Christ Forgives

1 Peter 2:24 -- He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

Mark 11:25 -- And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

Colossians 3:13 -- ...if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

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

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

There's only one way to be healed. There is only one law that provides liberty. Healing is found in the wounds of Christ. Freedom is found in forgiving as we've been forgiven.

On the next two pages, "Work Out" charts are provided. You'll be thinking about specific opportunities God has provided in your life to choose the healing of Christ's stripes through forgiveness. But first, please answer the following questions to discuss with your mature Christian friend.

Hebrews 12:2 -- Looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

- ☐ Why did Jesus choose to endure the cross?

- ☐ If you have been crucified with Christ, how would the reason Christ was crucified change your thinking towards those who have sinned against you?

- ☐ Was Christ a victim on the cross or a victor? If you have been crucified with Him, can you still think of yourself as a victim of others' sin against you?

- ☐ How does Christ's victory change us from those who have been wounded to those who have been healed?

- ☐ How do forgiveness and joy connect with crucifixion? (Hebrews 12:2)

- ☐ What would change in your thinking if you no longer thought of yourself as "wounded," but rather "crucified"?

The Healing of Your Heart

As you think through your life, remember there is full and complete healing at the cross. Prayerfully ask God to bring to mind only what will bring growth. Be sure that you have a mature Christian friend or biblical counselor to disciple you.

Age	Event	What happened	What I resent or am angry about because of the way someone sinned against me

Forgiveness Worksheet

Healing is by the forgiveness of Christ's stripes. With your mature Christian friend, be accountable to how you will live in the healing of for-the-joy-set-before-Him forgiveness.

**People who
harmed me by
sinning against
me**

**What debt do I need to cancel
because my debt has been
cancelled at the cross? What
judgment do I need to leave
in God's hands at the cross?
What wounds need to be
healed by Jesus' stripes?**

**Effects their sin has
had on my life as
long as I haven't
forgiven**

**How I think, speak,
and act when I choose
a heart of forgiveness,
realizing that not
until they ask will
I tell them they are
forgiven.**

Biblical Change Process

Are you ready for things to be different in your life? The Bible teaches a three-part, sure-fire method of change (Colossians 3:5-14, Ephesians 4:22-24).

Stop and Start

STOP—Put off means “get rid of,” “stop,” “finish with,” or “quit.” You can’t move on to steps two or three without step one.

START—Put on means to change, or start something new. Different behavior.

Renew Your Mind

Think of an oreo cookie. Everybody loves the cream that keeps those cookies together. “Renew your mind” is the cream that keeps the “stop” cookie and “start” cookie together.

Lots of people will tell you to stop the old thing and start a new thing. Yawn! But God’s Word puts a huge, essential twist into it. Changed actions are not the most important part of the process. Not even the godliest of actions, principles, or behaviors will make this thing work. You need a love relationship with a Savior, where you adore, devour, and live by every Word that He breathes.

You need a mind that loves to be renewed every day. New, again and again and again. When you repented and believed Jesus, you began to learn about Him. As His Spirit teaches you, your thinking changes and becomes more Christ-like.

God is the one who loved you first—He started the relationship with you. One of the things He did to pursue you was to write a love letter to you. You need to read it every day! Study it, and memorize it, and then change your ideas to match up with

it. Whenever you see something in the Bible that sounds weird to you, here’s what you need to say: “No! I won’t keep thinking the old way. It’s my old way that is weird. The right way to think is the Bible.”

Be careful though. It’s not enough to just fit a little of the Bible into our thoughts here and there. Renewing our minds means we work to totally change every thought until we line up with what the Bible says. We learn how to think like Jesus, such as choosing an attitude of forgiveness for the sake of joy (Philippians 2:5).

Stop, Renew Your Mind, Start: Lies / Truth

Our biggest area of struggle is self-deception. Check out how many times the Bible tells us, “Be not deceived.” Another word for “self-deception” is denial. Denial is a huge problem in addictions, which if not stopped will put up an insurmountable wall to change. If you say these things, you are lying to yourself and will not change:

- I can stop anytime.
- It’s not that bad.
- I’m OK now, I’ve learned my lesson and won’t do it anymore.

If that’s what you say, it means you don’t really want freedom from bondage. Rather, you need to admit the truth and say:

- I’m struggling.
- It’s bad. I need help.
- I must always rely on the grace of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. I need regular biblical teaching by a pastor and I need the accountability of discipleship as part of a church body.

Not only do you need to admit that you’re in trouble, you also

need to accept full responsibility for change. Listen to some of the lies that stop us from accepting responsibility:

- If my spouse would change, then I would change.
- It’s my parents’ fault that I am this way.
- I didn’t hurt anyone.
- You’re making this a bigger problem than it is.

You must accept the truth that you are responsible. This is not a wall you can go around. In order to move forward in freedom from bondage, you must honestly confess:

- I am fully responsible for this mess, no one else made these choices for me.
- I am completely to blame. No one forced me.
- I will never change until I admit that I am completely, 100% at fault.

Any other way of looking at bondage behaviors is a lie. The Bible repeatedly tells us to stop this lying, and to start being truthful.

- Jesus said the reason He came to earth is to tell us the truth (John 18:37).
- Lying is listed first in the list of what to stop (Ephesians 4:25).
- Not lying is listed as proof that we have put off the old (Colossians 3:9).
- In the battle against evil, the first piece of armor is truth (Ephesians 6).
- When we are told what to think about, the first thing is truth (Philippians 4:8).
- Jesus said the truth sets you free (John 8:32).

Stop, Renew Your Mind, Start: Rebellion / Accepting Restrictions

Next, we need to stop rebelling against boundaries, disciplines, and

restrictions. This means something bigger than merely refusing to use the tools of idol worship. This means radically refusing to be around the things that tempt you to pick up those tools.

What tempts you to pick up the tools with which you worship your idol?

- People?
- Places?
- Tastes and smells?
- Neglecting church?

Jesus taught us to pray these words: “Keep me away from temptation and.” After you pray, you must choose to restrict yourself. We don’t like restrictions, do we? But in order to stop, to put off, you must learn to restrict yourself, or be willing to let others impose restrictions upon you.

Being a disciple of Jesus Christ includes discipline. The One True God, the High King of the Universe, provides restrictions or boundaries for us because there is no other way to be free. He is not a killjoy. He is love. Without His loving restrictions, we would all be in bondage. We need to welcome boundaries or restrictions in our lives.

You need to fear that rebellious feeling that rises up in your gut upon hearing someone impose a restriction on you. As soon as it rises, right where you are, stop and deliberately pray, “I welcome this restriction. Lord thank you for providing it to let it keep me from evil.”

As we change and grow, we recognize that we are not righteous like Jesus. And so we see the need to confess and repent, all the way to heaven, where we’ll fall face-down at His feet in joy and gratitude.

Stop, Renew Your Mind, Start Human Philosophy & Scripture

We’ve talked about God’s language. The world likes to categorize observable behaviors and give them a label. Labelling helps us quickly understand things about a person. But God has already categorized and labelled a lot of things that the world decided to re-categorize and re-label. For example, what we often hear labelled “alcoholism” was labeled by God as the sin of “drunkenness” rooted in the sin of “idolatry.”

When we think of the word “drunkenness,” we think of someone

who is stumbling and staggering, with slurred speech. But that’s only part of the picture. To see the whole picture, we’d see the person making choices to worship something other than God. The person chooses to disobey God in thoughts, speech, and actions. Those choices increase and become regular and habitual, until the person is in bondage and enslavement to those choices. Eventually, there are physical effects, and we are tempted to agree with a disease diagnosis.

We must renew our thinking to embrace God’s definitions about addictions. Are we so intoxicated with our own importance that we don’t allow God to speak His language? Apart from divine truth we are but fools with empty thoughts.

Lay aside definitions based in human philosophy. Addictions are rooted in idolatry; those that choose addictive, self-sabotaging behaviors are worshipping idols, not the God of Scripture.

Stop, Renew Your Mind, Start Feeling-driven / Obedience-driven

Whether we’ve chosen addictive behavior or we’ve merely dabbled in anxiety or depression, we need to think differently. The problem is that we listen to our feelings over God’s Word.

Have you ever considered God’s commands about our feelings?

- Trials must be counted joy (James 1:2). Our brains need to tell our hearts what to feel.
- We are commanded to choose to rejoice in the Lord always (Philippians 4:4).
- Praying about everything guards our hearts and minds with peace beyond understanding (Philippians 4:6).
- We must be thankful for everything (1 Thessalonians 5:19).
- We need to love God first and

most (Matthew 22:37-38).

- We must taste and see that God is good and His Word wonderful (Psalm 34:8, 119:103).
- It is in God’s presence that we experience true joy (Psalm 16:11, 43:4).

Feelings are wonderful! They are one of God’s greatest gifts to us. As John Piper says: “God is most glorified when we are most satisfied in Him...The only password into the presence of God is, ‘God makes me happy.’” Or, Jeremy Taylor has said: “God threatens terrible things if we will not be happy.”

We must stop our misery, renew our minds, and start rejoicing in God.

Stop, Renew Your Mind, Start Defensiveness / Surrender

God grants repentance with every humble confession of sin. But there is a worldly sorrow that leads to death. Here are some examples of defensive worldly sorrow:

- If people wouldn’t be so controlling, or if authority wouldn’t be so ridiculous, I wouldn’t have this problem.
- I shouldn’t have to face these consequences.
- My sin isn’t an issue, I need to talk with some people about this sin of others.

Do you know what Jesus is doing these days? He’s sitting next to God the Father, advocating for you if you have godly sorrow for your sin. Every time you confess, Jesus says to God the Father, “That one is ours, Father. He or she is the reason I died. He or she has been cleansed. Forgive him or her. Change him or her. Use him or her. (1 John 2:1-4).

Humbling yourself and repenting must become a daily habit. Repentance is as important as belief (Mark 1:15).

We need to put off defending ourselves or explaining why we sin. We need to put on the righteousness of Christ, evidenced first by confession and forgiveness. No wonder Jesus taught us to pray, “Forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”

It’s time to put off pride and put on humility. Stop defending and start repenting as you renew your mind with Scripture.

Cling Desperately to Truth

John 18:37 -- [Jesus said] "For this purpose I was born and for this purpose I have come into the world--to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth listens to my voice."

Why did Jesus come to earth?

What is our connection with truth?

Ephesians 6:14 -- Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth...

What do we need first to be able to stand?

Philippians 4:8 -- Finally, brothers, whatever is true...think about these things.

What does it mean to think about whatever is true?

Look up Philippians 4:8. What are the other things you need to think about. How does that list impact your definition of true?

John 8:32 -- [Jesus said] "And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

What sets us free from bondage?

Lying Takes Many Forms

Complete the checklist below.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have lied | <input type="checkbox"/> I have avoided people |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have been sneaky | <input type="checkbox"/> I have not followed up on commitment |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have rationalized behavior | <input type="checkbox"/> I have manipulated |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have made excuses | <input type="checkbox"/> I change the subject to avoid certain topics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have isolated myself from others | <input type="checkbox"/> I shut down when people mention certain topics |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have shifted blame onto others | <input type="checkbox"/> Other ways I have neglected truth _____ |

Look up the following verses and write down what you learn about deception.

Proverbs 6:12-19

Proverbs 10:9-10

Proverbs 11:9

Proverbs 12:19-22

Proverbs 19:5

Proverbs 20:17

Proverbs 21:6

Proverbs 26:18-19

Stop, Start, & Renew the Mind

STOP	START	SCRIPTURE RENEWAL
Underline thoughts or behaviors you need to put off. Ask your mature Christian friend to check your list & provide input.	Underline thoughts or behaviors that you need to put on. Ask your mature Christian friend to check your list and provide input.	Together with your mature Christian friend, choose relevant Scripture passages with which to renew your mind. Write the verse(s) here.
THINGS I NEED TO PUT OFF	THINGS I NEED TO PUT ON	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Cell phone use * Cigarettes * Coolers to store beer * Clothing that advertises any alcohol or drug use * Suggestive or revealing clothing * Secular books, magazines * TV advertisements * Internet or channel surfing * Mirror use, weight obsession * Deception, lies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Meetings with Christians * Christian music, messages * Shirts from your church with godly messages * Walking * Reading the Bible * Christian movies * Supervised internet use * Serve the body of Christ * Planning for clothing and food * Speaking truth 	
PLACES TO PUT OFF	PLACES I NEED TO PUT ON	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Bars, familiar restaurants * Houses of drinkers or drug users, even if relatives * Convenience stores, grocery aisles that stock alcohol * Locations where you previously obtained drugs, any known drug sale places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Church, Bible studies * Fun times with Christians * A godly friend to whom you can turn anytime * Gas up at pumps, don't go in * Plan your shopping aisles * If you host, clarify no alcohol use * Plan new routes to avoid old neighborhoods 	
PEOPLE TO PUT OFF	PEOPLE TO PUT ON	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Avoid "old friends" until repentance is proven * Avoid dealers at all costs * Avoid being alone for long times, and don't meet new folks alone * Avoid co-workers caught up in addictive behavior * Steer clear of conversation about your past * Avoid old places of vacation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Godly, drug-free friends and co-workers with joyful spirits * Accountability partner who speaks truth in love * A pastor who teaches the Bible * When meeting new people, have a godly friend with you * Those you previously considered "uncool" or "goody-two-shoes." * Praying friends, relatives 	
ATTITUDES TO PUT OFF	ATTITUDES TO PUT ON	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Feelings of self-pity, hurt * Procrastination * Panic * Focus on appearance * Ignoring priorities * Anger, anxiety, resentment * Complaining, grumbling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Pray and read Scripture, alone and with other Christians * Love, acceptance, meekness, humility * Peace by praying constantly * A plan to serve Christians * Gratitude for how God made you * Joy, trust, a smile at the future 	

**Are you reading
your Bible and
praying every
day?**



Freedom Training

Training My Thoughts

Ever think about why you have a mind? We were created for God's honor and glory (Isaiah 43:7). It follows that unless our minds think thoughts that honor and glorify God, we're messed up.

Arguments, ideas, opinions, philosophies, theories, bitteresses, resentments, cravings, ideas, dreams—we have plenty of skyscrapers we erect in our minds. We are in a war. Our days need to include destruction. Captivity. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, God tells us:

Destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.

Jesus said that what we do and say comes from our heart, our inner man, where our thoughts take place (Luke 6:45). On the journey from bondage to freedom, the war with our thoughts will rage again and again.

Let's listen in as Jesus teaches his friends this lesson. It was one of the last things He taught them. The story that follows took place the evening before He died.

First of all, do you know how it feels to have dog-tired and dirty feet? A day of dragging them through heel-cracking dust until way too late? And has anyone ever (not talking pedicure here) prepared a basin of warm sudsy water, and carried it right to the spot where you sunk exhausted, intending not to get up again until you dragged yourself to bed? Then, have they insisted on tenderly immersing your feet in the water, rubbing them clean, and wrapping them in a towel? That's what Jesus did.

"Hey guys," Jesus said, "Find a room to rent so we can all have dinner together tonight. And since it's a holiday, pick up the food and take it there yourselves, OK?"

"Got it." His friends rushed off.

It was a bit tricky to find a restaurant with a room to seat thirteen on such short notice, but they managed. The owner said, "You can have a room, but there's no one available to wait on you."

"That's OK, we've already picked up the food."

John asked, "If we have no waiter, who'll do the dirty work for us?" He didn't mean dishes. Those were the days when men had really, really revolting feet. Sandal feet. And those were the days when there weren't septic systems, giving impressive meaning to the word dirty. Every good host hired a servant to wash guests' feet. Foot washers were a dime a dozen, it was the dirty work of the lowliest of people. A bit like today's dish-washers, only the work took on a whole new level of skanky.

"Well," Peter said, "I don't care about our feet. We can even eat

leader!"

Hear what Jesus did not say. He did not say, "Oh, yah, right. I just got sick of the smell in here. You do it."

No. He said this. "Unless you let me wash you, you'll have nothing to do with me."

Whoa! So, there He was, his head bent over those stench-crusted feet, his hands washing, drying. The next day around that time, the hands that had attended to their feet would have been placed in a grave. But that night, he did something his disciples never forgot.

Jesus was saying, "Guys, it's my last chance with you. All this time, I've been showing and telling you how to think right, how to love. Tonight I want you to experience it. If you think right, you'll do right, and you'll be blessed. Right thoughts followed by right actions (actions of loving sacrifice) are the only path to the joy and peace you want (John 13:17).

Jesus said, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." John 13:17

without washing, as long as we don't have to do that job."

The day passed, all the preparations were in place. By the time everyone arrived, they were hungry. Just the twelve friends, with their Jesus. If any of them thought of it, no one mentioned the foot thing.

Jesus seemed really engrossed in serving the food. That is until suddenly he stood up. Peter and John watched aghast, He was pouring water into a basin. He was kneeling in front of them.

"Jesus, what are you doing?" It was Peter, of course. "You can't do that! It's gross! You're our

Jesus' Brother Understood

After Jesus was raised from death, His little brother James became a sold-out believer. James had thought Jesus was crazy, until Jesus let the people crucify Him. I don't know what James was thinking for those three days between the cross and the resurrection, but once Jesus walked into that room, well, of course James was all in.

Likely he spent many a sleepless night thinking back to life-lessons Jesus had taught. One of them had to be the above, because James emphatically repeated it to the church in James 1:25. He explained that you

have to study God's Word to think right, and then you have to do right and keep doing right (no matter how you feel), in order to feel right.

Taking Thoughts Captive

Taking thoughts captive is the beginning of transformation, the entry gate to the path of freedom. All your life you will be engaged in the battle. The body and brain in which you are incarcerated wants desires that can become enemies. You want to blame Satan, actually anyone will do in a pinch. The world even has you blaming your parents. You want to pursue the things that look and feel good in this world. You want to follow your emotions.

The only way to succeed in taking thoughts captive is to replace them with Scripture. This has been true for thousands of years. The people of the great nation Israel knew this (Psalm 119:9, Joshua 1:8). Jesus showed us

this when He used Scripture to refute Satan (Matthew 4:4, 7, & 10).

Satan's trick is to try and get you to doubt Scripture. It was the ploy he used with Eve, it worked with her and he's been busy perfecting it ever since (Genesis 3:2-6). Don't allow doubt to be cast on God's Word! (Did God really say?) Don't distort God's Word (He said we couldn't touch it.) Don't let God's Word be denied.

It is a great and amazing gift of God that He has given us His Word. We are not left to the whims of inner ideas. There is no need for wondering whether this thought, or that, is of God, or not. We have the rock solid, everlasting, eternal, Word of God. Word that became flesh for a time, and showed us beauty, grace and truth. Word that will inerrantly, eternally, miraculously, unquestionably outlast every pogram, every burning, every twisted and twisting attempt to destroy it. Word

that is authoritatively super-sufficient, no matter what human philosophies and psychologies insist.

God's Word is living and active and powerful. It will show you your thoughts and intentions (Hebrews 4:12). Your Bible is your offensive weapon, the sword you yield to take your thoughts captive (Ephesians 6:18). Scripture is the means by which to renew your mind (Ephesians 4:22).

Speak Scripture to yourself the moment you waken. Write verses on cards to keep with you and around the house. Say verses with your kids as you tuck them into bed. Make up melodies and sing chapters to yourself. When your head hits the pillow, be sure it is Scripture that is running through your mind.

Refuse to live by feelings. Live by the great and precious promises of God's Word, and you'll know a divine power that gives you everything you need.

Think Right



Do Right



Feel Right



Absolute Truth is Absolutely True

Placing the various types of books into four categories helps us to understand the position of absolute truth.

1. **Fantastical fiction** Stories that could not be true (such as the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, or the *Harry Potter* series).
2. **Realistic fiction** Stories that are realistic (such as *Lassie*, or *Anne of Green Gables*).
3. **Perceived truth** Human attempts to convey what is understood from their worldview as truth (textbooks, Christian writings, reports, newspapers, biographies, historical works)
4. **Absolute truth** There is only one book of absolute truth—God’s Word. Only God could know what is absolutely true, for three reasons: He created us and knows us, He is truth, and He is not affected by the deceiver. We are.

Trouble is, we nod and agree that Scripture is absolute truth, but then seek other sources of wisdom for day-to-day living.

James 1:5-8 -- If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. 6 But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. 7 For that person must not suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; 8 he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.

What will be true about us if we ask God for wisdom, but our faith is in the wisdom of mankind rather than in His Word?

Psalm 19:1-2 -- The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork. 2 Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.

We can learn about God from creation. What does creation declare, proclaim, speak, and reveal?

Romans 1:20 -- For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.

Creation reveals two aspects of God. His _____ and _____. But when it comes to learning about ourselves, creation falls short.

Jeremiah 17:9 -- The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it?

What is the problem with our hearts?

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

What does God’s Word discern about the hearts of humankind?

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

When we allow Scripture to teach, convict, correct and train us, are we fully or partially equipped?

2 Peter 1:3 -- His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

What is the problem with our desires?

How many thing pertaining to godly living does God provide through the precious and great promises, given to us in His Word?

How does God’s Word protect us from the corruption we embrace because of our sinful desires?

Scripture is sufficient and authoritative to reveal, deal with, and heal us.

Talk About Freedom Training 1

Scripture Can Renew Your Mind

God's Word is living and powerful. It provides what humanity needs to live well in the world. In "Talk About Transforming Correction 3", you chose Scripture passages relevant to what you need to put off and put on.

The text(s) I chose: _____

If you do not have a passage chosen yet, following are a few suggestions. Choose one.

THINGS

Titus 2:11-12

Ephesians 4:20

Matthew 4:8-10

PLACES

Romans 12:1-2

Ephesians 4:17

Isaiah 2:3

PEOPLE

Psalms 1:1

Ephesians 3:17-18

Philippians 4:9

ATTITUDES

Philippians 2:5, 4:4

Colossians 3:12-13

1 Thessalonians 5:18-19

Below you will find "Ten Steps to Renewing Your Mind," for instruction on how to renew your mind with the Scriptures you have chosen.

Ten Steps to Renewing Your Mind

Adapted from "The Heart of Addiction" by Mark Shaw.

1. Pray before you read the passage you have chosen, with which to renew your mind. Pray that God would reveal lies you have believed and truth you must believe.
2. Read the passage one time without stopping.
3. Read the passage again slowly and break it into smaller pieces, or phrases. Write the smaller pieces here:

Now reword the smaller pieces into thoughts you understand, and write those here:

4. Look each of those small pieces (phrases) over with a personal view. What is God saying to you in each piece? Is there a lie you have believed that you need to renounce? Is there a truth God is announcing to you?
5. Discuss each phrase with your Christian friend until you have a better understanding of each part of the passage and what God is saying.
6. Begin to memorize the verse now, by writing it down piece by piece. Start with the first small piece, write it down and say it aloud repeatedly.
7. Close your eyes and see if you can recite that first piece, without looking. If not, return to step #6, and after writing the phrase down, say it aloud starting with the first word, then repeating it and adding one more word with each repeating, until all the words of the phrase have been spoken aloud from memory.
8. Now, move to the next small piece (or phrase) and repeat #6 and 7.
9. Once you've completed the passage, recite it all together three times aloud. Practice it daily three times (perhaps meal-times). You could make it into a prayer before you eat. Be creative!
10. Recite it to your Christian friend, and to others. Explain to them what it means and how it helps you.

Training My Attitudes

Imagine a team of hockey players boarding a bus after a game, ready to head home. They are wearing suits of course, being professionals. At first glance, you'd never know that the hour was late or the game had been hard. There are smiles on those faces that look like they'll never be wiped off. They hoot and holler and call to one another, banter so merry you can almost taste victory in the air.

But as a matter of fact, the game went so long that near the end, players almost fell over the boards and collapsed on the bench at shift change. You look closely and see nicks and bruises, stitched faces and necks, missing teeth, bloody noses. White tape covers sprained ankles, wrists, hands. Some are limping, some leaning on crutches. Still, their faces register a relief, a unity, a gratitude, and their eyes shine vibrant with life. The battle has been won!

Battle Reality

In Jesus Christ, your battle has been won. You can face the bondage of your habitual idolatries from the position of assured victory. Just read the last chapters of the Bible and see that Christ is victorious over sin. Fantastic! We get to be part of the army that's described in Revelation 19:11-16.

We need to train our attitudes to think victoriously. Romans 1:21 points out two things that need to be true about us:

- We need to honor or glorify God.
- We need to be thankful to God.

Do you remember the three steps to change? Check out Ephesians 4:22-24 if you need a review.

- Put off, or stop, the old.
- Renew the mind
- Put on, or start, the new.

Today, we'll think about the result of putting off, or stopping, attitudes that lead to bondage behaviors. When you are free from bondage, you want to sing to the Lord from the bottom of your heart. You might have a brutal voice, but that's OK! You may be way out of tune, but that's no problem! Gratitude to God has nothing to do with how a song sounds, it has to do with enthusiasm, attitude, and passion.

There is strong contrast, a marked difference, between those who are chained in idolatry and those who are being freed. Idolaters choose to be victims, dragging around the tools by which they worship their idols, hammering every person in their path with their own personal bag of tools. God-worshippers choose to be thankful, uplifting every person in their path with joy and peace. Notice the vast difference between idolaters and God-worshippers when we compare two passages that deal with the topic:

Idolatrous Victim

Proverbs 31:6-7

- Give strong drink
- Seek to numb hopelessness
- Focused on bitter distress
- Drink to forget your poverty
- Drink to forget your misery

God-worshiping Grateful one

Ephesians 5:18-20

- Stay away from strong drink
- Stay away from debauchery
- Focused on singing/ encouraging others
- Sing to the Lord in your heart
- Give thanks to God always and for everything

Walking in the reality of victory means putting off the old focus of misery and distress, renewing your mind with the reality of Christ's victory,

and putting on the kind of gratitude that just has to sing!

The person who is not training in freedom is problem-focused and depressed. The repentant man or woman is thankful for everything that comes into his or her life.

Thankful for Problems?

Whether the events of your day or the situation of your life is good or bad, you can choose to be thankful. God never promises that things will always go well for us. God does promise that, if you love Him and live to glorify Him, He will work everything out for good, even problems. How? He uses the problems to make us look more like Jesus. Our trials and difficulties are like a knife in the hands of a Sculptor, who chips off of us what isn't like Jesus.

No one can take away joy in the Lord (Philippians 4:4). You can always choose to be joyful, even in the middle of the deepest difficulty. You can always put on an attitude of gratitude because of your Lord and Savior. Thankfulness is the only appropriate response once we know that God is using the difficulty for our benefit.

We must choose to think about difficulties and problems with thankfulness and intellectual joy. The God who never changes gives you problems as a good gift (James 1:17). How can we understand our problems as a good gift from God? How can we see them as something about which to be joyful and for which to thank God? James 1:2-25 will teach us how this works.

Mind Over Feelings James 1:2-4

The word "count" teaches us to think about joy with our minds, not our

emotions. Think of trials and problems with joy. You can know intellectually that the problems have the purpose of growing you in perseverance. You need perseverance in the battle against your enemies. As you stick to what's right in the face of problems, you become a man or woman of proven character. This gives you much hope and joy. You are not a failure, you have proven to be growing in Christ-likeness! Rejoice in the Lord!

Run to the Right Place James 1:5-7

Run to God for wisdom when your life doesn't make sense. And there will be times when it doesn't. Cry out to God in desperation. Don't lose the urgency of full reliance on Him. After you pray for help, get up and obey His Word. Do not seek help from other voices, from other types of wisdom. If you do, you'll waver back and forth like a crashing wave.

Don't Try to Buy Your Way Out James 1:8-9

Money is not the answer. This is not a physical difficulty. The problem is not the problem, the problem is your

response to the problem. Seek God's kingdom, not a financial way out of the problem.

This is About Eternal Reward James 1:12

There's a reason to be steadfast in worshiping God and denying your desires. Worshiping God comes with an eternal reward. You need a future perspective.

Take Responsibility James 1:13

You cannot blame God when you fail. Take responsibility for your choices and responses.

Desires and the Path of Death James 1:14-15

It's your desire that baits you. When you swallow the lure that became temptation because of your desires, the end result is death. The temptation didn't get you there, your desires did. Each time you pick up the old habit to feed your desire, you are choosing death.

Don't Be Deceived James 1:16-18

Following your desires leads to death, but rejoicing in trials leads to life. Trials are a good gift from God. He is always good. He never changes. When you obey His Word you become

more like Jesus.

Slow Down James 1:19-21

Slow down. Anger is a wrong response (we'll look at anger in the next chapter). Humble yourself.

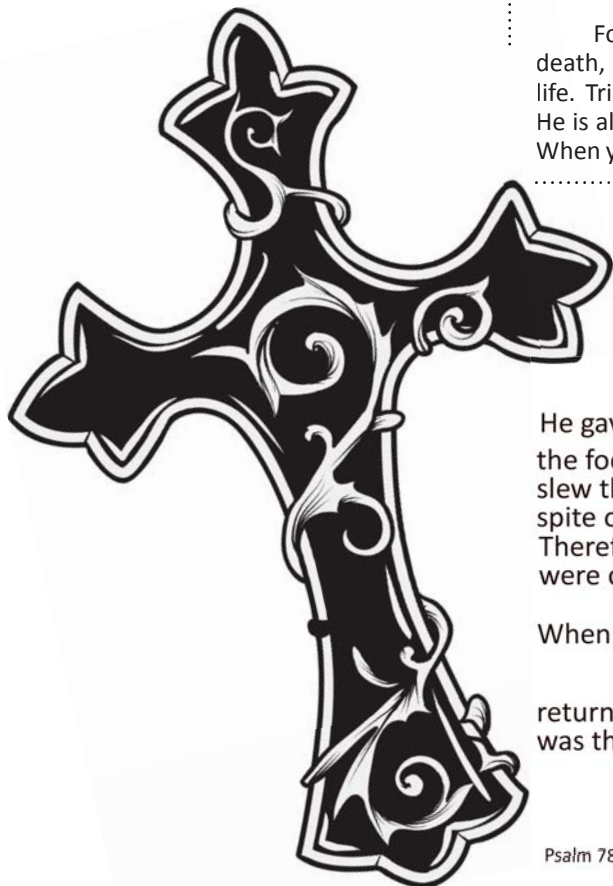
Desire and Do the Path of Blessing James 1:22-25

James echoes Christ's teaching of John 13:17—right thoughts lead to right actions, which lead to blessing. You see joy is a choice made in obedience to God. Biblical feelings of joy and peace will eventually follow obedient thoughts and actions. Joy is a command to be obeyed and a feeling that eventually follows persevering obedience. However, the search to feel good and be blessed cannot be what drives you.

THINK RIGHT—Trials are a gift from God. I will thank Him. He is sending me tests intended to make me steadfast, so that I become faithful. I desire a crown in heaven more than I desire comfort or good feelings on earth. I will study His Word and obey what God teaches.

DO RIGHT—I pray for wisdom, for help, for courage. I will deny my desires. I will not be driven by riches. I choose to be slow to anger.

FEEL RIGHT—As I choose to be thankful and rejoice in the Lord, that becomes who I am. A grateful and joyful person. Forever.



He gave them their own **desire.** They were not deprived of their craving; but while the food was still in their mouths, the wrath of God came against them, slew the stoutest of them, and struck down the choice men of Israel. In spite of this they still sinned and did not believe in His wondrous works. Therefore their days were consumed in **futility** and their years in **fear.** When He slew them, then they **sought** Him; and they returned and sought earnestly for God. Then they remembered that God was their **ROCK** and the Most High God their **REDEEMER.**

Psalms 78:29-35 (JNKV)

Train Your Attitude in Gratitude

Has Jesus Saved You? Be Grateful!

Following are a few of the many, many verses about thankfulness and gratitude to God. When you are not grateful, choose one and renew your mind with it. As well as memorize it and repeat it many times per day, write it on cards and carry it with you. Place the cards in visible areas where you will be faced with reminders to be grateful.

As you consider the following verses, underline each instance of the word “will,” “shall,” or “give.” Circle each word that describes attitude.

Psalm 7:17 -- I will give to the LORD the thanks due to his righteousness, and I will sing praise to the name of the LORD, the Most High.

What attitude is required of us before the Lord? Is it an option?

Psalm 9:1-2 -- A Psalm of David. I will give thanks to the LORD with my whole heart; I will recount all of your wonderful deeds. 2 I will be glad and exult in you; I will sing praise to your name, O Most High.

What part of our hearts are to give thanks to the Lord?

Psalm 28:7 -- The LORD is my strength and my shield; in him my heart trusts, and I am helped; my heart exults, and with my song I give thanks to him.

What is the outcome of trust in the Lord?

Psalm 52:9 -- I will thank you forever, because you have done it. I will wait for your name, for it is good, in the presence of the godly.

In whose presence do we wait for the name of God?

Psalm 105:1-3 -- Oh give thanks to the LORD; call upon his name; make known his deeds among the peoples! 2 Sing to him, sing praises to him; tell of all his wondrous works! 3 Glory in his holy name; let the hearts of those who seek the LORD rejoice!

Is thankfulness something we can keep to ourselves? How is it to be expressed?

Psalm 107:1-2 -- Oh give thanks to the LORD, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he has redeemed from trouble.

From what has the Lord redeemed you? How will you say so?

Psalm 138:1-5 -- I give you thanks, O LORD, with my whole heart; before the gods I sing your praise; 2 I bow down toward your holy temple and give thanks to your name for your steadfast love and your faithfulness, for you have exalted above all things your name and your word. 3 On the day I called, you answered me; my strength of soul you increased. 4 All the kings of the earth shall give you thanks, O LORD, for they have heard the words of your mouth, 5 and they shall sing of the ways of the LORD, for great is the glory of the LORD.

Instead of worshiping your gods, or idols, what are you to do before them?

Talk About Freedom Training 3

Stop Complaint /Start Gratitude

Complete the following worksheet, and discuss it with your mature Christian friend. Ask him or her to pray for you and hold you accountable in the areas of repentance that you identify.

Thoughts and Attitudes to Confess and Stop	Renew my Mind Philippians 4	Thoughts and Attitudes to Embrace and Start
I have been miserable, complaining or grumbling in the following circumstances:	Philippians 4:4 -- Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice.	For me to choose rejoicing in the Lord would mean:
I have been speaking my opinion, even ramming it down people's throats, in the following ways:	Philippians 4:5 -- Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;	For me to reasonably and gently speak Scripture would mean:
I have been anxious and worried about:	Philippians 4:6 -- do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.	I would evidence that I am resting in God's sovereignty by:
I have been letting a problem "prey" at me. Here are the "what if" questions I have been asking:		I will "pray," instead of "prey," in needy dependence on God, and journal my prayers until there is victory, at this time each day:
I have been unthankful about:		I will choose thankfulness by:
Has contempt stirred up in my heart?	Philippians 4:7 -- And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.	Is my heart guarded by peace in Christ?
What negative possibilities have I been dwelling on?	Philippians 4:8 -- Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.	TRUE—Do I focus on God's fatherly care?
Have I been letting my thoughts focus on what is untrustworthy?		HONORABLE—Are my thoughts noble? Reflecting that I know a wonderful God?
What have I thought about that might be unfair?		JUST—Are my thoughts holy, righteous, just?
What impure desires have I lingered on in my thoughts?		PURE—Am I confessed up?
Do I think about anything ugly?		LOVELY—Am I focused on God's loveliness with a heart of tender affection to God?
Are my thoughts about things of good repute?		COMMENDABLE—What good reputations am I focused on?
Do I think about the sin of others?		EXCELLENT—Do I have a courageous commitment to excellence?
What do I focus on that is not praise-worthy?		WORTHY OF PRAISE—Am I praising God in my thoughts? Do they bring Him glory?

Training My Anger

Anger can be an enemy living inside us. But, anger can be a friend as well. While most often we use anger in a sinful way, it's possible to be angry and not sin (Ephesians 4:26).

Sinful Anger

The Bible describes sinful anger: In which of the following have you ever indulged?

- Blowing up, raging, getting even (Proverbs 6:34).
- Clamming up and not admitting your anger (Ephesians 4:26-27).
- Responding foolishly (Proverbs 14:17).
- Failing to rule your spirit (Proverbs 16:23).
- Stirring up anger and strife in others (Proverbs 15:1, 18).
- Getting angry habitually (Proverbs 19:19).
- Causing transgression because you are given to anger (Proverbs 29:22).
- Being fierce and destructive (Proverbs 27:4).

Sinful anger turns a resolvable problem into a major crisis. Sinful anger pushes people away and isolates the angry one. Sinful anger hardens a resentful heart and often drives depression. Sinful anger makes addictive behavior look like a good idea.

When we are sinfully angry, we need to confess it as sin. If you did not include your sinful anger on the Confession Worksheet, please be sure to go back to that page and include it.

Remember, confession and forgiveness are not one-time events. They are how Christians live in gospel-based interaction, first with God then with one another.

Righteous Anger

The Bible has a lot to say about God's anger, anger that is perfect and holy. Through both the Old and New Testaments, we are made aware that in God's perfect holiness, flowing out of His love, He is a God of wrath (Deuteronomy 29:27-28, Romans 1:18). We are people who imitate God (Ephesians 5:1). Therefore, we must come to understand how anger can be used well, for God's glory.

Understanding Anger

Anger has two parts. Both parts can be either helpful and righteous or destructive and sinful.

- Arousal—something happens to trigger the feeling of anger.
- Expression—something is said or done because of anger. Typical expressions are explosion, internalization, or irritability.

The following chart contains an example to help us see how both arousal to anger and expression of anger can be either righteous or sinful.

	Sinful anger	Righteous anger
AROUSAL My reason for being angry	<i>The girl refused to listen to me, I'm angry that she ignored me when she had that abortion.</i>	<i>I am angry that we have such lack of regard for lives God has created.</i>
EXPRESSION What I say and do with the anger	<i>I talk about her with others, in what I consider righteous indignation. I look for ways to hurt an abortion doctor.</i>	<i>I'm going to find a way to provide support and help for girls in her situation, and raise awareness that life is being belittled.</i>

Once you are able to identify what motivates you to express anger, you can confess sinful, self-centered motivation, and choose helpful righteous reasons instead. Then you can make a plan for how to express anger well.

Think Well about Arousal to Anger

1. Identify what you want (James 4:1). There's some desire that's risen to the top, and it's making you upset.

When you recognize what has made you upset, you gain insight into your desires. You want what you want, and when you don't get it—presto—you are sinfully aroused to anger.

Driven by desire, you begin to look at people in one of two ways.

- I like you because you help me get what I want.
- I don't like you because you don't help me get what I want.

Once again, we see that worshiping our desires more than worshiping God is really a problem of pride. God opposes pride. He brings His forces against pride. But if you humble yourself, admit that your desire is rooted in pride, and confess it as sin, God grants repentance and change.

2. Back off and look to see what God is doing (Romans 8:28-29).

Be aware of what triggers anger in you, or what arouses you to anger. It's likely another person and something they do or don't do. But God has a use for that person's imperfections. He can use them to change you into looking more like Jesus Christ.

3. Make room for God's wrath (Romans 12:19).

If you try to change another person by your anger, you are playing god. If you try to get even or seek revenge, you are not leaving room for God's anger to deal with that person's sin.

Holy Spirit. Remember the power that raised Jesus from the dead empowers you to return good for evil.

Be careful in your definition of "good." It is never good to help someone sin, to be an accomplice or enabler in another's sin.

3. Talk to solve the problem. Our manner of communication must please God. Listed below are five basic rules to guide your speech:

- Tell the truth, or else you drive a wedge (Ephesians 4:25).
- Deal with it today. You may need to confront, maybe not. You always need to forgive, otherwise you'll be bitter and give Satan a place to land in your life (Ephesians 4:26-27).
- Be generous. You have been given mercy. You need to be merciful in your conversation (Ephesians 4:28, Matthew 6:14-15).
- Attack the problem, not the person. If you attack the person, you grieve the Holy Spirit and lose His power (Ephesians 4:29-30).
- Work a plan. You need a plan of action so that you don't react. Two elements you need to include in your plan—how you will be kind and how you will forgive (Ephesians 4:31-32).

Learn to separate sinful from righteous anger, both in arousal and expression.

Plan Well for Expression of Anger

1. There's an energy that comes with anger. Scripture indicates three ways that energy is expended—explosion, internalization, or irritability. Plan to use the energy of anger to return good for what you think is evil (1 Peter 3:9-10).

The explosive type of expression includes raging, yelling, fuming, ranting. You deal with it openly and often loudly. Everyone knows you are angry.

The internal response can be called a quiet stewing. Feelings of anger churn inside you. Right off the bat, folks may not know you are angry.

Irritability includes sarcastic words, looks of disdain, ignoring a person, gossiping about a person. You deal with it quietly and back-handedly. Sometimes people know you are angry, but it may not be the people with whom you are angry.

No matter how you are being treated, you use the energy of anger to return a blessing, by God's grace in the power of the

2. Act to solve your part of the problem (Romans 12:18). This does not equal changing the other person.

Responding well in unavoidable conflict is an important skill.

Mostly, when we're angry, we speak or act in ways that aren't reflective of God's image. Figure out what you can do differently so that you respond more like Jesus Christ. God tells us to live peaceably, so identify actions on your own part that would promote peace.

Here are a few questions to ask and actions to take toward solving your part of the problem:

- Have you talked yourself into being upset? Stop and pray instead (Philippians 4:6-7).
- Have you goaded someone into frustration with you? Be gentle instead (Philippians 4:5).
- Have you been cranky, grouchy, or miserable? Instead, rejoice in the Lord (Philippians 4:4).

God Knows

There may be times when anger spews out and you didn't see it coming. There may be nail-biting days of churning anger inside you and we didn't even realize it was there. All things are naked before the piercing eyes of God, every thought, every word, every action. These things are revealed by the sword of His Word (Hebrews 4:12). As you read your Bible, ask God to slice deep and show you what motivates you to anger. You can become tender-hearted, like Jesus.



Don't Blow Your Anger, Use it Well

Consider occasions when you have been angry. Write down your sinful way of responding, and then write down what righteous anger would have looked like.

	Sinful anger	Righteous anger
Arousal My reason for being angry—include the situation as well as what you wanted		
Expression My response of words and actions, or lack of words and actions		

What To Do With Anger's Energy

Luke 6:27 -- "But I say to you who hear, Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you.

How does Jesus command us to respond to those who wrong us?

Luke 17:3-4 -- Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, 4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

If they say they have repented, what must I give to them?

Colossians 3:13 -- Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.

What is the one and only reason why I give forgiveness to the people who have offended me?

Romans 12:17-21 -- Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

When someone does evil to me, how do I need to respond to them?

Evil that has been done to me	In the boxes below, write down a kindness you can show them. [Remember how Joseph did not reconcile with his abusers until they had been tested and he had proof of change. Staying apart to give someone time to change is sometimes the best kindness.	Write down the date, location, and your accountability. When will I do this kindness? Where will I do it? Who will check that I've done it?

Train in Responding Well to Conflict

Before you complete the worksheet below, "Responding to Conflict" to discuss with your mature Christian friend, keep in mind the five principles in Ephesians 4 (from page 105).

1. HONESTY—Do I have the facts straight? Am I exaggerating? Am I not saying everything that needs to be said?
2. IMMEDIACY—Am I letting it fester and built up resentment inside me? Do I need to deal with it today?
3. GENEROSITY—Have I been forgiven for my sin? If I don't forgive, it's as if I'm stealing from the person.
4. GRACE—Am I saying only what needs to be said to tackle the problem? Or am I attacking the person? (ie. You always...)
5. KINDNESS—Is my heart tender and ready to forgive?

Responding to Conflict

What happened when my anger was triggered? Describe the incident that led to your anger.

What did I hope would happen instead?

What did I want so much that I was angered by not getting it?

What did I say to myself when I started to sense the anger? Did I pray and ask God for help? If so, how quickly?

What did I say to myself when I started to sense the anger? Did I pray and ask God for help? If so how quickly?

How did you express your anger? Rate your expression according to the following measures

Did I speak with honesty? Or did I exaggerate? Or did I ignore a problem?

Did I deal with it quickly or let it fester?

Did I have a heart of generous mercy toward the sinner?

Did I help the person? Did I tackle the problems, or attack the person?

Was I ready to forgive with kind tenderness?

How can I humble myself and learn from this?

AROUSAL—Is there a desire I need to confess to God?

EXPRESSION—Did I express anger sinfully? Confess it to God and those I've sinned against.

Training in Holy Spirit Power

Of all the things we can try to control in this life, self often gives us the most trouble. Thankfully, we have an indwelling power for the task.

Many Christians are unaware, though, that God's Spirit indwells them. Apparently this is nothing new. Paul asked the Corinthians twice. "Don't you know, know ye not? Your body is the temple in which the Holy Spirit lives" (1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19).

Worse, many Christians have embraced unbiblical ideas about the Holy Spirit, which is scary. As He is the power we so desperately need, let's get to know Him correctly.

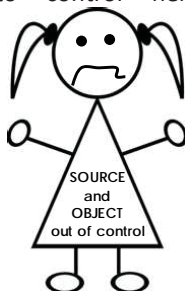
- The Holy Spirit is a person. He is one of the Trinity (Ephesians 3:14-17).
- Jesus wanted to go to Heaven so the Holy Spirit could come and convict everyone on earth of sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8).
- The Holy Spirit indwells every Christian when he or she believes (Romans 8:9).
- We are in need of the Holy Spirit's power by which to put sin to death (Romans 8:13).
- The Holy Spirit, the one who guarantees that we are redeemed, is grieved by our ungracious speech (Ephesians 4:29-30).
- The Holy Spirit can be quenched (1 Thessalonians 5:19).
- Apart from the empowering of the Holy Spirit, we would be in bondage to sin (Romans 7:18-8:4).

Self-Control

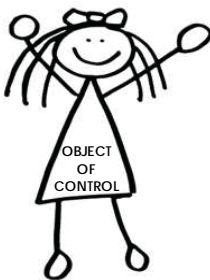
Self-control is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. That does not mean you look inside yourself to control yourself.

The Holy Spirit is the source of power by which you control yourself. You cannot control yourself by yourself. You need the power of the Holy Spirit. Jesus knew this. And that's why He returned to heaven and sent us the power we'd need to be His church, the ones He's coming back for.

Here's Miserable Missie, trying to control herself from within.



Much better to be Joyful Julia. She knows she is the object that needs to be controlled. She also knows she is the one who must do the controlling. The difference is that her source of control is not in herself, it is the Holy Spirit who indwells her.



If we try to control ourselves from within, we will fail. We must rely on the Holy Spirit as the power by which to control ourselves. Each day, our prayers should indicate our reliance on Him, our desperate need for Him to empower us.

As we rely on the Holy Spirit, we must also work hard. We are 100% responsible for every thought and action, and we need the Holy

Spirit to train and empower us in this responsibility.

Training your Mind and Body to Obey the Holy Spirit

Our thoughts and behaviors can fool us into thinking we are in control. Really we are involved in self-destruction (Proverbs 25:28). Without the walls of discipline and self-control, it's amazing how easily we fall to temptation.

But, with the Holy Spirit as our source of control, we train ourselves to exercise self-control in all things (1 Corinthians 9:24-27). There are many areas of self-control. To help us organize our thoughts on the topic, we will break it down into thinking and behavior—self-control of the mind and self-control of the body.

Self-Control of The Mind

- JOY—Choose joy by no longer being controlled by fears or circumstances, rather trusting completely in God (Philippians 4:4).
- PEACE—Choose between worry/anxiety or thankful prayer (Philippians 4:6-7).
- PATIENCE—Choose between a good attitude that grows patience during tough times, or anger and frustration (James 1:2-3, Proverbs 16:32).
- FAITHFULNESS—Choose either stick-to-it-tivity or bailing, buckling, blaming. Do you stay put in a tough situation? Do you endure and persevere during trials (Romans 5:3-5)?

Self-Control of the Body

- LOVE—We love God by obeying His Word in how we love others (John 14:21).

- **KINDNESS**—Kindness blesses others, even enemies (Romans 12:20). But it starts at home (Titus 2:5).
- **GOODNESS**—Do only what is virtuous (2 Peter 1:5).
- **GENTLENESS**—because you let God rule you, you can speak without forcing yourself (Proverbs 15:1).

Biblical Examples

The Bible reveals that God rewards self-control. The examples we will consider here are people who lived free from bondage, at the same time serving as human slaves.

Daniel denied himself the rich food of his captors, and controlled himself to work hard in studying the language and philosophies of his captors. God allowed him to become a leader and advisor to several kings. The fact that he'd been captured as a young boy and taken into brutal captivity as a slave did

not stop his devoted self-control. He prayed daily, regularly, and unashamedly in worship of the One True God. (Notice also, that Daniel did not allow himself to indulge in a victim mentality.)

Joseph, also serving as a slave, controlled himself to flee sexual

the areas of love and kindness. She'd also been captured as a slave. When her new boss became ill, the one who'd bought her away from her home and family, she told him about a man who served the God who heals. God rewarded her self-control by healing her new owner.

The Holy Spirit, able also to raise the dead, is the powerful trainer teaching you self-control.

temptation. Later, in prison for a crime he did not commit, he again exhibited self-control and worked his way into a leadership position. This became the training ground for his next job, second-in-command to Pharaoh himself. A great example of a young man who refused to adopt a victim mentality.

Finally, Namaan's servant girl exhibited beautiful self-control in

Work Hard

The Bible teaches us to work hard to obey the Holy Spirit. Fill your mind with God's Word, rely on the Holy Spirit to empower you, and then train yourself to do what God's Word says. This process of working together with the Holy Spirit is called sanctification. All Christians are being sanctified—by God's grace and power we are changing and growing, all of our lives.

But you will receive
power
 when the
**HOLY
 SPIRIT**

has come upon you,
 and you will be my witnesses
 in Jerusalem
 and in all Judea and Samaria,
 and to the end of the earth.

Acts 1:8



Empowered and Fully Controlled Self-control. Self-Mastery. Self-Surrender

Proverbs 16:32 -- Whoever ignores instruction despises himself, but he who listens to reproof gains intelligence.

What are the elements of self-control? Consider Proverbs 16:32 above, and also look up 1 Peter 2:11-12.

1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 -- For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4 that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, 5 not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God;

What commonly shows a lack of self-control?

Romans 14:7-8 -- For none of us lives to himself, and none of us dies to himself. 8 For if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's.

To answer the following question, see Romans 14:7-8 above and also look up Romans 12:18-21. Who is self-control for? Does it benefit self alone?

Romans 12:1-3 -- I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

What elements that would produce self-control are mentioned in Romans 12:1-3 (above)?

Holy Spirit

Ezekiel 11:19-20 -- And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

To answer the following question, consider Ezekiel 11:19-20 above and also 1 Corinthians 2:10-14. What is the relationship of the Holy Spirit to self-control?

Areas for Training in Self-Control

Apart from the Holy Spirit's control, we are completely captive to bondage. Paul described our wretched enslavement in Romans 7, then went on in Romans 8 to explain that the Holy Spirit empowers us to walk in a new way—gloriously free from condemnation, victoriously engaged in battle, and spiritually alive in Christ.

There's only one thing we bring to the relationship with God. Our wretched, out-of-control, sin-cursed selves.

There can be no relegating of the Holy Spirit to a back room. Christians cling to His empowering. He is no crutch, He is our life-support. Whether we do or don't walk in Him is a matter of life or death, a matter of freedom or captivity, a matter of righteousness or evil. There is absolutely nothing we can do without Him that is of any redeeming value. Without Him we fall right back to bondage.

The Holy Spirit is our surety, our guarantee, our seal. In the three passages below, underline the words that assure you of the work of the Holy Spirit, and talk about what that means in your life.

John 6:27 -- Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For on him God the Father has set his seal."

2 Corinthians 1:21-22 -- And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, 22 and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.

Ephesians 4:30 -- And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

Areas of Life Requiring Self-Control

From the center column of the table below, which areas of your life are in need of greater self-control? Read the passages, then discuss put-offs and put-ons which you will implement, with date. Pray together and report back with how you've done.

Thoughts or Behaviors to Confess and Stop/Put Off	Area for Self Control	Thoughts or Behaviors to Start/Put On
	Church Involvement Acts 2:42, Hebrews 10:24-25	
	Role in Marriage Colossians 3:18-19	
	Sex in Marriage Abstinence in Singleness 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 7:1-6	
	Finances/Budgeting Ephesians 4:28, Proverbs 6:2-11	
	Profession/Employment Colossians 3:22-4:1	
	Sleep, Exercise, Food Proverbs 19:15	
	Parent/Child Relationships Deuteronomy 5:16, Eph. 6:1-4	
	Friendships Psalm 1, Proverbs 17:17	
	Internet/TV/Books/Magazine Matthew 6:22	

Training To Rise If I Fall

Every good plan has a backup. Falling backward into idolatrous behavior must be followed-up by rising, according to God's plan.

In his book **Addictions: A Banquet in the Grave**, Ed Welch states that "to succeed you must learn how to fail." Proverbs 24:16 says that when the righteous fall, they rise again. And not just once—seven times! When you fail and you are upset about it, that's a very good sign. The fact that you are upset is not a sign of failure. It is a sign that the Holy spirit is alive and well in your life. Godly sorrow leads to change. The battle with failure shows that you are alive and well and engaged in change.

Your failure is no surprise to Jesus. He doesn't look at you and say, "I've had it." No, He looks at you and says, "Come to me. I will not cast you out. I will forgive you" (1 John 1:9, John 6:37).

On this fallen earth we all sin. If we don't admit that, we are lying (1 John 1:8 - 2:2). But, we must follow God's plan when we do sin. That is the message of the gospel. We confess our sin as sin, right away, before we don't want to anymore. Jesus is sitting right beside the Father, advocating for you, saying, "I paid the price for this sin. I forgive and cleanse this repentant confessor." (Propitiation is the word often used in 1 John 2:2, it means payment.) Jesus has paid for our sins. Imagine, knowing that we would sin again, He paid for it in advance.

But our failure can't go on endlessly. Proverbs 24:16 says the righteous rise and fall and rise again a limited number of times. There comes a point when we no longer continue in the same old habits. But, to come to that point, we need to plan well. Today we're looking at a plan for responding well.

Refuse to Blame God. Take Full Responsibility.

The problem is you, not God. God did not tempt you. It was your old core desire that hooked you into sin (James 1:13-15). The progression of sinful relapse happens in five steps. Do any of them seem familiar to you?

1. **LOST URGENCY:** You lost the urgency of priorities. You forgot or denied that you are in a battle. You didn't pray for help, or ask your mature Christian friend to pray for you, so that you would turn and worship only God.
2. **QUIT PUTTING OFF:** You stopped stopping. You quit confessing sinful thoughts. You let the enemies of anxiety, anger, resentment, or self-pity lure you back to old things, places, people, and attitudes. You stopped loving God more than you love your idol.
3. **STARTED SINFUL THINKING:** You quit renewing your mind with Scripture, and instead let your emotions rule.
 - You believed lies about God, such as: "Maybe He's not so powerful after all."
 - You believed lies about yourself, such as: "I'm too bad to stay clean," or "I'm so good this won't affect me."
 - You thought it wasn't fair that you had to stay totally away from addictive behavior. "After all, other people can do it a bit, and they don't get into trouble. It's not fair that I have to work so hard." Anytime you think life isn't fair, you're blaming God.
 - You began imagining how it would feel to indulge in the

addictive behavior one more time.

4. **QUIT PUTTING ON:** You stayed home from church, isolating yourself from accountability. You began to indulge in old thoughts, places, people.
5. **RELAPSE:** You wanted the comfort or pleasure of your addictive behavior more than anything else. You returned to places and activities that you had sworn you never would.

Know and Admit Your Desire

What do you want so badly that you pick up an old tool to get it again? What are you willing to sin to get? James 1:13-15 teaches that there is a desire in you that hooks with temptation and so you sin. This root or core desire that you are willing to sin to satisfy, proves you still love to worship your idols more than you love God and want to worship Him.

Which of the following did you want so much that you were willing to sin?

- Comfort (relax)
- Better feelings (relief)
- Pleasure (that feeling again)
- Ease (escape)
- Control (my own choices)
- Security (safety)
- Approval
- More stuff (just one more)
- More respect
- Affection
- Attention
- Acceptance
- Power

When we give in to our core desires, we prove that we are worshiping an idol in our heart. We are loving self more than we are loving God (Matthew 22:37-38).

Confess It as Your Own Sin

Remember, guilt is a good thing, but it must be resolved in confession of sin. Don't cover it, don't run from it, don't hide it, and don't blame-shift. Turn to Jesus, and confess that you wanted your idol, and confess the tool that you used. Cry out, "God be merciful to me, a sinner" (Luke 18:13-14).

The following list of lies can hinder free confession of sin. Beware!

- Don't believe the lie that God is too mad at you to forgive you (1 John 1:9).
- Don't believe the lie that you should keep feeling bad (Romans 8:1).
- Don't believe the lie that you need to get right before God takes you back. You can never

pay God back. He's the one who made the payment. Forgiveness is a gift you receive. This is about love, and grace. Fight every enemy that stops you from your response of grateful obedience.

Turn to Jesus quickly when you sin. Confession is not the same as admitting you did it after you got caught. Confession means you've been convicted by the Holy Spirit and you choose to agree with God. Whether you've been caught at it or caught up in it, now is the time to confess and ask for help.

Here are some of the aspects you may need to confess:

- Do you need to confess the sin of relapse?
- Do you need to confess the sin

of dabbling in things, places, or people that you needed to put off?

- Do you need to confess the sin of wrong attitudes—feeling negative or pessimistic, thinking life isn't fair, or thinking wrongly about God?
- Do you need to confess anger, anxiety, resentment, or self-pity?
- Do you need to confess that today you didn't pray desperately for help? That you are becoming self-reliant instead of fully trusting and relying on God?
- Do you need to confess that you've been worshiping your disgusting and self-gratifying idolatry instead of your great and awesome God?



For the

righteous

and falls seven times

rises again

But the wicked stumble
in times of calamity

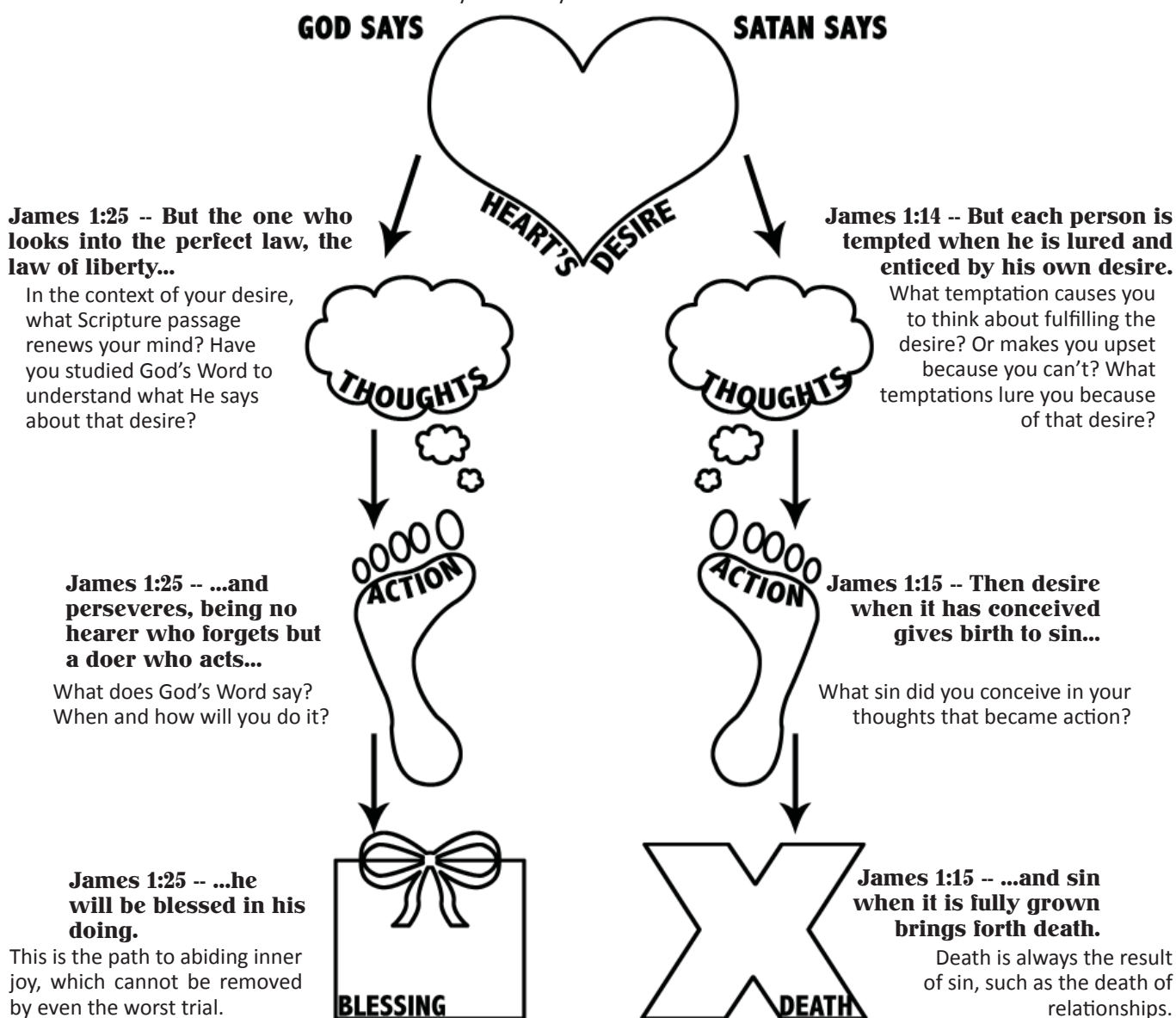
Proverbs 24:16

We Fall Because We Want To

God Lets Us Choose What We Want

We have two options when it comes to our hearts' desires. James 1:25 explains the choice that leads to blessing, and James 1:14-15 explains the choice that leads to death. Our study today will help us to personalize this Scripture.

Inside the heart at the top of the diagram below, write down the desires that you most want. You can also look back on previous pages to remember what God has shown you about your desires and idols.



Write down a prayer asking God to empower you in self-control so that the desire of your heart becomes pleasing to Him:

Plan Ahead for Times of Crisis

Be Ready to Act, Instead of React

Think of a time when you fell in the past, and complete the chart below in that context.

Describe a time of crisis when I have fallen in the past:	
What happened in the past that makes me realize this is dangerous?	
How did I lose urgency?	
What did I quit putting off?	
The desire I craved was...	
What did I quit putting on?	
My relapse consisted of...	
What did I want so badly I was willing to sin to get it?	
How could I have stopped this crisis from leading to relapse?	
How I could have kept urgency	
How I could have put off	
Renew my mind to want to worship God most of all.	
What I could have put on	
Victory would have looked like:	
My prayer of thankful crying out to God:	

The Freedom Path

Stay on the path! You're not alone! There is a Good Shepherd who will lead you on the path of righteousness, the path of freedom from bondage.

Do you remember the pathway to blessing that Jesus taught in John 13:17, which we also learned from James 1:25? Basically this:

THINK RIGHT
TO
DO RIGHT
TO
FEEL RIGHT

Psalm 23 can help you stay on that right pathway as you journey through life.

Anytime you are feeling hopeless, or worried, or angry, or tempted, renew your mind with Psalm 23. Don't forget that the path of righteousness leads to a wonderful, indescribable reward—eternal life in glory. While the path of bondage leads to death—horrifying hell forever.

The Lord Is My Shepherd

Who is this good, understanding, and concerned Shepherd?

God, the Father, is the architect who planned my life. He takes everything that happens in my life and makes it into my good, with only two qualifiers. If I love Him and if I am called for His purposes. I want to fulfill His purposes, so that's me.

As far as love goes, well it was His idea to have a relationship with me, like a compassionate father with his child, or like a loving shepherd with his sheep. He loved me first. Do I love Him? I am the one who rebelled and disobeyed Him. But He still allows me to love Him, which I prove by obeying Him.

God, the Son, is the Savior who made possible all that the Father had planned. He is the One who took the wrath of the Father for my sin, so that

I don't need to. He said, "I am the Good Shepherd. I lay down my life for my sheep" (John 10:11). I followed the herd and went my own way, for which He took my punishment (Isaiah 53:6).

God, the Holy Spirit, is the power that lives inside me by which I can live in freedom from the bondage to sin. He empowers me so that I am able to choose humble obedience over prideful rebellion.

I belong to God because He chose to create me, to love me, to save me, to make me His own. I choose to obey Him as my Shepherd, my Lord, my High King, my Creator, my Owner, my Master.

I Shall Not Want

I am free from discontentment. I am utterly contented. Every desire, every craving, every obsession is fulfilled.

This is especially comforting when I experience the pain of physical cravings that come with addictions. Then I must choose to say and believe, "I shall not want."

I am now under the management of the Expert who created me. He is the perfect and Good Shepherd. I may not grumble or complain under His care, direction, protection, and control. He does not allow any complaining, for that would

opportunity to show others what a wonderful Shepherd I have (Philippians 1:19-21).

He Makes Me Lie Down in Green Pastures

Sheep need four things to be able to lie down. Without these things, they will roam and search until they are weak, weary, and worn. My Shepherd provides the requirements so that I can rest (Ezekiel 34:16-23).

1. Sheep must be free from all fear. In my Shepherd's perfect love, I find freedom from fear (1 John 4:18).
2. Sheep must be free from friction and rivalries in the flock. In my Shepherd's church, He teaches me how to live in order, harmony, and unity (Ephesians 4:12-13).
3. Sheep must be free from the torment of flies and parasites. My Shepherd frees me from anxieties and the things that bug me, when I give them to Him (Philippians 4:6-7).
4. Sheep must be free from hunger. When I hunger and thirst for righteousness, I am fully satisfied and free from hunger (Matthew 5:6).

Follow the Good Shepherd. He assures contentment, safety, security, satisfaction, goodness, mercy and a glorious eternity.

move me toward other herdsmen—the dangerous, deadly sin and Satan.

Only the Good Shepherd provides abundant life (John 10:10). Trial, danger, and difficulty provide

He Leads Me Beside Still Waters

I tried a lot of wild waters in my search for satisfaction. I drank from a lot of dirty pools that caused pain and destruction. My Shepherd leads

me to still, deep, quiet, clean, and pure waters that fully satisfy my deepest thirst (1 John 4:14).

He Restores My Soul

I know what it tastes like to experience defeat. I know the bitterness of falling under temptation. But, I have a Shepherd who restores my soul. When I am cast down, He picks me up (Psalm 37:24, 42:11). When I am going astray, He disciplines me (Hebrews 12:4-13).

He Leads Me in Paths of Righteousness for His Name's Sake

Every day I must deny myself, and be crucified with Christ (Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23). Every day I must be skeptical of my thought processes, and remember to trust God (Proverbs 3:5-6). Although it's a daily struggle, my Good Shepherd never tires of leading me. He shows me how to glorify His name in everything I do (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Even Though I Walk Through the Valley of the Shadow of Death, I will Fear No Evil, for You are With Me

Even in my most horrific times of

loneliness, pain, and difficulty, I am not alone. My Shepherd is with me, and everything is under control (John 16:33, Hebrews 13:5). He has won the battle over sin and death.

Your Rod and Your Staff Comfort Me

God's Word is my Shepherd's rod. It reveals my sinful motivations and keeps me with the rest of the flock (Hebrews 4:12, 10:24-25).

His Spirit is my Shepherd's staff. He hooks me back in with conviction when I am straying. I tangle myself up in situations where only His staff can pull me out. But as I mourn my sin, I am comforted (Matthew 5:4, Isaiah 40:1-2).

You Prepare a Table Before Me in the Presence of My Enemies

My Good Shepherd already faced all my enemies (Hebrews 4:15). He suffered their worst treatment, which I deserved. He laid down His life, and poured out His blood for me. I partake of His bread and drink together with the rest of His flock, to remember what He did for me (Luke 22:19-20).

You Anoint My Head with Oil, My Cup Overflows

My Good Shepherd fills me with His Holy Spirit so that I can control my personality. I am characterized by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

Surely Goodness and Mercy Shall Follow Me All the Days of My Life

Even when my health is gone, my income is dried up, my loved ones die, and my life is full of dilemmas and disasters, one thing is sure. The goodness and mercy of my Good Shepherd will never, never fail.

And I Shall Dwell in the House of the Lord Forever

Once I was pitiful and pathetic. I was doomed to an eternity of wailing and burning in Hell. Now the Lord is my Shepherd. Jesus Christ is preparing a place just for me, in His Father's house (John 14:2). He is the door by which I will enter, and I will dwell there forever, finally home!! in His presence and care (John 10:9).



He leads me in
paths
of
righteousness
for his name's sake.

A Lifetime Gym Membership

It's Your Job: Train to Walk Free

Thank you for completing this workbook. Going forward, keep training. Keep yourself in the gym. Stay on the path. Walk free from bondage. You have a Good Shepherd who satisfies, protects, guides, and assures you. Sheep that follow the Good Shepherd are part of the Kingdom of the One True God, the High King of the Universe. Worship Him. What you worship drives how you walk. Stay on the path.

PSALM 23:1 CONTENT AND FULLY SATISFIED IN THE LORD, MY SHEPHERD

Isaiah 53:6 -- All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned--every one--to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

What is true about you and every one of us?

John 10:10-11 -- The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy. I came that they may have life and have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.

Who is Jesus and what is true about Jesus? Contrast the life He gives with the life a thief gives.

PSALM 23:2 GREEN PASTURES AND STILL WATERS

1 John 4:18 -- There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love.

If I am fearful, what must I remember?

John 4:14 -- Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

What kind of waters does Jesus offer? What will be true of you when you drink the water Jesus gives?

PSALM 23:3 RESTORED ON PATHS OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

Psalm 37:24 -- though he fall, he shall not be cast headlong, for the LORD upholds his hand.

When a sheep is cast down, it is literally impossible for it to rise. Watch a YouTube of a "cast sheep" sometime, and you'll have a new picture of what God does for us when we are cast down.

Proverbs 3:5-6 -- Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. 6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.

To stay on the path, what must I trust? What must I not trust?

PSALM 23:4 THE SHADOW OF DEATH AND THE ROD OF COMFORT

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

Where is peace found?

2 Corinthians 7:10 -- For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death.

What kind of sorrow results in eternal comfort? Read Hebrews 4:12, what is the rod of God?

PSALM 23:5 NOT EVEN ENEMIES CAN DISTURB MY ANOINTED PEACE

Hebrews 4:15 -- For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.

What does Jesus understand?

PSALM 23:6 ETERNITY IN THE HOUSE OF THE LORD

On the next page, a sneak previews of something incredible in the house of the Lord, where you will dwell forever. Also, read Revelation 21-22.

Set Your Mind on Things Above

Colossians 3:2 -- Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth, where Christ is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

In Revelation 4-5, we find at least seven descriptions of God's Throne. Picture them in your mind's eye.

Beauty

You know how sometimes light catches a diamond, and you must stare at the shimmering kaleidoscope of color? The largest diamond on earth is less than a chip. God on His Throne is like a gem, surrounded with an emerald rainbow. Certainly, the sparkling, dazzling beauty will draw your eyes and you won't be able to look away. See the beauty. Remember how you had been deceived to think there was greater beauty in some other pleasure, relief, or security.

Authority

Around the throne are 24 crowned elders, imitated on earth in 12 tribes of Israel and 12 apostles of Christ. The Ten Commandments and the Church are earthly shadows of this ultimate, perfect, make-you-tremble-because-you-are-a-rebel-and-you-know-it authority. Bow before God's authority. Talk with your mature Christian friend about specific ways God is growing you to surrender to God's Word which provides for us His authoritative ordering of the world.

Power

Even people who love thunder and lightning cringe when it strikes near. The throne is the source of all lightening and thunder. It's not just the occasional lightening strike. God's throne is the electrifying, power emitting source. You'll never look elsewhere for power again. Embrace the power. How have you sought victory or freedom from sin on your own power? How are you now instead seeking God's power for self-control?

Wisdom

The lightening being emitted from the throne fires up the light of complete spiritual wisdom. Read Isaiah 11:2, and see that this throne is where you find the Lord, wisdom, understanding, counsel, strength, knowledge, and the fear of God. Walk in the wisdom. Identify three decisions you need to make to reflect God's wisdom. Discuss them with your mature Christian friend and ask him or her to hold you accountable to those decisions by a certain time frame. To make accountability more than words, determine what penalty you will pay if you do not keep them.

Calm

The raging evil is captured and calmed once and for all at the throne of God. Whatever evil rages in your life, here before this throne it's like a big Swarovski crystal sea, reflecting all that is beauty and power. Rest in calmed evil. Talk about how three evils are calmed by God's rule of your life.

Worship

In wonderful, wild, indescribable worship, seven creatures dance—the powerful lion, the strong renewed eagle, the promising young calf, the wonder-filled man. Worship at the Throne. What metaphor describes you? What acts of obedience would evidence that you are worshipping the God who is holy?

All heaven and earth pauses. No one is there to take up the rolled scroll and let the rest of the story be told. The elders weep. The story teller weeps. The door opens and we walk in. That scroll holds the story of our redemption from hell, our freedom from bondage. Who will open the scroll? We weep.

The Lamb, Slaughtered, Standing

Jesus Christ! Victorious, ruling, conqueror over sin, over idolatries and addictions! When it comes to unrolling the scroll of our story, He stands and watches. We do not need to ever respond in guilt or shame again. What we confess He covers with the blood of His slaughter. He rose for us. We can and we will live in His victory. We can extend His mercy in every situation. In His resurrection, we have freedom from slavery to bondage, to bitterness. He stands watching to see us love Him, to see us say no to sin and yes to love. Love the Lamb. Worship Jesus Christ at the Throne of God.

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