



SONSHIP TRANSFORMATION

Romans 12:2...be ye transformed, by the renewing of your mind...



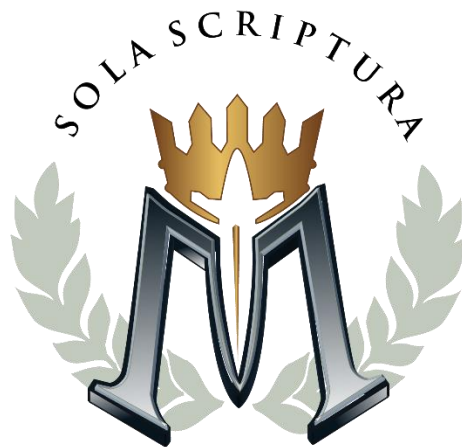
AN 11-WEEK COURSE TO RESOLVE
PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS

MILLENNIUM BIBLE INSTITUTE

SONSHIP TRANSFORMATION

Participant's Guide

**A biblical guide to assist in removing strongholds,
resisting temptations, and renewing your mind.**



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Why Take Part in This Course?

The Sonship Transformation Course is for every Christian, whether you are a new Christian or you have been a Christian for many years.

It is designed to help you:

- Achieve a greater level of spiritual maturity
- Uncover any areas of deception holding you back
- Resolve personal and spiritual conflicts
- Learn strategies to renew your mind and break free from negative thinking and unhelpful patterns of behavior

The course does not focus on how to behave but on how to believe. Christ has already set us free and given us everything we need, in Christ, even though sometimes it may not feel like it.

Many sense they have not reached their full potential for God. Perhaps they are “stuck” in habitual sin, negative thoughts, fears, anxieties, unforgiveness, depression, or condemnation. Even so, they want to grow and mature in their spiritual life. This course can help by revealing some amazing and life-changing truths such as your new identity in Christ.

You will also learn to uncover and resist the enemy’s deception so you can renew your mind. This is not a “quick-fix,” but it is likely to revolutionize your Christian life.

How Can I Get the Most Out of This Course?

Go through every session. Do not assume that you do not need to go through a session.

Pay attention to the instructions at the end of each session. These instructions are titled, "In the Coming Week." This is where you will be asked to do some things which will help you internalize truth.

Go through the "Steps to Transformation" which take place between sessions 8 and 9. This is a gentle process during which you will ask God to show you areas of your life where you need to change your mind about something, let go of some unprofitable things and take up some things which will move you forward. For many, this is a life-changing experience.

The course includes strategies for standing firm in the freedom you will have won and renewing your mind on an ongoing basis, making it a part of your daily life.

Introduction to Sonship Transformation

People are looking for happiness. Everyone wants to have a good life, a life with someone to love and to love us back; a life with a sense of belonging; a life of peace and contentment; a life that is fulfilling.

The common idea is that that kind of life comes by things like having a good job, being financially secure, having the respect of those around us, or accomplishing something worthwhile. But as it turns out, you can have all of those things and there is still no guarantee that you will have a happy life, a good marriage, or a life free from stress.

Rich people can be depressed. Famous people are often unhappy. Powerful people can be miserable. Money, fame and power are not the answers. And while most of us already know that those things do not bring true happiness, we don't know what does. We do not know how to be free from the kinds of things that hinder our Christian life and our life in general.

What kinds of things am I talking about?

Anxiety disorders, feelings of guilt, depression, thoughts of suicide, paralyzing fear, feelings of inferiority, low self-esteem, constant stress, Post-traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), many cases of Irritable Bowel Syndrome (IBS), extreme anger, bitterness, constant irritability, panic attacks, night terrors, and phobias are not limited to the poor or uneducated or unlucky; they can victimize anyone and everyone, and they do.

Christians sometime think that because they have trusted Jesus Christ as their Savior, all of their previous problems will go away. But, if you have been saved for very long, you know that is not the case. As it turns out, Christians can have the same types of problems, the same mental struggles and the same sin patterns as non-Christians.

Our churches are full of people who are privately struggling, and they are losing. They are putting up a good front, but inwardly they are hurting, afraid and uncertain. It has been estimated that 50% of the problems for which people are seeing their doctors are not medical problems, but spiritual problems.

Tell a doctor about your depression and you will likely get some kind of prescription which does not deal with the root of the issue, but only masks the symptoms of your real problem.

Depression is not your problem; it is a symptom of a problem; a spiritual problem, and that is supposed to be the church's domain.

Unfortunately, the church mostly ignores these because, 1) they don't recognize them as spiritual problems, and 2) they don't know how to solve them.

So, no matter if you call yourself a Christian or not, what if I told you that there was an answer to the personal and spiritual problems that plague you? What if I could show you where those things come from and how to be rid of them once and for all? Sounds too good to be true?

Well, what if I told you that hundreds of thousands of people, just like you, have taken part in a program, based on the Bible, which enabled them to be free from the very things we have been talking about? I am talking about real results; things which they have been dealing with for years are now a thing of the past. Would you be interested in something like that?

If you would, then we invite you to join us in an 11-week program we are calling *Sonship Transformation*.

In this program we will be talking about how to resolve the personal and spiritual issues that keep people from the fulness of life in Christ.

I understand that there are numbers of Christians who love God and have a sincere desire to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, but are trapped in a never-ending cycle of sin – guilt – confess, sin – guilt – confess, sin – guilt – confess, until they feel like such a failure, and they don't know what to do.

Christian men and women who feel trapped by behaviors they cannot overcome, put on a front as though everything is okay, when inwardly they know things are not right, and it is affecting every area of their life. They have tried everything they know, and they just cannot break free and now they only want to give up. They have resigned themselves to be defeated. And they have been convinced not to ask for help, for fear of being rejected or ridiculed. So, they continue on with no help in sight. Here is your chance to break free.

And before you say “no, this isn't for me,” let me ask you, do you want to live, so adversely affected by your circumstances that it affects you physically to the point you can't function? You don't have to; you can be free from that once and for all. We can lead you through the steps of utilizing biblical principles to reverse the effects and prevent them from returning.

Christ did not save you to have a life that is constantly at the mercy of your circumstances. Look, many others, who have the same kinds of issues you have, have found real freedom. Why not join them? I am trying to offer you some hope. Don't throw in the towel; you don't have to live that way.

And look, I know that when it comes to dealing with the intimate parts of our lives and what is going on inside, this is private and personal. We're not going to violate that. This is a gentle and thoughtful process by which you will learn two things:

1. The first 11 sessions are the general part of the program which we call *Sonship Transformation*.

These sessions are setting the stage for the next part of the program by establishing some very important truths.

2. Then, between sessions 8 and 9, we will introduce the *Steps to Transformation*.

These *Steps to Transformation* are the process by which you will overcome whatever personal or spiritual issues you are having a problem with.

The *Steps to Transformation* are on video for you to watch on your own. Included is a workbook which will guide you through the steps. You will view these videos in the privacy of your own home. The work that you will do will not be in front of an audience, but it will be between you and God alone.

The *Steps to Transformation* will guide you with Scriptures and prayer instructions for you to follow as you and God, do the work in your soul of removing any strongholds or sin patterns.

This does not have to be done in front of another person. The process is simple and straightforward; you will have no problem doing this on your own. Of course, if you would like someone to be present, as you work through the steps, we would be glad to help you.

Once you have gone through the *Steps to Transformation*, you will continue in the *Sonship Transformation* program in sessions 9-11.

How to remove the strongholds which have built up in your life is not the only thing you will learn. Once a stronghold has been removed, Satan will always attempt to build it back. We are going to prepare you for this too. As you will see, this process gets easier and easier until a time will come when you no longer are under that temptation to go back to the way you were. You will be completely free! And all of this is possible in Christ; you just need to know how.

Another thing you will learn is how to overcome temptations. In this course, we will identify the “way of escape” that Paul talked about in 1 Corinthians 10:13. When you are tempted, and God promised to make a “way of escape” that ye may be able to bear it, wouldn’t you like to be able to identify that way of escape every time? By the end of this course, you will.

All you will need to take this course are the materials that we will gladly make available to you. We will supply you with the printed notes for the 11 sessions in the *Sonship Transformation* program. They will come in a comb-bound book, which I really like because it lies flat on the table when you lay it down. We will also provide you with a workbook which you will use as you work through the *Steps to Transformation*.

For those who cannot attend the physical meeting, we will make the meeting available on Zoom.

The recorded sessions will be available on our YouTube channel, our Vimeo showcase, and the MBI Dropbox.

Call us at (888) 605-3202 for more information, or email us at: mbistudiesstaff@gmail.com

Thank you and we hope you will continue to join us for this life-changing event.



Session 1, Part A: Why Believe the Bible?

Determining whether or not we can trust the Bible is an important issue. Why? Because this *Sonship Transformation* course is based on biblical principles.

So, let me ask you, “How well do you know the Bible?” Is it a book you have studied? Are you familiar with it?

So, what does the Bible mean to you? Is it just a religious book? Or do you take the Bible to be inspired by God?

In this first session, we are going to talk about why it is completely rational, and reasonable, to trust what the Bible has to say. As you will see, the Bible is inspired by God and it contains His message to us Christians today. It is a book unlike any other book in the world.

This is important to understand because this *Sonship Transformation* course is based entirely on the Bible.

So, can we trust what the Bible says is true? That is a legitimate question.

Some people think the Bible is a collection of myths and legends. Others think it is a good religious book with some wise sayings. Some have no idea because they never thought about it.

Whatever facts and figures we look at, when it comes to books, the Bible sets itself apart from every other book in the world.

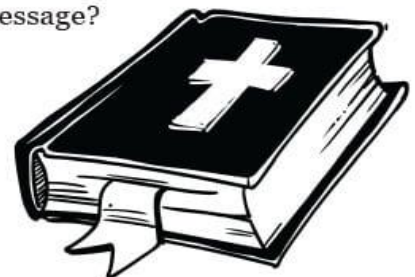
The Bible is the most influential book that has ever been written. It always tops the best sellers list. So much so, that the best sellers list just stopped listing it.

Billions of copies have been printed: so far, about 6 billion. Plus, it was the first book ever printed.

So, let me ask you a question, “Which book would you say has been translated into the most languages?”

If you guessed, the Bible, you guessed right. Well, how many languages do you think it has been translated into? Before you answer that question, let me give you a thought.

The Instruction Book—the Bible is the best-selling Book of all time. Have you ever opened its pages? Do you know its message?



The Adventures of Pinocchio (1881) has been translated into 260 languages. The Bible? - 2,500 different languages. Wow, right? The #2 book, Pilgrims Progress, which was a book based on the Bible, has been translated into 2,000 languages.

The Bible contains about 750,000 words and it would take you about 70 hours to read it out loud. Even though it was written by 40 different people, from fishermen to kings, who lived over a period of 1500 years, on three different continents, the great claim of the Bible was this: that it is God's inspired message to His people.

To quote the Bible:

2 Timothy 3:16 **All scripture is given by inspiration of God**, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:



“Scripture” is a word that refers to the Bible. The idea is that although there are many human writers, God inspired them to write down what they wrote down.

They wrote in their own languages, in their own style, but what they wrote was divinely inspired and was written down for us so that we would know what God Himself wanted to say to us. If that's true, it really does make the Bible the most unique book among all other books. And that is quite a claim.

I am not expecting you to believe it just because I said it. Instead, let me show you some of the ways by which you can have confidence in the Bible.

Session 1, Part B: Why Believe the Bible?

History Confirms the Bible

Let me give you a few reasons why I am one of hundreds of millions of people who have come to the conclusion that believing the Bible is God's message to us is a perfectly reasonable, credible position to take based on hard evidence.

The Bible contains a vast amount of historical background and information. If it is what it claims to be, you would expect that information to be accurate. However, for many years some experts maintained that the biblical writers had invented a lot of the detail and therefore, the Bible was not accurate.

One of the oldest stories in the Bible relates to two cities called Sodom and Gomorrah, which God destroyed. For years that was considered a myth because there was no other evidence of those cities having ever existed.



Yet in the mid-1970s, a team of Italian archaeologists came across a library of 15,000 clay tablets (Ebla tablets) dating back to around 2500 BC and discovered that these tablets mentioned these two cities.

Here is another example: The Old Testament talks about a people called the Hittites over 50 times. Yet for years people did not believe that they really existed because there was no evidence for their existence outside the Bible. This was an important point, because if they really didn't exist, it caused them to question the accuracy of the whole Bible. Yet during the 19th and 20th centuries, archaeologists found evidence that backed up the Bible's claims in spades.



EBLA TABLET

They even found the Hittites capital city, Hattusa, in northern Turkey. And, they found a treaty between Pharaoh Ramses II and the Hittites. Nobody now doubts what the Bible says about the Hittites.

In the New Testament, the second part of the Bible, in the Gospel of John, John gives quite a detailed description of a particular pool, mentioning that it had five covered walkways supported by columns. He says that it was a place where invalids gathered, hoping for a miracle, because it was said that occasionally the waters in the pool would be supernaturally stirred up and the first one into the water when that happened would get healed.

John tells how Jesus passed by the pool, got into a conversation with a man who had been severely disabled for 38 years, and then healed him. The man got up and walked for the first time.

It's very important that what John says in his description of the pool is correct. It may not be a fundamental part of the story, but if it isn't true, then why should we believe his account of the miracle? You cannot test the miracle scientifically, but you can investigate the place and events around it historically. If it can be shown that John cannot be trusted in his historical detail, then I wouldn't want to trust what he says in the areas that cannot be directly verified. For centuries, there was absolutely no evidence of this pool in Jerusalem.

There were other pools, but they didn't have the covered walkways. However, in the late 1800s, a pool with five covered walkways supported by columns was discovered 40 feet underground. It was just as John described. It came complete with an inscription about the supposed healing properties of the waters.



Putting this argument the other way around, if the authors of the Bible are proved to be accurate in their historical detail, then those things lend credibility to the rest of their message, even when they report things out of the ordinary, such as Jesus healing the man's infirmity.

The reality is that up to now, the findings of archaeology have done nothing but verify the Bible's historical accuracy. There isn't a single case where they have disproved it. That is quite remarkable.

The Bible's Predictions Come True

Another thing that sets this book apart is that the Old Testament is full of predictions and prophecies. The Bible predicted, ahead of time, things which amazingly took place. And often, these prophecies contained a great many details, all which came to pass.

Perhaps the most astonishing examples are prophecies about Jesus Christ. There are dozens of them. They predict where He would be born, what He would do, how He would be killed, and how He would rise from the dead. And they all came true.

But there are plenty of other examples too. In 586 BC, a man named Ezekiel predicted the destruction of an ancient city called Tyre. Ezekiel told them that God was saying this:

Ezekiel 26:3 Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I *am* against thee, O Tyrus, and will **cause many nations to come up against thee**, as the sea causeth his waves to come up.

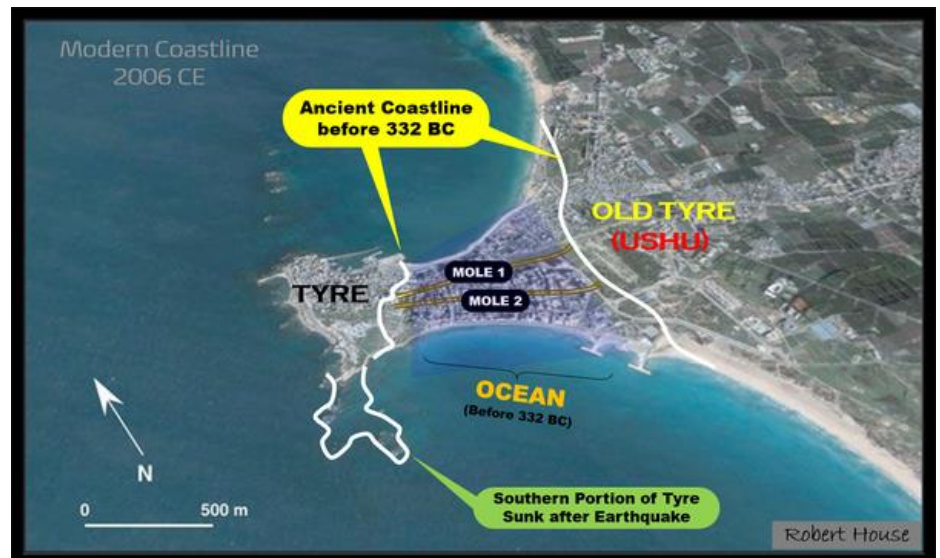
He also predicted:

Ezekiel 26:4 And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock.

Shortly afterwards, Nebuchadnezzar began a siege that lasted 13 years. The city fell as predicted. The inhabitants fled to a fortified island off the coast and set up a new city.

Something interesting here is that Ezekiel added to his prediction down in verse 12; that the invaders would throw their stones, timber and rubble (dust) of the destroyed city into the sea.

And remember, it was not just one nation that would come against Tyre. Well, 250 years later, Alexander the Great attacked the island fortress. In order to do so, he had to build a causeway which involved scraping the old city back to a bare rock, which was a specific prediction, and throwing it all into the sea. This is a further fulfillment of bible prophecy.



Another example comes from the Old Testament, a prophecy from Jeremiah, a man who was born around 645 BC. He, along with other prophets, warned the Jewish people that if they did not turn back to God, they would be carried off into exile. In Jeremiah 25:11, Jeremiah said that the whole country would become a desolate wasteland and that they would serve the King of Babylon 70 years.

Just as he predicted, the Jews were carried off into exile in Babylon in 605 BC. Things in Babylon weren't too bad, as it turned out. Yes, they were slaves, but they weren't generally treated badly. They did not have a bad life. They were able to settle down and get married. That sort of thing has happened many times in history. And when it does, it's generally the end of a particular people group. They enter the conquering land, marry and get absorbed into the dominant culture.

But Jeremiah had said the exile would be for 70 years. How likely was it that they would return to their own land as prophesied by Jeremiah? Incredibly unlikely. And guess what happened as that 70 year captivity was coming to a close? Babylon, this mighty superpower that seemed absolutely untouchable, was conquered by a new superpower, the Persians, under the leadership of Cyrus.

The very next year, Cyrus issued a decree permitting the Jews to return to their land. He even permitted the Jews to rebuild their temple and he paid for the work from the royal treasury.

Session 1, Part C: Why Believe the Bible?

The Bible's Claim that Jesus Christ rose from the Dead is Credible

No matter how fond we may be of Bible stories about Jesus, we want to know if they are just a fairy tale, if they are combination of some fact and a lot of fiction, or if they are actually true.

The defining claim of the New Testament is that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. This is a startling claim. And many may simply dismiss it as impossible without even looking at the facts. But those with a genuinely open mind and honesty of heart would surely want to look at the evidence. Well, let's look at it.

The medical evidence seems to indicate that Jesus was in fact dead before He was put into the tomb. Professional Roman soldiers with plenty of execution experience gave this verdict. In fact, they declined to break His legs so He would succumb faster, as He was already dead.

It seems equally clear from the evidence that three days later his tomb was indeed empty. Even the authorities admitted it and said that the disciples must have stolen Jesus' body.

Jesus appeared to his disciples a few days after being subjected to the most brutal execution method known at the time. And He seemed absolutely fine. Not like someone who had narrowly escaped death. In fact, he appeared to over 500 people at the same time.

Peter, one of Jesus' disciples, wrote that he and the others did not follow cleverly devised stories when they told about the Lord, but that they were eyewitnesses of His Majesty (2 Peter 1:16).

Even more convincing is that many of those eyewitnesses went on to die for their belief that Jesus rose from the dead. Peter himself was crucified upside down at the spot where Saint Peters at the Vatican now stands. People don't usually go to their death for something that they are not absolutely certain about.

The Truths in the Bible Change Lives Today

If the Bible is true, you'd expect to see an impact in people's lives. The truth is those of us who believe that the Bible is God's trustworthy message, are not taking some blind leap of faith. There is a perfectly logical and reasonable basis for what we believe. We've only had time to skim the surface, but there are plenty of resources available if you'd like to find out more.

Why is this so important? Because if the Bible is true, then we should find the principles it gives us for living, to be truly life-changing. And so, they are.

So, please join us for the rest of the course, where we'll be looking at some straightforward principles from the Bible. The focus won't be a bunch of rules, do this, don't do that, no. Our focus will be on what we believe, not so much how we behave.

Why? Because, when we get the belief right, our behavior will come into line. We'll learn how becoming a Christian is the defining moment in our lives, how we became brand new people from the inside out, and how that means we can come to God any time we like without fear.

We will learn how nothing we do can make God love us any more or any less. We'll find out how we can resolve the effects of even the deepest issues from the past, how we can deal with repeating patterns of getting stuck in things that we'd rather not be in. We'll get to understand what God's purpose is for our life, and it may not be what you think. These principles have certainly changed my life, and so many others testify that their lives have been changed too.

This course is based on principles from the Bible, not about a bunch of rules; do this or don't do that. Rather the focus will be on what we believe. It is in knowing the truth that we are truly free.

What you will learn:

- That becoming a Christian is the defining moment in our lives
- How we became new people in Christ
- That we can come to God anytime we like without fear
- How that nothing we do can make God love us more or less
- How we can resolve even our deepest issues from the past
- How we can deal with repeating patterns of behavior we would rather not have; and
- We will understand what God's purpose is for our life

We're really excited about sharing the principles of the Bible with you and we hope you are too.

Witness:

If someone told you that they thought the Bible was just a collection of myths and legends, what would you say to them?

In the Coming Week:

If you have never come to grips with reading the Bible regularly before, why not try reading a little bit each day? You could start with the book of Romans. As you read, remind yourself of the truths that we have looked at. And that the Creator of the Universe wants to speak to you today, through His word, the Bible.

Session 2, Part A: Who Are You, Really?

Perhaps the most fundamental truth we need to know is who we are. So, who are you? It sounds like a simple question.

If you were to meet me somewhere and say “who are you?” I might say, “I’m Michael.” But you might rightly point out, “no, that’s just your name. Who are you?”

I could say, “I’m a pastor”. But you could say “no, that’s what you do.”

I could say “I’m an American.” But no, that’s where I was born or where I live. So, who is the person that you’re looking at? Is it really me?

- Could you put me on an operating table or run tests to try to find out who I really am?
- If a surgeon chopped off one of my arms, would I still be me?
- If he chopped off one of my legs, would I still be me?
- What if you transplanted my heart and kidneys and liver, would I still be me?
- Well, where am I then?
- If he kept chopping off bits of me, will he eventually find me? I must be in there somewhere.
- The question is what makes up the real me? What makes up the real you?

The Original Design

You were created in the image of God.

The Bible says in Genesis 1:26 that we were made in God's image. So what does it mean to be made in God’s image? Well, we know that God is spirit. So, at the most fundamental level of our being, we too have a spiritual nature.

It is not our body, our outer person that is created in the image of God. It is our inner person.

There used to be a British TV series in which celebrities traced their family tree. It seems that every family has its share of success, shame, and secrets. In the TV series, people became very emotional as they found out about their ancestors, as if this additional knowledge somehow helped them understand themselves a little better.

But if we really want to understand why we are as we are and why we have the built-in drives that we do, we need to go a lot further back than that. We need to start with the couple that we're all descended from.

Scientists confirmed that our mitochondrial DNA proves that we are all descended from the same woman. And our Y chromosomes prove that we are all also ultimately descended from the same man. Look around the room, we're all related to each other. What a thought!

The Bible tells us that our ultimate ancestors were called Adam and Eve. God inspired their story to be written down to communicate some very significant truth.

Adam's spirit, his inner person, the core of his being, was connected to his body. In other words, he was physically alive, just as we are. You are physically alive because your spirit is connected to your physical body.

But Adam's spirit was also connected to God, which meant that he was also spiritually alive.

This is how we also were designed to be. On the one hand, our spirit is connected to our physical body. On the other hand, our spirit is connected to God.

Our spiritual life, this connection to God meant we had three very significant things.

1: **Acceptance.** Adam had an intimate relationship with God. He could talk with Him at any time and have His full attention.

2: **Significance.** Adam was given a purpose for being. He was given dominion over the earth, to rule over the birds of the sky, the beasts of the field, and the fish of the sea. This is given in Genesis 1:26.

3: **Security.** Man was totally safe and secure in God's presence. Man's needs were all provided for.

Here's the key thing to get hold of; you were created for that kind of life, complete acceptance by God and other people. You were created to have significance, a real purpose. And you were created to have absolute security; no need to worry about a single thing.

The Consequence of the Fall

Adam and Eve were told in Genesis 2:17 that they must not eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil because in the day that they ate, they would surely die. They did eat. They did. And did they die? Physically, no. Physical death did eventually come, but not until over 900 years later.

But they did immediately die spiritually. The connection that their spirit had to God was broken. And they were separated from God. Consequently all their descendants, including you and me, were born physically alive, but spiritually dead.

The acceptance they enjoyed, that amazing, intimate moment by moment relationship with God changed into a crushing sense of rejection. And we all know that feeling. That sense of significance was replaced by a sense of guilt and shame, and we're all born with it.

Here's a little piece of wisdom that comes from the Internet.

“If you can start the day without caffeine or pep pills; If you can be cheerful, ignoring aches and pains; If you can eat the same food every day and be grateful for it; If you can conquer tension without medical help; If you can relax without alcohol; If you can sleep without the aid of drugs; Then you must be... the family dog!”

Dogs don't seem to have this need to feel significant to make their life worth something. In fact, as long as they can eat, sleep and sniff other dogs occasionally, they seem quite happy.

But for Adam, that sense of security turned to fear. The first emotion expressed by Adam was that he was afraid (Genesis 3:10). Think about that. The immediate product of disobedience was an emotion that was unpleasant.

But that is not what Adam was designed to function in. But, because he sinned, all of us are born into an environment that's not at all like the one that we were designed for. Instinctively, we want to find our way back to the acceptance, significance and the security that we were meant to have.

Session 2, Part B: Who Are You, Really?

What Jesus Came To Do

The only solution to the predicament that we've looked at is to restore our relationship with God, to become spiritually alive again. That's why God sent Jesus.

Jesus was like Adam at the very beginning. He was both physically and spiritually alive. But unlike Adam, Jesus never sinned. He showed us how a spiritually alive person can live in this fallen world if they live dependently upon their Heavenly Father.

However, Jesus came to give us more than an example. He came to... well, why did He come? What would you say?

Most people would say "He came to forgive my sins," and yes, that's true. But that was just a means to an end. What did Adam lose? He lost spiritual life. And what did Jesus come to give people? He came to give spiritual life.

When we became Christians, our spirit was reconnected to God's Spirit. In fact, His Spirit took up residence in our human spirit the moment we trusted Jesus Christ as Savior. At that moment, we get back the spiritual life that we were always meant to have with its acceptance, significance, and security. Included as a part of that spiritual life, is eternal life.

Eternal life is not just something you get when you die; it's a whole different quality of life **right now**. God intends for us to have spiritual life right now. He intends for us to have an intimate relationship with Him that will last forever.

So, who are you?

You may not know this yet, but the moment you became a Christian, that was the defining moment of your life. Many things changed for you. And the language the Bible uses to describe that is very dramatic. In 2 Corinthians chapter 5 and verse 17, the Bible says:

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore **if any man *be* in Christ, *he is a new creature***: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

What was made new, or, what part of you is new? Who you are, your identity is new in Christ. Look at Ephesians 5:8.

Ephesians 5:8 For ***ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye light in the Lord****: walk as children of light:

Just as we cannot be light and darkness at the same time, we cannot be old and new at the same time. We really are a new creature in Christ.

A Saint and Not a Sinner

Many Christians have come to think of themselves as a sinner saved by grace. You certainly *were* a sinner, and you were saved by grace alone. But here's an interesting verse:

Romans 5:8 But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Now this is past tense. The verse seems to imply that we are no longer sinners.

In the New Testament, the word “sinner” appears 44 times, but it's clearly a shorthand way of referring to people who are not yet Christians. You'll never see it applied to a Christian, at least not in terms of who they are now, but only in terms of who they used to be.

There's another word that is shorthand for believers, and you'll find it 62 times. Traditionally in English this word has been translated “saint” and it means holy one.

Yes, you are “holy” in the sense that you are set-apart for God. You are special. The moment you became a Christian, even if you cannot pinpoint the exact moment, you became completely new in your inner person. Who you are deep down inside, changed from being someone who could not please God, to someone who now has acceptance, significance, and security in Christ.

Galatians chapter 3, verse 27 says that we have clothed ourselves with Christ; we have “put on Christ.” Perhaps you have understood that to mean that you're still the same dirty, rotten, no-good person deep down inside, and it's just covered up by Christ, so that when God looks at you, he doesn't really see you, He sees Jesus; but that's not what the Bible says.

Regardless of the mess you have made or how bad you feel about yourself, the truth is that if you have trusted Jesus as your Savior, you are now a son or daughter of God himself. You are righteous, clean, and holy on the inside.

You can clothe yourself with Christ because at the deepest level of your being, He's already made you holy. When God the Father looks at you now, he doesn't see Christ covering your mess He sees you just as you are: His child, a new creation, holy and wonderful, and He delights in you.

Understanding our identity in Christ is crucial, not so much for our salvation, but if we want to become the people God created us to be.

Suppose you were an orphan who became a thief. You heard, one day, that the king had decreed that all thieves were forgiven. Good news. But if that's all the decree said, would it change how you saw yourself? No. You'd still be an orphan and a thief. Would it change your behavior? Probably not.

If you think of yourself as a forgiven sinner, but still a sinner, what are you likely to do? Sin, because by definition, that's what sinners do.

But what if the decree mentioned your name and said that the king not only forgave you, but also wanted to adopt you, wanted to make you a Prince? Would that change how you saw yourself? Of course. Would it change your behavior? Of course. You would say, "Why would I ever want to go back to the life I had now that I'm a Prince?" You're not only forgiven, you're adopted, and you have become a son or daughter of the King.

Who you are now is a fact, and Satan cannot change it. But what he can do is to get you to believe a lie about who you are. He can cripple your walk with God.

No child of God is inferior or useless, but if Satan can get you to believe that you are, that's how you'll act. No child of God is dirty or abandoned any more, but if Satan can get you to believe that you are, that's how you'll act.

You might say "You don't know what's been done to me." But what was done to you doesn't change who you are in Christ. You might say, "You don't know what failures I've had as a Christian." Even so, it doesn't change who you are in Christ.

Jesus loved you when you were a sinner, and he's not going to stop now that you're a saint.

And you might say, "But what about my future sins?"

When Jesus died once for all, how many of your sins were future? All of them?

You're not saved by how you behave, but by what you believe. And life as a Christian is more of the same. It's not about trying to behave differently; it's about knowing the truth, which then works out in your behavior. This course is not about learning to behave differently, but to believe differently.



Session 2, Part C: Who Are You, Really?

What Happens When I Sin?

One of the main problems we have with seeing ourselves as saints rather than sinners is we're painfully aware that we still sin.

Let me tell you a secret. When I am really tired, I snore. But when I introduce myself to you, I don't have to say, "Hey, my name is Michael and I'm a snorer." I may snore, but that's not who I **am**; it's what I **do**. And there's a big difference between the two.

It's what we are down deep in our inner man that defines our identity and not what we do. If you're a Christian, at the very core of your being you now share in God's divine nature. We're now new creatures in Christ. Our old identity in Adam has gone, and our new identity in Christ is who we are now.

In our old identity in Adam we were under sin, unrighteous and enemies of God. But in our new identity in Christ, we are forgiven, made righteous, and we now have peace with God; we are "at one" with Him. That is **who we are**.

But that doesn't mean that we're automatically perfect in our behavior. Perhaps an accurate way to describe us would be that we are saints, who are working on our sanctification. And by saying it that way, I do not mean that we are sanctifying ourselves. I am describing the process by which we bring our behavior up to the standard of our identity in Christ.

Make no mistake, sin is a serious matter. It gives the devil a foothold in our lives and it stops us from being fruitful. But it does not change our relationship with God and it does not change who we are in Christ. It does not break our fellowship with God to any degree.

When you were saved, you became God's child. Spiritually speaking, you received His DNA. God's own Spirit lives in you.

Romans 5:5 And hope maketh not ashamed; because the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by **the Holy Ghost which is given unto us**.

And you can now share His very nature. Nothing can separate you from God's love. Romans chapter 8 makes that clear. And if you're truly saved, your relationship with God is settled, no matter what you or anyone else might do.

Let me give you an illustration. You know the fairy tale of the Princess who decided to kiss a frog. When she kisses the frog, it changes into a handsome Prince. Now imagine they go out to dinner to celebrate at a fancy restaurant and suddenly a fly starts to buzz around their table.

The prince leaps out of his chair, catches the fly with his tongue. Does this frog like behavior make him a frog again? No, he's still a Prince. He's just acting like a frog.

That's how it is. When we sin as Christians, it doesn't mean we've gone back to being a sinner, we're still saints. We're just **behaving** like sinners. When we do wrong, we need to realize that our sin is already forgiven because of Christ's death, and it does not change who we are in Him.

The truth is nothing you can do can make God love you anymore or any less.

In your *Sonship Transformation* book you will find the "Who I am in Christ" list. We've taken a variety of verses from the Bible which tells us who we really are if we have trusted Jesus as our Savior. We put them in the "I" form. Let's read them aloud together.

Why read these aloud? You may find yourself being reluctant to do this exercise, so did I at first. But saying the truth of God's word out loud has an effect that simply thinking it does not have.

Who I Am In Christ?

I AM ACCEPTED

I renounce the lie that I am rejected, unloved, or shameful. In Christ I am accepted. God says:

- I am God's son/daughter
- I am in Christ
- I am justified unto eternal life

I am united with the Lord and I am one spirit with Him.

- I am bought with a price: I belong to God
- I am a member of Christ's body
- I am a saint; a holy one

I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.

- I am redeemed and forgiven of all my sins
- I am made righteous
- I am "at one" with God

I AM SECURE

I renounce the lie that I am guilty, unprotected, alone or abandoned. In Christ, I am secure.

God says:

- I am free from condemnation
- I am assured all things work together for good
- I am free from any condemning charges against me

I cannot be separated from the love of God

- I have been sealed by God's Spirit
- I am confident that the work God has begun in me will be accomplished
- I am part of the kingdom of God's dear Son
- I am delivered from the power of darkness

I am hidden with Christ in God

- I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind
- I have peace with God
- I am risen with Christ

I AM SIGNIFICANT

I renounce the lie that I am worthless, inadequate, helpless or hopeless. In Christ I am significant. God says:

- I am part of the one new man
- I am chosen to bring forth fruit unto God
- I am seated with Christ in heavenly places

I am God's workmanship, created unto good works

- I am predestinated to be conformed to the image of God's Son
- I am a laborer together with God
- I am the glory of God in Christ

If you are listening to all this and wondering if all this applies to you, the answer is "yes": if you are a Christian. But, if you are not a Christian, then it does not apply to you.

If you are not sure that you are saved; if you do not know for sure where you would spend eternity if you died today, it is a very easy decision to make. All you need to do is understand these simple things:

- 1) You are a sinner (not perfect)
- 2) Because God is just, He must punish sin (cannot overlook it)
- 3) God loves you and sent His Son to take the punishment for the sins of the whole world (yours included)
- 4) If you will, by faith, put your trust in what Jesus Christ did on the cross as your substitute, God will count your faith as righteousness; He will forgive your sin, He will give you a new identity in Christ, and He will restore the spiritual life that was lost in Adam.

This is a decision that only you can make for yourself. But, you cannot save yourself, no matter what you do. And God knows that. That is why He sent His Son to die in your place and take your sins upon Himself. God did that for you.

If you put your faith in Christ alone as your substitute, not trusting any of your works, you will be saved and forgiven in that moment.

And then, everything we have been talking about will be true of you too!

For me, because I grew up in a Christian home, I was saved as a young boy. Not everyone gets that advantage. But, no matter how you have lived your life, or how old you are, God's offer of salvation is for you today. Don't put it off. Right now, you can trust what Jesus did on the cross for your salvation. How do you do that? You do that by making a decision. Here is how:

- Do you know that you are a sinner?
- If you do, do you also realize that your sin separates you from God? Because God is just, He must punish sin.
- But God sent His Son to suffer the punishment for your sins, Jesus acted as our substitute. Do you believe that Jesus died on the cross for you?
- If you do, then right now, you can make a decision to trust what Jesus did as sufficient to satisfy God's judgment against your sin. That is all it takes, according to the Bible. That is what it means to "believe on Jesus."

Acts 16:31 And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved...

Now, if you just trusted Christ as your Savior, tell someone about it. They will be so happy to hear it. And let us know too. We would be thrilled to hear of it.

And what about God? Well, maybe you could offer a prayer of thanksgiving to God for saving you. If you are unsure of what to say, perhaps you could pray something like this:

Dear God, thank you for sending your Son to die on the Cross, to take my punishment for sin, so I could be forgiven, so I could have eternal life, and so that I can be connected to you. I know you have the power to change my life, to transform me and put the character of your Son in me, and I need that. Thank you God for saving me today, Amen.

And now you should go back to that list we just read through and read it again, slowly, thinking about each one of those things which are straight out of the Bible, for they are all true of you right now.

You have just made the most important decision you could ever make. And there is so much more in store for you, great and glorious things which will change your life for the better.

So, start enjoying your new life in Christ, your new identity in Christ. Who are you, really? You are a child of God of whom all the things in our list are true of.

It may take some time for you to truly internalize these, but believe me when I say, when you do, it will change everything for you. This is the first step to being transformed as a son, which is why we call this Sonship Transformation.

Witness:

If you were asked by a neighbor to explain the difference between a Christian and someone who is not yet a Christian, what would you say? Do you think that a Christian is in any way better than a non-Christian? What would you say to someone who asks you, “Why should I become a Christian?”

In the Coming Week:

Read the “Who I am in Christ” list out loud every day. Then, pick one of the truths that is particularly meaningful to you and spend some time reading it in its context and asking God to help you understand it more fully.

- I am God’s son/daughter – Romans 8:14
- I am in Christ – 1 Corinthians 1:30
- I am justified unto eternal life – Romans 3:24
- I am bought with a price: I belong to God – 1 Corinthians 6:20
- I am a member of Christ’s body – 1 Corinthians 12:27
- I am a saint; a holy one – Romans. 1:7
- I am redeemed and forgiven of all my sins – Ephesians 1:7
- I am made righteous – Romans 3:22
- I am “at one” with God – Romans 5:11
- I am assured all things work together for good -Romans 8:28
- I am free from any condemning charges against me – Romans 8:34
- I cannot be separated from the love of God – Romans 8:35-39
- I have been sealed by God’s Spirit – Ephesians 4:30
- I am confident that the work God has begun in me will be accomplished – Philippians 1:6
- I am part of the kingdom of God’s dear Son – Colossians 1:13
- I am delivered from the power of darkness – Colossians 1:13
- I am hidden with Christ in God – Colossians 3:3
- I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind 2 Timothy 1:7
- I have peace with God – Romans 5:1
- I am risen with Christ – Colossians 3:1
- I am part of the one new man – Ephesians 2:15

- I am chosen to bring forth fruit unto God – Romans 7:4
- I am seated with Christ in heavenly places – Ephesians 2:6
- I am God’s workmanship, created unto good works – Ephesians 2:10
- I am predestinated to be conformed to the image of God’s Son – Romans 8:29
- I am a laborer together with God – 1 Corinthians 3:9
- I am the glory of God in Christ – Romans 15:7

Session 3, Part A: Choosing to Believe the Truth

So who are you? As we saw in the last session, if you know Jesus, you are a holy one, whether it feels like it or not.

Does God love you? Yes. If you performed better, would God love you more? No. Does God love me more than you? No, He doesn't. God's love has nothing to do with what we do. It doesn't make any difference whether you perform great one day and mess up the next. God will still love you because that's His nature. He is love. He couldn't not love you.

However, the fact that God loves you no matter what does not mean that you will be the person He wants you to be, and that you will do the things that He has prepared for you.

That's all about the choices you make. And the choices you make come down to what you believe. I mean what you really believe, not necessarily what you think or what you say you believe. If you want to know what someone really believes, don't listen to what they say, but look at what they actually do.

Faith is simply believing what is already true

The writer of Hebrews says, without faith it is impossible to please God. This is not just true for the believing remnant of Israel, it is true for us (the body of Christ) too. Being dealt with by God in our inner man requires faith, because you just can't see the work being done with your physical eyes.

But what is faith?

One little boy put it like this, "Faith is trying hard to believe what you know isn't really true." Sounds reasonable, but actually, it's the very opposite of that. Faith is finding out what is already true and making a choice to believe it.

The message of this session is simple. Find out from God what is already true. Choose to believe it, whether it feels true or not, and it will transform your Christian life. How do we find out from God what is already true? We find it written in God's word, in the books that are written specifically to us and about us.

By the way, it's worth noting in passing that not believing in something doesn't make it false. For example, Jesus taught very clearly about hell, but some Christians say they don't believe in it. However, not believing in hell doesn't make it go away.

Everyone Lives and Operates By Faith

The issue of faith is not that we believe. Everyone believes in something or someone. Practically every decision and every action you make demonstrates your faith in something.

For instance, the last time you were driving your car and came to a green traffic light, what did you do? You probably drove right through it. Even though you couldn't see that the traffic light in the other direction was red, that the other driver saw it and had stopped. No, you drove right through by faith.

Some people choose to believe that there's no such thing as a God, that we've evolved from animals. That's faith. In fact, when you look at this universe or at how amazing our human bodies are, I think it takes a lot more faith to believe that there is no God than to believe in God.

The Critical Issue is Who or What We Believe In

You might believe that you can fly a plane across the Atlantic Ocean by peddling it. You might have more faith to believe that it will work than anyone who has ever lived. But actually, it won't work.

The critical issue with faith is not so much **that** we believe, but **what** we believe.

A true story. There was a hypnotist who announced that he was going to give a public demonstration of his psychic powers by driving a car blindfolded. He put the blindfold across his eyes and with conviction and confidence he climbed into his car and started driving. After 20 yards, he drove confidently into the back of a parked police van. He may have had an enormous amount of faith, but what he believed in, his psychic powers let him down. His beliefs didn't reflect reality.

It's who or what we believe in that determines whether our faith will actually work.

Let's look at another true story in the Bible. In 1 Kings 18, we read the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal. Alijah and the prophets decided to hold a competition to see whose God was real.

They both set up altars and threw a dead bull on it to be sacrificed. They both were to ask their God to send fire from heaven to burn it up.

There were about 450 prophets of Baal and they won the toss and went first. They danced and danced and called out to Baal, but nothing happened. Then they cut themselves with spears and called out louder. Nothing. It went on all day, but they didn't get an answer.

Then it was Elijah's turn.

He called on God, and immediately fire came from heaven and burned up not only the bull, but the wood and the stones of the altar.

Who had more faith? Actually, we don't know. The prophets of Baal clearly had great faith in Baal, but it made no difference because Baal wasn't real.

Elijah may only have had a little bit of faith, but his offering was immediately burned up because he was calling on the true and living God. It doesn't depend on how large our faith is, but on who we put our faith in.

Traffic lights can go wrong. Other faith objects, like our parents, the church, friends, husbands and wives can let us down. God is the only one we can put our faith in who will never fail us. He has never failed to be and do all that he said he would be and do, and He never changes.

People might sometimes say to us, "I wish I could have your faith" as if it were some mystical thing that might one day come over them.

Christians might say, "Oh, if only I could have faith like so and so." Are we given a certain amount of faith so that some are destined to have lots of faith and others not very much? No. Faith is just making a choice to believe what God says. So, let's try to understand how we can increase our faith.

Let's say that you have a young child and you put her on the ledge of a swimming pool. Stand back a little bit and say come on, jump into my arms. She may waver a little bit, but then jumps and you would catch her.

What do you do next? Go a little further back and say, come on, jump into my arms. Let's say she does. And if you catch her, you can even go further back. She'll continue to jump, provided you continue to catch her. As long as you don't let her down, her faith in you will keep growing and growing. That's how faith grows.

As you find out what God has said, choose to believe it and find that it works. You will get to know God better and will be able to trust him with bigger and bigger things.

It's great to memorize Bible verses and take part in a Bible study. But your faith grows when you take that verse or that truth you learned and put it into practice (When you jump and find that, God catches you.)

As you get to know that God, the object of your faith, really can be trusted with absolutely anything He wants to do with you, you will trust him for more and bigger things. But start where you are right now.

Have you ever wondered how Abraham could contemplate sacrificing his son Isaac? He had come to learn through experience, that God was loving and could be trusted. You start with what God has said is true and you choose to believe it. Don't start with what you feel. You'll be all over the place.

You don't feel your way into good behavior you behave your way into good feelings. Your feelings will follow in due course.

This is a story by a man named Steve Goss.

“We had a couple in our church who had a lot of problems, and my pastor asked me to disciple them. I found it a frustrating process because we didn't seem to make much progress. I knew Jesus was the answer for their problems, but I didn't know how. I didn't know what I could do apart from praying for them and that didn't seem to change anything.”

Later, Steve came across the truths that shaped the very course we are studying, which claimed to help people resolve personal and spiritual conflicts. He endeavored to use biblical principles to help this couple.

“One evening, my pastor and I tried it out very timidly with this couple. Nothing else had worked. We didn't do it the way I would do it now, but it didn't seem to matter.”

To cut a long story short, the wife got cancer and was dying. Before they went through the steps, we weren't even sure that she was a Christian. Yet as she faced death, it was clear that there had been a major change in her. After going through the steps, she had assurance of where she was going and was unafraid.

“Her husband, who had a history of mental breakdowns, was my concern at that time. I couldn't see how he would survive the premature death of his wife, but he did. He didn't have another breakdown.”

Having the peace of God was crucial for both the wife and the husband.

Faith Is Demonstrated By Actions

In the Bible, the words, faith, trust, and believe are all the same word in the original Greek. That's important to know because in English, when you say that you believe something it doesn't carry the same connotation as to trust in something, does it? But faith is not simply agreeing with someone intellectually. It's a reliance that you demonstrate by actions.

Romans 10:17 So then faith *cometh* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

No matter what we say, it's what we do that shows what we really believe. It's like standing at the train station waiting to go across country. You find out all about the times of the trains, you

learn all the technical details, you even study the train map, and you say you believe them to be true, but you never actually get on a train.

If you want to know what you really believe, look at what you do. As we have seen, our faith grows when we make that choice to put it into practice. But it's when we find ourselves in difficult times that it can potentially grow the most.

Can you replace the story from Nancy with one of your own?

A young woman grew up with very abusive parents and had been exposed to witchcraft through her grandmother. Sadly, as a young Christian, she was led to believe that she needed someone with a special spiritual discernment and anointing to help her overcome the spiritual oppression she had experienced since she was a child.

How was she to find such a person? How long was she to wait? Who knew?

She waited, passively stunned, in her growth, unfruitful. Many times she received prayer and sometimes it helped, but it had no lasting effect.

She did eventually come through, but it wasn't through some special person. It was when she took active responsibility for her own spiritual growth.

The outcome of your Christian life is in your hands. The truth is that there's no one here who can't become a mature, fruitful disciple. There's no one here who can't resist temptation, get out of hopelessness, leave behind negative behavior and past influences, and move on. You don't need some special anointing from God or others. You just need to know what is already true. Choose to believe it and act on it.

Now we have another list of truths from the Bible that will help us with this. These are called the "21 Cans of Success." Let's read them aloud together.

- 1) Why should I let my physical circumstances define my spiritual condition, when the Bible says I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me? – Philippians 4:13
- 2) Why should I think I lack spiritual resources when I know that God shall supply all my needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus? – Philippians 4:19
- 3) Why should I fear when the Bible says God has not given me the spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind? – 2 Timothy 1:7
- 4) Why should I think that I have no purpose, knowing that God has given to me a measure of faith? – Romans 12:3
- 5) Why should I be anxious when the peace of God is always available to me? – Philippians 4:7
- 6) Why should I worry about my weakness when the Bible says that the Lord's strength is made perfect in weakness? – 2 Corinthians 12:9

- 7) Why should I allow Satan supremacy over my life when Christ has led captivity captive?
Ephesians 2:8 / Colossians 4:15
- 8) Why should I worry about sufferings when the Bible says that is when the power of God rests upon me? – 2 Corinthians 12:9-10
- 9) Why should I lack wisdom when Christ has abounded toward me in all wisdom and prudence? – Ephesians 1:8
- 10) Why should I be bitter toward my offender when the Bible says that vengeance belongs to the Lord? – Romans 12:19
- 11) Why should I worry and fret when the Bible says to be careful for nothing, but let my requests be made known to God? – Philippians 4:6
- 12) Why should I ever be in bondage, knowing that where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty? – 2 Corinthians 3:17
- 13) Why should I feel condemned when the Bible says I am in Christ. – Romans 8:34
- 14) Why should I feel alone when the Bible says that I have not been forsaken? – 2 Corinthians 4:9
- 15) Why should I feel accursed or that I am the victim of bad luck, when the Bible says that Christ redeemed me from the curse of the law? – Galatians 3:13
- 16) Why should I be discontented when, like Paul, I can learn to be content in all my circumstances? – Philippians 4:11
- 17) Why should I feel worthless when Christ became sin on my behalf that I might become the righteousness of God in him? 2 Corinthians 5:21
- 18) Why should I have a persecution complex knowing that nobody can be against me when God is for me? – Romans 8:31
- 19) Why should I be confused when God is the author of peace and He has given me His Spirit and His word? – 2 Corinthians 13:11
- 20) Why should I feel defeated when I am more than a conqueror? – Romans 8:37
- 21) Why should I think Satan is too much for me when the Bible says that God will bruise Satan under my feet? – Romans 16:20

We'll have one more list to share with you later in the course. Keep in mind, there's nothing magical about reading these lists out. The truth in them will only have an effect on your life to the extent that you decide to believe it.

Reading the list out loud as soon as you wake up in the morning for several weeks is a great way to commit yourself to affirm and believe the truth. Many people say that their lives have been completely transformed just by doing that.

Will you take this opportunity to make a new commitment to base your life completely on what God says is true, regardless of your feelings and regardless of the opinions of others?

Witness:

Think of someone you know who is not yet a Christian. What does the Bible say about why they don't yet believe? See 2 Corinthians 4:4, Romans 10:14-15.

2 Corinthians 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Romans 10:14 How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? ¹⁵ And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

Write a prayer that you could pray concerning the things that are stopping people from believing. Are you willing to pray that prayer?

In the upcoming week:

Everyday read the "21 Cans of Success" list out loud and pick one of the truths that is particularly appropriate to you and make a decision to believe it regardless of feelings and circumstances. If you can find a way of stepping out in faith, in some practical way based on that truth, so much the better.

Session 4, Part A: The World's View of Truth

The World, The Flesh, And The Devil

Every day we struggle against three things that conspire to push us away from the truth. Understanding how the world, the flesh and the devil work will enable us to renew our minds and stand firm.

What Is "The World?"

We've looked at some fundamental truths: who we are in Christ, and the fact that faith is simply a choice to believe what God tells us is already true. In the next three sessions, we are going to turn our attention to the things that try to deflect us from the truth. We have three distinct enemies, the world, the flesh, and the devil.

First, in this session, we will look at the world and how it tries to make us look at reality in a way that is opposed to how God says it actually is.

The world is the system or culture we grew up in and live in. This will vary greatly according to where you are from and where you were born.

I'm going to talk about it almost as if it were a person with its own thoughts and deeds. It isn't. However, there is someone behind it, Satan, whom Jesus called the ruler of this world. To a significant extent, he is the one who pulls the strings behind the world and works through it.

Let's look at the three main tactics the world uses to try to divert us from the truth.

Tactic 1: Promising To Meet Our Deepest Needs

The world's first tactic is promising to meet those deep needs we all have. We were created to have the kind of life Adam had: 100% acceptance, the highest significance, and Perfect security.

But that wasn't the life we were born into. From our first breath, we didn't have the spiritual connection to God that we were meant to have. Yet we were created with those inbuilt needs for acceptance, significance and security that our connection with God would have fulfilled.

When we were growing up and instinctively started looking to fulfill those deep needs for acceptance, significance and security, up pops the world and says "no problem, I'll show you how to get those."

The world feeds us false formulas:

- Performance plus accomplishments equals significance.
- Status plus recognition equals security.
- Appearance plus admiration equals acceptance.

Those are lies. But in the absence of a spiritual connection to God, we naturally fell for them. Or, as Paul put it, we naturally followed the ways of this world.

Ephesians 2:2 Wherein **in time past ye walked according to the course of this world**, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

You see, the world has a kind of 1-2 punch. On the one hand, it makes us feel insignificant, insecure and that nobody likes us. Then it offers ways that promise to fix that. Dress in fashionable brands, hang out with the elite. But those things don't work, not really.

1 John 2:15-17 is a key passage in understanding how the world tries to suck us in.

1 John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. ¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. ¹⁷ And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever.

According to the passage, there are three channels through which the world works: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. They are the same channels that Satan used when he tempted Eve, and again when he appeared to Jesus in the wilderness and tempted him.

The Lust of the Flesh

We'll look at the flesh as an enemy in its own right in the next session. But let's just notice for now that the lust of the flesh is linked to the world. The more we buy into the world's lies and act on them, the more unhelpful patterns of thinking become established in our minds, which then become default ways of behaving.

The Lust of the Eyes

The world also works through the lust of the eyes. It shows me things that it claims will meet my needs, those legitimate needs for acceptance, significance, and security that God created me to have.

It is interesting and sad that a number of pieces of research have shown that more Christian men regularly use pornography than don't. And quite a few women use it too.

The world is always trying to get our attention with bright, new, attractive things. Airbrushed models make us feel like we have to look a certain way and create anxiety about aging. Ultimately, they don't lead us into the bright future they promise, but into darkness and confusion.

The Pride of Life

Then there's the pride of life. This is simply the temptation the world throws at us to boast about our life based on the lie that its possessions or achievements or connections make us significant.

Even Christians can swallow the world's lies about social class and status.

The truth is, when we feel the need to boast about what we have, our achievements or who we know, we show our insecurity. We're using those things as a crutch to bolster our self-image. But you don't need to do that anymore, and neither do I. We are now wholly and pleasing to God. We are accepted and completely secure in Him.

Session 4, Part B: The World's View of Truth

Tactic 2: Painting a Complete but False Picture of Reality

Have you ever put on a virtual reality headset? Rather than simply watching a movie or sporting event, you can have the impression that you are right in it. If you move your head to the right or the left, the screen will change accordingly and you can interact with this 360 degrees virtual world as you do with the real world.



One of the pioneers of virtual reality says that the goal is to make technology that is as real as real life, with none of the limitations. But of course, it won't be real. It will just feel real.

And that's essentially the second tactic of the world to give you a distorted view of reality, but feed it to you as though it is the real thing. In effect, it gives you a virtual reality headset, but you don't know you're wearing it. This virtual reality headset is called your worldview.

I have three kids. Anyone care to guess what language they speak? English; but if they had been brought up in a French home, they'd speak French. Just as we pick up things like language from our environment, we also pick up beliefs, values, and ways of behaving. We're influenced by our family, our schooling, our friends, entertainment and the media.

So, without even realizing it, we all develop a way of looking at reality that we believe is true. But if your worldview is faulty, it will lead to faulty judgments about what happens in your life.

There are thousands of different worldviews, but let's look at the most common to understand how they work.

1. A Non-Western Worldview

If you were brought up in African or Eastern cultures, you may well have absorbed the belief that the universe is controlled by a kind of universal power that runs through everything and by spirits of many types.

If something bad happened to you, let's say you suddenly became ill, you would pass that bad experience through your virtual reality goggles to make sense of it, and you would probably begin to suspect that someone might be manipulating this universal power or the spirits against you by cursing you or doing some kind of magic.

Just as you might turn to an electrician to sort out problems with the power in your house, you would probably turn to a sort of cosmic electrician, a shaman or witch doctor, to sort out the problems with this universal power.

If this is how you see reality, chances are that you'll be living in constant fear that someone else might have a better control of the powers, or that you might somehow unwittingly upset a spirit that would then turn against you.

2. The Western Worldview

Most people brought up in the West don't turn to a witch doctor if things start to go wrong. Instead, we tend to look for logical reasons and try to fix the problem.

That's because we have been fed a different view of reality by the world. It's a worldview that tells us that what is real can only be known through scientific methods. If we're ill, we'll turn to a doctor who will use scientific methods to try to make us better.

In this worldview, it is still okay to believe in God and other supernatural things, but we come to believe that they have no real bearing on our daily life. It's generally thought, for example, that we can leave spiritual questions out of our children's education without losing anything that really matters.

I heard of someone who said I believe in God, but I'm a practicing atheist and that would be true of many people.

3. The Postmodern Worldview

But culture is always changing, and another worldview, usually called the Postmodern Worldview, has been emerging in the West in recent decades, which is something of a reaction against past generations reliance on scientists and experts. After all, what experts say has all too often turned out to be wrong.

The younger you are, the more likely you are to be suspicious of experts in general, but particularly suspicious of those who make strong claims to certainty. In fact, you may well have come to see anyone who has strong convictions as being on a dangerous line that ends with extreme, fanatical terrorists.

Whereas previous generations saw truth as something revealed by God or discovered by science. Increasingly, we test whether an idea is valid or not purely on the basis of our own personal experience. If it feels good to me, it's OK. Each person is free to make up their own version of truth based on their own experience.

So, politicians can say what people want to hear, even if it flies in the face of facts, and get a strong following. Groups on social media promote even the most outlandish views and members reinforce each other's beliefs.

That is why Christians are under pressure to agree that all religions are equally true. Saying that we respect the right of other people to different beliefs and that we are happy to dialogue with them is no longer enough. There is a pressure to agree that their beliefs are just as true as our own.

Younger Christians are happy to say that Jesus is **their truth**, but hesitate to go further and talk about Him as **the truth**. This has led to what you might call “extreme tolerance,” where practically any behavior is acceptable.

People in previous generations used pornography, indulged in drunkenness, used drugs, or had multiple sexual partners, but would usually have acknowledged that those things were wrong. Increasingly, people don't see these things as inherently wrong as long as they make them feel good. In fact, the only thing that is seen as wrong is saying that what someone else is doing is wrong.

The bottom line is that people are increasingly absorbing into their worldview, a belief that there is no real, solid, undergirding truth.

The Biblical Worldview: Truth Does Exist

So, what is true? That there is a spiritual power flowing through the universe that we can manipulate. Something that only science can uncover? Whatever feels good to you? Which worldview is right?

None of them.

If we were to take that virtual reality headset off, get rid of the values and beliefs that our own particular culture instilled in us, what would the world actually look like?

The Bible claims to be God's revelation of reality to the people he created. If that is right, then taking off that headset would mean that what we would see would correspond exactly to what the Bible tells us; that what the Bible says is how it really is.

What are we saying? That only one view of reality can be right? Isn't that a bit, well, intolerant?

Consider the most important question facing everybody in the world. What happens when you die? Hinduism teaches that when the soul dies, it is reincarnated in another form. Christianity teaches that the soul spends eternity in either Heaven or Hell. Spiritists think we just float around as ghost. Atheists believe that we have no soul and that when we die, our existence simply ends.

Can all those things be true at the same time? To put it another way, does what you believe will happen to you when you die make any difference to what will actually happen? Or will the same thing happen to everyone when they die, regardless of what they believe before the event?

Surely, if Hindus are right, we'll all be reincarnated. If Christians are right, we'll all stand before the judgment of God. If atheists are right, all of our existences will come to an end. If Spiritists are right, we'll all float around as ghosts. But they simply can't all be true at the same time.

So, it's clear that there is such a thing as real truth that exists, whatever individuals may choose to believe.

We're not proposing a version of truth that we have made up ourselves. The Bible has been tested and found reliable by millions of people over thousands of years. In fact, many of those ordinary people have found that by choosing to believe it, they have been able to accomplish or be a catalyst for extraordinary things, such as: starting and running hospitals that are open to everyone, providing education, helping to abolish slavery, and helping people get free from drugs.

We may find it difficult to advance an unfashionable argument, but are we really being helpful if we encourage people in their view that there is no truth when the Bible says very clearly that there is truth?

Session 4, Part C: The World's View of Truth

Tactic 3: Not Replacing Core Beliefs

All of us were raised wearing a virtual reality headset of one kind or another. It's our original worldview. But it's crucial to understand that these headsets give us a distorted view of reality.

The third tactic of the world is to get us to add our Christian beliefs to our existing worldview, rather than replace it, so that our core beliefs remain the same.

Gold leaf is real gold that is beaten until it is 200 times thinner than a human hair. Then it is applied to books, ornaments, buildings and sometimes even food. Something that is covered in gold leaf looks as if it's made from solid gold, but it's actually just a thin covering. Imagine your Christian beliefs as a beautiful gold ornament. But if we were to take a saw and cut it in half, what would we see inside? Would it be solid gold all the way through? Or would there be just a thin layer of gold with some cheap and nasty metal inside?

It's much easier to see how deeply our core beliefs affect us when we look at the lives of other people who have different worldviews from our own. For example, in an African country, the leadership of a missionary organization was ready to hand the church they planted over to African leadership. Two men were candidates for the position.

Now, what I'm about to say might sound silly to you if you are not brought up with an African worldview, but one of them went to a witch doctor to get a charm to enhance his chances of being chosen as the church leader. Why did he do that? He was simply reverting back to his core beliefs because they were deeper than his new Christian beliefs.

How are those brought up in the West affected by the Western worldview, which in effect denies the reality of the spiritual world? Some parts of the church have tried to get rid of what they consider to be unnecessary, supernatural baggage. They deny the miraculous and the existence of angels and devils.

Most of us recognize the reality of the spiritual world, at least intellectually. However, the Western worldview can still influence us. It encourages us to live our lives and exercise our ministries as if the spiritual world didn't exist. Now we don't need to go around seeing a devil under every bush, but if you leave spiritual wickedness out of the equation, you're setting yourself up for some problems because you don't have a complete view of how this world operates.

When something goes horribly wrong in our lives, many Christians blame God. Why? But, because they are influenced by the Western worldview, they leave Satan out of the equation. His work in them goes undetected.

What about when someone has a mental or psychological problem? The medical profession influenced by the Western worldview, tends to ignore the reality of the spiritual world.

The following story is from a Christian named Darrell.

“I was explaining the gospel to a young man who came into my office. I could tell by his body language and the look in his eyes that there was a battle going on for his mind. I asked him to tell me what was going on in his head. He said there were voices in his head telling him the gospel is not true, the gospel is not true.”

Is that a chemical imbalance; or maybe some kind of problem with this brain; or should we at least consider the possibility that the voices in his head might be coming from an unclean spirit? A healthy view of reality would acknowledge both possibilities.

The church is often divided into two camps. One group who ignores the reality of the spiritual world and just look at psychological and emotional treatment, and the other group who sees a devil behind everything.

We are whole people, spirit, soul and body; and we need to have a healthy, balanced view that takes into account both the natural world and the spiritual world.

We say we believe the Bible, but isn't it true that many of our decisions are made on the basis of what we think rather than on what God is saying? Do our actions demonstrate that we believe we can sort out our lives on our own and use prayer only as a last resort?

Holding on to our core beliefs leads to a shaky foundation for our faith. For example, consider this question: Why are you a Christian?

Christians who are still operating according to their old worldview might say something like, “I believe because it seems to work,” or, “I feel it's true in my experience,” or, “I sincerely believe it's true for me.”

But what happens when it no longer seems to work, or when it doesn't feel true anymore, or when another attractive belief system comes along?

Os Guinness says “the Christian faith is not true because it works; it works because it's true.” It's not simply true for us, it's true for anyone, because truth is true, even if nobody believes it, and falsehood is false even if everyone believes it. That is why truth does not yield to opinion, fashion, numbers, office or sincerity. It is simply true, and that is the end of it.

Each of us needs to come to a point where we realize that what the world has caused us to believe is so contrary to what is really true that we should make a conscious decision to throw it away. We need to make a conscious choice to believe what the Bible says, to make the word of

God our core belief system, not just something we add like a coating of gold leaf to a faulty belief system.

If we don't, it will lead us to compromise and we will be double-minded and unstable in all our ways.

I'm going to say a prayer that you can pray with me if you want, to make a firm decision to base the rest of your life on what God says is true.

Lord Jesus, no matter what the world throws at me, I'm making a decision today to believe only what you say is true in your word, the Bible. I choose not to be double-minded any longer, but to trust you and make the Bible the core of what I believe. I renounce and turn away from my previous worldview and make a new commitment today to base my life on the truth of your word. I know that you will be faithful to me, in Jesus' name. Amen.

This Week:

Spend some time in prayer, throwing out your old worldview and choosing to see the world as God says it actually is. You might find it helpful to say, "I renounce the lie that... (*insert your old false belief*), and I announce the truth that...(*insert the truth from God's word*)."

For example:

"I renounce the lie that the unseen spiritual world is not real, and I announce the truth that the spiritual world just as real as the physical world we can see."

"I renounce the lie that financial success brings real security, and I announce the truth that I am already perfectly secure because no one can separate me from the love of God."

"I renounce the lie that I should be worried that someone may have cursed me, and I announce the truth that I'm seated with Christ in the heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers."

Witness:

How will understanding that we all grow up with a particular way of looking at the world help you as you talk to people who are not yet Christians?

In the Coming Week:

At the end of each day, take 5 minutes to review how your old worldview has reared its head during the day to try to persuade you to compromise the truth of the Bible. When you identify it happening, take time to renounce the false belief from your previous worldview, and make a commitment to base your life on the truth of the Bible.

Session 5, Part A: Our Daily Choice

We might think that becoming a Christian means that we will automatically do everything right, as if accepting Christ solves all of our problems. But it doesn't work that way. As believers, we sense the Holy Spirit deep down inside, and we want to please God, but we often fail to live the Christian life in the way we want to. And sometimes we don't feel different at all. Our bad habits don't instantly disappear. In fact, the struggle with sin may seem to intensify. Why?

In this session, we're going to look at what the Bible calls the flesh, the second of our enemies. Paul says,

Romans 8:5 For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit.⁶ For to be carnally minded *is* death; but to be spiritually minded *is* life and peace.⁷ Because the carnal mind *is* enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be.

Let's start by looking a little more at what happened and what did not happen when we became Christians.

What Changed

We've already seen that at the moment we became Christians, some dramatic changes took place.

- **We have a new spirit within us in the sense that we are now spiritually alive**

Romans 7:6 But now we are delivered from the law, that being dead wherein we were held; that we should serve **in newness of spirit**, and not *in* the oldness of the letter.

- **We have new life in Christ.**

We are new creations and are now alive in Christ.

2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore if any man *be* in Christ, *he is* a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.

- **We have a new master.**

Our new spiritual authority is God; before our conversion, it was Satan.

Ephesians 2:1 And you *hath he quickened*, who were dead in trespasses and sins;
² Wherein **in time past ye walked** according to the course of this world, **according to the prince of the power of the air**, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience:

What Did Not Change

Let's look at some of the things that didn't change when we became Christians.

- **Our body did not change.**

Physically, we still look the same as before. One day we'll get a new body, but for now we still have the same old flesh and bones.

- **Our flesh wasn't taken away**

When we talk about the term “flesh” we are not referring to our physical bodies, but we are talking about the urges and desires it has. You could think of the biblical concept of the flesh as the urge to do what comes naturally to a fallen human being.

As we grew up independent of God, we learned to react, cope and think in certain ways. These old ways of thinking and behaving are the primary characteristics of the flesh. When we became Christians, no one pressed a “clear” button in our minds.

Let me give you an illustration of how the flesh works. I used to have a hard time communicating with my father. His face always seemed cold and hard toward me. So when I saw him, it made me feel like I had done something wrong. So every time I saw him, I learned to feel fear or rejection.

Over the years, I learned about how he grew up and what he went through as a child. I learned how he conditioned himself to survive in the Vietnam War. I realized that his tough face didn't mean he was angry with me. It was just a result of his past. However, I'd learned to think it meant he was rejecting me. It has taken some time for me to train myself to think differently.

Even now, when I see his face, my initial reaction is to think and feel rejection. Then I have to remind myself of the truth. That's exactly how the flesh works. It's a set of automatic thoughts and behaviors that we have learned over time.

Flesh is an unfamiliar word, but it's exactly what the original Bible text says.

Many modern Bible translations went through a phase where they didn't translate the word flesh literally, but interpreted it as “sinful nature.” Using the term “nature” is unhelpful and confusing because, as we have seen, Christians no longer have a sinful nature, but we share God's nature.

We're going to stick with the literal translation “flesh.”

Sin did not die

The big question for many is this: How can we defeat sin? The bad news is we can't. The good news is that Christ has already done it for us. Sin itself is not dead. In fact, it is still extremely appealing, and it tempts us every day to try to meet our legitimate needs for security, acceptance, and significance through things other than God.

What has to change so that we don't go round in circles falling into the same old sin patterns?

It won't happen by trying harder. The key to freedom is knowing the truth. We need to know the truth about sin.

Even though sin used to be our master, Paul tells us that it has no power over us anymore.

Even though sin is very much alive, Paul tells us that we are to realize that we are alive to God and dead to sin.

Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord.

When we died with Christ, his death ended our relationship with sin.

Romans 6:3 Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?

Romans 6:6 Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with *him*, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. ⁷ For he that is dead is freed from sin.

But sometimes you may not feel like you are dead to sin. Just as Paul said in Romans 7:

Romans 7:21 I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me.

Romans 7:23 But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.

When we feel like we are not dead to sin, we simply need to believe what is really true rather than what our feelings are telling us. Internalize the truth that we are dead to sin.

When Paul says that there is a "law of sin" that we still have to deal with, how can we overcome a law that is still effective?

Well, who here can fly? Why can't you fly? Because every time you try, the law of gravity keeps you stuck to the Earth. But we can all fly by getting into a plane. Has the law of gravity been temporarily suspended? No. It's still working. But we've overcome the law of gravity by a greater law, the law of lift and thrust.

So how do you overcome the law of sin that is still in effect? By a greater law.

Romans 8:2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.

The law of the spirit of life that's now at work in me as a child of God is far greater than the law of sin and death. Before you became a child of God, a saint, a holy one, you had no choice but to stay on the ground in your sin. But now, in Christ, we have the power to choose to fly above the law of sin and death.

Session 5, Part B: Our Daily Choice

Our Choices

It is becoming clear that we face some very real choices:

- Even though we no longer have to think and react according to our flesh, we can choose to do so.
- Even though sin has no power over us, we can choose to give in to it.

1 Corinthians 3:1 And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, *even* as unto babes in Christ. ² I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto ye were not able *to bear it*, neither yet now are ye able. ³ For ye are yet carnal: for whereas *there is* among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not carnal, and walk as men?

The carnal man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, they are foolishness to him. The carnal man is prompted by the impulses of his flesh.

The spiritual man chooses to walk by the Spirit and therefore demonstrates the fruit of the Spirit.

The spiritual man still has the flesh, but he crucifies it daily as he recognizes the truth that he is now dead to sin.

Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. ¹² Let not sin therefore reign in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. ¹³ Neither yield ye your members *as* instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God.

The emotions of those who reckon themselves to be dead to sin are increasingly marked by joy and peace instead of turmoil.

This is the model of maturity to which we are all moving. But don't dismiss it as something that might be possible for others but not for you.

A Christian can walk after the flesh even though he is spiritually alive. Paul calls him carnal because, instead of choosing to follow the impulses of the Spirit, he follows the impulses of the flesh.

He is free to walk according to the Spirit, but chooses not to, either deliberately or because he is being deceived and doesn't understand how to.

His daily life tends to mimic the non-Christian person more than the spiritual person.

His mind is occupied by wrong thoughts. His emotions are plagued by negative feelings. His body shows signs of stress.

He is living in opposition to his identity in Christ and is likely to be plagued by feelings of inferiority, insecurity, inadequacy, guilt, worry and doubt.

He will also tend to get stuck in the sin confessed cycles.

In Roman 7:15-24, Paul describes how bad it feels to be stuck and refers to it as miserable or wretched.

Because our spirit has joined God's Spirit, in our inner being, we delight in God's law. We really want to go His way. Yet we find that we fail time and again. Maybe we return time and again to comfort eating or gossip or sexual sin. In the end, we feel completely hopeless and conclude wrongly that we can never escape. The salvation of fleshly Christians is not the issue. But they accomplish nothing much of eternal value in such a state - a tragedy when in due course, they stand before God and look back at what might have been.

Barriers to Growth

If you feel you are more of a fleshly person than a spiritual person right now, don't beat yourself up. Just look at what is getting in the way and deal with it. Here are some of the barriers to growth.

➤ **Deception**

As fleshly patterns of thinking get more and more ingrained, they become entrenched, and we refer to them as strongholds. They stop us seeing things as they really are and keep us in deception. Common areas of deception for the Christian would include thoughts like these:

- This might work for others, but my case is different and it won't work for me.
- I could never have faith like someone else.
- God could never use me.

It takes a determined effort to deal with a stronghold, and we'll show you how to do that in Session 9.

➤ **Unresolved Personal and Spiritual Conflicts**

Ephesians 4:26 Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath:
²⁷ Neither give place to the devil.

In other words, if we do not deal with something like anger quickly, and we let it turn into the sins of bitterness and unforgiveness, we give the devil a foothold and opportunity to hold us back.

For example, if you have never truly forgiven someone who hurt you, you're leaving a big door open for the enemy to confuse your thinking and stop you from connecting with the truth. If you do not close that door by obeying God and forgiving the person, no matter how well someone preaches the truth to you, you're unlikely ever to really get hold of it in a way that you can grasp and put it into practice.

It's actually straightforward to get rid of the foothold. You'll have the opportunity later in the course to go through a process called the *Steps to Freedom in Christ*, which is a straightforward tool you can use to examine all the areas of your life and ask the Holy Spirit to show you where you have not repented and closed the door to the enemy's influence. You can then, in a controlled and calm way, take the authority you now have in Christ to repent of those things, and cut off the capacity of the enemy to confuse your thinking. In our experience, there is no Christian that does not benefit from this process, and for many, it is the key to getting hold of the truths that we're teaching. It's something many do every year.

It's not uncommon for people who have been through the *Steps to Transformation* to be listening to some other teaching and say something like, "Why didn't someone tell me this 20 years ago?" Their pastor might respond "I have been telling you for 20 years." They were just not able to connect with it in any meaningful way until they dealt with their personal and spiritual conflicts.

For many in this course, it's going through the steps that will suddenly enable them to grasp key truths for the first time in their heart and not just their head.

- God really does love me.
- There really is no condemnation for me now.
- God really does want the best for me.
- I don't have to be frightened anymore.
- I'm not a victim anymore.

Not assuming responsibility for our lives

A final reason that we may not make progress is that we haven't learned to take responsibility for the things that God says are our responsibility.

The apostle Paul declares that we have already been given all spiritual blessings in Christ and that the power of God which raised Jesus from the dead is available to do the spiritual work in us to produce a godly life.

So, it's not a question of asking God to do something more, and it's not a question of looking for an anointed person to zap us, or pray the right prayer.

It comes down to knowing just who you are. A holy child of the living God who already has everything they need to be the person God is calling them to be. And then understanding how to put it all into practice, which is what this course is all about.

Session 5, Part C: Our Daily Choice

Choosing to Walk by the Spirit Every Day

Once we've committed ourselves to believe the truth, no matter what we feel; once we've dealt with our unresolved spiritual conflicts, we are genuinely free to make a choice every day. We are back in the position Adam and Eve were in before the Fall, able to choose freely. That free will is hugely important to God.

Galatians 5:16 *This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.*

The key choice we make every day is rather to obey the promptings of the flesh or the promptings of the Holy Spirit. These two are in direct opposition to each other.

What is Walking by the Spirit?

What Walking by the Spirit is not:

- Just a good feeling.

Sometimes the Holy Spirit touches us in such a way that we feel full of joy and peace. That's a lovely gift when it happens, but being filled with the Spirit day-by-day is much more than that, because if we base our life on having a good feeling, we'll always be looking for the key to feeling better and will be constantly chasing after a new experience.

I've known people in our churches that are addicted to having other people pray for them. They seek a warm, tingly feeling inside or cathartic emotional release. But there's no fruit in their lives until they realize they're responsible for their own growth in the Lord.

- **A license to do whatever we want**

Some think that freedom means we can cast off all the guidelines God has given to help us lead responsible lives. You can try that. And while your sin of choice might feel like freedom for a short while, eventually you realize that's actually bondage. The key question is: can you stop? If you can't, you have become a slave to sin.

- **Legalism (slavishly obeying a set of rules)**

The Old Testament law revealed the moral nature of God. But nobody could live up to it. The point of the law was to lead us to Christ by teaching us how much we need Him.

Galatians 3:24 *Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*

But Paul says:

Galatians 5:18 But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.

When we see living for God as obeying a set of rules or behaving in a certain way, our walk with him becomes a joyless trudge. It's hard to keep it up and very tempting to give up. God isn't blessed by people who will obey because they feel they have to. He wants us to obey because we want to, because we delight in doing His will.

So what is walking by the Spirit?

Walking by the Spirit is:

➤ **True Freedom**

2 Corinthians 3:17 Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord *is*, there *is* liberty.

The devil cannot make you walk in the flesh, although he will try to draw you that way. We have the freedom to be the people God created us to be and to make the choice to live by faith and in the power of the Holy Spirit.

➤ **Being Led**

Nothing will get done in our lives if we expect God to do it all. And neither can we accomplish anything lasting for eternity by ourselves.

Romans 8:14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.

When we walk with Him, we learn his ways and we become in practice the sons we were designed to be. We also find that God's ways are not hard and that we can actually rest in them and find peace for our souls.

How Can We Tell if We're Walking by the Spirit?

Just as you can tell a tree by its fruit, you can tell whether you're walking by the Spirit by the fruit of your life. If you're being led of the Spirit, your life will be increasingly marked by love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

If you're living according to your flesh, that too will become evident in your life.

Perhaps you become aware during the session that you're living according to the flesh. What is the appropriate response? Simply deal with any footholds of the enemy and start walking after the Spirit rather than the flesh.

Walking by the Spirit is a moment-by-moment, day-by-day experience. You can choose every moment of every day either to walk by the Spirit or to walk by the flesh.

Reflection: Paul said this to his younger disciple, Timothy.

2 Timothy 1:6 Wherefore I put thee in remembrance that thou stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands. ⁷ For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

So, who is responsible for fanning into flame the gift of the Spirit in Timothy's life, God, Paul or Timothy?

Whose responsibility is it to do that in your life? What are some of the ways you could do that?

Take some time on your own in prayer to commit to walk by the Spirit rather than the flesh, and to fan into flame the gift of the Spirit in your life.

Witness:

How would you explain to a not yet Christian the benefits of being filled with the Spirit in a way that would make sense to them?

In the coming week:

Every day, specifically commit yourself to walk by the Spirit rather than the flesh.

Session 6, Part A: The Battle for Our Minds

The Battle is Real

We've looked so far in this section of the course, at the way this fallen world tries to influence our thinking and how our flesh has been programmed to predispose us to live independently of God.

But we're not just up against the world and the flesh. The Bible teaches us that we're also up against the devil, who Jesus calls the Father of Lies, in John 8:44. The good news is that this is the most resolvable of the three. Jesus came to destroy the devil's work and to deliver us from this present evil world.

Galatians 1:4 Who gave himself for our sins, that he might **deliver us from this present evil world**, according to the will of God and our Father:

Ephesians 6:13 Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand **in the evil day**, and having done all, to stand.

The evil day is the day when we are under attack from the evil one.

The tendency, however, of those of us brought up at the Western worldview is to run our lives as if the spiritual world does not exist. But from the beginning of Genesis to the end of Revelation, there is one continuous theme in the Bible, the battle between the Kingdom of light and the Kingdom of darkness, between the Spirit of Truth and the Father of Lies, between the Christ and the Antichrist.

“But wasn't all of that dealt with at the cross? I'm a Christian, so surely I'm immune.”

No, the truth is you're the bullseye. Is the armor of God for the non-believer? No, it's for the believer. We are in the battle whether we like it or not. Paul tells us explicitly that we're not fighting flesh and blood. But the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places (See Ephesians 6:10-18).

If you bury your head in the sand, you leave a great big target exposed.

If we don't understand that we're in a battle, or how that battle works, we're very likely to become a casualty or to be neutralized in our walk with the Lord.

Satan the Deceiver

So, who is Satan and how does he work?

When God created Adam and Eve to rule over the world, the devil had to crawl at their feet in the form of a snake.

But when they sinned, Adam and Eve effectively handed over their right to rule the world to Satan. That's why Jesus referred to him as the prince or ruler of this world in John 12:31. He is also called, the Prince of the Power of the Air in Ephesians 2:2. And we're told the whole world lies in his power in 1 John 5:19.

Satan Is Not Like God

God and Satan are not equal and opposite powers or anything remotely like that, though Satan would like for you to think that they are. In fact, it has been said that to compare Satan to God is like comparing an ant to an atomic bomb. The Bible makes a huge distinction between the "Creator" and the "created." Like us, Satan is a mere created being.

Satan Can Only be in One Place at One Time

Because of that, we can infer that he can only be in one place at a time. He rules this world through rulers, authorities, principalities, and powers (See Ephesians 6:12). These are different types or levels of fallen angels. The Bible doesn't bother telling us a huge amount about how they are organized because we really don't need to know.

Only God is everywhere at once. That means that most of us have probably never come up against Satan himself in person. So when I use the term Satan, I'm usually referring not to Satan himself, who can only be in one place at one time, but using it rather to refer to evil spirits in general.

Satan's power and authority do not even begin to compare to God's.

At the Cross, Jesus completely disarmed Satan (See Colossians 2:15). And Satan can only operate within the boundaries that God sets. He can't just walk into your life and inflict damage and destruction.

If a dog is loose, the cat will stay out of its way. If, however, the dog is on a leash, a cat seems to know just how far it can come and will often delight in parading slowly past, just out of reach. Of course, the dog goes wild, snarling, barking and straining at the leash, but the cat knows it's perfectly safe. And it has great fun standing just beyond the limit of its leash, the picture of calm and tranquility. God has put Satan on a leash, and he can only act within the boundaries that God has set.

Satan Does Not Know Everything

Every occult practice relates to the mind or the future, but Satan knows neither perfectly.

There's no evidence that Satan can read your mind. For example, all interaction in the Bible between angels and people, or devils and people, is done out loud.

In Daniel chapter two, God gave King Nebuchadnezzar some dreams. He demanded that his magicians tell him what they meant, but first he also had to tell them the content of his dreams. These sorcerers could not do it because their normal sources of power and information were unclean spirits, and they clearly were unable to read the King's mind. If they had been able to, they would have, but they could not. Only God knows the future. Satan does not know the future except what God has revealed.

Many claim that they can see into the future using a cult's powers. Think about that for a moment. If someone were genuinely able to see into the future, what would they do? I dare say they would make a fortune buying stock market shares that were about to rise dramatically, or betting on sports events and horse races. What they would not be doing is spending time in tents at carnivals, reading palms for a few dollars at a time.

Have you ever seen the headline "Psychic Wins Lottery?" Neither have I.

How Satan Works

By Putting Thoughts Into Our Mind

Now, this does not mean that Satan cannot put thoughts into your mind, something the Bible teaches he can clearly do.

Mind you, so can I. In fact, I hope that during this course I've been putting lots of thoughts into your mind.

Because Satan had so much practice observing people over many years, he can often make a pretty accurate guess about what's going on in your mind, and it's not hard for him to know what you're thinking if he gave you the thought in the first place.

Some people get spooked because they know someone who went to a medium or some other occult practitioner and was only told a detail of their life that no other person or often only a deceased person knew. Undoubtedly, much of that is explainable through psychology or mind games. However, it would be equally possible that the information was revealed to the medium by a devil which had observed 20 years ago that great Uncle Bill had a heart-shaped mole on his left arm.

The Spirit clearly sees that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits. This is 1 Timothy 4:1.

1 Timothy 4:1 Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;

Are Christians being deceived into abandoning faith and listening to devils? Let's look at three biblical examples, to understand how we can be affected without even knowing it.

1 Chronicles 21:1 And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.

Now what's wrong with that? Wouldn't you want to know how many troops you had? But even the captain of his guard tried to persuade him not to do it, because it showed that David was putting his confidence in his own resources rather than God.

But why did he listen to Satan? To put it another way, would he have done it if he thought it was Satan's idea? Of course not. David believed it was his own idea, even though the Bible makes it clear that it wasn't.

John 13:2 And supper being ended, the devil having now put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son*, to betray him;

Weren't these Judases own thoughts? The Bible clearly says that the thought came from the devil. And when Judas realized the implications of what he had done, he went out and hanged himself.

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back *part* of the price of the land?

Ananias almost certainly thought that this was his own idea, but the Bible makes it clear that it originated with Satan. Ananias was deceived and it had terrible consequences. God struck him dead. God sent a powerful message to the early church about the importance of not compromising with the truth.

It's not too much of a leap to think that if Satan can put thoughts into our mind, he can make them sound like our own. He would not announce the thought with an evil cackle, "Satan here, you're useless."

No, he would make it sound like your own thought. The thought would be "I'm useless, I'm ugly." Not every thought that comes into your mind is your own, and you don't have to entertain every thought that comes into your mind.

Session 6, Part B: The Battle for Our Mind

Through Temptation, Accusation, and Deception

The strategy Satan uses falls into three categories: temptation, accusation, and deception.

Let's imagine your Christian life as a race, with the racetrack stretching out in front of you. Satan cannot block the path or stop you from becoming everything God wants you to be. All he can do is shout at you from the sidelines.

He'll try to tempt you away. "Hey, look what's over here. Come and get it. It'll make you feel better and no one needs to find out, you know you want to."

Or he'll shout accusations at you, "You blew it again, you useless excuse for a Christian. You might as well sit down and give up."

He'll also tell you barefaced lies. "Excuse me you're going the wrong way. The finishing line is back that way."

Satan is trying to get us into sin to establish negative patterns of thought: "I'm hopeless or I'll never be able to." And he works to deceive us into worldly ways of thinking: "I can sort this out on my own" or "all I need is positive thinking."

The most defeated Christians believe the lies and sit down: "Yeah, you're right. It's hopeless."

Others may stand while they argue with the thoughts, but they make no progress.

Victorious Christians simply ignore them. They take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ and keep running toward the finishing line.

Are we experiencing a battle for the mind? Let's ask three sets of questions to find out.

Generally speaking, most hands go up for the first two questions and not many for the third, which emphasizes the point that deception is the most effective weapon Satan has. If we're being deceived, by definition we don't know it.

1. How many of us have experienced some form of temptation this last week? According to the Bible, who is the tempter? Is it the opposite sex? Or the porn site? Or the chocolate bar? No, those are just the objects that Satan uses. But given that Satan himself can only be in one place at a time, we're probably dealing with deceiving spirits.
2. How many of us here have struggled with the voice of the accuser in the last week? Or, to put it another way, how many of us have struggled with thoughts like, "I'm stupid, I'm hopeless, no one understands me, God doesn't love me. I'm different from others."

Revelation 12:10, reveals that Satan will accuse the members of the believing remnant before God day and night during Daniel's 70th Week. But does he accuse against us (members of the body of Christ) too? He may, but here is what is certain his cohorts look for when we give in to temptation and as soon as we do, they put those accusing thoughts into our heads to condemn us, discourage us and defeat us.

3. In the last week, how many of us have been deceived in some way?

Far fewer hands go up for the third question. Because if I tempt you, you know it, and if I accuse you, you know it. But if I deceive you, by definition you don't know it. Deception is Satan's primary strategy.

When those thoughts of "I'm no good, I am not important, I am not loved" come into our minds, that is, in fact, deception. When we're tempted to feel or think like that, we can catch ourselves and recognize it as a lie. We can remind ourselves of the truth of who we are in Christ, even when we don't feel like it.

By Getting Footholds in Our Lives Through Sin

In the last session, we looked at Ephesians 4:26-27, which says that if we don't deal with anger quickly, we give the devil a foothold in our life. You can see the same principle in 2 Corinthians 2:10-11.

2 Corinthians 2:10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave *it*, for your sakes *forgave I it* in the person of Christ; ¹¹ Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

We'll look at forgiveness in a later session, but for now I'll just point out that Satan's greatest access to our lives is often through the sin of unforgiveness.

If Satan can lead us into sin, he gains a point of influence in our lives that he can use to hold us back as if we're on a piece of elastic.

We tend to look for the activity of devils in "dramatic" episodes, but the battle is primarily in our mind.

The Relationship Between Unclean Spirits and Christians

It's very important to stress at this point that we're not talking about Christians being completely taken over or taken back by unclean spirits.

At the center of your being, your spirit is connected to God's Spirit, and Satan can't have you back. You've been purchased by the blood of the Lamb. In other words, Satan can no longer possess you or own you. Being possessed of an unclean spirit is not possible for a Christian.

If we fall for Satan's temptation, accusation, or deception, he may gain a degree of influence in our minds. His goal is to neutralize us, or even use us to further his agenda. For example, Acts 5:8.

We read in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that Satan has blinded the minds of unbelievers, and these footholds seem to work in believers in much the same way. They cause a degree of spiritual blindness and make it more difficult for us to connect with truth. That's why good teaching on its own isn't enough for us to grow. We may simply be unable to connect with it until we deal with these footholds of the enemy.

The good news is that getting rid of these footholds is not difficult or dramatic, and you'll get an opportunity to do that in a gentle and controlled way when we go through the steps to freedom and Christ. Many find that they are then able to grasp the truth of God's word in a completely new way.

Session 6, Part C: The Battle for Our Mind

Our Defense

Understand Our Position in Christ

Ephesians 1:19-22 says that Jesus is seated at God's right hand, the ultimate seat of power and authority. All power has been given unto Him as He is far above all other positions of authority.

That is a great position of power!

So, what is our position?

Ephesians 2:6 And hath raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus:

We are seated with Jesus far above Satan and all his powers, and since we are seated with Christ, we are also "far above" those principalities and powers.

Use the Resources We Have in Christ

Now, even though Satan is defeated, he is still busy.

No matter how weak and frail you feel, or how long or short a time you have been a Christian, every believer has the same authority and power in Christ over the spiritual world.

Understanding this concept is the key of escaping from the sin/confess cycles. This is where people go wrong. They think all they need to do is confess, tell God how sorry they are, but then, they wind up back in the same sin, again and again.

We have resources in Christ which allow us to overcome the habits of sin and overcome temptations. These resources are spiritual in nature and when we employ them, we are, in effect, submitting ourselves to God and resisting the devil.

Do Not be Frightened

There's nothing big about a devil except its mouth. They're like dogs with a big bark but no teeth. We don't need to be intimidated by something that goes bump in the night. The truth is that devils are worried about Christians who understand the magnitude of power and authority they have in Christ. Satan and his evil partners have no power over Christians, except what we give them.

So, some of you might be thinking, do you mean there might be unclean spirits in here? Yes, the spiritual world is filled with them, but so what? God has not given us the spirit of fear. You have no reason to be afraid of that. What else is here that you can't see, but it has the potential to hurt you? Germs.

But what is the proper response to the fact that there are germs all around?

Do you need to go out and put on a protective suit and spray disinfectant all over the place? No. The best response is to live a balanced life with diet, exercise and rest and let your immune system protect you.

What's the best response to the fact that there are devils all around? To watch (be aware), to put on the whole armor of God (our immune system) and counter Satan's lies with truth (exercise). The last thing you need to do is go looking for a devil behind every bush, that is a distraction.

However, the danger comes for those Christians who don't realize that devils are there; don't understand how they work, and don't know how to protect themselves. When doctors didn't know that there were germs all around us, they didn't sterilize their instruments or scrub their hands, and people died. Christians who don't know to put on the full armor of God are left exposed to the attack of the enemy because they don't understand the reality of the spiritual world.

By the way, your authority does not increase with volume. You don't need to shout the devil away. If you think you have to shout and scream, you're not exercising your authority, you're actually undermining it. The devil's goal is to get you to respond in fear. If you respond in fear, you're operating in the flesh, and he'll defeat you.

If you're ever tempted to be frightened of the enemy, here's a good verse to memorize; 2 Timothy 1:7.

2 Timothy 1:7 For **God hath not given us the spirit of fear**; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Guard Our Minds

Then we need to guard our minds to be careful what we allow into them.

There are a lot of Eastern influences coming into the business world, schools and even churches that are spiritually dangerous.

A Christian lady attended an inner healing seminar in her church and participated in a process called guided imagery. Instead of getting better, she got worse, but eventually was taken through the same steps that we will be going through.

Here is what she wrote. "It was an awesome encounter with the love of our Heavenly Father like I've never experienced before. At the beginning of the session, with the help of the loving, gentle pastor, the Lord revealed a spirit guide that had gained entrance during the inner healing guided imagery. I had learned to look forward to His presence in my prayer life in the form of a

purple light that guided me in many situations. I had often shared with my pastor my color purple. He believed it was from the Lord and didn't recognize it as demonic either. We were both deceived.”

“As a result of this demonic guide, my marriage ended, my son is alienated from me and I am alienated from my church. Now, as a result of an encounter with truth, I am free in Christ.”

It's concerning when such practices enter the church. The Psalmist said, “Search me, O God, and know my heart...see if there be any wicked way in me.”

We want God to search our hearts too. However, we're never told to direct our thoughts inward or passively, but always outward and actively.

We open ourselves up to deception when we put our minds into neutral. That's what other religions do. For example, Maharishi Yogi, a Hindu, says “the mind is like a snake, you have to get it out of the way so that you can perceive truth directly.”

We never want to deny any supernatural work of God in our lives, but He does not bypass our minds, He works through them.

Turn on the Light

Some people are concerned to know whether the thoughts in their mind are coming from the enemy or not. That's the wrong question. The real issue is not where the thought came from, but whether it's true. We're told to take every thought captive in 2 Corinthians 10:5. I don't care if it's coming from my memory, the TV, the Internet, or a deceiving spirit, if it's not true, then I'm not believing it.

One lady was consistently rebuking thoughts in her mind. I mean constantly, “I rebuke that thought in Jesus’ name.” It's good that she was aware of the reality of the spiritual world, but do we need to keep checking our thoughts and rebuking the enemy every 5 minutes to see if he's put a thought into our minds? No.

If you're in a dark room and you want to see, what do you do? Do you try and shoot the darkness away? No, you turn on the light. Don't focus on the enemy, focus on the truth.

Do you know how bank clerks are trained to recognize forged currency? By studying forged notes? No. By studying the real thing. They get to know what real currency looks like, so they're able to spot fake ones when they come through. In the same way, our defense against deception is to know the truth.

Satan's lies can't withstand the truth any more than night can withstand the rising sun. It's a truth encounter, not a power encounter, so let's not focus on the enemy. Instead, as Paul instructs:

Philippians 4:8 Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things *are* honest, whatsoever things *are* just, whatsoever things *are* pure, whatsoever things *are* lovely, whatsoever things *are* of good report; if *there be* any virtue, and if *there be* any praise, think on these things.

Witness:

How do you think Satan works in the lives of your non-Christian friends? What might you be able to do about this?

In the Coming Week:

Meditate on the following verses: Ephesians 1:3-14, Ephesians 2:6-10, Colossians 2:13-15.

Session 7, Part A: Handling Emotions Well

God is Described in Emotional Language

This session marks the start of the third section of the course, where we're going to find out how we can break the hold that the past has on us.

In this session, we're going to consider the whole question of our emotions. Did you know that the Bible describes God using emotional language?

We know that God loved us while we were yet sinners. We know He loves us “much more” now that we belong to Him. We are also told that it's possible to grieve the Holy Spirit, in Ephesians 4.

Jesus wept at the grave of Lazarus (John 11). And he wept again when he looked at the city of Jerusalem, (Luke 19).

We Cannot Directly Control How We Feel

As we saw in the first session, we're made in God's image, so we too have an emotional nature.

We can't simply turn our emotions on and off with a remote control, like we do our TV. Controlling emotions isn't like our ability to walk or wave our hand, where we just make a conscious decision to do it. They (emotions) are more like the way our heart beats or our immune system functions. It just happens.

If you want to check that out, try this simple test. Think of someone you just don't like. And decide that from now on you're going to like them. Is it working? No, you just can't do it.

The good news is that God doesn't ask us to like people, He commands us to love them. Love, in this case, is not an emotion it's a choice that we make. If we make that conscious choice to love them, we may find that we'll eventually come to like them too.

And right there, you have a key principle concerning our emotions. Although you can't control them directly, you can change them over time as you make a conscious choice to change what you can control. And you can control what you choose to believe.

Negative Emotions - Our Red Warning Light

Your emotions are to your soul what your ability to feel pain is to your body.

Suppose someone had the power to take away the sensation of pain and offered it to you as a gift. Would you receive it? It would be tempting, wouldn't it, especially if you were in chronic pain. But it would be dangerous.

If you go to the dentist for a filling and have an anesthetic, you will usually be told not to eat anything for a while afterward. You may think this is so you don't damage the filling. In fact, it's not so much to protect the filling, as it is to protect the soft tissue in your mouth, such as your tongue and your cheeks. Eating with a numb mouth is dangerous. You are likely to mangle your tongue and cheeks as you chew because you can't feel a thing.

You see, God gave us the ability to feel physical pain for our own protection. If you had no ability to feel physical pain, you'd be a hopeless mass of scars within a matter of weeks.

Negative emotions perform the same function, but for your soul. Wouldn't it be great if you never felt depressed or anxious or angry? No, it wouldn't.

You can think of negative emotions as being like that red warning light that comes on occasionally in your car. The light is there to alert you to a potentially serious problem in the engine.

Our natural reaction when a painful emotion appears can be to ignore it. But that's like taking a piece of tape to cover the warning light. "No problem, I can't see the light anymore."

Consciously ignoring our feelings or choosing not to deal with them is unhealthy. It's like trying to bury a live mole. It will eventually tunnel its way to the surface, usually in some other unhealthy way, maybe in the form of an illness.

Another way of dealing with the red light is to pick up a hammer and smash it. In other words, we simply explode in an outburst of anger.

"That's better. I just had to get that off my chest." But it can be devastating for your spouse, children, or whoever else is within the perimeter of the explosion.

The most suitable response when that red light comes on, of course, is to stop and take a good look at the engine to see what the problem is. And that's the best way to handle negative emotions too. Their function is to alert you to a problem with what you believe.

If what you believe does not reflect what is actually true, then what you feel will not reflect reality.

Suppose your company is downsizing and people are being laid off. On Monday morning you get a message from your boss. He wants to see you at 10:30 AM on Friday morning. Maybe your first reaction is anger. "I've been here 20 years, they can't fire me." Then anxiety. "Yes, they can, those no goods. How am I going to pay the bills?" By Thursday you have convinced yourself you're going to lose your job and there's nothing you can do about it, so you're depressed. You decide to resign but your wife talks you out of it. So on Friday morning, you're an emotional mess; haven't slept a wink. You knock on the boss's door, and you hear your boss

say. "Congratulations, you're being made vice president." How do you feel now? Well, probably relieved.

All week you've been going through a range of emotions, but none of them were based on reality. What you believed wasn't actually true.

Take a look at a biblical example. It's in Lamentations 3:1-11. Jeremiah is in complete despair because he believes that God is the cause of all of his problems.

Lamentations 3:1 **I am the man that hath seen affliction** by the rod of his wrath.² He hath led me, and **brought me into darkness**, but not *into* light.³ Surely **against me is he turned**; he turneth his hand *against me* all the day.⁴ My flesh and my skin hath **he made old**; he hath **broken my bones**.⁵ He hath builded against me, and **compassed me with gall and travail**.⁶ He hath set me in **dark places**, as *they that be* dead of old.⁷ He hath **hedged me about**, that I cannot get out: he hath made my chain heavy.⁸ Also when I cry and shout, **he shutteth out my prayer**.⁹ He hath **inclosed my ways** with hewn stone, he hath made my paths crooked.¹⁰ He *was* unto me **as a bear** lying in wait, *and as a lion* in secret places.¹¹ He hath turned aside my ways, and **pulled me in pieces**: he hath **made me desolate**.

Can you relate to how Jeremiah was feeling?

What was the problem? Simply that what Jeremiah believed about God wasn't actually true. God hadn't walled him in. God wasn't like a wild animal who had mangled him. If your hope was in God, and this was your belief about what he was like, you'd be depressed too.

Thankfully, Jeremiah doesn't leave it there. He thinks more about it. It's like he gets up and goes for a walk. And he has a change in perspective. The passage continues.

Lamentations 3:20 My soul hath *them* still in remembrance, and is **humbled in me**.²¹ This I recall to my mind, therefore **have I hope**.²² *It is of the LORD'S mercies* that we are not consumed, because **his compassions** fail not.²³ *They are* new every morning: **great is thy faithfulness**.²⁴ The LORD *is* my portion, saith my soul; therefore **will I hope in him**.

What changed in Jeremiah's circumstances? Absolutely nothing. Did God change? No. The only thing that changed was in his mind how he looked at his circumstances. Everything changed internally for him when he said in essence. "Come on Jeremiah, get a grip. What's really true here?" Then he wrote that when he called to mind, he had hope because God's faithfulness was great. And he had to talk truth to himself.

Sometimes we have to do the same. It is at these times that we have to hold on to truth for dear life. Maybe it is the truth that our emotional pain was a normal and healthy result of

accumulated loss, but no matter the cause, the truth is that God is not punishing us or rejecting us. It may be that we are dealing with the consequences of other people's choices. But again, what Satan meant to use to destroy us, God means to use to strengthen us.

Session 7, Part B: Negative Emotions Can Help Us

Things like hormones or even the weather can play a part in producing negative emotions, but generally speaking they are a gift from God to help us uncover something we believe that isn't actually true. Let's consider two areas where they do that.

1. Faulty Life-Goals

Firstly, negative emotions can help us uncover faulty life-goals. We've seen how God created us to be accepted, significant and secure.

Every day as we grew up, we saw our lives stretching out ahead of us, and whether we realized it or not, we got up and we worked toward whatever we thought would give us those things. Consciously or unconsciously, we developed a set of life-goals. But are those life-goals the same as the goals God has for us? Negative emotions can help us identify those that are not.

Anger Signals a Blocked Life-Goal

If you're finding yourself feeling angry a lot, it's usually because someone or something is blocking a goal you have. I don't know about you, but I have a strange knack of always choosing the wrong queue at the supermarket. No matter how short the queue, a problem develops. If you're in a hurry to get to a meeting, that makes you angry because your goal is being blocked.

Suppose you have consciously or unconsciously developed a life-goal to have a loving, harmonious, happy Christian family. Is that a good thing? Well, who can block that goal? Every person in the family. At the end of the day, you can only do so much to influence how your family turns out, but you can't control every factor. If you have a belief that achieving this goal is what's going to make you significant, you will go to pieces every time your spouse or children fail to live up to your image of family harmony.

A pastor might feel that in order to be significant or approved by God, they have to reach the community for Jesus. That's a great thing to work toward if it's for the right reason but if they're doing it because their sense of worth and success as a pastor is dependent on that happening, they will experience tremendous problems in ministry. Why? Again, because it's dependent on other people acting in a certain way. Who can block that goal? Every person in the community.

And a couple of members of their leadership team. They will get angry and try to manipulate church members into evangelistic efforts and perhaps end up falling out with their church.

Anxiety Signals an Uncertain Life-Goal

It's not just anger that highlights unhealthy life goals. Anxiety does too. Anxiety is signaling that achieving a goal feels uncertain. You are hoping something will happen, but you have no guarantee that it will. You can control some of the factors, but not all of them. For example, if you have come to believe that your sense of security depends on financial success, and that has become a life-goal, you will probably suffer from anxiety. Why? Because you have no guarantee that you can ever get enough money or even if you feel you have enough that it won't be wiped out by a financial crisis.

Depression Signals an Impossible Life-Goal

Sometimes a life-goal that was already uncertain seems to slip even further away, to the point where its fulfillment begins to appear impossible. "It's never going to happen." At that point, anxiety turns to depression.

Of course, the causes of depression are complex and our hormones, and other things going on in our bodies, can play a part. But if there is no overriding physical cause, then depression is usually rooted in a sense of hopelessness or helplessness. But, no child of God is helpless, and no child of God is hopeless, whatever their circumstances.

We will get rid of a great deal of anger, anxiety and depression if we ensure that our life-goals are in line with God's goals for us.

And one thing we can be sure of is that any goal God has for us is one that will not be able to be blocked by other people or by circumstances that we have no right or ability to control. How can we be so sure? We can be sure, because God loves us too much to set up a goal that we couldn't reach.

In our final session, we'll come back and work out what a healthy life-goal for you and me is.

2. Uncovering Lies that Past Experiences Have Taught Us to Believe

The other area where negative emotions can help is in uncovering lies that past experiences have introduced into our belief system. All of us have had traumatic experiences that have scarred us in some way, a frightening experience, loss of a loved one, or some form of abuse.

When you suffered that negative experience, you mentally processed it at the time it happened. It almost certainly caused you to believe some things about God and yourself. "Those bullies told me I was rubbish. I guess I am." "My dad never has time for me, so I'm not important."

If you've suffered some kind of sexual abuse as a child, at the time it happened to you, you probably felt dirty. If you thought God wasn't there for you, then you probably questioned God's love and your salvation.

The beliefs that come, as a result of those traumatic experiences, stay with you and become deeply ingrained strongholds. We'll look at how to demolish them in Session 9, but for now let's just recognize this: We remain in bondage to the past, not because of the traumatic experience itself, but because of the lies it caused us to believe.

Children of God are not primarily products of their past. They are primarily products of Christ's work on the cross and His resurrection. Nobody can change our past but we can choose to walk free of it. That's the whole point of the Gospel.

When Jesus was in the synagogue at Capernaum, He specifically turned to what we now know as Isaiah 61 and said, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears."

Luke 4:17 And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ The Spirit of the Lord *is* upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; **he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,** ¹⁹ To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

And he meant it. Every Christian needs the principles we are teaching, and the wonderful thing is that they work for those with even the deepest hurts.

The following is a quote from one of the presenters.

"I had the privilege of getting to know a lady by the name of Carolyn Bramhall, who for years suffered the worst kind of abuse with satanic rituals thrown in. As part of a team in my church, I worked with Carolyn using discipleship tools, and over 8 months saw her turn from a very needy person who would go from church to church and do unpredictable things into a fruitful disciple."

"Several years ago, she started her own ministry, "Heart For Truth," to equip churches to help others who have suffered similar things, and they regularly see, deeply wounded people, coming into their freedom in the context of local churches. She once went to a conference and met the foremost secular expert on her condition, which is called Dissociative Identity Disorder, and told the story of how she found her healing in Jesus. The expert said. "You know, Carolyn, that you aren't really healed, don't you? People don't get better from this condition. Sometimes the mind just deceives you into believing that you're healed for a period of time. Well, said Carolyn, the deception's been working really well for 10 years now."

Jesus didn't just come to give you a way to cope with the effects of the past. He came to help you resolve those effects completely. It takes time and it's a struggle. But he is with you every step, and he's already given you everything you need.

Session 7, Part C: The Dangers

We saw in the last session how the emotion of anger can give the enemy a foothold in our lives if we don't quickly resolve an offense. Anxiety has similar dangers.

Three Keys to Emotional Health

Let's look at three keys to being emotionally healthy.

I. Know Who You Are in Christ

If you know your true identity in Christ in your heart, not just in your head, you won't go looking for acceptance, significance and security in those faulty life-goals.

And those who have suffered trauma in the past, you can learn to reevaluate your past from the perspective of who you are now in Christ.

The truth is you are a complete, clean, holy child of God with unlimited potential in Him. You might be thinking, but I have done awful things, or awful things were done to me that made me feel dirty. That doesn't change who you are now. You may **feel** dirty, but you're not actually dirty because you're a new creation in Christ. As you understand and believe this truth, and forgive from your heart those who have hurt you, you can walk in your freedom in Christ.

What once might have seemed like a huge mountain that was impossible to move, can become something that actually makes you stronger as you climb and conquer it in Jesus.

II. Be Honest

The second thing we can do to guarantee that we're emotionally healthy is to be honest about how we feel, rather than try to bury our feelings or thoughtlessly express them. And that starts with being honest with God.

Let me read you a prayer from David, who was described as a man after God's heart. Maybe you can use this passage as a model when you pray for people.

Psalm 109:6 Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.
⁷ When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin. ⁸ Let his days be few; *and* let another take his office. ⁹ Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow. ¹⁰ Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek *their bread* also out of their desolate places. ¹¹ Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour. ¹² Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. ¹³ Let his posterity be cut off; *and* in the generation following let their name be blotted out. ¹⁴ Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out. ¹⁵ Let

them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

What on earth is that doing in the Bible? Well, have you ever felt like that? Have you ever prayed like that? Would it be right to pray like that? Well, David prayed like that, and God inspired him to write it down.

Does God already know you feel that way? Of course, He does. God knows the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. So, the question is, if God already knows that, why can't we be honest with him? Would He still love us, if we were totally honest with him about how we feel? Absolutely.

The problem with this psalm is that it sounds like it's okay to ask God to wipe someone out. But finish the psalm. Once David has his emotional eruption, after he's been honest with God about how he was really feeling, he returns to praising God.

You can be completely honest with God. He is your closest friend. As a matter of fact, you can't be right with God without first being real with him.

III. Commit to Believing the Truth

The third thing we need to do to guarantee that we're emotionally healthy is to embrace the truth. We've seen that behind those wrong life-goals are lies. And those traumatic experiences that we had continue to affect us because they made us believe lies. Our freedom comes from knowing the truth.

“My parents were really into sports and they pushed us to be the best we could be when we played. But when they pushed us, it didn't come out very affirming, but actually very critical. That led me to believe that God was harsh, critical, and distant.”

None of us have had perfect fathers, and we often have come to believe lies about our Heavenly Father because of our experience with our earthly fathers.

To finish this session, we have another list of biblical truths. It's the truth about our Heavenly Father. Let's say these words together to our amazing and loving God to remind ourselves what is really true.

- I renounce the lie that you, God, are distant and uninterested in me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, God, are always personally present with me. You give me hope and a future.

- I renounce the lie that you, God, are insensitive, and don't know me or care for me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, God, are kind and compassionate and know every single thing about me.

- I renounce the lie that you, God, are stern and have placed unrealistic expectations on me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, God, have accepted me unconditionally.

- I renounce the lie that you, God, are passive and cold toward me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, God, are warm and affectionate toward me.

- I renounce the lie that you, God, are absent or too busy for me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, God, are always present and eager to be with me, and enable me to be all that you created me to be.

- I renounce the lie that you, God, are impatient or angry with me, or have rejected me.

I choose to believe the truth, that you, God, are patient and that you will never reject me.

- I renounce the lie that you, God, have been mean, cruel or abusive to me.

I choose to believe the truth that Satan is mean, cruel and abusive, but you, Father, are loving, gentle and protective.

- I renounce the lie that you, God, are denying me the pleasures of life.

I choose to believe the truth that you, God are the author of life and will lead me into love, joy and peace.

- I renounce the lie that you, God, are trying to control and manipulate me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, God, set me free and gave me the freedom to make choices and grow in your grace.

- I renounce the lie that you, God, have condemned me and no longer forgive me?

I choose to believe the truth that you, God, have forgiven all my sins and will never use them against me in the future.

- I renounce the lie that you, God, reject me when I fail to live a perfect or sinless life.

I choose to believe the truth that you, God, are patient toward me and that it is the Adversary who seeks to condemn me when I fail.

If you realize that you have had a faulty understanding of God, reading this list out loud every day for six weeks or so can dramatically help heal your emotional pain.

Witness

If you're feeling angry, anxious or depressed, do you think it would be better not to let that show to the not-yet Christians around you? Why or why not?

Nothing in your character is so difficult that God cannot make something good out of it.

Session 8, Part A: Forgiving From the Heart

Why Forgive?

What, in your opinion, gives Satan the greatest opportunity to defeat Christians? Occult activity, sexual immorality, cults and sects?

It may surprise you, but in our experience, the biggest issue is an unwillingness to forgive. Nothing gives Satan greater opportunity to stop a saint from growing, than bitterness and division.

A staggering number of Christians are walking around with unforgiveness. And it's usually because we haven't understood what forgiveness is, why we should do it, and how to do it.

Let's remember what Paul says in 2 Corinthians 2:10-11.

2 Corinthians 2:10 To whom ye forgive any thing, I *forgive* also: for if I forgave any thing, to whom I forgave *it*, for your sakes *forgave I it* in the person of Christ; ¹¹ Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.

What is the worst thing anybody ever did to you? Have you got it in your mind? Here's the big question: Why should you forgive them? That's the issue we're addressing today.

It is Required by God

The first reason is simply because God tells us to.

Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, **forgiving one another**, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Your relationship with God is tied to your relationship with other people. You really cannot have a righteous relationship with God in isolation from your relationships with other people.

1 John 4:20 If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?

Pretty sure this works the same in the Dispensation of Grace.

God wants us to learn to relate to others on the same basis that He relates to us.

It is Essential for our Freedom

God doesn't want his children to languish in bitterness and be bound to the past.

The Extent of Our Own Debt

In order to forgive this freely, we need to understand first of all the extent of our own debt to God. How much have you been forgiven? Little or much?

Colossians 3:13 Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: **even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye.**

No matter how well we may think we've done, the truth is, our best is like filthy rags before God. Without Christ, we all stand condemned. We've all been forgiven, though, we may not realize it. But if we do realize it, we'll find that our capacity for loving others will increase.

Mercy is Required

That is what God has done for us. Let's define some important terms, justice, mercy and grace.

Justice is rightness or fairness. In other words, it is giving people what they deserve. God is perfectly just; it's part of His character. If He gave us what we deserve, we would all get the Lake of Fire.

Thankfully, God is also merciful and He found a way to forgive and accept us without compromising justice. The punishment we deserved fell, at an unimaginable cost, on Christ.

Mercy is not giving people what they deserve. We are told to be merciful to others as God has been merciful to us. But our generous God goes even further than that. He didn't just take our punishment on himself so that we could go free. He actually showers us with good gifts, spiritual blessings and mercies that we don't deserve.

Grace is giving people what they do not deserve. God set the standard by his own example. So, he expects us to relate to other people in exactly the same way. We are not to give people the retribution they deserve. In fact, we are to give them the forgiveness and blessings they don't deserve.

It all begins with the relationship that God has established with us.

Session 8, Part B: Forgiving From the Heart

Forgiving From the Heart

To forgive someone from the heart means we have to be emotionally honest with God and ourselves and face the hurt and pain we feel.

In the Steps to Transformation, we use a simple but effective formula. You go to God and choose to be emotionally honest with him by saying: Lord, I choose to forgive (the person) for (name what they did or failed to do) because it made me feel (express the hurt or pain you felt).

We encourage people to stay with this process until every hurt that is uncovered has been put on the table. We have to let God lead us to the emotional core where healing is going to take place.

I'm not saying that this is easy or that it's not painful, but it's not a meaningless exercise. We do this in order to completely resolve the pain that we have been carrying around. We cannot move on from the past until we choose to forgive.

One of the key points we need to understand when it comes to forgiveness is that the real issue is not so much between us and the other person, but between us and God, because he is the one who commands us to forgive. We don't even have to go to the other person in order to forgive them. In fact, the process of forgiveness doesn't involve them at all. It is between us and God alone.

After you have forgiven them, you may or may not be reconciled to the other person. But that doesn't depend just on you. Whether you are reconciled or not, you have removed the enemy's ability to hold you back.

We Forgive to Stop the Pain

When you forgive, it is for your sake. You might be thinking, "But you don't know how much they hurt me." But can't you see that they're still hurting you? How do you stop the pain? By forgiving.

If you went fishing and somebody accidentally hooked your cheek, when they cast their line, what would you do to get rid of the pain? Would you leave the hook in your cheek and go around shouting, "Look what they did to me. This hook is in my cheek and it hurts. I will never forgive them." That night you go to sleep with the hook in your cheek and you get up the next morning and it is worse. You go out and tell others the same story, but you leave the hook in your cheek. Would you do that? No, you wouldn't. You'd take the hook out of your cheek to relieve the pain. By choosing not to forgive someone for what they did, we stay hooked to the

pain of what they did. We think that by forgiving someone, we let him or her off the hook. But if we don't forgive, we're the ones with the hook in us.

Holding on to bitterness and unforgiveness is like swallowing poison and hoping the other person will die.

Session 8, Part C: Forgiving From the Heart

What Forgiveness Is and What It Isn't

You still have in your mind the worst thing that anyone ever did to you. Let's get to the crux of the matter.

A major reason that people don't forgive is because they don't understand what forgiveness is and what it isn't.

Not Forgetting

Forgiveness is not forgetting. You cannot get rid of a hurt simply by trying to forget it.

You might say, well, doesn't God forget our sins? God is all-knowing and He couldn't forget if He wanted to. When God says I will remember their sins no more (Jeremiah 31), what he is saying is that he won't take the past and use it against them. He will put it away from him, as far as the east is from the west.

If a husband says to a wife, I've forgiven you, but remember on January 10, 2013, you did this? Do you know what he's actually saying? He's saying, "I haven't forgiven you. I'm still taking the past and using it against you." So, part of the commitment to forgive is about deciding not to bring up the past and use it against them ever again.

Not Tolerating Sin

Forgiveness does not mean that we tolerate the sin committed against us. Does God forgive? He does. Does he tolerate sin? No, He can't.

This is most difficult when someone is in a situation where they're being sinned against continually, for example a wife who is being physically abused by her husband. In the past, some churches advised abused wives, in effect, to go home and be submissive. But what if that man beat up another woman in the church? Would they tolerate that? Was it all right to beat up his own wife? It's not only wrong, it's doubly wrong, because she's not just getting beaten up, she's getting beaten up by the one who is there by God's instruction to provide for her and protect her. She not only is being abused, she has lost her protector.

The Bible certainly tells wives to be submissive, but that's not all it says. In Romans 13:1-7, we're instructed to submit to the governing authorities whom God has placed over us. They have put laws in place to protect that wife. It's perfectly possible to forgive someone yet still decide to turn them over to the authorities to let the law take its course. The fact is that kind of abuse tends to run in a cycle that simply goes on and on until someone puts a stop to it.

You have every right to put a stop to sin by laying down Biblical guidelines or by removing yourself from a particular situation. That is not at all inconsistent with forgiveness.

“A lady rang our office and told me that her Christian husband kept having affairs. She continually forgave him and took him back, but he kept having affairs. I advised her to forgive him, but then draw a line in the sand and say that if he did it one more time, he must leave. That is not inconsistent with forgiving him. To be honest, you feel a little nervous when you give that kind of advice. Well, it worked. I met them again when they came on a marriage course we were running. He thanked me and told me that the line in the sand was the wake up call he needed to get his act together and sort his life out.” If you don't put an end to a cycle of abuse, it will just continue.

Not Seeking Revenge

The main difficulty we have with forgiveness is that we remember that nasty thing that was done to us and understandably, we want revenge; we want justice.

We somehow think that forgiving means we just have to sweep it under the carpet and say it didn't matter, but it did matter very much.

Listen carefully to what God says about this.

Romans 12:19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but *rather* give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance *is* mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

In no way is God asking you to sweep what was done under the carpet as if it didn't matter. In fact, it's quite the opposite.

He promises that if you hand the matter over to him, he will ensure that it is not swept under the carpet when you forgive. Although you're letting the person off your hook, you're not letting them off God's hook.

“I will repay.” When you choose to forgive, you are taking a step of faith to trust God to be the righteous judge who will weigh what was done on the scales of justice and will demand that the scales balance.

Nothing will be swept under the carpet. God really will demand full payment for everything done against you. Everyone who sinned against you will have to stand before God and explain it. Either it will be paid for by the blood of Christ, if the person is a Christian, or they will have to face the judgment of God, if they are not. “I will repay” means God will settle every account someday.

You're choosing to take a step of faith and trust God with what happened; and to hand all of that pain and those demands for justice and revenge over to him, safe in the knowledge that he will ensure that justice is done. In the meantime, you can walk free of it.

Resolving to Live with the Consequences of Another's Sin

Part of forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of someone else's sin. You may say, "Well, that's not fair." No, it's not. But you will have to do it anyway. Everybody is living with the consequences of somebody else's sin. We are all living with the consequences of Adam's sin, for example.

The only real choice we have is rather to do that in the bondage of bitterness, or in the freedom of forgiveness.

Conclusion

Forgiveness is to set a captive free and then realize you were the captive. This is an issue between you and God. He commands you to forgive because He loves you. He knows that bitterness will defile you and others, and cause you to miss out on the abundant life that Jesus came to give you, and you will not be a fruitful disciple.

You may agonize about whether what they did was actually wrong, or you might think of reasons to justify what they did. Don't do any of that. The issue of forgiveness is not primarily about who was right and who was wrong. If you felt offended, you need to forgive. Regardless of any other circumstance, it's about clearing rubbish out of your life and walking away from it. It's for your sake, and in some ways has little to do with the person who hurt you.

Let's conclude by talking to God about forgiving those who have offended us.

"Father I commit myself to forgiving all those who come to my mind."

"I want to be free in Christ, and I want to be a fruitful disciple. I don't want the enemy to have any hold on me or give him an opening to my soul. So, I am resolving to forgive all those who have hurt me, just as you have freely forgiven me. In the name of Jesus who died, that I might be forgiven. Amen."

Witness

How might this question of forgiveness challenge someone who is not yet a Christian? Are there any ways you can demonstrate forgiveness to someone who does not yet know God?

In the Coming Week

Ask the Spirit to prepare your heart by leading you into truth and starting to reveal to you the areas you'll need to bring into the light when you go through *the Steps to Transformation*.

Steps to Forgiveness

1. Meditate and Think and Talk to God about the people you need to forgive.

Make a list of everyone that comes to your mind. Write the names on the separate piece of paper. Even if you think there is no one, go through the process and talk to your God about this, just the same. The two most overlooked names are: Yourself and God.

Forgiving yourself: Only God can forgive your sins. But for many people, especially perfectionist, the hardest person to forgive is themselves for letting themselves down. You are, in effect, accepting God's forgiveness and refusing to listen to the devil's accusations. Some people are really helped by being able to say, "I forgive myself for (list everything you hold against yourself) and I let myself off my own hook."

Forgiving God: Forgiving God is harder to understand because God has done nothing wrong. He has always acted in your best interest. But because you have not understood God's larger plan, or because you blame God for something that other people or the devil have done, you may have felt that God has let you down.

Many people feel disappointed with God, even angry with him because he didn't answer their prayer. He didn't seem to be there for them. They cried out for help and nothing came. Usually they're embarrassed to admit it, but God knows anyway, and he's big enough to handle it.

2. Acknowledge the hurt and the hate.

We're instructed to forgive from the heart. That's much more than simply saying I forgive and then pretending we've dealt with it. To forgive from the heart, we need to face the hurt and the hate. People try to suppress their emotional pain, but it's trying to surface so that we can let it go.

3. Understand the significance of the cross.

The cross is what makes forgiveness legally and morally right. Jesus has already taken upon himself your sins and the sins of the person who has hurt you. He died once for all. When your heart says it isn't fair, remember that the justice is in the cross.

4. Decide that you will bear the burden of each person's sin.

You need to make a choice not to use the information you have against that person in the future. That doesn't mean you can never testify in a court of law, however you do it, not in the bitterness of unforgiveness, but having first forgiven from your heart.

5. Decide to forgive.

Forgiveness is a crisis of the will. If you wait until you feel like doing it, you probably never will. You may feel like you can't do it, but would God really ask you to do something that you couldn't do? When he says that you can then is that true or not? The reality is that you have a choice to make. Are you going to remain in bitterness, hooked to the past, giving the enemy an entrance into your mind; or are you going to get rid of it once and for all?

You choose to forgive, and in making that choice, you are agreeing to live with the consequences of the sin committed against you. You're choosing to let God be the avenger and trust him to bring justice in the end. You choose to take it to the cross and leave it there.

There is nobody out there keeping you from being the person that God created you to be. The only one that can do that is you. You need to forgive, be merciful and love as Christ has loved you. Let that person go. Get on with your life and walk away free, in Christ.

6. Take your list to God.

To forgive from your heart, say for example, "Lord, I choose to forgive my father" and then say specifically what you are forgiving him for. Stay with the same person until you have told God every pain and hurt that has surfaced and be as specific as you can. It's then helpful to take it a step further and say how it made you feel. "I choose to forgive my father for leaving us because it made me feel abandoned."

Tears will often come at this point, but this is not about trying to get someone to cry. It's making sure that it's as thorough as possible. One lady said, "I can't forgive my mother. I hate her." Having recognized her real feelings of hatred, now, for probably the first time, she could forgive. If she didn't admit that she hated her mother, she wouldn't be able to forgive.

Pray as follows for each person you need to forgive. Dear Heavenly Father. I choose to forgive (name of the person) for (what they did or failed to do) because it made me feel (share the painful feelings, for example, rejected, dirty, worthless, inferior).

Take careful note of what is said after the statement, "Because it made me feel..." Usually the same word, for example, abandoned, stupid, dirty, is repeated several times. That may well reveal a stronghold that your past experiences have led you to believe. You can tear down these strongholds by saying, for example, I renounce the lie that I am stupid. I announce the truth that I have the mind of Christ. I renounce the lie that I am abandoned. I announce the truth that God has promised to be with me always.

Session 9 of the *Sonship Transformation* course teaches a specific strategy, "Stronghold Busting," which will enable you to do this effectively.

7. Destroy the list.

You are now free from those people and those events in the past.

8. Do not expect that forgiving others will result in changes in them.

Forgiving others is primarily about you and your relationship with God. Pray for those you have forgiven that they too may find the freedom of forgiveness.

9. Try to understand the people you have forgiven.

You may find it helpful to understand some of what the other person was going through, but don't go so far as to rationalize away the sin. This is not about saying it didn't matter, because it did.

10. Expect positive results of forgiveness in you.

Forgiveness is not about feeling good, it is about being free. However, good feelings will follow eventually. You will need to concentrate on renewing your mind so that negative ways of thinking are replaced by the truth.

11. Thank God for what you have learned and the maturity gained.

You're now free to move on and grow as a Christian.

12. Accept your part of the blame for the offenses you have suffered.

Confess your part in any sin and know that you are forgiven. If you realize that someone has something against you, go to them and be reconciled. When you do that, be careful to simply confess your own wrongdoing rather than bringing up anything they did.

THE STEPS TO TRANSFORMATION WORKBOOK



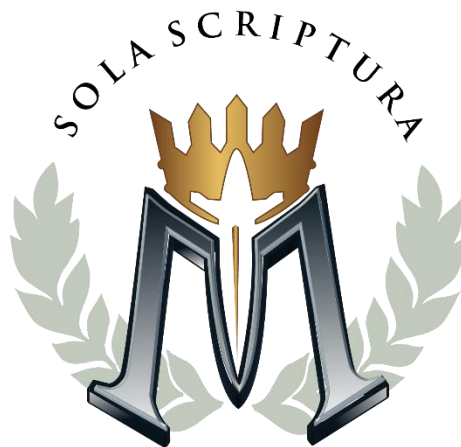
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THE STEPS TO TRANSFORMATION



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The Steps to Transformation

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THE STEPS TO TRANSFORMATION

Introduction to the Session

Preparing for Going through *The Steps*

Find a quiet place where you can talk out loud without being overheard. Prepare to spend some time without being interrupted. Do not play music or the TV or anything else that serves as a mental distraction. You will need quiet. Inform your family of what you are doing and ask for their cooperation. Silence your phone.

You are going to need a pencil or pen to fill in some things on your workbook. You won't need to take notes, but there are some things you will need to mark. You will see as we go through *The Steps*.

Satan's Power Has Been Broken

When Christ rose from the dead, He said:

Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, **All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.**

Because Christ now has the power, He is appropriately seated at the right hand of God, exalted in power above all other powers.

Ephesians 1:19 And what *is* the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power,²⁰ Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and **set *him* at his own right hand in the heavenly places,**²¹ **Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named,** not only in this world, but also in that which is to come:

When Christ ascended up on high, He spoiled (took their possessions) Satan's realm, taking it captive.

Ephesians 4:8 Wherefore he saith, **When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive,** and gave gifts unto men.

Colossians 2:15 *And* having **spoiled principalities and powers,** he made a shew of them openly, **triumphing over them** in it.

Christ has triumphed over Satan's realm. It is an accomplished fact. And Satan has no power over us, except what we give him. It is all a bluff on his part.

Who Is The Counselor

The first thing I want to make clear is that in presenting *The Steps to Transformation*, I am not being a counselor. Most of you will be going through *The Steps* with just you and God. But even if I was

meeting with you, it would only be in the role of being an encourager or facilitator. I do not have the ability to set people free and transform them, only God can do that.

The Lord Himself will be the Counselor as we go through *The Steps*. God is the only One who can free us from the bondage that comes from living in this world and the effects of Satan's devices.

The Steps to Transformation are dependent upon God's word, but the results are dependent upon those who are going through *The Steps*. But don't let that scare you; the work you will do, as you go through *The Steps*, will be based on things Christ has already done. This is really not about things for you to do, but truths for you to believe.

The Term "Satan"

As we talk about *The Steps*, we will use the term "Satan" in a over-arching sense. Since Satan can only be in one place at a time, when you encounter opposition, it is likely not Satan himself, but it comes from some entity that is connected to him. It may be a "principality" or "power," or some other part of his realm, but for simplicity's sake, we will refer to it all as "Satan."

Preparing For Opposition

It may be that, while going through *The Steps* with your heavenly Father, certain thoughts may come into your mind; thoughts, planted by Satan, to stop you or distract you from continuing through *The Steps*.

Since you will be going through *The Steps* on your own, let me warn you beforehand about this opposition, and what to do about it. (By the way, this is the advantage of having an encourager go through *The Steps* with you, as they can help you identify and overcome this opposition.)

What kind of thoughts are we talking about?

Let's say you are working through one of *The Steps* and this thought comes into your mind; "This isn't going to work for me."

That is a common thought that comes from Satan. It is a lie to get you to stop working through *The Steps*.

So, what should you do about it? You should reveal that thought **out loud** to your heavenly Father, and renounce it, as the lie that it is. The thought that this will not work for you is a lie, a bluff to intimidate you into stopping. See it for what it is and renounce it out loud.

"Father, Satan has put a lying thought into my mind saying that this will not work for me. He is trying to make me quit going through *The Steps*. I renounce his lie."

"I affirm, according to Matthew 28:18, that Satan's power was broken by Christ upon His resurrection and all power now belongs to Christ."

“I affirm, according to Ephesians 4:8 and Colossians 2:15, that when Jesus ascended up on high, He completely overcame Satan and all of his realm. Satan has no power over me, and he cannot prevent your truth from setting me free. Therefore, I will continue through *The Steps* no matter what thoughts Satan uses against me, and I will be set free.”

Satan cannot stop God’s truth from setting you free. He cannot stand in front of you and make you stop. All he can do is yell from the sidelines to distract you or deceive you into stopping.

Here is the next common thought; suppose you are going through one of the steps, and you become afraid. Here is the thought:

“This is scaring me, so I need to stop, I’m afraid something bad will happen.”

This is just a thought, nothing more. And guess where this is coming from; it is coming from Satan. This is another tactic to make you stop. Because this thought is connected with an emotion; fear, it *feels* real, but the reality is, nothing bad will happen. There is no monster in the room that’s going to attack you, it is only a thought from Satan. Nothing bad will happen by gaining your freedom in Christ.

Again, see this for what it is and renounce it out loud to your heavenly Father.

It is not important for you to list every single thought that may come into your mind. What is important is that you recognize that every thought that tells you to stop, is a lie from Satan. Every feeling which tells you stop is based on a lie, which means what you are feeling, is not rooted in reality. That feeling will go away as soon as you complete *The Steps*. These are all bluffs on Satan’s part. This is all he has – there is nothing more he can do. He is a paper tiger now that Christ has broken his power.

Distractions

Rarely, for a few who were much more deeply entrenched than most, they experienced something physical, such as a headache or nausea. Amazingly, as they continued through *The Steps*, the headache or nausea went away immediately upon their completion. Do not interpret the headache as a sign to stop; it is a distraction.

The Process

Going through *The Steps* is a beginning, not an end. In addition to going through *The Steps*, you will learn two more very important skills: 1) how to pull down strongholds, according to 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, and 2) how to find the way of escape when you are tempted to sin, according to 1 Corinthians 10:13.

As for *The Steps* themselves, it would be a wise thing to take time once a year and go through *The Steps* on your own. Pulling down strongholds is something that goes on all through the year as you become aware of them.

The Steps to Transformation **The Whole Gospel**

God created Adam and Eve in his image and in his likeness. They were both physically and spiritually alive. Being spiritually alive meant that their souls were in union with God. Living in a dependent relationship with their Heavenly Father, they were to rule over the birds of the sky, the beasts of the field, and the fish of the sea. They were accepted, secure and significant.

However, acting independently of God, they chose to disobey him, and their choice to sin separated them from God. They immediately felt fearful, anxious, depressed and insecure. Because Eve was deceived by Satan; and because Adam sinned, all their descendants were born physically alive but spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1).

Since all have sinned (Romans 3:23), those who remain separated from God will struggle with personal and spiritual conflicts. Satan became the rebel holder of authority and the “god of this world” (2 Corinthians 4:4). Jesus referred to him as “the prince of this world” (John 12:31).

Jesus came to undo the works of Satan and take upon himself the sins of the world. By dying for our sins, Jesus removed the barrier that existed between God and those he created in His image. The resurrection of Christ brought new life to those who put their trust in Him.

The spirit of everyone who trusts in Jesus’ redemptive work on the cross is again in union with God, and that is most often communicated in the New Testament with the prepositional phrases “in Christ” or “in Him.” The Apostle Paul explained that anyone who is in Christ is a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17).

If you are not sure about your salvation, but you would like to be, let me show you what you need to know in order to be saved.

1. Everyone is a sinner

Romans 3:23 For **all have sinned**, and come short of the glory of God;

No one is perfect. And because we are not perfect, we cannot save ourselves. The only way for a man to save himself is to live a perfect life in thought, word, and deed, for his entire life; and the Bible declares that no man can do that. Therefore, no amount of effort on your part can save you, and neither can any religious activity, no matter how well-intentioned it may be.

2. God is perfectly just, therefore, He must punish sin

God is perfectly righteous, which means that He cannot just overlook sin. If God was unjust, He would not be God.

3. God made a way for us to be saved

Since God knows that no man can save himself, God made a way for us to be saved without any works on our part. God has done all the work for us, through His Son.

How did God do this? God placed the sins of the whole world upon His Son while He was on the cross. The punishment for sins was then laid on Jesus, as He took our place. When Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the whole world, it was not just the sins which had been committed up to that day, but every sin that would ever be committed; all sins past, present and future.

4. You can be saved by trusting what Jesus did for you.

Ephesians 2:8 For **by grace are ye saved through faith**; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: ⁹ Not of works, lest any man should boast.

We are saved by faith, that is, by what we choose to believe or trust in. When we put our faith in Jesus and His death on the Cross, it means that we believe that Jesus died as our substitute and that God the Father laid the punishment for our sins on His Son.

And that is how anyone is saved; by believing on Jesus. Believing on Jesus does not mean that you believe that Jesus really existed here on this earth, or even that He died on the cross, even the devil believes that. Believing on Jesus means that you are trusting what Jesus did on the cross as sufficient to pay the price for your sins. It means that you are trusting in what Jesus did for your salvation.

What I have just told you, the bible calls “the gospel of Christ.” And if you believe that gospel is true, and you put your trust in Jesus’ death on the cross, God will save you the moment you put your faith in His Son.

If you have never received Jesus as your Savior, or, if you are not sure where you would spend eternity if you were to die today, you can be saved right now. All you need to do is 1) know what Jesus did on the cross (He died to pay for your sins) and 2) trust His death as sufficient to satisfy God’s justice against your sins. To do that is what it means to trust Jesus as your Savior.

You can choose to trust Jesus as your Savior right now, this very moment. Just pause for a moment, think about what God was doing when He sent His Son into the world to die on the cross, and decide to trust Jesus alone for your salvation.

What Salvation is Not

Salvation is not praying a prayer. You do not need to pray a prayer to trust Jesus, God knows if you are deciding to trust His Son or not.

You do not need to make promises to God about what kind of person you will be in the future, God isn’t making deals. He is offering you salvation as a free gift – no strings attached.

You are not asking Jesus to come into your heart, or your life. You are trusting what Jesus did on the cross.

And you make that decision as easily as you can decide to do anything. There is nothing for you to do but believe. Will you do that right now? If you are reluctant, ask yourself why you would reject God's free gift of salvation.

If you have already trusted Christ as Savior, then that is wonderful. If you just now trusted Christ, then let someone know, it will make their day. Let us know; we would be thrilled to hear about it.

Once you are saved, you might want to express your gratitude to God for your salvation.

If you do, you can pray your own prayer of thanks, or you can look at the following prayer as a template:

“Heavenly Father, thank you for sending your Son to die on the cross for me. I have put my trust in Jesus alone for my salvation. I know Jesus took my place and was punished for my sins, so that I could be forgiven, and now I am forgiven. I am now your (son/daughter). Thank you for giving me eternal life in your Son. Amen.”

Assurance of Salvation

If you have, at any time in your life, trusted Jesus Christ as your all-sufficient Savior, then you became, at that moment, a child of God and nothing can ever separate you from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35).

The moment you trusted in Jesus, God the Father sent His Holy Spirit to take up residence in you, in your human spirit. Many other things took place when you trusted in Jesus's death on the cross; important things which you will need to learn so you can live out of them.

For now, just know that when you trusted Christ, you were justified unto eternal life and there is nothing that you or anyone else can do, that will change that. You are permanently justified (righteous) in the eyes of God. You have eternal life. You have access to the presence of God at any time, and for as long as you want.

This is the beginning of a relationship with God that will last throughout eternity. Welcome to God's family.

Resolving Personal and Spiritual Conflicts

Since we are all born dead (spiritually) in our trespasses and sins. (Ephesians 2:1), we had neither the presence of God in our lives, nor the knowledge of His ways. Consequently, we all learned to live independently of God. When we became new creatures in Christ, our minds were not instantly renewed. That is why Paul wrote:

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

That is why new Christians struggle with many of the same old thoughts and habits. Their minds have been previously programmed to live independently of God, and that is the chief characteristic of our flesh. As new creations in Christ, we have a whole new identity in Christ, and the presence of God's Holy Spirit within us.

To experience freedom in Christ and grow in the grace of God requires repentance, which literally means a change of mind. People sometimes think that repentance means "feeling sorry that we sinned," and while we should; feeling sorry doesn't do anything for you but make you feel guilty. Others think repentance is saying that they won't ever do that sin again, and while that might be what you want, it will never be accomplished in the energy of your flesh.

Repentance means to "change your mind." The question is, what are we supposed to change our mind about? And answering that question is what *The Steps to Transformation* is all about. This is where we will learn the process that enables us to change our minds.

For now, understand that we are **not** talking about repenting of sins in order to be saved. We **are** talking about changing our minds from certain lies which Satan has entrenched in our minds, and exchanging them for God's truths, so that we can be set free from the consequences that came from believing Satan's lies.

God will enable us to engage in that process as we submit to Him and resist the devil; that is how the apostle James says it. The apostle Paul says it this way:

2 Timothy 2:25 In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; ²⁶ And **that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil**, who are taken captive by him at his will.

So, how do we recover ourselves (or anyone else) out of the snare of the devil? We do it by going through *The Steps to Transformation*.

The Steps cover seven critical issues that affect our relationship with God. We will not experience our freedom in Christ if we seek false guidance, believe lies, fail to forgive others, live in rebellion, respond to pride, fail to acknowledge our sin, and continue in the sins of our ancestors (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).

Even though Satan is defeated, he still rules this world through a hierarchy of spirit-beings who tempt, accuse, and deceive those who fail to put on the armor of God, stand firm in their faith, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Our sanctuary is our identity and position in Christ, and we have all the protection we need to live a victorious life. But if we fail to assume our responsibility and give ground to Satan, we will suffer the consequences of our sinful attitudes and actions. The good news is we can repent and reclaim all that we have in Christ, and that is what the *Steps* will enable you to do.

Processing *The Steps*

The best way to go through *The Steps* is to process them with a trained encourager. You can also go through *The Steps* on your own. Every step is explained so that you will have no trouble doing that.

We suggest you find a quiet place where you can process the steps out loud. If you experience some mental interference, thoughts such as, "This isn't going to work", or "I don't believe this" just ignore it, and continue on. Blasphemous, condemning and accusing thoughts have no power over you unless you believe them. They are just thoughts, and it doesn't make any difference if they originate from you, an external source, or from Satan. They will be resolved when you have fully repented.

If you're working through the steps with an encourager, share any mental or physical opposition that you are experiencing. Exposing the lies to the light breaks the power.

The Apostle Paul wrote that Satan disguises himself as an Angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). It is not uncommon for some to have thoughts or hear voices that claim to be friendly, offer companionship, or claim to be from God. They may even say that Jesus is Lord, though they cannot say that Jesus is their Lord. The point is you don't want any spirit guide other than the Holy Spirit to guide you.

You are a child of God and seated with Christ in the heavenly spiritual realm. That means you have the authority and power to do His will. The steps do not set you free, Jesus set you free and you will progressively experience that freedom as you respond to Him in faith and repentance.

Don't worry about any interference from unclean spirits. Most do not experience any. It doesn't make any difference if Satan has a little role or a bigger role, the critical issue is your relationship with God, and that is what you are resolving.

This is a ministry of reconciliation. Once those issues are resolved, Satan has no power to remain. Successfully completing this repentance process is not an end, it is a beginning of growth. Unless these issues are resolved, however, the growth process will be stalled, and your Christian life will be stagnant.

Breaking Mental Strongholds

On a separate piece of paper, write down any false beliefs and lies that surfaced during *The Steps*, especially those that are not true about yourself and God. When you are finished, verbally say for each exposed falsehood, "I renounced the lie that **(fill in the blank)**, and I announce the truth that **(what you are now choosing to believe is true based on God's word)**."

It may be best to have the Encourager keep this list for you, if you're being led by another through the steps. It's strongly recommended that you repeat the process of renouncing lies and choosing truth for 40 days, since we are transformed by the renewing of our minds and it is very easy to defer back to old flesh patterns when tempted.

Preparation

Processing these steps will play a major role in your journey of becoming more and more like Jesus. The purpose is to become firmly rooted in Christ. It doesn't take long to establish your identity and freedom in Christ, but there is no such thing as instant maturity.

Renewing your mind and conforming to the image of God's son is a lifelong process. Once you have experienced your freedom in Christ, you can help others experience the joy of their salvation by showing them how they also can be free. You are now ready to begin the steps by saying the prayer and declaration below:

Prayer

"Dear Heavenly Father, you are present in this room and in my life. You alone are all-knowing, all powerful and I worship only you. I declare my dependency upon you for apart from you I can't pull down Satan's strongholds or renew my mind. I choose to believe your word, which teaches that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to the resurrected Christ. And, as I am in Christ, I have the authority and power to undo the works of the devil, as I submit to you. I commit myself to being honest with you, so that I can truly be free from Satan's devices. In the wonderful name of Jesus, I pray. Amen."

Declaration

"I choose to know the truth of God's word and replace any and all deceptive lies which are in me. As a (son/daughter) of my heavenly Father, I am seated with Christ in heavenly places, far above all principalities and powers. God has not given me the spirit of fear, therefore, I reject any and all condemning, accusing, blasphemous, and deceiving thoughts of fear. Satan and all his hosts cannot prevent God's will from being done in my life today because I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ."

Review of Your Life

Before going through *The Steps*, review the following events of your life to discern specific areas that need to be addressed.

- Family History
- Religious history of parents and grandparents.
- Home life from childhood through high school.
- History of physical or emotional illness in the family.
- Adoption, Foster care, Guardians

Personal History

- Eating habits: (Bulimia, Anorexia, Compulsive eating)
- Addictions: (Smoking, Drugs, Alcohol, Gambling)
- Prescription medications: (What for?)
- Sleeping patterns, dreams and nightmares
- Rape or any other sexual, physical, mental or emotional abuse
- Thought life: (obsessive, blasphemous, condemning, and distracting thoughts, poor concentration, fantasy, suicidal, fearful, jealous, confused, guilt and shame)
- Mental interference during church prayer or Bible study
- Emotional life: (anger, anxiety, depression, bitterness, and fear)
- Spiritual Journey: (salvation: when, how and assurance)
- Any other traumatic experience

Step 1

Counterfeit versus Real

The first step toward experiencing your freedom in Christ is to renounce (verbally reject) all involvement, (past or present) with occult, cults, or false religious teachings or practices. Participation in any group that denies that Jesus Christ is Lord and/or elevates any teaching or book to the level of the Bible must be renounced. In addition, groups that require dark secret initiations, ceremonies, vows, pacts, or covenants need to be renounced. God does not take lightly false guidance.

“Dear Heavenly Father, may your Spirit help me as I bring to mind everything I have done knowingly, or unknowingly, that involved the occult, cults, false religions, false teachings and practices. I commit to renouncing any and all spiritual conflicts, false religious teachings and practices. In Jesus name I pray. Amen.”

Events may come to your mind that you have forgotten, even experiences you participated in as a game or thought were a joke. You might even have been passively or curiously watching others participate in counterfeit religious practices. The purpose is to renounce all counterfeit spiritual experiences and associated beliefs that the Spirit of God brings to your mind.

Use the following *Non-Christian Spiritual Experience Checklist* as a guide. Then pray the prayer following the checklist to renounce each activity or group that comes to your mind. You may even think of counterfeit spiritual experiences that are not on the list. Be especially aware of your need to renounce non-Christian religious practices that were part of your culture growing up. It is important that you prayerfully renounce them.

Non-Christian Spiritual Experience Checklist

Check all those you have participated in:

- Church of Scientology
- Astrology/horoscopes
- Nature worship (Mother earth)
- Palm reading
- Unitarianism/universalism
- Fortune telling/divination
- Hinduism/Transcendental meditation/Yoga
- Blood pacts
- Silva mind control
- Sexual spirits

- Buddhism (including Zen)
- Séances and circles
- Islam
- Out-of-body experiences
- Wicca
- Ouija board
- Black and white magic/The Gathering
- Bloody Mary
- Paganism
- Charlie Charlie
- Reiki
- Occult games such as Light as a Feather, Channeling/Chakras
- Magic Eight Ball
- Reincarnation/previous life healing
- Table or body lifting
- Mediums and channelers
- Mormonism
- Mental telepathy/mind control
- Freemasonry
- Tarot cards
- Jehovah's Witness (Watchtower)
- Levitation
- Christian Science
- Automatic writing
- Witchcraft/sorcery
- Spirit guides
- Bahaim
- Clairvoyance
- Spiritism/animism/folk religions
- Rod and pendulum (dowsing)
- Ancestor worship
- Hypnosis

- Satanism (See Appendix A)
- Other _____

Once you have completed your checklist, confess and renounce every false practice, belief, ceremony, vow, or pact that you're involved in by praying the following prayer aloud. So do not rush through this process. Remember, you are not confessing in order to be forgiven; you are already forgiven in Christ. By confessing, you are agreeing with God that these things are Satan's opportunity for a foothold. Take your time and be thorough. Give yourself time to recall every specific incident and ritual as needed.

Stay focused. Do not allow yourself to daydream about these things in a way that you reminisce about them. See them as the tool of the Adversary that they are.

"Heavenly Father, I confess that I have participated in (**specifically name every belief and involvement with all that you have checked above**), and I renounce them all as counterfeits. I realize that even the mildest of practices may provide Satan a foothold in my soul; therefore I renounce all of these as false guides which present lies contrary to your truth. Christ has made the provision whereby I am made free from these and Satan cannot hold me captive against my will. I thank you that in Christ, I have already been forgiven for participating in these things. Amen."

Additional Questions to Help You Become Aware of Counterfeit Religious Experiences:

Consider the following questions and use the words in bold to renounce any issue that the Spirit of God brings to your mind.

1. Do you now have, or have you ever had, an imaginary friend, spirit guide, or angel offering you guidance or companionship? If it has a name, renounce it by name. **"I renounce..."**
2. Have you ever seen or been contacted by beings you thought were aliens from another world? Such deceptions should be identified and renounced. **"I renounce..."**
3. Have you ever heard voices in your head or had repeated nagging thoughts such as "I'm dumb, I'm ugly, nobody loves me, or I can't do anything right," as if there were a conversation going on inside your head? **"I renounce all deceiving spirits and the lies I have believed (specify the lies)..."**
4. Have you ever been hypnotized, attended a New Age seminar; consulted a psychic medium, a channeler or spiritist? Renounce all specific false prophecies and guidance they offered. **"I renounce..."**
5. Have you ever made a secret covenant or vow to any organization or persons other than God, or made an inner vow contrary to Scripture? For example, "I will never..." Renounce it. **"I renounce..."**
6. Have you ever been involved in a satanic ritual or attended a concert in which Satan was the focus? See Appendix A for a more complete resolution. **"I renounce..."**
7. Have you ever made any sacrifices to idols, false gods, or spirits? Renounce each one. **"I renounce..."**
8. Have you ever attended any counterfeit religious event or entered a non-Christian shrine that required you to participate in the religious observances such as washing your hands or removing your shoes? Confess your participation and renounce your participation in false worship. **"I confess... and I renounce..."**
9. Have you ever consulted a shaman or witch doctor for the purpose of manipulating the spiritual world to place curses, seek psychic healing, or guidance? All such activity needs to be renounced. **"I renounce..."**
10. Have you ever tried to contact the dead in order to send or receive messages? Renounce such practices. **"I renounce..."**

Step 2

Deception versus Truth

The Christian life is lived by faith according to what God says is true. The Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth. God's word is truth and we are to speak the truth in love.

Ephesians 4:15 But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

The biblical response to truth is faith, regardless of whether we feel it is true or not. Christians are to forsake all lying, deceiving, or stretching of the truth, and anything else associated with falsehood.

Believing lies will keep us in bondage. Choosing to believe the truth is what sets us free. The liberated Christian is free to walk in the light and speak the truth in love.

We can be honest and transparent before God because we are already forgiven, and God already knows the thoughts and intentions of our hearts. So why not be honest with God when we are talking about these areas?

We do not confess our sins in order to be forgiven, as we are already forgiven every sin when we trusted Christ as Savior. Confession, in this case, means to agree with God. People in bondage are tired of living a lie.

Because of God's great love and forgiveness, we can walk in the light knowing that our fellowship with God is sure.

Begin this commitment to truth by praying the following prayer out loud. Don't let any opposing thoughts such as, "this is a waste of time," or, "I wish I could believe this, but I can't," keep you from pressing forward. God will strengthen your inner man as you rely on him.

"Dear Heavenly Father, You are the truth, and I desire to live by faith according to your word of truth. The truth will set me free, but in many ways, I have been deceived by the father of lies, the philosophies of this fallen world, and I have deceived myself. I choose to walk in the light, knowing that you love and accept me just as I am. As I consider areas of possible deception, I invite your Spirit to guide me into all truth. In the name of Jesus, I pray. Amen."

Prayerfully consider the list in the three exercises on the next page, using the prayers at the end of each exercise in order to confess any ways you have given in to deception, or wrongly defended yourself. You cannot instantly renew your mind, but the process will never get started without acknowledging your mental strongholds or defense mechanisms, also known as flesh-patterns.

Ways You Can Be Deceived by the World

- Believing that having an abundance of money and possessions will make me happy. (1 Timothy 6:10)
- Believing that eating food, drinking alcohol, or using drugs can relieve my stress and make me happy.
- Believing that an attractive body, phony personality, or image will meet my needs for acceptance and significance.
- Believing that gratifying sexual lust will bring lasting satisfaction without any negative consequences. (Ephesians 4:22)
- Believing that I can sin and suffer no negative consequences.
- Believing that I need more than Jesus to meet my needs of acceptance, security and significance. (2 Corinthians 11:2-4, 13-15)
- Believing that I can do whatever I want, regardless of others, and still be free.
- Believing that people who refuse to receive Jesus will go to heaven anyway (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).
- Believing that I can associate with bad company and not become corrupted (1 Corinthians 15:33-34).
- Believing that I can read, see or listen to anything and not be corrupted.
- Believing that there are no earthly consequences for my sin. (Galatian 6:7-8.)
- Believing that I must gain the approval of certain people in order to be happy. (Galatians 1:10)
- Believing that I must measure up to certain religious standards in order for God to accept me. (Galatians 3:2-3; 5:1)
- Believing that there are many paths to God and Jesus is only one of many ways.
- Believing that I must live up to worldly standards, in order to feel good about myself.

“Dear Heavenly Father, I confess that I have been deceived by (**mention the items you checked above**). I thank you for the forgiveness I have in Christ, and for the freedom that is also mine in Christ. I choose to believe the truth of your word over all the world’s deceptions. I choose to base all the areas of my life in you, and I reject all of the world’s counterfeits. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.”

Ways to Deceive Yourself

- Hearing God's word, but not doing what it says.
- Thinking I am something or someone, I'm really not. (Galatians 6:3)
- Thinking I am wise in this worldly age. (1 Corinthians 3:18-19)
- Thinking that God is the source of my problems.
- Thinking I can live successfully without the help of anyone else. (1 Corinthians, 12:14-20)

“Dear Heavenly Father, I confess that I have deceived myself by (**say the items checked above**). Thank you for having already forgiven me. I commit myself to believe only your truth. In Jesus name, I pray. Amen.”

Ways to Wrongly Defend Yourself

- Denial of reality: (Conscious or unconscious)
- Fantasy: (escaping reality by daydreaming, TV, movies, music, computer, video games, drugs or alcohol)
- Emotional insulation: (withdrawing from people or keeping people at a distance to avoid rejection)
- Regression: (reverting back to less threatening times)
- Displaced anger: (taking out frustrations on innocent people)
- Projection: (attributing to another of what you find unacceptable in yourself)
- Rationalization: (making excuses for my own poor behavior)
- Lying: (protecting self through falsehoods)
- Hypocrisy. (presenting a false image)

“Dear Heavenly Father, I confess I have wrongly defended myself by (**confess the items checked above**). Thank you for your forgiveness. I trust you to defend and protect me. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.”

The wrong ways we have employed to shield ourselves from pain and rejection are often deeply ingrained in our lives. You may need additional disciplining/counseling to learn how to allow Jesus to be your life, strength and refuge.

The more you learn how loving, powerful, and protective God is, the more you'll likely be to trust Him. The more you realize how much God unconditionally loves and accepts you, the more you'll be released to be open, honest, and vulnerable in a healthy way before God and others.

The New Age Movement has twisted the concept of faith by teaching that we make something true by believing it. That is false. We cannot create reality with our minds. Only God can do that. Our responsibility is to face reality and choose to believe what God says is true. True biblical faith, therefore, is choosing to believe and act upon what is true because God has said it is true and He is the truth. Faith is something you decide to do, not something you feel like doing. Believing something doesn't make it true, it's already true; therefore we choose to believe it. Truth is not conditioned by whether we choose to believe it or not.

Everyone lives by faith. The only difference between Christian faith and non-Christian faith is the object of our faith. If the object of our faith is not trustworthy or real, then no amount of believing will change that. That's why our faith must be grounded on the solid rock of God's perfect, unchanging character and the truth of His word and the life of His Son in us.

For 2000 years, Christians have known the importance of verbally and publicly declaring truth. Read aloud the following statements of truth and carefully consider what you are professing. You may find it helpful to read them aloud every day for at least six weeks, which will help renew your mind to the truth.

Statements of Truth

1. I recognize that there is only one true and living God who exists as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He is worthy of all honor, praise, and glory as the One who made all things and holds all things together (Exodus 20:2-3; Colossians 1:16-17).
2. I recognize that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. I believe that he came to destroy the works of the devil, and that he disarmed the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places and made a public display of them, having triumphed over them (Colossians 2:15).
3. I believe that God demonstrated his own love for me, and that while I was still a sinner, Christ died for me. I believe that He has delivered me from the domain of darkness and transferred me to His Kingdom, and in Him I have redemption, the forgiveness of sins (Romans 5:8; Colossians 1:13-14).
4. I believe that I am now a child of God and that I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms. I believe that I was saved by the grace of God through faith and that it was a gift and not a result of any works on my part (Ephesians 2:6, 8-9).
5. I choose to be strong in the Lord and in the power of his might. I put no confidence in the flesh. The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but might through God to the pulling down of strong holds. I put on the whole armor of God. I resolve to stand firm in my faith and resist the evil one (2 Corinthians 10:4; Ephesians 6:10-20; Philippians 3:3).
6. I believe that apart from Christ, I can do nothing, so I declare my complete dependence on Him. I choose to abide in Christ, in order to bring forth fruit unto holiness and glorify my Father. Jesus is my Lord, and I reject any and all counterfeit gifts, guidance, or works of Satan in my life (1 Corinthians 12:3).
7. I believe that the truth will set me free, and that Jesus is the truth. If He sets me free, I will be free indeed. I recognize that walking in the light is the only path of true fellowship with God and man. Therefore, I stand against all of Satan's deception by taking every thought captive in obedience to Christ. I declare that the Bible is the only authoritative standard for truth and life (2 Corinthians 10:5; 2 Timothy 3:15-17).
8. I choose to present my body to God as a living and holy sacrifice, and the members of my body as instruments of righteousness. I choose to renew my mind by the living word of God in order that I

may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. I put off the old self with its evil practices and put on the new man. I have been made to be a new creature in Christ.
(Romans 6:13, 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Colossians 3:9-10)

9. By faith I choose to be filled with the Spirit so I can be guided into all truth. I choose to walk in the Spirit, so I will not carry out the desires of the flesh (Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 5:18).
10. I renounce all selfish goals and choose the ultimate goal of love. I choose to obey the two greatest commandments, to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love my neighbor as myself (Romans 13:10; 1 Timothy 1:5).
11. I believe that the Lord Jesus has all authority in heaven and earth and He is the head over all rule and authority. I am complete in Him. I believe that Satan and his minions are subject to me, in Christ, since I am a member of Christ's body. Therefore, I submit myself to God and resist the devil (Ephesians 1:19-23; Galatians 5:13-14; Colossians 2:10).

Step 3

Bitterness versus Forgiveness

We are called to be merciful just as our Heavenly Father is merciful (Romans 12:8; Colossians 3:12) and forgive others as we have been forgiven (Ephesians 4:31). Doing so sets us free from our past and doesn't allow Satan to take advantage of us (2 Corinthians 2:10-11). Ask the Spirit of God to bring to your mind the people you need to forgive by praying the following prayer aloud:

“Dear Heavenly Father, I thank You for the riches of Your goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering towards me, knowing that Your goodness has led me to repentance (Romans 2:4). I confess that I have not shown that same kindness and patience toward those who have hurt or offended me. Instead, I have held on to my anger, bitterness, and resentment toward them. Please assist me, as I bring to my mind, all the people I need to forgive in order that I may now do so. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

On a separate sheet of paper, list the names of people who come to your mind. At this point, don't question whether you need to forgive them or not. Often, we hold things against ourselves as well, punishing ourselves for wrong choices we've made in the past. Write “myself” at the bottom of your list, if you need to forgive yourself. **Forgiving yourself is accepting the truth that God has already forgiven you in Christ.** If God forgives you, you can forgive yourself!

Also, write down, “thoughts against God,” at the bottom of your list. Obviously, God has never done anything wrong, so He doesn't need our forgiveness, but we need to let go of our disappointments with our Heavenly Father. People often harbor angry thoughts against Him because He did not do what they wanted Him to do. Those feelings of anger or resentment toward God need to be released.

Before you begin working through the process of forgiving those on your list, review what forgiveness is and what it is not. The critical points are highlighted in bold print.

Forgiveness is not forgetting. People who want to forget all that was done to them will find they cannot do it. When God says, He will remember our sins no more He is saying that He will not use our past failures against us. Forgetting is a long-term byproduct of forgiveness, but it is never a means toward it. Don't put off forgiving those who have hurt you, hoping the pain will go away. Once you choose to forgive someone, then Christ will begin to heal your wounds. We don't heal in order to forgive; we forgive in order to heal.

Forgiveness is a choice, a decision of the will. Since God requires you to forgive, it is something you can do. Some people hold on to their anger as a means of protecting themselves against further abuse, but all they are doing is hurting themselves. Others want revenge. The Bible teaches, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord” (Romans 12:19). Let God deal with the person. Let him or her off your hook because, as long as you refuse to forgive someone, you are still hooked to

that person. You are still chained to your past, bound up in your bitterness. By forgiving, you let the other person off your hook, but he or she is not off God's hook. You must trust that God will deal with the person justly and fairly, something you simply cannot do.

But you don't know how much this person hurt me! No other human really knows another person's pain, but Jesus does, and instructs us to forgive others for our own sake. Until you let go of your bitterness and hate, that person is still hurting you. Nobody can fix your past, but you can be free from it. What you gain by forgiving is freedom from your past and those who have abused you. Forgiveness is to set a captive free and then realize you were the captive!

Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person's sin. We are all living with the consequences of someone else's sin. The only choices are to do so, either in the *bondage of bitterness*, or in the *freedom of forgiveness*.

But where is the justice? The cross makes forgiveness legally and morally right. Jesus died, once, for all our sins. We are to forgive, as Christ has forgiven us. He did that by taking upon Himself the consequences of our sins. God "made Him to be sin who knew no sin (on our behalf), that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Do not wait for the other person to ask for your forgiveness. Remember, Jesus did not wait for those who were crucifying Him to apologize before He forgave them. Even while they mocked and jeered at Him, He prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34).

Forgive from your heart. Allow the Spirit of God to bring to the surface the painful memories and acknowledge how you feel toward those who've hurt you. If your forgiveness doesn't touch the emotional core of your life, it will be incomplete. Too often, we're afraid of the pain so we bury our emotions deep down inside us. Let God bring them to the surface so He can begin to heal those damaged emotions.

Forgiveness is choosing not to hold someone's sin against him or her any more. It is common for bitter people to bring up past offenses with those who have hurt them. They want them to feel as bad as they do! But we must let go of the past and choose to reject any thought of revenge. This doesn't mean you continue to put up with the abuse. God does not tolerate sin, and neither should you. You will need to set up scriptural boundaries that put a stop to further abuse. Take a stand against sin while continuing to exercise grace and forgiveness toward those who hurt you. If you need help setting scriptural boundaries to protect yourself from further abuse, talk to a trusted friend, counselor, or minister.

Don't wait until you feel like forgiving. You will never get there. Make the hard choice to forgive even if you don't feel like it. Once you choose to forgive, Satan will lose his hold on you, and God will begin to heal your damaged emotions.

Start with the first person on your list and make the choice to forgive him or her for every painful memory that comes to your mind. Stay with that individual until you are sure you have dealt with all the remembered pain. Then work your way down the list in the same way.

As you begin forgiving people, the Spirit of God may bring to your mind painful memories you've totally forgotten. Let Him do this even if it hurts. God is surfacing those painful memories so you can face them once for all time and let them go. Don't excuse the offender's behavior, even if it is someone you are really close to.

Don't say, "Lord, please help me to forgive." He is already helping you and will be with you all the way through the process.

Don't say, "Lord, I want to forgive," because that bypasses the hard choice we have to make. Say, "Lord, I choose to forgive these people and what they did to me."

For every painful memory that God reveals for each person on your list, pray as follows:

"Dear Heavenly Father, I choose to forgive [**name the person**] for [**what they did or failed to do**], because it made me feel [**share the painful feelings, for example, rejected, dirty, worthless, or inferior**]."

After you have forgiven every person for every painful memory, then pray as follows:

"Lord Jesus, I choose not to hold on to my resentment. I relinquish my right to seek revenge and ask for your grace to heal my damaged emotions. Thank you for setting me free from the bondage of my bitterness. I ask you to use my actions to minister to my offender. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

Note: During this step, it is not uncommon for people to come to your mind that you have knowingly, or unknowingly, wounded. See Appendix B for steps in seeking the forgiveness of others.

CHOOSING THE TRUTH ABOUT YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

Before we came to Christ, thoughts were raised up in our minds "against the knowledge of God" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). What we believe about our earthly fathers often distorts what we believe about our heavenly Father. Even as believers, we can harbor resentments toward God and those resentments will hinder our walk with Him.

We should have a healthy fear of God (awe of His holiness, power, and presence), but we fear no punishment from Him.

Romans 8:15 For **ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear**; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.

Renew your mind with the true knowledge of God by reading the following list aloud:

I renounce the lie that you, Father, are distant and uninterested in me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, Father, are always personally present with me, have plans to conform me to the image of your Son, to give me a hope and a future in the heavenly places, with the opportunity to labor with you in your business throughout eternity (Romans 8:29, Ephesians 2:6, 10).

I renounce the lie that you, Father, are insensitive and don't know me or care for me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, Father, are kind and compassionate and know every single thing about me (Romans 5:8-9, 2 Corinthians 6:6).

I renounce the lie that you, Father, are stern and have placed unrealistic expectations on me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, Father, have accepted me and you are joyfully supportive of me (Romans 5:8-11; 15:17).

I renounce the lie that you, Father, are passive and cold toward me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, Father, are warm and affectionate toward me. (Ephesians 2:18)

I renounce the lie that you, Father, are absent or too busy for me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, Father, are always present and eager to be with me and enable me to be all that You created me to be (Philippians 1:6).

I renounce the lie that you, Father, are impatient or angry with me or have rejected me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, Father, are patient and slow to anger, and that when you discipline me, it is a proof of your love, and not rejection (Romans 2:4).

I renounce the lie that you, Father, have been mean, cruel, or abusive to me.

I choose to believe the truth that Satan is mean, cruel, and abusive, but you, Father, are loving, gentle, and protective (Ephesians 6:10-18).

I renounce the lie that you, Father, are denying me the pleasures of life.

I choose to believe the truth that you, Father, are the author of life and will lead me into love, joy, and peace as I walk after the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-24).

I renounce the lie that you, Father, are trying to control and manipulate me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, Father, have set me free and gave me the freedom to make choices and grow in your grace (Galatians 5:1; Ephesians 4:13, Colossians 1:28).

I renounce the lie that you, Father, have condemned me, and no longer forgive me.

I choose to believe the truth that you, Father, have forgiven all my sins and will never use them against me in the future (Romans 4:7-8; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 2:13).

I renounce the lie that you, Father, reject me when I fail to live a perfect or sinless life. (Romans 3:22)

I choose to believe the truth that you, Father are patient toward me, and your love never fails, even when I do (Romans 3:26; Romans 4:6, 8).

I am your son/daughter! (Romans 8:14, Philippians 2:15)

Step 4

Rebellion versus Submission

We live in rebellious times. Many people sit in judgment of those in authority over them, and they submit only when it is convenient, or because they fear being caught. The Bible instructs us to pray for those in authority over us (1 Timothy 2:1-2) and submit to governing authorities (Romans 13:1-7). Rebelling against God and His established authority leaves us spiritually vulnerable. The only time God permits us to disobey earthly leaders is when they require us to do something morally wrong or attempt to rule outside the realm of their authority. To have a submissive spirit and servant's heart, pray the following prayer:

“Dear Heavenly Father, you have said that rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry (1 Samuel 15:23). I know that I have not always been submissive, but instead have rebelled in my heart against you and against those in authority over me in attitude and in action. Please show me all the ways I have been rebellious. I choose now to adopt a submissive spirit and a servant's heart. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

It is an act of faith to trust God to work in our lives as we submit to leaders who are less than perfect, but that is what God is asking us to do. Should those in positions of leadership or power (a husband, for example) abuse their authority and break the laws designed to protect innocent people, you need to seek help from a higher authority.

Many governments require certain types of abuse to be reported to a governmental agency. If that is your situation, we urge you to get the help you need immediately. Don't, however, assume that someone in authority is violating God's word just because he or she is telling you to do something you don't like. God has set up specific lines of authority to protect us and give order to society. It is the position of authority that we respect. Without governing authorities every society would be chaos.

From the list below, allow the Spirit of God to show you any specific ways you have been rebellious and use the prayer that follows to confess those sins you are guilty of.

- Civil government (including traffic laws, tax laws, attitude toward government officials).
(Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-4)
- Parents, step-parents, or legal guardians (Ephesians 6:1-3)
- Teachers, coaches, school officials (Romans 13:1-4)
- Employers (past and present), (Ephesians 6:5; Colossians 3:22)
- Husband or wife (Ephesians 5:21)

[Note to husbands: Ask the Lord if your lack of love for your wife could be fostering a rebellious spirit within her. If so, confess that as a violation of Ephesians 5:22-33.]

Church leaders

God

For each way in which the Spirit of God brings to your mind that you have been rebellious, use the following prayer to specifically confess that sin:

Heavenly Father, I confess that I have been rebellious toward [**name or position**] by [**specifically confess what you did or did not do**]. Thank You for Your forgiveness. I choose to be submissive and obedient to your word. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Step 5

Pride versus Humility

James talks about pride.

James 4:6 But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble.

Paul says a very similar thing in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 10:12 Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall.

Pride often comes before a fall. God does not like pride. We should have humility. But what is humility? Humility is confidence properly placed in God, and we are instructed to, "have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3). We are to be, "strong in the Lord and in the power of His might" (Ephesians 6:10).

When we decide we can live the Christian life in our own strength, when we think we can overcome sin by training our flesh, the root of both of these is pride. Pride opens up a door for Satan to gain a foothold in your life.

"Dear Heavenly Father, I confess that I have been prideful. I have focused on my own needs and desires and not those of others. I have not always denied myself. I have relied on my own strength and resources instead of resting in yours. I have placed my will before yours and centered my life around myself instead of You. I confess my pride and selfishness and pray that all ground gained in my life by the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ would be canceled as I believe the truth, and overcome these sinful flesh patterns. I choose to rely upon the Holy Spirit's power and guidance so that I will do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit. With humility of mind, I choose to regard others as more important than myself. I acknowledge that apart from You I can do nothing of lasting significance. Please examine my heart and show me the specific ways I have lived my life in pride. In the name of Jesus I pray. Amen."
(Proverbs 16:18; Matthew 6:33; 16:24; Romans 12:10; Philippians 2:3.)

Pray through the list below and use the prayer following to confess any sins of pride that come to mind.

- Having a stronger desire to do my will than God's will
- Leaning too much on my own understanding and experience rather than seeking God's guidance through prayer and His word
- Relying on my own strengths and resources instead of depending on the power of the Holy Spirit
- Being more concerned about controlling others than in developing self-control
- Being too busy doing "important" and selfish things rather than seeking and doing God's will

- Having a tendency to think that I have no needs
- Finding it hard to admit when I am wrong
- Being more concerned about pleasing people than pleasing God
- Being overly concerned about getting the credit I feel I deserve
- Thinking I am more humble, spiritual, religious, or devoted than others
- Being driven to obtain recognition by attaining degrees, titles, and positions
- Often feeling that my needs are more important than another person's needs
- Considering myself better than others because of my academic, artistic, athletic, or other abilities and accomplishments
- Not waiting on God
- Other ways I have thought more highly of myself than I should

For each of the above areas that have been true in your life, pray:

“Heavenly Father, I agree I have been proud by **(name what you checked above)**. Thank You for Your forgiveness. I choose to humble myself before you and others. I choose to place all my confidence in you and put no confidence in my flesh. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Step 6

Bondage versus Freedom

Many times we feel trapped in a vicious cycle of “sin confess, sin confess” that never seems to end, but God's promises say, “God is faithful, and will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation will also provide the way of escape” (1 Corinthians 10:13). If you did not choose the way of escape and sinned, then you should confess that to God, ask Him to fill you with His Holy Spirit, resist the devil by putting on the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-20).

Sin that has become a habit may require help from a trusted brother or sister in Christ.

Remember, confession is not saying, “I'm sorry” It is openly admitting, “I did it.” Whether you need help from other people or just the accountability of walking in the light before God, pray the following prayer:

“Heavenly Father, You have told me to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lust. I confess that I have given in to fleshly lusts that wage war against my soul. I thank you that in Christ my sins are already forgiven, but I have allowed sin to wage war in my body. I come to you now to confess and renounce these sins of the flesh so that I might be set free from the bondage of sin. May your Holy Spirit help me as I bring to my mind, all the sins of the flesh I have committed and the ways I have grieved the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' holy name I pray. Amen.” (Romans 6:12-13; 13:14; 2 Corinthians 4:2)

The following list contains many sins of the flesh but a prayerful examination of Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 4:25-31, and other passages will help you to be even more thorough. Look over the list below and ask the Holy Spirit to bring to your mind the sins you need to confess. He may reveal others to you as well. For each sin the Lord shows you, pray a prayer of confession from your heart. There is a sample prayer following the list.

Note: Sexual sins, marriage and divorce issues, gender identity, abortion, suicidal tendencies, perfectionism, eating disorders, substance abuse, gambling, and bigotry will be dealt with later in this step.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Stealing<input type="checkbox"/> Quarreling/fighting<input type="checkbox"/> Jealousy/envy<input type="checkbox"/> Complaining/Criticism<input type="checkbox"/> Sarcasm<input type="checkbox"/> Gossip/slander<input type="checkbox"/> Cheating<input type="checkbox"/> Avoiding responsibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><input type="checkbox"/> Searing<input type="checkbox"/> Apathy/laziness<input type="checkbox"/> Lying<input type="checkbox"/> Greed/materialism<input type="checkbox"/> Hatred<input type="checkbox"/> Anger<input type="checkbox"/> Drunkenness<input type="checkbox"/> Others _____
--	---

Prayer

“Heavenly Father, I confess that I have sinned against you by [**name the sins**]. Thank You for Your forgiveness and cleansing in Christ. I now choose to turn away from these expressions of sin and turn to you, Lord. I determine to walk in the Spirit so that I will not carry out the desires of the flesh. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

RESOLVING SEXUAL SIN

It is our responsibility not to allow sin to reign (rule) in our physical bodies. To avoid that we must not use our bodies or another person's body as an instrument of unrighteousness (see Romans 6:12-13). Sexual immorality is not only a sin against God, but is a sin against your body, the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:18-19). Sex was intended by God to be the means for procreation and for the pleasure of a husband and wife. When marriage is consummated they become one flesh. If we sexually join our bodies to another person outside of marriage we also become “one flesh”

(1 Corinthians 6:16), which creates a spiritual bond between two people, leading to spiritual bondage, whether it is heterosexual or homosexual.

Sexual relations between people of the same sex are explicitly forbidden by God, but so is sex with someone of the opposite sex who is not your spouse. To find freedom from sexual bondage, begin by praying the following prayer:

“Heavenly Father, I have allowed sin to rein in my mortal body. I ask you to bring to my mind every sexual use of my body as an instrument of unrighteousness so that I can renounce these sexual sins and break those sinful bondages. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

As the Holy Spirit brings to your mind every immoral sexual use of your body, whether it was done to you (rape, incest, sexual molestation) or willingly by you (pornography, masturbation, sexual immorality), renounce every experience as follows:

“Heavenly Father, I renounce [**name the sexual experience**] with [**name**], I ask you to break that sinful bond with [**name**] spiritually, physically, and emotionally. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

If you have used pornography, say the following prayer:

“Dear Heavenly Father, I confess that I have looked at sexually suggestive and pornographic material for the purpose of stimulating myself sexually. I have attempted to satisfy my lustful desires and polluted my body, soul, and spirit. Thank you for cleansing me and for your forgiveness. I renounce any satanic bonds I have allowed in my life through the unrighteous use of my body and mind. Lord, I commit myself to destroy any objects in my possession that I have used for sexual stimulation, and to turn away from all media that are associated with my

sexual sin. I commit myself to the renewing of my mind and to think pure thoughts. I have been made dead to sin therefore it has no hold over me, except what I give it. I commit to walk after your Spirit so that I may not carry out the desires of the flesh. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

After you have finished, commit your body to God by praying:

“Dear Heavenly Father, I renounce all these uses of my body as an instrument of unrighteousness, and I admit to any willful participation. I choose to present my physical body to you as an instrument of righteousness, a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to you. I choose to reserve the sexual use of my body for marriage only. I reject the devil's lie that my body is not clean or that it is dirty or in any way unacceptable to you, as a result of my past sexual experiences. Thank You that I am forgiven and made righteous in Christ, and for loving and accepting me just the way I am. Therefore, I choose now to accept myself and my body as clean in your eyes. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

SPECIAL PRAYERS AND DECISIONS FOR SPECIFIC SITUATIONS

The following prayers will enhance your growth process and help you make critical decisions. On their own they are unlikely to bring complete resolution or recovery but are an excellent starting point. You will then need to work on renewing your mind. Please don't hesitate to seek godly counsel for additional help when needed.

Marriage

Dear Heavenly Father, I choose to believe that you created us male and female, and that marriage is a spiritual bond between one man and one woman who become one in Christ. I choose to stay committed to my vows and to remain faithful to my spouse until physical death separates us. Give me the grace to be the spouse you created me to be and enable me to love and respect my partner in marriage. I will seek to change only myself and accept my spouse as you have accepted me. Teach me how to speak the truth in love, to be merciful as you have been merciful to me, and to forgive as you have forgiven me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Divorce

Dear Heavenly Father, I have not been the spouse you created me to be, and I deeply regret that my marriage has failed. I choose to believe that you still love and accept me. I choose to believe that I am still your child and that your desire for me is that I continue serving you and others in your Kingdom. Give me the grace to overcome the disappointment and the emotional scars that I carry, and I ask the same for my ex-spouse. I choose to forgive him/her and I choose to forgive myself for all the ways I contributed to the divorce. Enable me to learn from my mistakes and guide me so that I don't repeat the same old flesh patterns. I choose to believe the truth that I am still accepted, secure, and significant in Christ. I trust you to supply

all my spiritual needs in the future, and I commit myself to follow you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Gender Identity

“Heavenly Father, I choose to believe that you have created all humanity to be either male or female (Genesis 1:27) and commanded us to maintain a distinction between the two genders (Deuteronomy 22:5; Romans 1:24-29). I confess that I have been influenced by the social pressures of this fallen world and the lies of Satan to question my biological gender identity and that of others. I renounce all the accusations and lies of Satan that would seek to convince me that I am somebody other than who you created me to be. I choose to believe and accept my biological gender identity, and I pray that you would heal my damaged emotions and enable me to be transformed by the renewing of my mind. I take up the whole armor of God (Ephesians 6:13) and the shield of faith to extinguish all the temptations and accusations of the evil one (Ephesians 6:16). I renounce any identities and labels that derive from my old nature, and I choose to believe that I am a new creature in Christ. In the wonderful name of Jesus, I pray. Amen.”

Abortion

“Dear Heavenly Father, I confess that I was not a proper guardian and keeper of the life you entrusted to me, and I confess that I have sinned. I thank you that because of your forgiveness I can forgive myself. I commit the child to you for all eternity, and believe that he or she is in your caring hands. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

Suicidal Tendencies

“Dear Heavenly Father, I renounce all suicidal thoughts and any attempts I have made to take my own life or in any way injure myself. I renounce the lie that life is hopeless and that I can find peace and freedom by taking my own life. Satan is a liar, and he comes to steal, kill, and destroy. I choose to remain alive in Christ, who is my life. Thank you for your forgiveness that allows me to forgive myself. I choose to believe that there is always hope in Christ and that my Heavenly Father loves me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

Substance Abuse

“Dear Heavenly Father, I confess that I have misused substances [**alcohol, tobacco, food, prescription, or street drugs**] for the purpose of pleasure, to escape reality, or to cope with difficult problems. I confess that I have abused my body and programmed my mind in harmful ways, and by such ways have kept areas of my life from being under the control and direction of your Spirit. Thank You for your forgiveness. I renounce any satanic connection or influence in my life through my misuse of food or chemicals. I cast my anxieties onto Christ who loves

me. I commit myself to yield, no longer, to substance abuse, but instead I choose to allow the Holy Spirit to direct and empower me. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

Eating Disorders or Self-Mutilation

“Dear Heavenly Father, I renounce the lie that my value as a person is dependent upon my appearance or performance. I renounce cutting or abusing myself, vomiting, using laxatives or starving myself as a means of being in control, altering my appearance, or trying to cleanse myself of evil. I announce that only the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses me from sin. I realize I have been bought with a price and my body, the temple of the Holy Spirit, belongs to God. Therefore, I choose to glorify God in my body. I renounce the lie that I am evil or that any part of my body is evil. Thank you that you accept me just the way I am in Christ. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

Driveness and Perfectionism

Heavenly Father, I renounce the lie that my sense of worth is dependent upon my ability to perform. I announce the truth that my identity and sense of worth are found in who I am as your child. I renounce seeking the approval and acceptance of other people for my affirmation, and I choose to believe the truth that I am already approved and accepted in Christ, because of His death and resurrection for me. I choose to believe the truth that I have been saved, not by deeds done in righteousness, but according to your mercy. I choose to believe that I am no longer under the curse of the law, because Christ became a curse for me. I have received the free gift of life in Christ and choose to abide in Him. I renounce striving for perfection by living under the law. By your grace, Heavenly Father, I choose from this day forward to walk by faith in the power of your Holy Spirit, according to what you have said is true. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Gambling

Dear Heavenly Father, I confess that I have been a poor steward of the financial resources that have been in my possession. I have gambled away my future chasing a false god. I have not been content with food and clothing, and the love of money has driven me to behave irrationally and sinfully. I renounce making provision for my flesh in regard to this lust. I commit myself to stay away from all gambling casinos, gambling websites, bookmakers, and lottery sales. I choose to believe that I am alive in Christ and dead to sin. Fill me with your Holy Spirit so that I don't carry out the desires of the flesh. Show me the way of escape when I am tempted to return to my addictive behaviors. I stand against all of Satan's accusations, temptations, and deceptions by putting on the armor of God and standing firm in my faith. I choose to believe that you will meet all my needs according to your riches in glory. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

Bigotry

“Heavenly Father, You have created all humanity in your image. I confess that I have judged others by the color of their skin, their national origin, their social or economic status, their cultural differences, or their sexual orientation. I renounce racism, elitism, and sexism. I choose to believe there is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female, for we are all one in Christ Jesus. Please show me the roots of my own bigotry that I may confess it and be cleansed from such defilement. I pledge myself to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which I have been called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.” (Galatians 3:28; Ephesians 4:1-3)

Fear and Anxiety

See Appendices C and D for a comprehensive process for overcoming fear and anxiety issues that are rampant around the world.

Step 7

Curses versus Blessings

The Bible declares that the iniquities of one generation can be passed down to successive generations. The iniquities of one generation can adversely affect future ones unless those sins are renounced, and your new spiritual heritage in Christ is claimed. This cycle of abuse and all negative influences can be stopped through genuine repentance (change of mind about what you believe). You are not guilty of your ancestor's sins, but because of their sins, you have been affected by their influence. Ask the Lord to help you as you think of any ancestral sins and then renounce them as follows:

“Dear Heavenly Father, may your Holy Spirit reveal all the sins of my ancestors that have been passed down through family lines. Since I am a new creation in Christ, I want to experience my freedom from those influences and walk in my new identity as a child of God. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

List anything that comes to your mind. Also, every family has a history of issues such as mental illnesses, sicknesses, divorce, sexual sins, anger, depression, fear, violence, and abuse.

When nothing else comes to mind, conclude with:

Lord, I renounce (name all the family sins that Spirit of God brings to my mind).

We cannot passively take our place in Christ, we must actively and intentionally choose to submit to God, renounce the lies and oppose Satan’s work in our souls. Verbally complete this final step with the following declaration and prayer:

DECLARATION

“I here and now reject and disown all the sins of my ancestors. As one who has been delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of God's Son, I declare myself to be free from those harmful influences. I am no longer "in Adam." I am now alive "in Christ." Therefore, I am the recipient of all the spiritual blessings in Christ as I choose to love and obey Him. As one who has been crucified and raised with Christ, and who sits with Him in heavenly places, I renounce any and all satanic assignments directed against me. Every curse placed on me was broken when Christ became a curse for me by dying on the cross (Galatians 3:13). I reject any and every way in which Satan may claim control or ownership of me. I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who purchased me with His own precious blood. I declare myself to be fully and eternally bought by, and committed to, the Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, having submitted to God, I now by His authority resist the devil, and I command every spiritual enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ to leave my presence. I put on the whole armor of God and I stand against Satan's temptations, accusations, and deceptions. From this day forward I will seek to do only the will of my Heavenly Father.”

Prayer

“Dear Heavenly Father, I come to you as your child, bought out of slavery to sin by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are the Lord of the universe and the Lord of my life. I submit my body to you as a living and holy sacrifice. May you be glorified through my life and body. I now commit myself to walk after the Spirit. I commit myself to the renewing of my mind in order that I may be conformed to the image of your Son. I desire nothing more than to be like Him. I pray, believe, and do all this in the wonderful name of Jesus, my Lord and Savior. Amen.”

INCOMPLETE RESOLUTION?

After you have completed *The Steps to Transformation*, close your eyes and sit silently for a minute or two. Is it quiet in your mind? Most will sense the peace of God and a clear mind. A small percentage of believers don't, and usually they know that there is still some unfinished business with God. If you believe that you have been totally honest with God, and processed all *The Steps* to the best of your ability, then ask God as follows:

“Heavenly Father, it is my desire to be free from all of Satan’s devices, but I have a sense that there is still some unfinished business. I ask that in the moments and days ahead, you will help me bring to the surface anything I have overlooked, so that my freedom in Christ might be in its fulness. As those things come to my mind, I commit to acknowledging the lies which I have believed and replacing them with your truth. I pray that you will grant me the repentance that leads to knowledge of the truth that will set me free and heal my damaged emotions. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

Don't spend your time trying to figure out what is wrong with you if nothing new surfaces. You are only responsible to deal with what you know. Instead, commit yourself to find out what is right about you, that is, who you are in Christ. Some believers can sense a newfound freedom and then days or weeks later begin to struggle again. Chances are more of your past that needs to be dealt with is coming into your mind. Often, things are revealed one layer at a time for those who have experienced severe trauma. Trying to deal with every abuse in one setting may be too overwhelming for some. Instead, take things one at a time, and keep working. Soon, you will have dealt with everything.

The following shows clearly what is true about you!

IN CHRIST

I renounce the lie that I am rejected, unloved, or shameful. In Christ I am accepted. God says:

I am God's child (Romans 8:16]

I am Christ's adopted son/daughter (Romans 8:15)

I have been justified (Romans 5:1)

I am united with the Lord and I am one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17)

I have been bought with a price: I belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20)

I am a member of Christ's body (1 Corinthians 12:27)

I am a saint, a holy one (Ephesians 1:1)

I have been adopted as God's child (Ephesians 1:5)

I have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 2:18]

I have been redeemed and forgiven of all my sins (Colossians 1:14)

I am complete in Christ (Colossians 2:10)

I renounce the lie that I am guilty, unprotected, alone, or abandoned. In Christ I am secure. God says:

I am free from condemnation (Romans 8:1-2)

I am assured that all things work together for good (Romans 8:28)

I am free from any condemning charges against me (Romans 8:31-34)

I cannot be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39)

I have been established, anointed, and sealed by God (2 Corinthians 1:21-22)

I am confident that the good work God has begun in me will be perfected (Philippians 1:6)

I am a citizen of heaven (Philippians 3:20)

I am hidden with Christ in God (Colossians 3:3)

I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control (2 Timothy 1:7)

Grace, mercy and peace are available to me at all times

The power of sin over me has been broken (Romans. 6:2)

The power of Satan and his hosts has been broken by Christ (Colossians 2:15)

I renounce the lie that I am worthless, inadequate, helpless, or hopeless. In Christ I am significant.

God says:

I am a member of his body (Romans 12:5)

I am blessed with all spiritual blessings (Ephesians 1:3)

I have been prepared to bring forth fruit unto holiness (Romans 6:22)

I am Christ's ambassador in this world (2 Corinthians 5:20)

I am a temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19]

I am a minister of reconciliation for God (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

I am a fellow worker with God (2 Corinthians 6:1)

I am seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6)

I am God's workmanship, created for good works (Ephesians 2:10)

I may approach God with freedom and confidence (Ephesians 3:12)

I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me! (Philippians 4:13)

By the grace of God I am what I am (1 Corinthians 15:10)

MAINTAINING YOUR FREEDOM

It is exciting to experience your freedom in Christ, but what you have gained must be maintained. You have won an important battle, but the war goes on. To maintain your freedom in Christ and grow as a disciple of Jesus in the grace of God, you must continue renewing your mind to the truth of God's word. If you become aware of lies that you have believed, renounce them and choose the truth. If more painful memories surface then forgive those who hurt you and renounce any sinful part you played. Many people choose to go through *The Steps to Transformation* again on their own to make sure they have dealt with all their issues. Often new issues will surface. The process can assist you in a regular "housecleaning."

It is not uncommon after going through *The Steps* for people to have thoughts like: *Nothing has really changed; You're the same person you always were; or It didn't work.* In most cases you should just ignore it. We are not called to dispel the darkness; we are called to turn on the light. You don't get rid of negative thoughts by rebuking every one of them. You get rid of them by repenting and choosing the truth.

In the introduction you were encouraged to write down any false beliefs and lies that surfaced during *The Steps*. For the next 40 days verbally work through that list saying: *I renounce [the lies you have believed], and I announce the truth that [what you have chosen to believe is true based on God's word].*

To continue growing in the grace of God we suggest the following:

1. Get rid of or destroy any cult or occult objects in your home (Acts 19:18-20.).
2. Be part of a church where God's truth is taught with kindness and grace and get involved in a small group where you can be honest and real.
3. Read and meditate on the truth of God's word each day.
4. Don't let your mind be passive, especially concerning what you watch and listen to (for example, internet, music, TV). Actively take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.
5. Be a good steward of your health and develop a godly lifestyle of rest, exercise, and proper diet.
6. Say the following daily prayer for the next forty days and the other prayers as needed.

DAILY PRAYER AND DECLARATION

"Dear Heavenly Father, I praise you and honor you as my Lord and Savior. You are in control of all things. I thank you that you are always with me. You are the only all-powerful and only wise God. You are kind and loving in all your ways. I love you and thank You that I am united with Jesus and spiritually alive in Him. I choose not to love the world or the things in the world, and I crucify the flesh and all its passions.

Thank you for the life I now have in Christ. I desire to be guided by your Spirit and your word, so that I do not carry out the desires of the flesh. I declare my total dependence upon you and I

take my stand against Satan and all his lying ways. I choose to believe the truth of God's word despite what my feelings may say. I refuse to be discouraged; you are the God of all hope. Nothing is too difficult for you. I am confident that you will supply all my needs as I seek to live according to your word. I thank you that I can be content and live a responsible life through Christ who strengthens me.

I now take my stand against Satan and command him and all his evil spirits to depart from me. I choose to put on the full armor of God so I may be able to stand firm against all the devil's schemes. I submit my body as a living and holy sacrifice to you, and I choose to renew my mind by your living word. By so doing I will be able to prove that your will is good, acceptable, and perfect for me. In the name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, I pray. Amen.”

BEDTIME PRAYER

“Thank you, Lord that you have brought me into your family and have blessed me with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Thank you for this time of renewal and refreshment through sleep. I accept it as one of your blessings for your children and I trust you to guard my mind and my body during my sleep. As I have thought about you and your truth during the day, I choose to let those good thoughts continue in my mind while I am asleep. I commit myself to you for your protection against every attempt of Satan and his demons to attack me mentally during sleep. May the peace of God guard my mind from nightmares. I renounce all fear and cast every anxiety upon you. I commit myself to you as my Savior, my Life, and my spiritual Protector. May your peace be upon this place of rest. In the strong name of the Lord Jesus Christ I pray. Amen.”

PRAYER FOR LIVING IN A NON-CHRISTIAN ENVIRONMENT

After removing and destroying all objects of false worship from your possession, pray this aloud in the place where you live:

“Thank you, Heavenly Father, for a place to live and to be renewed by sleep. May I find a place of peace and spiritual safety in every room of this house. I renounce any allegiance given to false gods or spirits by the books and things that have been in this home. On the basis of my position as a child of God and an heir of God, who has all authority in heaven and on earth, I commit to godliness in this place in the things which I think, say and do. In Jesus' mighty name I pray. Amen.”

APPENDIX A

RENOUNCING SATANIC WORSHIP

Satan is the god of this world, and there are Satanists who worship him in secret societies and ceremonies. They meet from midnight to three in the morning when a horde of demons are sent to terrorize, deceive, and destroy the defenseless. If any Christian has been suddenly awakened at 3:00 a.m. or emotionally overcome with a sense of terror, they can immediately stop such attacks by submitting themselves to God in prayer and declaring the truth of God's word.

The weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, so physical attempts to stop the attack may prove futile. God knows our thoughts so we can always submit to Him inwardly, and instantly we will be freed from fear, knowing that Christ has stripped them of their power over us. It is up to us to call upon the name of the Lord during these times.

There are many victims who have been subjected to satanic ritual abuse. It is likely that they will develop alternate personalities to deal with the trauma. They are not in bondage to the trauma; they are in bondage to the lies they believe because of the trauma. Those lies are deeply embedded and need to be renounced so the truth can set them free. Satanic rituals counterfeit Christian worship. Such victims can start their recovery by renouncing satanic lies and assignments and announcing true Christian worship as follows:

I renounce ever signing my name over to Satan or having my name signed over to Satan.

I announce that my name is now written in the Lamb's Book of Life (Revelation 3:5; 20:15).

I renounce any ceremony in which I have been wed to Satan.

I announce that I am the bride of Christ (Ephesians 5:32; Revelation 19:7).

I renounce any and all covenants I made with Satan.

I announce that I am alive in Christ and under the new covenant of grace (2 Corinthians 3:6).

I renounce all satanic assignments for my life, including duties, marriage, and children.

I announce and commit myself to know and do only the will of God (Matthew 7:21-23).

I renounce all spirit guides assigned to me.

I accept only the leading of the Holy Spirit (1 John 4:1-6).

I renounce ever giving my blood in the service of Satan.

I trust only the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ to save me

I renounce ever eating flesh or drinking blood for satanic worship.

I acknowledge only the flesh and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ in Holy Communion (1 Corinthians 10:14-21).

I renounce all Guardians and Satanist parents who were assigned to me.

I announce that God is my Father and the Holy Spirit is my guardian by whom I am sealed.

I renounce any baptism whereby I have been identified with Satan.

I announce that I have been baptized into Christ Jesus (1 Corinthians 12:13).

I renounce any and all sacrifices that were made on my behalf by which Satan may claim ownership of me.

I announce that only the sacrifice of Christ has any hold on me. I belong to Jesus.

Those who have been ritually abused will slowly recover memories, and when they surface there will always be something to renounce and someone to forgive. If you suspect previous satanic activity or have periods of memory loss use the renunciations to ascertain the problem's source.

APPENDIX B

SEEKING THE FORGIVENESS OF OTHERS

If at any point during *The Steps to Transformation*, you become aware of something you have done which was offensive to your brother or sister in Christ, then it is your responsibility to go to that person and attempt to reconcile.

If someone has hurt you, then go to God. You don't need to go to the offender to forgive them, and in many cases that would be inadvisable. Your need to forgive another is primarily an issue between you and God. However, if you have offended another, you must go to them and ask for their forgiveness and make amends when appropriate. The following are steps to seeking forgiveness:

1. Be certain about what you did, that was wrong and why it was wrong.
2. Make sure you have forgiven them for whatever they have done to you.
3. Think through exactly how you will ask them to forgive you.
4. Be sure to state that what you did was wrong.
5. Be specific and admit that you did it.
6. Don't offer any excuses or try to defend yourself.
7. Place no blame on any others.
8. Don't expect that they will ask you for your forgiveness or let that be the reason for what you are doing.
9. Your confession should lead to the direct question: "Will you forgive me?"
10. Seek the right place and the right time, but the sooner the better.
11. Ask for forgiveness in person face-to-face.
12. Unless there is no other option, do not write a letter. It can be misunderstood, and others may see it who are not involved, and it could be used against you in a court case or otherwise.

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:18), but it doesn't always depend on you. If the other person doesn't want to be reconciled, it won't happen. Reconciliation between two people requires repentance and forgiveness by both parties. Rarely is there one who is completely innocent. However, if you have forgiven the other person and genuinely asked their forgiveness, then you have done all God requires of you. Be at peace with God.

PRAYER FOR RESTORATION OF BROKEN RELATIONSHIPS

I Have Sinned Against My Neighbor

“Dear Heavenly Father, I confess and repent of my sins against my neighbor [**spouse, parents, children, relatives, friends, co-workers, or brothers and sisters in Christ**]. I thank you for your forgiveness which you gave to me in Christ. I commit to asking for their forgiveness and want your grace to enable them to live with the consequences of my sin against them. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

My Neighbor Has Sinned Against Me

For those who have sinned against me I choose not to hold it against them in the future. I ask that I may be set free from the consequences of their sin or that you would give me the grace to live with the consequences without bitterness. I pray that you would heal my wounds and set me free so that I can live in peaceful coexistence with my neighbors, and with you. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.”

APPENDIX C

OVERCOMING FEAR

Fear is a God-given natural response when our physical or psychological safety is threatened. Fear always has an object, that is something or someone, and that object must be both present and potent, or that is perceived to have some power over us. It ceases to be a fear object when only one of those attributes is eliminated.

Almost all fears are related to the fear of death, people, and Satan. Death is still present in that it is an imminent possibility, but it is no longer potent (see 1 Corinthians 15:54-55). The believer who dies physically is still alive spiritually and fully in God's presence. Paul wrote, "For me to live *is* Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

People may threaten us physically, but Jesus told the members of His little flock not to fear those who can kill the body, but to "fear God, who can destroy both soul and body in hell." God is the one to fear above all else. And by that, we do not mean to say that we should be paralyzed in fear of God. What we are talking about is that we should fear nothing above God, for that is to place more power on the object of our fear, than we have God. The apostle Paul writes in Romans 8, that nothing and no one can separate us from God's love.

Satan still has a roar with which he seeks to terrorize people, but he is disarmed (Colossians 2:15). People tend to fear Satan more than they fear God, which elevates him as a greater object of worship. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. He is the ultimate fear object because He is omnipresent and omnipotent.

Courage is not the absence of fear. Courage is choosing to live by faith and doing what is right in the face of perceived fear-objects. Behind every irrational fear is a lie, which must be identified. Search God's word and pray to gain an understanding of the nature of your fears and the irrational lies that compel them as follows:

"Dear Heavenly Father, I confess that I have allowed fear to control my life. Thank you for your forgiveness. I choose to believe that you have not given me a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7). I renounce any spirit of fear operating in my life and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal any, and all, controlling fears in my life and the lies behind them. I desire to live by faith according to what you have said is true, in the power of your grace as I walk after the Spirit. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen."

Fears

- Fear of Death
- Fear of never loving or being loved
- Fear of Satan
- Fear of embarrassment
- Fear of failure
- Fear of being victimized
- Fear of rejection by people
- Fear of marriage
- Fear of divorce
- Fear of disapproval
- Fear of becoming/being homosexual
- Fear of going crazy
- Fear of financial problems
- Fear of pain/illness
- Fear of never getting married
- Fear of the future
- Fear of the death of a loved one
- Fear of confrontation
- Fear of being a hopeless case
- Fear of specific individuals
- _____
- _____
- _____
- Fear of losing my salvation
- Fear of not being loved by God
- Fear of having committed the unpardonable sin
- Other specific fears that come to mind now:
- _____
- _____
- _____

“Heavenly Father, I have allowed the fear of (**name the fear**) to control my life. I have believed (**state the lie**). I renounce all irrational fears and the lies behind them. I choose to live by faith, and acknowledge you as the only legitimate fear object in my life. In Jesus’ name I pray. Amen.”

ANALYZE YOUR FEARS AND WORK OUT A RESPONSIBLE PLAN:

When did you first experience the fear, and what events preceded the first experience? Knowing such experiences can help you identify the basis for your fears. Fear is a powerful motivator for good and evil. "Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men" (2 Corinthians 5:11).

How has Fear

1. Prevented you from doing what is responsible and right?
2. Compelled you to do something wrong and live irresponsibly?
3. Compromised your witness?

Once you have analyzed your fear, the next step is to work out a plan of responsible behavior. This may require baby steps at first, and it may be helpful to invite a trusted friend to help you make the first step. Don't set yourself up for failure. Determine in advance what your reaction will be to any fear-object when confronted. Finally, commit yourself to carry out the plan. Do the thing you fear and the death of fear is certain. The key to any cure is commitment.

How to succeed:

Nobody can keep you from having a successful life in God's kingdom if you follow these three principles:

1. Commit yourself to know God and His ways (Joshua 1:7-8).
2. Become the person God has created you to be (Philippians 3:12-14).
3. Be a good steward of the time, talent, and treasure that God has entrusted to you (1 Corinthians 4:1-2).

APPENDIX D

OVERCOMING ANXIETY

Anxiety is different from fear because it doesn't have an object. People are anxious because they are uncertain about an outcome or don't know what is going to happen tomorrow. It is normal to be concerned about things we value; if we weren't it would show a lack of care. For some the intensity and regularity of anxiety is out of proportion to the actual problem. We have been admonished not to be "full of care" about anything, but to let the peace of God reign in our hearts. (Philippians 4:6-7)

The root word for anxiety in Scripture means, "double-mindedness." The first step to become single-minded is to pray in accordance with God's truth. "Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6). Ask the Spirit of God to guide you through these steps to overcoming anxiety with the following prayer:

"Dear Heavenly Father, I am your child bought by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I am completely dependent on you and I need you. I know that without Jesus I can't do anything. You know the thoughts and intentions in my heart, and you know my situation from the beginning to the end. I feel as though I am double-minded, and I need your peace to guard my heart and my mind. I humble myself before you and choose to trust you to give me your peace. I trust You to meet all my needs according to your riches in glory in Christ Jesus, and to guide me into all truth. Please guide me so that I can fulfill my calling to live a responsible life by faith in the power of your Spirit." In Jesus' precious name I pray. Amen.

RESOLVE ANY PERSONAL AND SPIRITUAL CONFLICTS

The purpose of *The Steps to Transformation* is to help you submit to God and resist the devil through repentance and faith in God. Then you will have "the peace of God which passeth all understanding, [that] shall keep your hearts and your minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:7). Repentance means a change of mind. Worrisome people struggle with anxious thoughts. Since the Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by devils, (1 Timothy 4:1) it is imperative that we resist the devil and put on the whole armor of God. If you pay attention to a deceiving spirit, you will be a double-minded person.

STATE THE PROBLEM

A problem well-stated is half-solved. When people are anxious they can't see the forest for the trees so start by putting the problem in perspective: *Will it matter for eternity?* Being overly anxious is often more detrimental to the person than the negative consequences they are worrying about.

DIVIDE THE FACTS FROM THE ASSUMPTIONS

People may be fearful of the facts, but not anxious. When we don't know what's going to happen we tend to make assumptions, and people typically assume the worst. Very little good will happen if we act upon those assumptions.

DETERMINE WHAT YOU HAVE THE RIGHT OR ABILITY TO CONTROL

You are only responsible for the things you have the right and ability to control. You are not responsible for the things you don't. Your sense of worth is tied only to that which you are responsible for. If you're not living a responsible life, you should feel anxious! Don't try to cast your responsibility onto Jesus, He has already done His part, but He will not do our part. Cast your anxiety onto Him because His peace is available at all times.

FULFILL YOUR RESPONSIBILITIES

List everything that you can do that is related to the situation that is your responsibility and then commit yourself to do it.

THE REST IS GOD'S RESPONSIBILITY

The only thing left to do is pray and focus on the truth according to Philippians 4:6-8. Any leftover anxiety is probably due to your assuming responsibilities that God never intended you to have.

Session 9, Part A: Renewing the Mind

We started the course by looking at who you now are; a holy one. We looked at the fact that faith is simply finding out from God's word what is already true and then making a choice to believe it. We then considered the three enemies that tried to keep us from knowing the truth: the world, the flesh, and the devil. Finally, if you did business with God during the *Steps to Transformation*, you've taken hold of the freedom that Jesus won for you.

You became a brand-new creation when you first turned to Jesus. But now the stage is set for you to be transformed further. When the word transformed is used in the Bible, it refers to the process through which a wormy caterpillar becomes a beautiful butterfly. It does not mean change just a little; it means a really dramatic change.

How do you think that ongoing transformation happens? What do you need to do to experience it?

Romans 12:2 And be not conformed to this world: but **be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind**, that ye may prove what *is* that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.

Remember, the battle is for our minds. Our minds have been conditioned by the world, influenced by Satan, the puppet master behind it. So, we have developed a whole host of default beliefs and thought patterns that do not match up with God's word. In other words, they are not actually true.

(This dialogue takes place at a 50 year high school reunion.)

- “You were always the pretty one in class Jane.

You thought I was pretty. You always ignored me.

- We weren't ignoring you. We were just too intimidated to speak to you.

I spent 50 years struggling with low self-esteem because I thought you were ignoring me.

- Ha ha, isn't that silly.

My entire personality has been formed around the wrong information.”

Think about that; “my entire personality has been formed around the wrong information.” To a greater or lesser extent, that statement is true of every single one of us.

For much of our lives, our belief system has been shaped by our enemies. Isn't that sad? In other words, we've absorbed a whole load of lies and half-truths that really affect us. When we

became Christians, no one pressed a delete button up in our head. We still have the same old default programming, those same old thought patterns, or what the Bible calls “the flesh.”

Taking hold of our freedom is essential, but is not enough. Now we need to change that default thinking if we want to grow as disciples. We need to replace it with what is actually true. And the key to that is renewing our minds.

Strongholds

We touched briefly in Session 4 on the concept of a stronghold. Let's look at the only place in the New Testament that word appears, 2 Corinthians 10:3-5.

2 Corinthians 10:3 For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: ⁴ (For the weapons of our warfare *are* not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) ⁵ Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;

In the passage, Paul is clearly talking of something in the area of our thinking. He mentions imaginations and high things (thoughts) that set themselves up against the knowledge of God (that which God knows is true). He then talks about taking every thought captive to make it obedient to Christ.

The literal meaning of the word stronghold is “a fortress, a strong defensive building.” Have you ever seen a medieval castle up close? Not a Disney castle, but the real thing.

Now those are fortresses, solid rock buildings with few, and small windows surrounded by thicker walls, sometimes layers of wall after wall. The outer walls can be so thick you can drive a car on them. That's impressive.

In this context, a stronghold is a faulty belief that has been reinforced many times over a long period of time. It prevents you from knowing God and His ways. It's sitting there in your mind, apparently strong and impenetrable, like a thick castle wall.

Perhaps it started out back in childhood, when a little thought was planted in your mind by something that happened to you. Maybe you were bullied or worse. Perhaps someone said something negative about you which stuck with you: “You're useless. You're a failure. You're ugly. It's all your fault.”

Maybe the enemy lined up someone else at a different time who said or did the same thing. Since he knows your particular vulnerabilities, he ruthlessly tries to exploit them by lining up people or circumstances, one after the other, to give you the same wrong message.

The world then adds insult to injury with its constant bombardment of lies about what it means to be successful or happy or loved.

As it gets stronger and stronger, it becomes part of our default thinking and works itself out in our behavior. Then whenever someone suggests we could go for a particular job or lead a small group at church, a thought plays in our mind that says, "I couldn't do that, I'm useless at that." We have believed it for so long, it becomes part of our lives, and we can't imagine it ever being any different.

A good definition of a stronghold is **a belief or habitual pattern of thinking that is not consistent with what God tells us is true.**

Feelings of inferiority, insecurity, and inadequacy are all strongholds because no child of God is inferior, insecure, or inadequate.

Is any child of God dirty or ugly? Absolutely not. It isn't true. It just feels true. It's a lie that's been reinforced so many times that it literally has a stronghold on you and causes you to think and act in ways that contradict God's word.

Strongholds can have two faces: 1) when we know what we should do, but don't seem able to do it and 2) when we know we shouldn't do something, but don't seem able to stop. So, if that's how it feels, we're talking about strongholds getting in the way.

A little later, we will introduce you to a stronghold busting method, which is a structured way of demolishing a stronghold.

Session 9, Part B. Renewing the Mind

How Strongholds are Established

There are three ways that strongholds can be established in our minds.

Our Environment:

We have already seen how we learn values and beliefs from the world we live in. It can also work at the micro-level in our home, school or work environment.

Imagine you were raised in the home of an alcoholic father and there are three boys in the family. As the father's problem continues to develop, it turns into domestic violence. When their father comes home drunk the three boys develop different ways of coping. The oldest one feels he can stand up to his dad. "If you lay a hand on me, you'll regret it."

The middle one learns a different way of coping with it. "Hi dad, can I get you something?"

The third runs away and hides in his room.

Twenty years later, the father is long-gone and the three boys are adults. When each one of them is confronted with a hostile situation, how do you think they will respond? The chances are the oldest one will fight, the middle one will accommodate, and the youngest one will run away.

We call them strongholds, but psychologists might call them "defense mechanisms." There are ways of thinking and acting that have become deeply ingrained in the mind.

Traumatic Experiences

It doesn't necessarily take something to be repeated over a long period of time to set up a stronghold. A one-time powerful traumatic experience can do it because of its intensity; a divorce, a rape, or a death in the home.

For example, if you were abused, you may come to see yourself as a victim, helpless, never able to stand up for yourself. At one time that may have been true, but that's not true anymore if you are a child of God.

Remember, it's not the traumatic experience itself that produces the stronghold. It's the lie we believe as a result of that traumatic experience. If one person is violently attacked, they may be able to shrug it off as an isolated incident, but for someone else it might set up a lie in their mind that all men are dangerous. It's totally understandable, but it's not true.

Whatever has happened to you in the past, you can go back to that traumatic event and process it again from the position of who you are now; a holy child of God.

No Christian, no matter how bad their past experiences, has to remain a victim. God doesn't change our past; He sets us free from it.

Giving in to Temptation

Tempting thoughts that are not dealt with, will immediately lead on to actions. Repeating the action will lead to a habit. Exercising the habit long enough will produce a stronghold.

Satan is actively trying to tempt you into the same sin, time and time again, because he wants to set up strongholds in your life so that he can keep you going round in circles feeling hopeless.

The Bible is clear that there is a way out of every temptation.

If you drive a truck across a muddy field, it will create some ruts or grooves in the field. If you drive the same way every day, over a period of time, the ruts will get deeper and deeper and more noticeable. Eventually, they will be so well established that you could let go of the steering wheel and the truck would drive itself.

That's fine, as long as the ruts are going in the right direction. Strongholds are like ruts that are heading in the wrong direction.

If you don't intentionally change the direction, you're taking your hands off the steering wheel of your life and you're likely to end up somewhere you don't want to go.

The problem with strongholds is that they lead us to act on lies, false information, and cause our feelings to be out of line with reality. You may feel rejection when you're not actually being rejected. You may feel helpless to change when you're not helpless at all. For example, you may feel you'll never get out of a particular sin, when in fact you have everything that you need to walk away from it. If you live like this, there's no way you can become a mature, fruitful disciple.

Freedom and Maturity Are Not the Same

The moment you turned to Jesus, you were not expected to be instantly mature. When babies are born, they drink milk for a while before they move on to solid food.

But if babies keep acting like babies as they get older, they become less attractive.

Any Christian can become an old Christian. All it takes is time.

Any Christian can become a mature Christian, but many don't because they don't know how to deal with their strongholds.

But every Christian can tear these strongholds down.

Session 9, Part C: Renewing the Mind

Demolishing Strongholds

So how do you deal with these strongholds?

Close Doors Open to the Enemy

In the steps to transformation, you have taken away the footholds the enemy has in your life. And that's a key reason that you can now demolish strongholds, even those that you may have tried time and again to deal with in the past but failed.

There is an order here: retake the territory in your soul from the enemy – then demolish the stronghold – then prevent the return of the enemy or the rebuilding of the stronghold. You have already done the first one, now we are talking about the second part; demolishing the stronghold.

Take Personal Responsibility for the Whole of Your Life

This is not about asking God or someone else to do something in order for us to get free or grow. You already have everything you need to live a godly life.

In the way God has set things up, some things are His responsibility, and some things are our responsibility. If we don't do the things that He has given us to do, they simply won't get done.

No one else can forgive for you, and no one else can choose to believe the truth for you.

In the passage we looked at, we are the ones pulling down the strongholds. We demolish thoughts (imagination) that set themselves up against the truth. We take captive every thought. No one else can do it for us.

Take Every Thought Captive

Paul tells us to take every thought captive.

2 Corinthians 10:5 Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and **bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;**

You can think of your mind as being like an airport and you are the air traffic controller. A lot of thoughts ask for permission to land. But, you have complete control over which will land and which will be turned away.

We are in a battle between truth and lies. Every stronghold is an entrenched lie. The key to demolishing it is to uncover the lie behind it and then replace the lie with the truth.

This story is from a counselor:

“When I first met Rachel, she was the epitome of a Christian who had lost all hope. She was covered in bandages from injuries that she had inflicted on herself. She had difficulty stringing two sentences together because of drug abuse. She had suffered from eating disorders for years. In fact, it's a miracle she was still alive at all. She had just been thrown out of a psychiatric hospital, a self-harm unit, for a week, because she had self-harmed.”

“A local church took her in and wanted to work through this course and the steps with her. At their request, I was present when she went through the steps. At the end, her face had completely changed. She had done real business with God and she broke into a beautiful smile and said I'm free.”

“But is that the end of the story? You see, it was a relatively quick, straightforward process to take hold of your freedom. But staying free is another question.”

“Much as we encourage you to do when you went through the steps, I was keeping an ear open for faulty beliefs, lies that she believed. So at the end, I said to her, It's great that you're free. Now it's important to ensure you stay free. And to do that it's important to work out what lies you've been believing and take steps to renew your mind. It seems to me that the main thing you need to work on is the lie that you're dirty.”

“The big smile instantly banished and she looked at me in anger and said that's not right at all. Oh, I said. It's just that you seem to have mentioned feeling dirty a lot, especially in the forgiveness step. Yes, she said. I am dirty. It's not a lie.”

“Past abuse had taught Rachel to see herself in her body as dirty. Her subsequent anorexia, self-harm and addictions were simply ways she used to try to cope with or blot out those negative feelings.”

“Although by going through the steps process she had kicked the enemy out of her life and was free. If she had been left at that point, still believing the lie that she was dirty, what would have happened? She would almost certainly have spiraled back down into her former coping mechanisms, because the pain of feeling dirty would still be there.”

“I got her to have a look at some verses in the Bible such as 1 Corinthians 6:11.”

1 Corinthians 6:11 And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

“Then I said to Rachel, so what are you going to choose to believe? What your past experiences are telling you, or what God says about you? She was quiet for a long time, and then she said, I suppose what God says.”

“We then taught Rachel, a tool we call *Stronghold Busting*, a way to renew your mind. We'll teach the same process to you in a minute, but first, let me tell you the end of Rachel's story. The next time they saw her at the hospital was a couple of months later when she walked in dressed in her nurse's uniform; having been able to resume the career that she had had to give up. She said hi and she looked so different. They had no idea who she was. She had been transformed through the renewing of her mind.”

Be Transformed Through the Renewing of Your Mind

So, what is stronghold busting?

First of all, you need to determine the lie that you have been believing. Anyway, you're thinking that is not in line with what God says about you in the Bible. In doing this, ignore what you feel, but commit yourself wholeheartedly to God's truth.

In Rachel's case, the lie was “I am dirty.”

It's helpful at this point to write down what effect believing the lie has had in your life. For Rachel, it led her to feeling bad about herself and then into anorexia and various addictions. Realizing the negative effect should spur us on to tear the stronghold down.

Then find as many Bible verses as you can that state the truth and write them down. If there are a lot of verses, pick the top seven or eight.

Write a declaration based on the formula:

I renounce the lie that...

I announce the truth that...

So, Rachel would have said something like, “I renounce the lie that I am dirty, I announce the truth that I have been washed clean by Jesus; that I am a holy one.”

Finally, read the Bible verses and say the declaration out loud every day for 40 days, all the time reminding yourself that God is truth and that if he has said it, it really is true for you.

Why 40 days? Psychologists tell us that it takes around six weeks to form or break a habit.

Once you have dealt with any footholds of the enemy, a stronghold is simply a habitual way of thinking. Can you break a habit? Of course, but it takes some effort over a period of time.

Don't treat this as some kind of magic, however. It's not the speaking out that will change you. And there's not some special formula that works for everyone. Don't get all religious, either. If you miss a day or two, God still loves you, just pick it up the next day and carry on.

Do persevere until you have completed a total of 40 days. In fact, you may wish to go on longer and you will almost certainly want to come back and do it again at some point in the future.

It may sound easy, but it's not because the lie feels true to you. It's like watching a concrete wall being demolished. It withstands 10, then 15, then thirty, then 35 blows with no visible sign of being weakened. That's how it can feel as you work through a stronghold buster day after day. However, each day you renounce the lie and commit yourself to truth is making a difference.

A wall might appear not to have been weakened right up to, say, 37 swings of a demolition ball. However, sooner or later, say on the 38th swing. A few small cracks will appear. On the next, these cracks will get bigger until finally the wall completely collapses. Even though only the final three swings appear to have had an effect, without the previous 37, the wall would not have fallen.

There are some examples of completed stronghold Busters in your participants guide. One of them is on comfort eating. Another is on being drawn to Internet porn. They're meant to help you get the idea, but if those issues are live ones for you, it's much more effective if you work out your own stronghold buster from scratch rather than taking a ready-made one.

Commit For the Long Term

Philippians 3:13-15 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but *this* one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

We need to take a long-term view. If we feel we have to do everything at once, we are likely to start, but not to finish; to burn out and conclude that we have failed. If, however, we set out a long-term plan, we can deal with one area at a time and make sure that we really have changed our thinking before moving on. In a year, we could deal with eight or nine areas and that would make a tremendous difference.

Every single one of us can leave here today knowing that absolutely nothing and no one can stop us from becoming the people God wants us to be, as long as we play our part and use the weapons he has already put in our hands.

Witness:

Write down the two most important things you have learned in this course so far. How do you think you could explain them to a not yet Christian?

In the Coming Week:

Complete your Stronghold Buster for the most significant lie you have uncovered and start going through it.

Stronghold Busting

Work Out the Lie You Have Been Believing

This is any way you have learned to think that is not in line with what God says in the Bible. Ignore what you feel, because by definition, the lie will feel true.

Say What Effect Believing the Lie Has Had in Your Life

Imagine how different your life would be if you did not believe this. What would you be able to do that you currently don't do?

Find as many Bible Verses as You Can That Say What is Actually True and Write Them Down

If there are a lot of verses, pick the top seven or eight.

Write a Declaration

Base it on this formula: I renounced the lie that... I announce the truth that...

If you prefer, you could use alternative language such as I reject the lie that... I embrace the truth that... Or I say no to the lie that... I say yes to the truth that...

Read the Bible verses and say the declaration out loud every day for 40 days.

Remember that for a long time the verses and the declaration may not feel true. Remind yourself that God is the truth and that if He has said it, it really is true. And, it's not just true for other people, it's true for you.

Stronghold Buster Example #1

Taking Comfort in Food Rather Than God

The lie: That overeating brings lasting comfort.

Effects in my life: Harmful to health. Getting overweight. Giving the enemy a foothold.

Stopping my growth to maturity.

Proverbs 25:28 He that *hath* no rule over his own spirit *is like* a city *that is* broken down, *and* without walls.

Galatians 5:16 *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. ²⁴ And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

2 Corinthians 13:4 For though he was crucified through weakness, yet he liveth by the power of God. For we also are weak in him, but we shall live with him by the power of God toward you.

“God, I renounce the lie that overeating brings lasting comfort. I announce the truth that you are the God of all comfort, and that your unfailing love is my only legitimate and real comfort. I affirmed that I now live by the Spirit and do not have to gratify the desires of the flesh. Whenever I feel in need of comfort, instead of turning to foods, I choose to praise you and be satisfied. Fill me afresh with your spirit and live through me as I grow in self-control. Amen.”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40

Stronghold Buster Example #2

Always Feeling Alone

The Lie: that I am abandoned and forgotten.

Effects in my life: withdrawing from others, thinking other people don't like me. Seeming aloof, frightened.

Romans 8:38 For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come,³⁹ Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 4:9 Persecuted, **but not forsaken**; cast down, but not destroyed;

Ephesians 3:12 In whom **we have boldness and access** with confidence by the faith of him.

Ephesians 2:18 For through him we both **have access by one Spirit unto the Father**.

Romans 8:16 The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that **we are the children of God**:

“Dear Heavenly Father. I say no to the lie that I am abandoned and forgotten and will be left on my own. I am your child and your Spirit bears witness to that truth. I have not been forsaken by you, even in my darkest moments.”

“I say yes to the truth that you love me. I am never alone because you are always with me by your omnipresence and by your Spirit who lives in me. You have given me unrestricted and unlimited access to you as your (son/daughter). And absolutely nothing can separate me from your love. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40

Stronghold Buster Example #3

Feeling Irresistibly Drawn to Pornography

The Lie: that I cannot resist the temptation to look at porn.

Effects in my life: Deep sense of shame. Warped sexual feelings. Unable to relate to other people as God intended. Harmful to my marriage.

Romans 6:11 Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be **dead indeed unto sin**, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord. ¹² **Let not sin therefore reign** in your mortal body, that ye should obey it in the lusts thereof. ¹³ **Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin:** but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members *as* instruments of righteousness unto God. ¹⁴ **For sin shall not have dominion over you:** for ye are not under the law, but under grace.

1 Corinthians 6:19 What? know ye not that **your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost** *which is* in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

1 Corinthians 10:13 There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God *is* faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make **a way to escape**, that ye may be able to bear *it*.

2 Corinthians 4:10 Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that **the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body.**

Galatians 5:16 *This* I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall **not fulfil the lust of the flesh.**

Galatians 5:22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, ²³ Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. ²⁴ And they that are Christ's have **crucified the flesh** with the affections and lusts.

“Heavenly Father, I reject the lie that I cannot resist the temptation to look at pornography. I embrace the truth that God will always provide a way out when I am tempted, and I will choose to take it. I announce the truth that if I live by the Spirit and I choose to take that way of escape, I will not gratify the desires of the flesh, and the fruit of the Spirit, including self-control, will grow in me. I count myself dead to sin and refuse to let sin reign in my body or be my master. Today and every day, I give my body to God as a temple of the Holy Spirit, to be used only for what honors him. I declare that the power of sin is broken in me. I choose to submit completely to God and I choose to deny Satan an opening to my soul. I commit to having the life of Christ made manifest in my mortal body.”

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30
31 32 33 34 35 36 37 38 39 40

Session 10, Part A: Relating to Others

Introduction

From a counselor: It is possible to offend someone and know nothing about it.

“Habakkuk 3:17-18 has always been one of my favorite passages.”

Habakkuk 3:17 Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither *shall* fruit *be* in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and *there shall be* no herd in the stalls: ¹⁸ Yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

“When I was a teenager, I used to quote this Bible reference in Christmas cards that I sent to other young people in my church group. My handwriting has never been a strong point, and a lot of young people have never heard of a book of the Bible called Habakkuk. So, I now know my scrawled Hab. 3:17-18 was usually read as Hebrews 3:17-18 slightly but significantly different.”

“Anyone who bothered looking up the passage they thought I was referring to in the book of Hebrews would find this:”

Hebrews 3:17 But with whom was he grieved forty years? *was it* not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸ And to whom swore he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not? ¹⁹ So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

“Apparently, this had happened to a lot of people until one courageous young lady took me aside and asked me what sin I thought she had committed.”

“I have discovered that it's very easy to go through life giving offense to people and be completely unaware of what you've done. In this session, we're going to consider how God wants us to relate to other people and why that is so crucial.”

The Importance of Unity

Romans 12:5 So we, *being* many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another.

1 Corinthians 12:12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also *is* Christ.

1 Corinthians 12:13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether *we be* Jews or Gentiles, whether *we be* bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

Free Will Gives Us Responsibility

In his wisdom and humility, God has given every human being personal responsibility for the choices we make.

He could have chosen to make us like robots, so that if we wanted to criticize what someone else believes, or want to lash out against them in anger, we'd find that we just couldn't do it. The words wouldn't come out. But he hasn't done that.

He gave us free will. We are completely free to choose not to be one with other saints, and God does not overrule us, despite what the scripture says.

Changing the Spiritual Atmosphere

How does this work? Well, why do you think more people in our community don't respond to the gospel? You may rightly point out that techniques could be improved, that there aren't enough workers going into the harvest, or any number of other perfectly valid reasons.

But with our western world view, we tend to overlook clear verses like 2 Corinthians 4:4.

2 Corinthians 4:4 In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Compare this with Ephesians 4:

Ephesians 4:1 I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye **walk worthy** of the vocation wherewith ye are called, ² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, **forbearing one another in love;** ³ **Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.** ⁴ **There is one body,** and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling;

There is more going on than each individual's response to God. Every community is a potential harvest field, but the seeds need light in order to grow. Satan wants to keep it in darkness, but as the members of the body of Christ refuse sin and function as the one body that it actually is, Satan can't keep communities in the dark, and so, light comes in. The result is that more people will respond to the gospel as the workers go out into the harvest field.

It seems that godliness and unity can affect a positive change in what you might call the spiritual atmosphere.

Let me give you a couple of illustrations.

Imagine a scene of a huge field of wheat ready to be harvested, and in one corner there is a man cutting the wheat with a sip, a small handheld blade. He works and works, but makes

hardly any impression. It's obvious that he can only harvest a tiny part of the potential of that field.

Yet back in the farmyard is a brand-new combine harvester, the sort that could do the whole job in a couple of hours, but it can't be used because it's in pieces; all of the parts are scattered across the farmyard.

Here's the second illustration.

Imagine a huge gushing waterfall coming over a cliff. A massive amount of water is flowing down.

Yet, the riverbed at the bottom is bone dry because no water is flowing out. The land at the bottom is a desert where nothing is growing. The reason there is no water is because there are deep fissures in the riverbed. And the water is simply disappearing down the cracks. If the cracks could be filled in, then the water would run down the riverbed and irrigate the land and plants would begin to grow.

If God's people are not genuinely united we will only ever reach a tiny part of the harvest. And even though God is "abounding toward us in all wisdom and prudence," the effects will be nowhere as great as they could be unless we are united.

We can pray to the Lord to save people and pray for him to send His Spirit upon us, but the truth is, He has already given us everything we need to do that. We already have His Spirit.

But if we're not working together, with the way He has set things up, there is nothing more He can do. He has given us specific responsibilities.

This isn't easy, but it's crucial. In this session we want to look at how we can do our part to keep the unity of the Spirit, whether that's in our own family, in our friendship group, in our own church fellowship, amongst the various ethnic groups in our area or in the wider church family where we live.

Understanding How God Comes to Us

Ephesians 4:32 And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Being Aware of Our Own Weakness

Look with me at something back in the book of Isaiah.

When Isaiah was praying in the temple, he saw a vision of God.

Isaiah 6:1 In the year that king Uzziah died I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple. ² Above it stood the seraphims: each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. ³ And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, *is* the LORD of hosts: the whole earth *is* full of his glory. ⁴ And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke.

If that happened to you, would you immediately start thinking of the shortcomings of other people? No. You would do what Isaiah did. Look at the next verse.

Isaiah 6:5 Then said I, Woe *is* me! for I am undone; because I *am* a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.

This is an inter-dispensational principle: When we see God for who He is, we don't become aware of the sin of others, but of our own sin. And when we're lukewarm in our relationship with God, we tend to overlook our own sin and see the sin of others and want to point it out to them.

Session 10, Part B: Relating to Others

We Are Responsible for Our Own Character and Others' Needs

A counselor's testimony:

"I don't know about you, but what comes naturally to me as a wife is to feel the responsibility to point out my husband's faults. With the best of intentions, of course. Looking after his best interest. If I don't do it, who else will, right?"

"Is that the responsibility God has given me toward him and toward others?"

Romans 14:4 Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

Yes, each servant is responsible to his own master. It's not for us to judge someone else's character because it's none of our business. A growing disciple is someone who is becoming more and more like Jesus in character. No one else can do that for us and we can't do it for someone else.

"I'm sure it doesn't happen to you, but I also get tired of having to remind my husband that he should be meeting my needs. Hey, give me some credit. At least, I don't expect him to intuitively know what my needs are. Like I did in our first years of marriage, I've given him a list."

"Don't I have the right to expect this from him?"

Philippians 2:3 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.* ⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others. ⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

"Ouch. So not only do I have no right to expect my needs to be met by others. I have a responsibility to meet their needs."

So our responsibilities can be summed up as developing our own character and meeting the needs of others.

Those of us who are mothers or fathers understand this well. We assume the role of serving and meeting our children's needs selflessly, and we assume it with joy. That is the Christ-like attitude. Can we extend that to all of our relationships?

Focus On Responsibilities Rather Than Rights

In every relationship, we have rights and we also have responsibilities. Where should we put the emphasis, on our responsibilities or on our rights?

Take your Christian marriage, for example. It's true that the Bible tells wives to submit to their husbands, and the husband might claim that as his right. But he is also given a corresponding responsibility to love his wife, as Christ loved the church. And just think what that means. Which should he emphasize, his right or his responsibility?

A wife may nag her husband because she thinks she has a right to expect him to be the spiritual head of the household. It's true that he has been given that calling by God. She, on the other hand, has been given a responsibility to love and respect her husband. Where should she put the emphasis on her right, or on her responsibility?

What about parents? Should they focus on their right to expect their children to be obedient, or on their responsibility to bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord and discipline them when they are disobedient?

Does being a member of a local church give you the right to criticize others or to tear apart someone else's doctrine? Or, does it give you a responsibility to submit to those in authority over you and relate to others with the same love and acceptance Jesus has shown you?

When we stand before Jesus at the end of our earthly lives, where will He put the emphasis? Will he say to me, "Michael, did everyone do for you everything they should have? Or, will He focus on how well I loved and taught those He put in my care?

If we can learn to serve and love other people without expecting anything in return, it's liberating. Instead of being constantly disappointed by others, we will be truly and pleasantly surprised when people serve and love us.

Learning not to focus constantly on the failings of others, and choosing to think well of them is so much easier in the long run, than always feeling you've been let down and badly treated.

What About When Others Do Wrong?

So, we're to focus on our own character and responsibilities and to think well of others and meet their needs. But what about when other people do wrong; do we just ignore it?

Think for a minute about the last time you went wrong with yourself. How easy did you find it to apologize to someone you offended? Did you even apologize properly? Or did you say something like, "I'm sorry if what I said offended you, I didn't know you were so sensitive."

What does that actually mean? In effect, you're saying, "What I said was perfectly reasonable and you shouldn't have taken offense."

A proper apology takes responsibility for what you did. "I'm really sorry I spoke like that. I was wrong. Will you forgive me?" Most of us do eventually get to the point where we're honest about our feelings, but it can be a real struggle.

That's a very important thing to bear in mind when we consider alerting other people to their feelings.

It's true that we can often see the issue in someone else's life much more clearly than they can. But biblically, whose responsibility is it to be the conscience of another person and persuade them of their sin, which, as we've seen, is no easy task? That's not your role. It's the role of the Holy Spirit.

You can be sure that the Holy Spirit is on duty, not asleep, and is already gently convicting them. They're already engaged in an internal battle with Him. But the moment we try to intervene and point out the sin, they start to have that struggle with us instead of Him, and it's not fun.

What? Leave it to the Holy Spirit to tell them their feelings, their failings? Yes. But haven't I been given the ministry of condemnation? No. God has given us the ministry of reconciliation.

2 Corinthians 5:18 And all things *are* of God, who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation;

We need to understand just how hard it is for most people to own up to sin. Which is harder to say, "I'm sorry I did it", or "Will you forgive me?" It's "I did it."

If I caught my son throwing stones at my car, the conversation might go something like this: "You just threw a stone at my car. No, I didn't. Look, I saw you with my own eyes. I'm sorry, Dad."

Has he confessed it yet? No.

"What are you sorry for? Oh, you know. What is it that you're sorry for? Will you forgive me?"

Has he confessed it now? No.

"Of course I'll forgive you. What for? Well, you know."

Here's another conversation between two church members to illustrate further.

“Things aren't right between you and me at the moment. Will you forgive me? Of course, what for? You know the things going on between you and me at the moment. What things? Oh, forget it then.”

Session 10, Part C: Relating to Others

Discipline Yes, Judgment No

While it is the role of the Holy Spirit to convict people of their sin, Paul does talk about disciplining Christians who do wrong. For example, look at Galatians 6:1.

Galatians 6:1 Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

How can we reconcile the fact that we are told not to judge another man's servant, but to still carry out discipline?

Judgment and discipline are different things. Judgment is always related to character. However, discipline is always related to behavior.

Discipline has to be based on something we have seen or heard. If we personally observe another Christian sinning, the biblical principle tells us to confront the person alone. The objective is to win them back to God.

If they don't repent, then we're to take two or three other witnesses who observed the same sin. If the person still won't listen, then it may be brought before the church, just as Paul did with a man in the Corinthians assembly. The purpose of this process is not to condemn them, but to restore them spiritually and as a part of the assembly.

If there are no other witnesses, however, it's just your word against theirs, so the best thing to do is to leave it right there. God knows all about it, and he will deal with it in His perfect wisdom.

It is His job to bring conviction, not ours.

We are so often tempted to judge a person's character. Suppose I catch a fellow Christian telling an obvious lie and I confront them. I could say, "You're a liar," but that would be judgment because I've questioned their character.

It would be much better to say, did you just say something that's not true? That calls attention to their behavior, not their character.

Better still might be, "You're not a liar, so why did you just say something that's not true?" The truth is, they are a child of God who just acted out of character. The first expression implies that they have the character of a liar and indicates that they cannot change. The other two say nothing about their character. They simply call out a behavior issue.

If you point out someone's sinful behavior, you're giving them something they can work with. But calling somebody a liar or stupid, clumsy, proud or evil is an attack on their character, and no one can instantly change their character.

Discipline and Punishment Are Not the Same

There is also a major difference between discipline and punishment.

Punishment is related to the Old Testament concept of paying evil for evil and “an eye for an eye.” It looks backward to the past. God does not punish Christians. The punishment we all deserve fell on Christ.

Discipline, however, looks forward to the future. God may discipline us in order to develop our character so that we don't continue to make the same mistakes.

A parent who does not discipline their child for refusing to share a cake is not helping that child.

So, the point of discipline is to help produce a harvest of righteousness and peace, and to become more like Christ.

The parent will get their reward when they see that their child has learned to share. And of course, the child will be a better person for being disciplined, even though it felt painful at the time.

It's wonderful that we don't have a God who punishes us. Instead, we have a God who loves us so much that He sometimes makes the hard choice of allowing us to go through rough circumstances in order to prepare us for the future and to help us become more like Christ in our character.

When We're Attacked

What about when the shoe is on the other foot? How do we respond if someone attacks us? Should we be defensive? We certainly will be tempted to be.

We don't need to defend ourselves anymore. If you're wrong, then you don't have a defense. If you're right, you don't need a defense. Christ is our defense. We need to entrust ourselves to God and leave the outcome with Him.

I remember Neil Anderson telling a story about when he was a pastor. A woman in his church made an appointment to see him. She wanted to discuss a list of the good and bad points about him she had written. There were just two good points and a whole page of bad ones. When she read each point, he was tempted to defend himself, but he kept quiet. When she was finished, he said to her, “it must have taken a lot of courage to share that list with me. What do you suggest I do?”

At that point she started crying and said, “Oh, it's not you, it's me.” That led to a positive discussion that helped her find a new, more suitable role in the church. Now what would have

happened if he had defended himself? She would have been even more convinced that she was right.

If you can, learn not to be defensive. When someone exposes your character flaws or attacks your performance, you may have an opportunity to turn the situation around and minister to that person.

Nobody tears down another person from his position of strength. Those who are critical of others are either hurting or immature. If we're secure in our own identity, in Christ, we can learn not to be defensive when people attack us.

Let me read a poem that expresses how we can be the person God created us to be, no matter what other people and the world throw at us.

People are unreasonable, illogical and self-centered. Love them anyway.

If you do good, people will accuse you of selfish ulterior motives. Do good anyway.

If you are successful, you will win false friends and true enemies succeed anyway.

The good you do today will be forgotten tomorrow. Do good anyway.

Honesty and frankness will make you vulnerable. Be honest and frank anyway.

The biggest people with the biggest ideas can be shot down by the smallest people with the smallest minds. Think big anyway.

People favor underdogs, but follow only top dogs. Fight for the underdog anyway.

What you spend years building may be destroyed overnight build anyway.

People really need help, but may attack you if you help them. Help people anyway.

Give the world the best you've got and you'll get kicked in the teeth. Give the world the best you've got anyway.

Romans 12:18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men.

The crucial phrase is "as much as lieth in you." Conflict is a normal part of life; it's nothing to be feared.

You won't always have a happy, harmonious relationship with others. It is how you handle the conflict that matters.

So, are you willing to do the "as much as lieth in you" stuff. Are you ready to lay down your preferences and prejudices and come to others the way God comes to you? Are you willing to commit yourself to the unity of the body of Christ so you can be a part of the answer?

If so. Let's pray.

“Dear Heavenly Father, thank you that you do not judge me and that Christ took the punishment that I deserved upon Himself so I would not have to. Thank you for your love for me and that you discipline me to help me produce righteousness and peace. Thank you for your word which produces your love in me, even when they have done me wrong. Thank you that, in Christ, I now have the opportunity to live at peace with everyone. I choose to commit to walk in unity with the body of Christ so that the life of your Son might be manifest in me. Amen.

We have some homework for you this week.

At the beginning of the next session in your participants guide is a questionnaire entitled “What Do I Believe?” It will be very helpful if you can complete it before the next time.

Reflection

Spend some time asking God for wisdom as to how best to relate to others in your life. First, consider who the main people in your life are. Then think about how you can best relate to them. Is there a need to stop judging their character instead of offering loving discipline or forgive them? How can you meet their needs?

Witness

How can you be a good neighbor to those who live on your street? How could you get to know them better so you'd have a better idea of what their needs are?

In The Coming Week

Take some time to evaluate your faith by completing the “What Do I Believe?” questionnaire on the next page. Give some serious thought as to how you would complete the sentences.

What Do I Believe?

- | | Low | | | High | |
|--------------------------------------|-----|---|---|------|---|
| 1. How successful am I? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I would be more successful if _____ | | | | | |
| 2. How significant am I? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I would be more significant if _____ | | | | | |
| 3. How fulfilled am I? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I would be more fulfilled if _____ | | | | | |
| 4. How satisfied am I? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I would be more satisfied if _____ | | | | | |
| 5. How happy am I? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I would be happier if _____ | | | | | |
| 6. How much fun am I having? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I would have more fun if _____ | | | | | |
| 7. How secure am I? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I would be more secure if _____ | | | | | |
| 8. How peaceful am I? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| I would be more peaceful if _____ | | | | | |

Session 11, Part A: What's Next?

Making Freedom A Way of Life.

We don't want this to be one of those courses that you enjoy, but then as time passes, the principles you learn just fade away. Our objective is that these principles become a part of your everyday life so that you'll bear fruit that will last. What we've taught is very straightforward. There are three main points.

1. Know who you are in Jesus.

You are a holy one who can come boldly into God's presence at any time.

2. Resolve your personal and spiritual issues.

This is about repenting and getting back on track if you fall into a sin or have some other issue. Hopefully you now know how to go about this. We recommend that you use the *Steps to Transformation* on a regular basis, like you have a regular service for your car.

3. Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.

Stronghold bursting really works. As you keep building your spiritual muscles, remember it will feel like a complete waste of time, but you'll see progress as long as you keep working.

The Road Ahead

In this session, we want to consider where you're heading for the rest of your life. In your book, there's a questionnaire entitled *What do I Believe?* If you haven't completed it yet, do it quickly now.

This survey will help you identify what you actually believe right now, assuming your basic needs for food, shelter and safety are met.

We're daily motivated by how we can be successful, significant, secure and so on. How you answered those questions or the way you completed the sentences, "I would be more successful if... I would be more significant if..." reflects what you really believe.

Would it be acceptable, do you think, for a Christian to answer every question with the five? If you feel uncomfortable about that, the chances are you may not see yourself in the way God does. Does God want you to be successful? Does he want you to feel secure? Well, He certainly hasn't called you to be insecure, insignificant or a failure.

We're going to look at each of those eight areas.

Success Comes From Having the Right Goals

We looked at life goals back in Session 6. Success is all about whether you achieve your goals. So, if you want to be successful in God's terms, it's important to understand what His life goal is for you.

Before we do that, let me ask you a very important question. If God wants something done, can it be done?

To put it another way, would God ever say, "I have something for you to do, but I know you won't be able to do it. Just give it your best shot."

That wouldn't be fair. It's like saying to your child, I want you to mow the lawn. I know the mower doesn't work and there's no fuel, but try your best anyway. That would be frustrating.

Whatever life goal God has for you, you can be sure that no circumstance and no person can stop you from achieving it. God loves you too much to give you something you couldn't do.

God's goal is about building our character. His primary concern is not so much what we do, but who we are. God's goal is for us to be conformed to the image of His Son. Why is that His goal? Isn't God interested in what we do? Of course He is, but because what we do flows from who we are His focus is on making us like Christ.

Who is the only person who has ever perfectly reflected the character qualities listed in the Bible? Jesus, of course.

The life-goal that God has for you could be defined like this: To become more and more like Jesus in character.

The great news is, nobody and nothing on earth can keep you from being the person God planned - except you.

In Session 7, we looked at how our emotions, and specifically anger, anxiety and depression, are like that big red light on the dashboard of your car. Your emotions are a warning that you may have some unhealthy life goals that depend on people or circumstances that you have no right or ability to control.

Think about the pastor whose life goal was to reach the community for Christ, which is something that could be blocked by every person in the community. In the light of what we've just said, what if he made his life goal to become conformed to the image of God's Son? The irony is that, as the pastor learns to adopt God's goal, he will get rid of a lot of anger, anxiety and depression. The people under his ministry will become more and more like Jesus and people will follow him and trust him more. Paradoxically, they may end up reaching the Community for Christ!

Remember the parent whose life goal was to have a happy, harmonious Christian family? What if they made their goal to be the husband and dad or wife and mom that God wants them to be?

What would that greatly increase? The chances of them having a happy, harmonious family!

Here's a faith stretching question, "Do you believe you can be successful in business without ever going against the word of God? Do you think it's possible to get elected to office or local government without ever going against the word of God?"

Perhaps you think you don't have enough talents or intelligence to be the person God wants you to be. Or perhaps you think the circumstances you find yourself in, prevent you from being the person God wants you to be.

When the Bible talks about the things that we need, it doesn't list talents, intelligence, or positive circumstances. The fact is all believers are not given the same amount of talents. We don't all have the same intelligence and our circumstances can be totally different.

You might be thinking that's not fair. How can God do that? Well, God is not measuring you by those things. He is looking at your character, not your talent or your intelligence. It is equally possible for a Christian with a few talents, and a Christian with many talents, to see their character grow and to reach the life goal that God has for each one of them.

Session 11, Part B. What's Next?

Significance Comes from Proper Use of Time

How did you score yourself on significance?

What's forgotten in time is of little significance. What's remembered for eternity is of great significance. Significance is about time.

The tragedy is that often we don't realize our own significance.

You may say, "All I do is help with the children at church." No. You're teaching truth to five year olds! What they choose to believe will have eternal consequences. That makes it very significant; quite apart from the significant service to their parents releasing them to be undistracted in the main service.

If you want to increase the significance of what you do, focus your time on things that will make an eternal difference.

Fulfillment Comes from Serving Others

What about fulfillment? You probably noticed that there is so much self-help advice out there in books, blogs, magazines and the internet, about how to live a fulfilled life. Yet, not that many people actually seemed to be fulfilled.

Jesus must have been the most fulfilled person that ever walked the earth. Where did he get his sense of fulfillment? He said:

John 4:34 Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work.

(And that would be true in any dispensation.)

Interestingly, Jesus' fulfillment didn't come from trying to be fulfilled; it came when He didn't focus on himself, but on serving his Father.

Fulfillment comes when we grow where we're planted, instead of looking for better soil or a prettier pot; by changing the circumstances or people in our lives.

You're the only one who lives in your particular circumstances. You have a unique role as an ambassador for Christ. Where you work, live and play, these are your mission fields, and you're the worker. God is appointed for the harvest there.

God wants Christians who are becoming more and more like Jesus in every area of society. Whatever you do, wherever you live, you can make an eternal difference. Don't try to be someone else. Be the unique person that God has made you to be.

God won't ask me why I wasn't Billy Graham, but he might ask me why I wasn't me.

Satisfaction Comes from Living A Quality Life

How did you rate yourself on your level of satisfaction? I wonder what you thought would make you more satisfied. That's a clue to what you've come to believe will bring satisfaction.

The truth is that nothing really satisfies except living a righteous life. If you wrote something like I would be more satisfied if I worked harder for righteousness in my community, then you're on the right path.

Think about something you purchased that left you dissatisfied. What was the issue? It generally has to do with quality. Satisfaction is an issue of quality.

We achieve greater satisfaction from doing a few things well, than from doing many things in a haphazard or hasty way. The key to personal satisfaction is not found in doing more things, but in deepening commitment to quality and the things that we're already doing.

The same is true in relationships. If you're dissatisfied in your relationships, perhaps you have spread yourself too thin. We can learn from Jesus, who taught thousands and equipped 70 for ministry, but invested most of his time in 12 disciples. Out of those 12, he selected three, Peter, James, and John to be with him at crucial times on the Mount of Transfiguration, on the Mount of Olives, and in the Garden of Gethsemane. We all need the satisfaction that quality relationships bring.

It is interesting to note. That rectifying the things which cause people to be dissatisfied does not bring satisfaction. You can see this in churches. People may complain that it's too cold or too hot or whatever. Fixing the problem does not bring satisfaction. The same people usually find something else to complain about. Satisfaction comes from living a righteous life and having meaningful relationships.

Happiness Comes from Wanting What We Have

What about happiness? The world's concept of happiness is having what we want.

Advertisements tell us that we need a flashier car, a better phone, another pair of shoes or any number of items which are better, faster or easier to use than what we already have. We become restless, don't we? And we start to want all the latest fashions, fads and gadgets.

I'm usually content with what I have until I walk into a shopping mall. Then suddenly it's, I need, I need, I want, I want.

Never has there been a society where people have so many things, yet are so unhappy. Why? Because things don't make us happy.

1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

In other words, happiness isn't about having what you want. It's about wanting what you have. As long as you're focusing on what you don't have, or what you can't have, you'll be unhappy. But when you begin to appreciate what you already have, you'll be happy all your life.

Actually, you already have everything you need to make you happy forever. You have Jesus. You have eternal life. You're loved by a Heavenly Father who promised to supply all your spiritual needs in Christ. You are already blessed with all spiritual blessings. No wonder the Bible repeatedly commands us to be thankful (1 Thessalonians 5:18).

God brought the Israelites out of slavery with amazing miracles. He gave them clear guidance as to where to go. A Pillar of cloud by day and a pillar fire by night. He provided bread from heaven and water from rocks. And what did they do? They complained, that's not enough.

We too are continually tempted to feel like we don't have enough. Christians change churches because the old one "wasn't meeting my needs." And how often do we hear complaints that a sermon or worship time that "didn't minister to me?"

Church isn't there to meet your needs. You're part of a church so that you can meet the needs of others and glorify God.

Session 11, Part C: What's Next?

Fun Comes from Enjoying Life Moment by Moment

You may think fun is a strange thing to include in this list. Yet of all people, a Christian who's been set free by Christ and knows who they are and what they have in Christ, should be having fun.

Often, when you plan for fun, it leads to a letdown because it doesn't turn out as expected. Most fun happened spontaneously. Maybe it was a pillow fight with the kids or a ridiculous conversation with a friend. It just happened.

That spontaneous fun comes when we throw off our inhibitions, when we stop worrying about what other people will think of us. Paul wrote about this in Galatians 1:10.

Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Do you still find yourself thinking what will people say? Those walking in freedom will respond, "Who cares what people say? I'm not playing to the crowd any longer, playing for God alone."

When David got the Ark of the Covenant back, which had been stolen by the Philistines, he was so happy that he leaped and danced before the Lord in celebration. His wife was embarrassed by his behavior and told him so. David said:

2 Samuel 6:21 And David said unto Michal, *It was before the LORD, which chose me before thy father, and before all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the LORD, over Israel: therefore will I play before the LORD.* ²² And I will yet be more vile than thus, and will be base in mine own sight: and of the maidservants which thou hast spoken of, of them shall I be had in honour.

I have realized that the same embarrassment that often keeps me from having fun also keeps me from telling others about Jesus if I don't make a constant effort to throw it off.

From Steve Goss:

"When my father-in-law died, I had the privilege of doing the address at his funeral service. I started by telling his favorite joke. I was intrigued to see the looks on people's faces, especially those who were not regular churchgoers. They were not unreasonably expecting seriousness and religion. It was quite a pause before they realized it was OK to laugh in church."

How have we managed to give people the impression that our wonderful, loving, creative God is a killjoy? When we're free, we can laugh. We don't need to keep up appearances.

Security Comes from Focusing On Eternal Values

I would be more secure if... Actually, you can't possibly be more secure than you already are. Paul declared that nothing can separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39).

2 Timothy 1:12 For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day.

We can, however, feel insecure when we depend upon earthly things that we have no right or ability to control. It's all too easy to fall into the trap of working toward a goal of finding our security in money or some other worldly thing.

“Everything we now have, we shall someday lose.” Jim Elliott, a missionary who was murdered, said, “He is no fool to give up that which he cannot keep, in order to gain that which he cannot lose.”

Jim Elliott wrote these words while still a student at the time when he prayed for God's direction for his future as a missionary. Writing in his college journal, he also wrote. Father, if thou will let me go to South America to labor with thee and to die, let me go soon. In 1955, he and four others were killed by Auca Indians in eastern Ecuador, where they were working as missionaries for the Missionary Aviation Fellowship.

Peace Comes from Quietening the Inner Storm

How can we have peace? Jesus is the Prince of Peace, we know that. Paul opens his epistles with “grace and peace.”

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The peace of God is something we need to take hold of every day in our inner man. A lot of things may disrupt our external world because we can't control all our circumstances and relationships. But we can control the inner world of our thoughts and emotions by allowing the peace of God to rule in our hearts on a daily basis. There may be chaos all around us, but God is bigger than any storm. Nothing will happen to you today that God and you cannot handle.

Difficulties Help Us Toward the Goal

You may think that your past or present circumstances are so difficult that they stop you from becoming the person God wants you to be. But actually, the opposite is true. Paul says that we can rejoice in our sufferings because of what those sufferings produce.

Romans 5:3 And not only so, but we glory in tribulations also: knowing that tribulation worketh patience; ⁴ And patience, experience; and experience, hope:

Persevering through difficulties develops our character and helps us fulfill our life-goal to become more and more like Christ.

Can you share briefly from your own experience how difficult circumstances have helped you to grow and become more Christ-like in character?

Testimony: "I remember when my wife was really ill over a period of two years and couldn't really do much apart from sitting in a chair. Our children were at a critical stage in their education and the ministry was growing. It was a tough time. One of my friends reminded me recently of something that I apparently said to him during that time. If I don't come out of this changed for the better, then, well, I've wasted an opportunity. And I really believe that. It's in the tough times that our character can really grow to become more like Jesus, and in due course we'll see the fruit of that. I don't know anyone with any kind of significant ministry who has it persevered through great difficulties."

Defeated spouses say, "My marriage is hopeless." Then, they try to solve the problem by changing partners. Others feel their jobs or churches are hopeless, so they move, only to discover that their new job or church is just as hopeless.

What should you do? Can I give it to you straight? Hang in there. Why? Because these difficult situations may be helping you achieve God's goal for your life, of becoming more like His Son.

There are legitimate times to change jobs or churches, but if we're just running from our own immaturity, it will follow us wherever we go.

We need occasional mountaintop experiences, but the fertile soil for growth is always down in the valleys, not on the mountain tops.

It Is the First Day of the Rest of Your Life

We're all going to die one day. You will lose everything you have, including your closest earthly relationships, your qualifications, your possessions and your money. Well, this is the last session of the course, so I thought you might need cheering up.

Actually, there is just one thing we won't lose, our relationship with Christ and everything that comes with it.

That is why Paul can say in Philippians 1:21:

Philippians 1:21 For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.

If you're trying to put anything else other than Christ in that verse, it doesn't work.

For me to live is my career, to die is...loss.

For me to live is my family, to die, is...loss.

For me to live is my Christian ministry, to die is...loss.

But when the point of our life here and now is simply becoming conformed to the image of God's Son, when we die, it just gets better.

Today is the first day of the rest of your life. You can become everything God wants you to be, regardless of your current circumstances.

Whether or not you feel you're very far along the path to becoming more like Jesus, you can leave here in the sure knowledge that you are a child of God, you are His holy child and that He delights in you. He is intimately concerned with your life and has plans to give you a future in the heavenly places.

Amazingly, you can leave here knowing that nothing and no one can prevent you from becoming the person God wants you to be. Are you ready to adopt God's goal for your life to become more and more like His Son? Are you ready to have Christ formed in you? Are you ready to have Jesus' character working in you?

I want to finish by reading something written by an unknown author. You may have heard it before. While every detail may not be perfect, you will get the idea.

"I am part of the fellowship of the unashamed. I have the power of the Spirit. The die has been cast. I've stepped over the line. The decision has been made. I am his disciple. I won't look back. I won't let up, slow down, back away, or be still. My past is redeemed, my present makes sense and my future is secure. I am finished and done with low living, sight walking, small planning, smooth knees, colorless dreams, tame visions, mundane talking, miserly giving and dwarf goals.

I no longer need preeminence, prosperity, position, promotions, plaudits or popularity. I don't have to be right, first, top, recognized, praised, regarded, or rewarded. I now live by presence, lean by faith, love by patience, lift by prayer, labor by power.

My face is set, my gait is fast, my goal is heaven. My road is narrow. My way is rough. My companions few, my God reliable, my mission clear. I cannot be bought, compromised, detoured, lured away, turned back, diluted or delayed. I will not flinch in the face of sacrifice, hesitate in the presence of adversity, negotiate at the table of the enemy, ponder at the pool of popularity, or meander in the maze of mediocrity.

I won't give up, shut up, let up, or burn up, till I have preached up, prayed up, paid up, stored up and stayed up for the cause of Christ.

I am a disciple of Jesus. I must go till He comes, give till I drop, preach all that I know and work till He stops.

And when he comes to get his own, he'll have no problems recognizing me. My colors will be clear.”

This statement has been circulated widely. Its author is unknown. Some say it was written by a young African pastor who was martyred for his faith. Others claimed that it was composed at a Fellowship of Christian Athletes retreat in 1966. Whoever wrote it, it's a powerful statement of commitment to Christ.

The rest of your life is ahead of you. It is exciting. You can become the person God wants you to be. Nothing and no one can get in your way.

“Lord God. Thank you that we are saints, holy ones, because of what Jesus has done. Our goal is to become the people you have created us to be. Thank you that nothing and no one can stand in our way. Thank you that Christ has set us free.

We commit ourselves to truth, to being transformed by the renewing of our minds.

Thank you that nothing can separate us from your love. Thank you that you will always be with us. We love you, Lord, and we choose to put you first. For me to live as Christ, to die is gain. Amen.”

Reflection:

Discuss the idea that God's goal for your life is that you become more and more like Jesus in character. What would it look like for you to embrace that?

Spend some time in prayer, committing to God's goal for your life and thanking Him that you can achieve it in His strength.

Spend some time thanking God for what He has shown and taught you through the course. Think about what steps God wants you to take next.

Witness:

Pick two or three of the eight areas we've considered. How would not yet Christians around you be affected if you were to put those principles into practice?

In the Coming Week:

Which of the eight areas of the “What Do I Believe?” questionnaire are the most challenging for you? Spend some time reading the relevant passages for those areas in “God's Guidelines for the Walk of Faith” in your book following this session.

God's Guidelines for the Walk of Faith

Success comes from having the right goals.

Success is accepting God's goal for our lives and by His grace, becoming what He has called us to be.

Significance comes from the proper use of time.

What is forgotten in time is of little significance, what is remembered for eternity is of greatest significance.

1 Corinthians 3:13 Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is.

1 Timothy 4:7 But refuse profane and old wives' fables, and exercise thyself *rather* unto godliness. ⁸ For bodily exercise profiteth little: but godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come.

Fulfillment comes from serving others.

Fulfillment is discovering our own uniqueness in Christ and using our gifts to build others up and glorify the Lord (Romans 12:1-18).

2 Timothy 4:5 But watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.

Satisfaction comes from living a quality life.

Satisfaction is living righteously and seeking to raise the quality of our relationships and the things that we do.

2 Timothy 4:7 I have fought a good fight, I have finished *my* course, I have kept the faith:

Happiness comes from wanting what we have.

Happiness is being thankful for what we do have rather than focusing on what we don't have, because happier are the people who want what they have.

Philippians 4:12 I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

1 Thessalonians 5:18 In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you.

1 Timothy 6:6 But godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.

Fun comes from enjoying life moment by moment. The secret is to remove unbiblical hindrances, such as keeping up appearances.

Galatians 1:10 For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ.

Galatians 5:1 Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage.

Romans 14:21 *It is* good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor *any thing* whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended, or is made weak.

Security comes from focusing on eternal values.

Insecurity comes when we depend on things that will pass away, rather than things that will last forever (Romans 8:31-39).

Ephesians 1:13 In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, ¹⁴ Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Peace comes from quieting the inner storm.

The peace of God is internal, not external.

Philippians 4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.