



Glorious Hope Publishing

New Carlisle, Ohio

Rebuilt Recovery

A Journey with God

Book 1-4 – Complete Series

By: Heather L. Phipps



Rebuilt Recovery Is a Ministry of The Hope of Ruth Ministries Church

Glorious Hope Publishing

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Rebuilt Recovery

What Is *Rebuilt Recovery*?

Rebuilt Recovery is a tool to help people find recovery from their mental and emotional pain and suffering by dealing with the root causes of their issues.

Too often, attempts to heal mental health conditions address the symptom of the suffering without looking at the underlying cause. This is especially true with addiction. People often develop addictions in an attempt to mask pain from abuse, neglect, rejection, depression, grief, anxiety, etc. Treating the addiction without first treating the underlying causes feeding the addiction is only a temporary fix. When the person relapses, the problem intensifies, feeding guilt, shame, and feelings of failure that make the original problem even worse.

This is true of other mental disorders as well. OCD, depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, PTSD, or codependency are not the problem. They are the symptom of underlying issues. To treat the mental disorder without treating the cause will end in failure, and an eventual reoccurrence of the symptoms of the disorder.

***Rebuilt Recovery* is a tool that works in a cooperative effort with the Lord** to permanently remove the underlying issues so people may have full healing and receive the joy and freedom promised in Scripture.

What Causes Mental Illness?

Mental illness is complex. The truth is that there is no known, proven cause of mental illness. There is evidence to suggest that your genetic makeup may predispose you to certain mental ailments. This does not mean that you will develop a mental disorder, however; it simply means that it is more likely for you than for someone with a different genetic makeup.

It was once widely thought that the cause of mental disorders was chemical imbalances in the brain. It's true that the chemical balance of the brain does change with depression, anxiety, etc., but this theory, called the chemical imbalance hypothesis, is now widely dismissed by medical professionals. The chemical imbalances in the brain may cause the *symptoms* of these disorders, and medication can aid in easing the symptoms. The cause of the disorder, however, runs much deeper.

What Causes Chemical Imbalances in the Brain?

Chemical imbalances occur when the brain produces natural chemicals called neurotransmitters. The job of the neurotransmitter is to help nerve cells communicate with one another. The way you think creates and reshapes the pathways of this intricate neuro-circuitry in your brain—in other words, your brain physically changes depending on how you are thinking. Your thoughts can literally change the physical structure of your brain. Mental illness is not genetic, but your genetic makeup may put you at a greater risk of developing a mental illness. The way you think about your experiences can activate your genes, so if you are predisposed to mental illness, your thoughts can activate those genetic factors.¹

¹ More information on the science of thinking differently:

<https://www.healthline.com/health/chemical-imbalance-in-the-brain>

<https://www.thebestbrainpossible.com/how-your-thoughts-change-your-brain-cells-and-genes/>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/bottoms/201611/what-is-cbt>

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/what-mentally-strong-people-dont-do/201710/how-train-your-brain-think-differently>

How Do You Heal Mental Disorders?

Physically

Medical professionals may prescribe medicine that works to compensate for the chemical imbalances in your brain as a temporary fix. They may also recommend vitamins, eating well, or exercise, which will improve mood and lead to a better quality of life.

Medicine is a Band-Aid® or a mask; it does not heal you. As your body adapts to medications, the dose must increase to create the same emotional state. Medicines must be used in conjunction with other treatment to be successful.

Mentally

Counselors and therapists use a wide range of therapy techniques such as CBT (Cognitive Behavior Therapy) or CPT (Cognitive Processing Therapy) to change your perspective by training you to consider and reinforce positive beliefs and remove negative beliefs. When successful, there are proven long-lasting results. The solution is to restore the right way of thinking.

Therapies that change the way you think depend on reinforcing your beliefs. The positive thoughts become easier to believe as evidence reinforces the belief. If a belief fails the person, or he lacks evidence for it, destructive thoughts may again lead the person back into emotional instability. A person must base belief on unchangeable truth to effect a permanent change. The Lord is unchanging, and His truth will effect permanent change.

Many methods of treating mental illness often miss the spiritual component. We are not only physical and mental beings; we are also spiritual beings. We have the answer when we know Jesus and the Word.

Spiritually

Churches attempt to address this problem through the concept of faith and works. If you believe enough—have faith—God will heal you. They instruct you in positive behaviors: quit sinning, serve more, live like Jesus, take authority, rebuke the enemy, put on the armor of God. However, churches often neglect the underlying physical and mental components of mental illness, relying only on the spiritual.

Christians have the answer, but many times they fall short in implementation. They often create an expectation of how God will move. People's faith tends to waiver when God does not meet their expectations. They may believe they are not good or spiritual enough for God to heal. Churches only fail if they address one part of the problem without the complete counsel of the Lord. **God's way of healing is found in Scripture and completely addresses mental, physical, and spiritual healing.**

Some Christ-centered recovery groups attempt to combine faith in God's word, living a Christian life, and spiritual warfare with therapy styles to change thought processes. They use Scripture to do this and achieve an excellent success rate. Yet these programs alone do not provide the complete foundational understanding of Scripture and God required to overcome addiction. This may lead people to a faith reliant on the program and not God. Full healing requires recovery and relationship.

Complete Healing

Only with the Lord can you find complete healing. Complete and permanent healing comes when you:

- Discover the root of the problematic thinking
- Replace the negative thinking (the report of the enemy) with truth (the report of the Lord) based on God's unshakable and unchanging truth
- Reinforce the truth with evidence and translate the evidence into belief

Rebuilt Recovery Fills Gaps to Recovery through Scripture!

Complete healing does not mean that you will never experience difficult emotions or temptations. It means you will no longer suffer debilitating emotions or relapse because you have the tools and know-how to work through those difficulties, and you have the joy of the Lord in all circumstances!

Why Is *Rebuilt* Different from Other Recovery Programs?

Christ-centered programs that focus on incorporating a spiritual and mental healing process are successful with those who are solid in their faith. However, these programs tend to neglect to instill a deep, foundational understanding of Scripture, leaving many still searching for the freedom and joy they were promised.

Rebuilt takes recovery to a whole new level. It is personal discipleship mixed with recovery. To be grounded in truth, you must know truth. *Rebuilt Recovery* is a process based on relationship. Why? Because relationship is the basis of everything God is and does. God is relational.

- God is Love (see 1 John 4:8). Love by its very definition requires an object. We are the object of God's love. He created us for the purpose of giving His love to us. Likewise, He desires that we give Him our love.
- God describes our relationship with Himself and other believers using relational language. He is our father, our husband. We are brothers and sisters in Christ, His bride, His child.
- God established people in families to teach us truths about Himself.

The two greatest commandments fulfill all God's laws.

Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind' and 'Love your neighbor as yourself. (Luke 10:27)

- We are to first love God with our everything.
- We are to love others.
- We are to love ourselves. (This love is not self-centered, but is based on our identity in Christ.)

This is not love as defined by the world. This love is sacrificial and defined by respect and admiration. This love is the foundational truth on which all Scripture builds. As we build a relationship with God, He teaches us this love, grounding our way of thinking in solid, unshakable truth, which comes from relationship with God. It is that relationship, which transforms our lives, not what we do or believe.

Relationship with God changes our level of faith in Him and provides us evidence of God. It gives us unshakable faith in His ability to provide, protect, guide, heal, and restore. We learn to trust through this relationship. Our faith activates God's power to move in our lives and remove our hurts, provide stability in chaos, and show us hope for the future God prepared for us.

Relationships with others sharpen us, like iron sharpening iron. Healthy relationships provide opportunities to forgive and make amends. God's Word shows us how to choose our relationships wisely, and how to love even people who seem unlovable. God made us for relationship. Nearly all trauma is caused by people, insecurity, or fear of a person's response: rejection, insults, abuse, negligence, crime, loss of people we love, etc. Learning how to relate to people gives us a fresh perspective on what people have done and helps us think about past events differently. Learning to relate to others helps us forgive them and truly release them from their wrong, thus giving us freedom.

Relationship with self allows us to know ourselves as we truly are. We must know ourselves. We must know where we flourish and fail, and we must examine the condition of our hearts. Even more than this, we must love ourselves. This sounds taboo, but Scripture does not say to love other people more than ourselves. God expects humility, but loving others as ourselves implies that we **must** also love ourselves. Because of our sin nature, we do not know how to love ourselves without it becoming a self-seeking kind of love. Scripture shows us how to do this. Loving yourself is seeing yourself through God's eyes, instead of through the lens of your experiences, failures, or your perception of another's opinion of you. It is loving the person God is creating in you as He transforms your heart. Loving yourself overcomes the not _____ enough feelings that come from shame.

What *Rebuilt Recovery* is not

- *Rebuilt Recovery* is not a quick fix. It is a journey with God in a process of healing.
- It is not a 12-step program. It is not a program at all, but a tool.
- It is not responsible for your recovery. God does the healing through your journey.
- It does not take the place of doctors, psychiatrists, or therapists.
- It is not an alternative to medication and does not encourage you to stop medicines or go against any advice a medical care professional has put in place to stabilize you.
- Coaches are not licensed professionals, nor are they responsible for your choices.
- *Rebuilt* is not for people who are not serious about their journey or fully committed to do what God requires for success.

What *Rebuilt Recovery* is

- A tool to guide you on a journey with the Lord through a process of recovery.
- A tool which transforms your lifestyle, drawing you nearer to the Lord and helping you build better relationships so you can relate to God, to others, and to yourself.
- A place of healing and trust, teaching you to develop trust and forgiveness.
- A tool that incorporates biblical principles of recovery, not just behavior modification, using the model of relationship and the "put offs" and "put ons" of Scripture.

Where there is no guidance, a people falls, but in an abundance of counselors there is safety.
(Proverbs 11:14)

The Process

The crucial difference between this journey and other programs is that we approach healing through understanding relationships. The process is relational. This is your path to freedom:

Relationship with God

- Learn that faith is more than simple belief.
- Deal with your doubt and denial.
- Learn to surrender and what that truly means.
- Learn realistic and biblical expectations of God and put to rest false expectations.

Relationships with others

- Understand healthy relationships and their purpose.
- Understand the real meaning of love.
- Learn to have healthy friendships and families.
- Quit avoiding conflict and face your problems, biblically.
- Forgive others for the wrongs they have done against you, so you never have to struggle with them again.
- Learn that forgiveness is something you do once per transgression.
- Make amends for the wrongs you have done to others and experience freedom from your guilt.

Relationship with yourself

- Examine the condition of your heart and learn three biblical “heart checks.”
- Learn who you are, where your value and purpose lie, and the character of your God.
- Identify the original source of your emotions and your coping mechanisms.
- Learn to identify and distinguish the truth from the lies you are believing.
- Identify and remove the enemy’s strongholds in your life, making the Lord your stronghold.
- Learn the things you must put off before putting on the Armor of God.
- Learn how to love the person God has created you to become.
- Confess the hurts and wrongs in your past and watch them lose their power over you.

The Result

You will know your purpose and have hope for the future again. Your heart will be free from the burdens you have been carrying. You will experience new confidence in yourself and your God. Your faith will become unshakable. Your relationships (as much as it depends on you) will heal. You will handle other people’s flaws and their rejection. You will know which people are good for your life and which are not. You will have compassion and love for others, greater than you have ever been able to experience before. You will have an entirely transformed life.

Introduction

Preparing For Your Journey

Welcome to a new season in your life! **This introduction lesson will teach you all you need to begin your journey.** The following lessons are divided into weekly increments to keep you moving and not overwhelmed. Do not be discouraged if you take longer or get stuck. You may require deeper thought or a better frame of mind to move ahead. Some weeks you may be motivated to complete more than one lesson. Go for it! This journey is yours. God and you set the pace, **but it is important to continue despite tough days.**

Rebuilt is a tool designed to guide you on a journey of healing with the Lord. Of course, there is no tool, guide, journey, program, recovery, ministry, counselor, preacher, or drug that can fix you. They may help you cope, but only the Lord can fix your brokenness.

Your coach along this journey is your support person, to encourage and strengthen you. You are not walking alone, but your coach cannot make choices for you or heal you. Restoration and healing require a relationship with Jesus Christ and the work of the Holy Spirit.

Listen to the Right Report!

The report of the enemy will try to convince you not to attempt this journey with lies that feed your strongholds of fear, insecurity, and pride. “This will be the same as everything else.” “This won’t work.” “I don’t really need this.” “I can’t trust God to heal me.” “I am okay as I am.” There is another report, however. **The report of the Lord is truth.** The Lord tells us that He will not forsake us, He will break our chains, freedom is in Him, and by our faith we are healed.

God’s responsibility

- ✓ Show you truth about Himself
- ✓ Show you the truth about yourself a your life
- ✓ Love you where you are
- ✓ Heal your heart
- ✓ Forgive your sins
- ✓ Take your life’s burdens and place them on His shoulders
- ✓ Remove your fear
- ✓ Give you genuine joy
- ✓ Empower you
- ✓ Strengthen you
- ✓ Give you a purpose
- ✓ Change your heart
- ✓ Make you a new creation

Your responsibility

- ✓ Have faith, believe the Lord will work
- ✓ Be utterly honest with yourself, God, and your coach
- ✓ See it through with complete commitment
- ✓ Choose something different
- ✓ Prepare to change your thoughts about the past, people, & life
- ✓ Be willing to submit everything to the Lord, and make changes

The coach’s responsibility

- ✓ Guide you through the questions
- ✓ Share Scripture, personal experiences and insights from their journey with the Lord, etc.
- ✓ Help you see yourself more clearly

Manage Your Time

Before starting *Rebuilt*, consider how you manage time to prevent becoming overwhelmed by the commitment.

Every purchase has a positive or negative return and a dual cost: the amount spent on the purchase and the hidden cost of everything you cannot get with the money spent. You receive a **positive return** as the property value increases in your home. However, the moment you drive away in a new car, its value depreciates, giving you a **negative return**. A losing lottery ticket is a **total loss**, leaving nothing to show for the money spent. It robbed you of your investment.

**Life's currency is time and energy, and like monetary currency,
there is a dual cost and return when spent.**

Time and energy are your most precious resources. Time is finite and irreplaceable; if we waste it, we cannot regain it. Energy makes time productive. As time passes, less energy is available. When your energy depletes, your time becomes unproductive. You spend more time accomplishing less.

Understanding Wise Investments of Time and Energy

Read the definitions below to familiarize yourself with the terminology:

- **A Return** refers to positive or negative impact from investing time or energy.
- **A Positive Return** is when our effort adds an element of quality, surplus of energy, or redeems the investment for our benefit.
- **A Negative Return** brings harm to us or others, leaving us worse off for our effort.
- **Robbed of Time/Energy** implies an investment that steals time or is a complete loss. This includes mind-numbing activities like social media or television, non-productive time spent daydreaming or worrying, and investing time in someone who does not reciprocate or benefit from your investment.

We spend time and energy in four areas. To learn more about these four areas, read the descriptions below and answer the questions.

- 1. Physical Investment** — Our activities are an obvious investment of time and energy. Exercising, walking, cleaning, cooking, working, traveling, sleeping, eating, or being sick, all cost time and energy. Physical investments such as laughing, crying, and fits of rage may also have an emotional investment such as joy, grief, and anger. This is a dual investment. Many times, our physical investments **return a positive benefit**. We exercise and our bodies become stronger. We go to work and earn money. When we help another, we receive joy. Sometimes, our physical investments give us a **negative return**. We fall behind when we waste time doing the wrong things. We lose opportunities when we are not wise in how we spend our time. Negative actions, such as yielding to addiction or gluttony of food or pleasure, provide a negative return to our health, our mental and emotional state, and even our wallets.

Questions to Ponder

- 1) Consider what you do. What are your greatest physical investments?
- 2) What is the time and energy cost of your physical investments?
- 3) Describe the negative returns on your physical investments.
- 4) What positive returns result from your physical investments?
- 5) In what ways do your physical investments rob you of time and energy?

2. **Emotional Investment** — Emotions influence our investment of time and energy into people, dreams, goals, grudges, and ourselves. We may spend a great deal of time and energy fighting, denying, or avoiding emotions. Emotional investments may bring joy and a sense of worth, or leave us drained with rage, grief, and sadness, as hidden violations and unforgiveness fester in our hearts.

Questions to Ponder

- 6) What are your emotional investments?
- 7) How do your emotional investments spend time and energy?
- 8) In a typical week, how often are your feelings negative? How often are they positive?
- 9) Do your emotional time and energy investments have a positive or negative return?
- 10) How do your emotions steal your time and energy?

3. **Mental Investment** — Many things require a mental investment of our time and energy: thinking, worrying, planning, researching, studying, writing, daydreaming, reading books, watching videos, or playing games. Dwelling on negative or ignoble things can drain our energy and rob us of our time or give us a negative return on our time. However, meditating on things of the Lord—His blessings, purpose, and future—can give us the positive returns of hope, encouragement, and motivation. When we rest our mind in the Lord, He renews our strength and energy.

Questions to Ponder

- 11) What are your mental investments?
- 12) How do your mental investments spend your time and energy?
- 13) Is your thinking mostly positive (hopeful), negative (pessimistic), or neutral?
- 14) What thoughts give you a positive or negative return?
- 15) What thoughts give you no return, robbing you of your time and energy?

- 4. Spiritual Investment** — A spiritual life requires time and energy. We seek spiritual wellbeing to find meaning, purpose, and security in life. Investing time and energy in a relationship with God fills our spiritual needs. The Lord renews our energy, gives us rest, and redeems our time. When we seek to fill our spiritual needs from different sources—such as nature, self, money, or idols—our investment returns void or empty of meaning. Our drive to seek purpose and meaning exhausts our energy.

Questions to Ponder

- 16) How much time and energy do you spend in prayer, devotion, church, witnessing to others, worship, Bible reading, or meditating and listening to the Lord?
- 17) What other spiritual influences are in your life? (E.g., horoscopes, fantasy, spiritualism apart from the Lord, books, movies, etc.)
- 18) What is the return on your spiritual investments? What percentage of your return is negative, positive, or both?
- 19) Are there any negative influences you allow to take up your spiritual time and energy? Are you aware of the impact and cost to you?
- 20) How do spiritual investments steal your time and energy?

Now, consider this next set of questions to help you break down the cost of your time and energy and how that cost affects your life.

Questions to Ponder

- 21) Estimate the percentage of your time spent in each category. (For example: 40% Physical, 25% Emotional, 30% Mental, 5% Spiritual.)
- 22) Estimate the percentage of your energy spent in each category.
- 23) What investments give a positive return?
- 24) What are the benefits of the positive returns you identified?
- 25) What investments give a negative return?
- 26) What harm comes from the negative returns you identified?
- 27) Which investments leave you robbed, unable to identify a return or loss?
- 28) What losses have you identified resulting from the way you invest your time and energy?
- 29) How are you spending more time and energy than you have available to give?
- 30) How could you invest less time and energy in the things that rob you or give a negative return?
- 31) How could you invest more time and energy in the things with a positive return?
- 32) Is there any investment that causes a negative return or loss, which you can invest differently to create a positive return?

Introduction to Book One

Prepare the Way

As with any journey, you must prepare before you leave: Plan the route, pack the right supplies, and choose your travel companions. It is the same way on a spiritual journey!

Plan Your Path

Your path is set before you. Consider this guide your GPS.

Pack for the Journey

You will travel light. All you need is a Bible, this guide, a journal (or two or three ...), and pens or pencils.

Your Travel Companions

You will travel with the Lord, whose spirit will minister to you and teach you throughout your journey, and with your coach, who will be there to keep you focused on the Lord and give some encouragement along the way. Once you get started, you may make a pit stop and ask one or two trusted friends to come along on the journey. They can give additional support and help keep you accountable.

Plan Adventures and Sight-seeing

There will be many destinations along the way, and it will be the greatest adventure of your life. You will see many sights as your eyes become opened to the truth. But as with everything, there are guidelines to follow:

- Be completely honest with yourself, your coach, and God. The road becomes bumpy and treacherous when you break this rule.
- Never give up. Quit the journey early, and you may end up stranded in the wilderness without a ride home.
- Do not isolate yourself. You can easily get lost in unfamiliar territory if you pull away from your coach or from God. You do not want to be stuck in the wilderness!

Method of Transportation

One step at a time. You can walk through the books at your own pace, just do not stop moving. Your coach will go over your answers to the questions in the book, your journal (if you want to share), and answer questions along the way.

- Meetings with your coach are confidential, so you can be free to share whatever is on your mind. (Your coach will discuss this in more detail with you).
- Pray before working through the books and listen for the Lord.
- Each day, journal about your feelings, concerns, or what the Lord is teaching you.

Lesson 2 — Dealing with Doubt

No person increases our faith—not a pastor, mentor, or even ourselves. It is the Lord who gives the increase when we reach out with the smallest seed of faith.

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. ... You are God's field, God's building. (1 Corinthians 3:7,9)

The apostles realized this and asked the Lord to increase their faith.

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you." (Luke 17:5 – 6)



Jesus tells them that if they had even a little amount of faith (a mustard seed is very tiny), they could do the impossible. In other passages, Jesus scolds his disciples for not having enough faith. Yet in each case, He is telling them to simply believe. You can know something is true in your head, but believing it with all your heart is far more difficult.

We already know that faith comes by hearing the Word, so studying Scripture is a great place to start. **After all, how do you trust in a God you do not know?**

How does faith grow?

- By reading the Word
- Through testing and trial
- With prayer



Opportunity to Use Our Faith

God will give us opportunities to use our faith, testing our faith in trials. When everything is going well, it is easy to have faith in God, but the true demonstration of our faith is when the trials come. Do we trust God, put it in his hands, and believe for a victorious outcome, or do we try to control matters ourselves and thus fall into worry, panic, or fear?

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

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

Of course, we can pray for the Lord to help us. Do you remember how the apostles asked the Lord to increase their faith? There are many stories of people of God who struggled at times to trust God. When we ask God to help us with our doubt, it gives him permission to work in our lives, increasing our faith.



Consider the story of the boy possessed by a demonic spirit from his early childhood (see Mark 9:14 – 29). The father was weak in faith, but he asked Jesus to help his son. The father said, “But **if** you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” And Jesus said to him, “**if you can!** All things are possible for one who believes.” Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, “**I believe; help my unbelief!**”

This man cried out to Jesus in doubt, but Jesus responded to him that it would be possible if he would believe. The father realized his doubt. He told Jesus he believed and asked for help with his unbelief. Jesus made it a point to show this man that it is **not** about what **Jesus** could do. (After all, Jesus was given all authority in heaven and earth. See Matthew 28:18). It was about what the man could do. **Could he believe?** The man wanted the kind of faith that pleased Jesus and asked Him to help with his unbelief. Jesus honored his effort to trust, meeting him where he was, and He healed the boy. He will do the same for us. He meets us in our unbelief.

Never hesitate to pray for help when you struggle with doubt and unbelief!

Denial

Denial is not the same as doubt. In denial, you refuse to look at part of yourself or your life honestly. This is a detrimental coping skill. Denial can show itself many ways:

- By minimizing a difficult time of life as being in the past and over, without ever addressing how it made us feel or the way it impacted how we respond to situations today.
- By ignoring a character flaw (“I’m not so bad; at least I’m not like _____!”)
- By hiding a sin or issue in our family because of shame and embarrassment
- By drawing attention to another’s flaws to draw attention away from our own issues
- By projecting negativity
- By burying how we feel in medication, illegal drugs, or alcohol

Questions to Ponder

- 2.1) **Make a plan to help grow your faith. Include studying the Word, how you will pray, and what you will do during a trial. Put your plan into action this week.**
- 2.2) **How are you going about daily praying and journaling? If you struggle to do this every day, write how you are struggling and a plan to help you be more consistent.**

Forget the Past

We should **not** hang onto the past, but the only way to truly overcome it is to deal with it. Then we can move ahead, leaving the pain of the past behind us. Paul says in Philippians 3:13,

*Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do:
forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.*

Some people use this verse as a reason not to dig up the past, thinking that doing so is merely being a victim, continually obsessed with what has happened to them. However, Paul is telling us to keep our eyes on where we are going, instead of looking back to where we have been. **He is not telling us to ignore the past.**



When you are in denial, refusing to look at or deal with the things that hurt you in the past, there are lasting consequences.

The result is that you cannot move forward, and **you are in fact living in the oppression of your past**, regardless of whether you can admit it or not.

Refusing to deal with past situations leaves you trapped there.



Hanging onto our past is not always something we do knowingly!

Consequences of Denial

When you deny or discount your feelings, all your emotions become muted. Suppressed emotions can cause anxiety, expressing themselves as unexplainable fear and fatigue. Not only do we mute the bad feelings; we also silence the good ones. This can lead to depression. There is freedom in experiencing our emotions, even when the feelings are unpleasant.

**Denial is as if you are running away from your past
yet terrified of stepping into your future.**

Questions to Ponder

- 2.3) Can you identify coping skills that you use now (or have used in the past) to deal with shame, fear, pain, insecurity, depression, etc.? How do you handle difficult situations?
- 2.4) What have you clung to for way too long? Anger? Fear? Loneliness? Unforgiveness? Resentments? Or something else?

Many people do not realize they have unmet expectations. Denial of your expectations may cause tension in your relationships and make you feel impatient and irritated. Even when you get what you thought you wanted, you still may not feel satisfied or find yourself complaining that nothing works out. Your denial causes you to live in the lie that you can somehow achieve the unreasonable expectations you place on yourself.

Denial is the lie that keeps us trapped **indefinitely**. It tells us we are safe from our past with our “yuck” buried behind vast walls no one can penetrate. But the people who have “walked in your shoes” can see right through those walls.

In denial, we think we are hidden, but we are simply blind.

Have you ever heard the saying, “You are only as sick as your secrets”? Your secrets are anything you deny and keep hidden in the dark. Bring those secrets into the light, and they lose their power over you. God promises us that while we are blind and stuck, He will guide us out of our darkness.

*And I will lead the blind in a way that they do not know, in paths that they have not known I will guide them. I will turn the darkness before them into light, the rough places into level ground. These are the things I do, and I do not forsake them.
(Isaiah 42:16)*

Questions to Ponder

- 2.5) Fear can take many forms: Jealousy, insecurity, anxiety, worry, control, etc. In what ways do you experience fear?
- 2.6) Consider recent situations where you were wronged or felt uncomfortable. What was your emotional response? (Did you feel insecure, angry, fearful, panicked, sad/depressed, lonely/empty, numb, etc.?)
- 2.7) Take an honest look at yourself. Can you identify the walls you present to others?
- 2.8) What are your secrets? (These can include family secrets.) Bring them into the light!



Today, commit to breaking out of your walls of denial.

Pray and speak to the Lord about your choice.

Ask him to search your heart and show you anything you missed.



Do you struggle to pray and journal?

Ask your coach to help you come up with a plan to be consistent!

Strategy: Stop, Drop, and Roll

Every bad choice begins with a wrong thought. It may seem difficult to believe that you have control over your thoughts, but you do—and stopping wrong thinking is vital to your recovery! You may not be able to stop a thought from entering your mind, but you can control how that thought affects you. The Word says to take your thoughts captive and make them obedient to the Lord. This implies that you should be aware of your thoughts. Dismiss wrong thinking and replace those thoughts with God’s truth.

This strategy can help you prevent a crisis in any situation before it starts. Remember your fire safety lessons from school? They taught you if you are on fire, you must stop where you are, drop to the ground, and roll to smother the fire. Instead of a physical fire, we are going to teach you to put out symbolic fires in your thinking that can cause devastating burns.

Stop

Stop and think. No matter what situation comes up, stop and think before you act. Stay aware of your thoughts throughout the day. Pay attention to emotional responses and see if you can identify the thought behind the response. What are you thinking? Is your self-talk detrimental? Are you leaning on the Lord in the situation, or on your own strength?

Drop

Drop the lie. If you find your thinking goes against what you are learning from the Lord, you are on “fire.” Identify the lie. Would the Lord say the same thing to you that you are saying to yourself? Would you give another person the advice you are speaking to yourself? Are your thoughts degrading you or another person? Test the thought with Scripture!

Roll

Roll with the truth. Find the truth in the situation. Are you misunderstanding something? Pray for understanding and the Lord’s wisdom on what to do. If you are distraught, seek the peace of the Lord through worship. Sometimes the lies in our mind shout so loudly they drown out the truth. If you must, shout the truth aloud until it is louder than the lies in your mind. You may get some strange looks, but it works!



If you are unsure of God’s truth for a particular situation, you can use tools such as

<https://www.openbible.info/>

to search Scripture for any topic you can imagine.

Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal the truth to you.

Lesson 6 — Giving Up

It All Works Together

Throughout your journey, you will continue to find areas of denial, pride, and control that need to be surrendered to the Lord. Now that you understand how to identify them, it will be easier to give issues to God as they come up. Each evening, as you journal about your day, think about how control and pride are evident in your life.

What Is Surrender, and How Do I Do it?

Surrender is giving up control, laying down your pride, and being obedient to the Lord. It is vital for your journey. It sacrifices your selfish desires and changes your heart to accept God's will as your own. Surrender is coming to the end of self-effort and giving up. **It is giving up your time, will, emotions, and life to the Lord.** God wants us to live in a **state of constant surrender** to Him, a constant state of giving up to Him so He can direct our every step.

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

We are to deny our own desires and will for His.

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

How Do We Surrender?

We are promised increase when we first seek God's Kingdom, His ways, and right standing with Him. We must also abide in Him. This means we live in Him and His Spirit lives in us. Without Him, we can do nothing, but in Him we can do all things. If your first priority is to seek His kingdom, you will have all that you need.

But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. (Matthew 6:33)

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in me he is thrown away like a branch and withers; and the branches are gathered, thrown into the fire, and burned. If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. (John 15:4 – 7)

Surrender is:

- To allow the Lord access into an area of your life
- To give up your own control and desire in that area
- To give the Lord permission to do with it what He wants
- To allow the Lord to control the outcome

When you surrender something to the Lord, the burden of the result rests on Him, not you!



Surrender, like faith, is a process.

Do not grow weary and *do not take it back*. The Lord helps grow our faith.
In the same way, He helps us learn to surrender.

Surrender Displayed through the Life of Moses

In the book of Exodus, God approached Moses, manifested as a burning bush.

“Come, I will send you to Pharaoh that you may bring my people, the children of Israel, out of Egypt.” But Moses said to God, “Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh and bring the children of Israel out of Egypt?” ... Then Moses said to God, “If I come to the people of Israel and say to them, ‘The God of your fathers has sent me to you’” and they ask me, ‘What is his name?’ what shall I say to them?” God said to Moses, “I AM WHO I AM.” And he said, “Say this to the people of Israel: ‘I AM has sent me to you.’”
(Exodus 3:10 – 11, 13 – 14)

Moses asked who he was to serve, and then who God was. God answered, “I AM WHO I AM.” It was never about Moses or his ability to serve; **it was about God**. We do not need to be in control, because God is. **In fact, there cannot be two “I AMs” in control**. You cannot say, “I am in control of my life” and also say, “The I AM is in control of my life.” One must yield. Will you keep a tight hold on your control, or give control over to the Lord?

How Do I Know What Needs to Be Surrendered? What if I Am in Denial?

One way to identify what you need to give up is to look at the causes of your anger. At times, anger is justified; many times, however, anger is an indicator of a larger issue. For instance, conversation topics that are “off-limits” because you fear how you may respond may indicate denial or something you have not fully surrendered. Sometimes we cannot understand why we do what we do. It is easier to see from an outside perspective. You may need to ask your coach, accountability partner, or **someone you respect** for his or her perspective and be **willing to hear it with an open mind**.

Questions to Ponder

- 6.1) In what ways have you tried to control the outcome of situations?
- 6.2) What did you compromise or lose to achieve that outcome?
- 6.3) What things do people say or do to make you feel defensive? What life circumstances put you on the defensive?
- 6.4) What are the things people say or do that make you angry? What life circumstances make you angry?
- 6.5) What topics are not open for discussion with you? Can you spot areas in your life where being angry or threatened show something you should surrender?

Introduction to Book Two

Relationship with Self

Do you struggle constantly to believe in your ability or worth? Do you despise yourself when you lose control? Is anger a perpetual war in your heart? As life goes on, we often flip-flop between confidence and doubt. Can you imagine how freeing it might be to appreciate who you are and have confidence that you will respond well to life's challenges?

You are worthy of everything God has for you because He has made you worthy!

To have confidence in yourself, you need to know yourself. To have confidence in what God can or will do in you, you need to know who God says you are in Him. Know God. Know yourself.

Don't ask yourself if you are able, but if you believe God can make you able!

In This Book

Heart Check & Inventory

You will examine the condition of your heart using methods revealed in Scripture, and you will make an inventory of your life, revealing patterns that may expose the root of your problems.

Problematic Thinking & Stuck Points

You will learn how to identify the ideas keeping you stuck and to change patterns of problematic thinking.

Self-control

You will discover how to overcome overwhelming emotions.

Perseverance

You will learn to persevere when life seems beyond hope, even when you feel attacked from every direction.

Anger Management

You will discover strategies for controlling out-of-control anger and learn the difference between destructive and beneficial anger.

Anxiety & Fear Management

Fear manifests many ways. It is the greatest tool in the enemy's arsenal. You will learn to identify fear triggers and combat them.

Lesson 10 — Understanding What's Ahead

Before you begin Book Two, it's important to understand how this part of your journey will work. This is the meat of your journey—one of the most difficult and rewarding parts. This lesson explains each section of this book and the heart check exercise, which you will use throughout.

The Heart Check

The heart check helps you examine the current condition of your heart and reveals both the good and the bad things hidden within it. This helps you identify areas of denial or avoidance and brings them to light where you can deal with them. It is important to remember the purpose of the heart check is to discover problems, not fix them. **You must discover what is in your heart before change can happen!**

The Heart Check Plan

After completing all the heart checks in this book, you will review your answers to identify areas where you desire change. You will define the results you want to accomplish and set goals to achieve those results. At the end of this book, you will revisit your plan and evaluate both your progress and how your goals have changed since you began.

The Inventory

The inventory is an assessment of your life that examines your resentments, fears, and hurts, along with harm you may have caused others. The inventory worksheets will help expose patterns in your life that led to detrimental relationships and behaviors. You may continue to the lessons on coping skills while working on your inventory to help you progress. However, **do not continue to the next book until your inventory is complete.** Your coach has additional tools and activities to aid the inventory process.

Coping Skills

These lessons will help you identify and deal with obstacles you may encounter on your journey. Each lesson provides a tool or acrostic teaching about problematic thinking patterns, stuck points, perseverance, powerful emotions, and managing anger and anxiety. These coping skills will remain useful even after this journey.



Do not continue without a coach. Now is a good time to find a strong accountability partner too—one who listens, keeps you balanced, and gives you support.



This week, your coach will share an object lesson to illustrate the enemy's strongholds in your life and the changes that occur when you make God your only stronghold.

Heart Check

But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.” (1 Samuel 16:7)

The Lord sees the genuine condition of your heart. He knows your beginning, your end, and everything in between, yet His focus is never on the outside appearance. God does not worry about the job you have, the car you drive, or the size of your body. His first concern is the state of your heart.

Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart. (Proverbs 21:2)

What Is the Heart?

When God speaks about the heart, He is referring to our core being: our mind, will, and emotions. The Lord examines our desires, our motives, our plans, our schemes, and how we understand people or situations.

We hide behind layers of walls, but the Lord looks at the person beneath the layers. God knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows our wrong thoughts and actions, even those **we cannot acknowledge in ourselves but are quick to see in others**. Only with the Lord can we recognize our true condition. We lack self-control when we do not understand why we do the things we do.

For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. (Romans 7:15)

For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked. (Revelation 3:17)

Ask the Lord to test your heart and reveal needed changes. He exposes things as we become open to seeing them.

Prove me, O Lord, and try me; test my heart and my mind. (Psalm 26:2)

Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:10)

God’s word helps us understand our heart. Scripture is a mirror which reflects the condition of our character.

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

Question to Ponder

10.1) Do you have questions or concerns before you continue?

Lesson 12 — The Tongue, Part 2

Gossip, Deception, and Lies, Oh My!

Has someone ever lied to you? It hurts, doesn't it? It is difficult to give trust to people capable of deceit. Lies don't just hurt our feelings; they destroy lives. People may mislead your thoughts or deceive you to act in ways you otherwise would not. They can take advantage of you, manipulate you, destroy your reputation, and involve you in legal disputes.

Deception takes many forms, from a blatant lie to subtle manipulation. It may present itself as a joke or a mistake. Deception disguised as kindness and flattery appeals to the ego while urging certain actions. Flattery is dangerous because it can manipulate you to act badly while feeling great.

Have you ever lied about your opinion of someone to protect his or her feelings? Your lie may lead others to have unreasonably high expectations, or it could cause them to feel shame and rejection. Pretending to be a friend while hiding your true feelings is deceptive and harmful.

Like a madman who throws firebrands, arrows, and death is the man who deceives his neighbor and says, 'I am only joking!' (Proverbs 26:18 – 19)

For such persons do not serve our Lord Christ, but their own appetites, and by smooth talk and flattery they deceive the hearts of the naive. (Romans 16:18)

The one who conceals hatred has lying lips, and whoever utters slander is a fool. (Proverbs 10:18)

His speech was smooth as butter, yet war was in his heart; his words were softer than oil, yet they were drawn swords. (Psalm 55:21)

Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. (Psalm 34:13)

Questions to Ponder

12.1) Has anyone ever lied to you? How did their lies harm you?

12.2) Have you ever lied to anyone? What harm was caused to others by your lies? (Play this lie all the way out. Who may have been hurt beyond the person you lied to? What were the unintended consequences of your lie?)

Gossip and Malicious Words

Gossip is when lies or exaggerated truth are spoken **to** us or **about** us. It could be ridicule, sharing someone's personal information, or talking about a person's mistakes or flaws. In any situation, gossip unfairly influences other's opinions about an individual.

People frequently conceal gossip as concern or a prayer request. It may be hidden in a "warning" about someone. A person may justify gossip because the hearer of the gossip is aware of the situation. They may claim it is acceptable to discuss it because it is "common knowledge". However, **the further from the source information travels, the less truth is conveyed**. The truth is often contrary to an individual's perception of a situation.

No one wants another to share their business. It is the individual's choice to share information about their lives. The choice does not belong to another.

Gossip may not start with malicious intent. It may be genuine concern for someone, legitimate prayer needs, or a simple comment relating to another's experience. You may possess a genuine belief it was an acceptable topic to discuss. Get permission before sharing anything about an individual with another person.



Every time you share anything about someone who is not you, your words have the potential to become twisted and misconstrued, and to spread.

You Are Responsible

What if you do not spread gossip, but surround yourself with people who do? Just as **you are accountable for your words** and those to whom you speak them, **you are also responsible for the gossip you hear**. Every word you let into your mind influences you. Listening to someone speak about another, whether it puts them in a positive or negative light, influences your opinion of them. Hearing a false understanding or perspective can turn you against a quality person, or toward believing a deceptive one. Gossip skews truth. You are not missing out if you refuse to listen to gossip.

*An evildoer listens to wicked lips, and a liar gives ear to a mischievous tongue.
(Proverbs 17:4)*

Questions to Ponder

- 12.3) What gossip and lies have harmed you?
- 12.4) When did you listen to gossip and with whom?
- 12.5) Have you ever spread gossip and lies to others?
- 12.6) Have you ever shared information with an uninvolved party out of concern, or warned someone about another person? Was this gossip?

The Appeal of Juicy Morsels of Gossip

*The words of a whisperer are like delicious morsels;
they go down into the inner parts of the body. (Proverbs 18:8 and 26:22)*

The book of Proverbs talks twice about how appealing whispered words (i.e., gossip) are to those who listen. Gossip sinks into the inner parts of our body. The lure of gossip comes from knowing information that others do not, giving us a sense of importance. It can make us feel better about ourselves to talk about another's problems, but whenever we gossip, we are ingesting poison into the core of our soul.

Questions to Ponder

12.7) How do you relate to these verses from Proverbs?

12.8) Wrong words can backfire and hurt us. Has this ever happened to you? Describe what happened.



What if I Need to Be Advised?

Is it gossip to share with a therapist, pastor, or coach?

There is nothing wrong with seeking advice about a situation in your life that involves other people. The problem comes when you seek advice with an ill motive, or when you seek advice from those who will spread your concern to others. Seek counsel from a trusted friend—one who is fair-minded, understands your strongholds, is not afraid to call out your errors, and will offer you a realistic perspective. You can also ask for advice while keeping the person you're talking about anonymous.

If you solicit the viewpoint of someone you know will always agree with you or popular opinion, you are not requesting advice. Instead, you are venting frustration or seeking to justify yourself, and this is gossip.

*Where there is no guidance, a people falls,
but in an abundance of counselors there is safety. (Proverbs 11:14)*

Therapists, pastors, sponsors, and coaches should carry no bias toward you or your situation. You should feel safe to share concerns with these people, but no one is perfect. If your most trusted advisors betray your confidence, it is they who are gossiping, not you.

Watch Your Words



- ***“A man who bears false witness against his neighbor is like a war club, or a sword, or a sharp arrow.” (Proverbs 25:18)***
- ***“A dishonest man spreads strife, and a whisperer separates close friends.” (Proverbs 16:28)***
- ***“You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness.” (Exodus 23:1)***
- ***“You shall not go around as a slanderer among your people, and you shall not stand up against the life of your neighbor: I am the Lord.” (Leviticus 19:16)***
- ***“Whoever slanders his neighbor secretly I will destroy. Whoever has a haughty look and an arrogant heart I will not endure.” (Psalm 101:5)***



Sometimes we do not realize how words we speak come across to others. Pay extra close attention to your words and how people respond to them. Journal what you learn!

Lesson 15 — Your Thoughts, Part 1

Test Your Heart by Knowing Your Thoughts

You can test your heart by examining the secret thoughts you never reveal to anyone or even those thoughts you refuse to acknowledge. Thoughts invoke feelings and desires. Therefore, what we feel, think, and desire (our “will”) displays the core condition of our heart.

Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (Psalm 139:23)

Questions to Ponder

- 15.1) What thoughts have you kept secret? Seek the Lord and ask Him to reveal thoughts you struggle to acknowledge or refuse to admit, even to yourself. List them to bring them into the light.
- 15.2) How do your secret thoughts affect your life? (Consider your emotions, actions, etc.)

Renew Your Mind

Feelings often direct our conscious thoughts. Changing our thoughts can alter the way we feel and what we desire. Different thinking can override negative emotions. Science has shown that, as our thinking changes, the make-up of our brain changes. The renewal of the mind spoken of in Scripture is the process of replacing poisonous patterns of thinking.

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

God’s transformation changes how we think. We hear two conflicting reports throughout our lives: lies of the enemy leading to death, or to the true report of the Lord, which leads to life. We choose which one we listen to. Believe the report of the Lord. Choose life and live!

I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse. Therefore choose life, that you and your offspring may live. (Deuteronomy 30:19)

Our minds require renewal. Without the Lord, our thoughts turn to evil and become enslaved to our flesh.

The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. (Genesis 6:5)

Therefore, we must guard our minds from the enemy’s lies and wrong thinking by keeping our mind focused on the Lord. We must take our thoughts captive, controlling what we allow our mind to absorb.

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

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. (Isaiah 26:3)

We destroy speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

How do you take your thoughts captive?

- Keep your mind focused on what is good and worthy of praise.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.” (Philippians 4:8)

- Guard what goes into your mind. This may include videos, books, or music. Keep your eyes from wicked things that may “cling to you” or have a lasting impact.

“I will not set before my eyes anything that is worthless. I hate the work of those who fall away; it shall not cling to me. (Psalm 101:3)

- Set your mind on furthering God’s Kingdom and seeking the will of God. Do not become preoccupied by worldly things. The priorities and motivations of this world are not the same priorities and motivations that move a person seeking after God’s heart.

“But he turned and said to Peter, ‘Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man.’” (Matthew 16:23)

“As we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen. For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.” (2 Corinthians 4:18)

“For to set the mind on the flesh is death, but to set the mind on the Spirit is life and peace. For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God, for it does not submit to God’s law; indeed, it cannot. Those who are in the flesh cannot please God.” (Romans 8:6 – 8)

- Do not lean on your own understanding. Instead, seek God, and He will keep you on the right path. There is no fear when we trust in the Lord. Our emotions, senses, and experiences blind us to truth when filtered through our strongholds—the protection responses created by our life experiences. We know truth by God’s wise counsel.

“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes.” (Proverbs 3:5 – 7)

“Seek after the Lord always. With my whole heart I seek you; let me not wander from your commandments!” (Psalm 119:10)

“He is not afraid of bad news; his heart is firm, trusting in the Lord.” (Psalm 112:7)

Questions to Ponder

- 15.3) How have you tried to take your thoughts captive in the past?
- 15.4) Do you base your judgments and choices on what you think happened without knowing all the facts? Give examples.
- 15.5) Do you tend to focus more on the positive or negative? List the ways your thoughts focus on the negative.
- 15.6) What impact does your negativity have on you?
- 15.7) For each negative thought you mentioned, how can you change to more positive thoughts?
- 15.8) What do you allow to influence your mind? (TV, movies, books, friends, etc.)
- 15.9) How do things you watch, read, and hear “cling” to you?
- 15.10) What should you stop watching, reading, and hearing?

Lesson 18 — Your Thoughts, Part 4

Motives

Motives are the intentions or reasons behind our choices. Sometimes we do the right thing with ill motives. Perhaps our motives are honorable, but our actions result in an unintended outcome. Many times we are unaware, or refuse to consider, the motives that dwell in our subconscious thoughts. We need to examine the motives behind our thoughts, words, actions, and even our prayers.

Thoughts and motives interlink. Our thoughts influence our motives, and our motives influence our thoughts, which direct our decisions. Thoughts and ideas filtered through fear, insecurity, selfishness, and our individual versions of right and wrong give birth to wrong, selfish motives. **Regardless of the outcome, it is the heart's intent that matters to God.** Doing good things with wicked intention is sin. And when our heart's motives line up with God's ways, mistakes resulting in a negative outcome are not always sinful. God examines the spirit in which we act. He does **not condemn** us for **honest mistakes** when we strive to be obedient to His Word.

Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven you. (Acts 8:22)

Questions to Ponder

18.1) Define in your own words which intentions of your heart please the Lord, and which motives He would consider wickedness.

18.2) How do your motives influence your thoughts, ideas, decisions, or actions?

Influence

Be careful with whom you associate. Everything you see and hear influences your thoughts, and the people in your life are your greatest influence. Your spouse and close friendships should have similar values and beliefs to yours. It is difficult, sometimes painful, and often detrimental when your close relationships oppose your faith. Scripture calls this being **unequally yoked**.

If your friends are not of moral character, you will pick up more of their bad habits than they will pick up of your good ones. You may keep your core values, but people do affect how you think. Are you a people pleaser? Your desire for approval affects your motives. Guarding your mind includes guarding which influences you allow in.

*Do two walk together, unless they have agreed to meet?
(Amos 3:3)*

*The fear of man lays a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is safe.
(Proverbs 29:25)*

Questions to Ponder

18.3) Do you keep company with people of godly character?

18.4) Do you compromise your values or change your behavior when with certain people?

18.5) Do you behave in certain ways to be accepted or to avoid another's judgment?

Emotions

Our emotions often speak louder than our thoughts. Thoughts are the place where our emotions dwell. Emotions develop as our minds interpret situations through our conscious thoughts, memories, and beliefs. This is how our emotions can help us understand our unconscious thoughts. **When you discover the thought behind an emotion, you discover what is in your heart, which helps you understand your expectations and sort through your motives.**

In the **conscious mind**, the part of the mind in which we are currently aware and process our thoughts, it is easy to connect a thought to the emotion it evokes. For example, if someone cuts you off in traffic, you think, "They almost caused a wreck!" and you experience fear. Your fear connects to your realization that you almost wrecked your car.

Have you ever experienced an emotion, like sadness or fear, that seems to have no origin? Thoughts buried in the **unconscious mind** can trigger an emotional response that seems illogical or out of place, like experiencing sudden fear or sadness when you step outside.

Think of your brain as a personal computer. Every thought, emotion, memory, and belief becomes a file stored on the hard drive of your brain. The **conscious mind** is like your open, active files. The **subconscious mind** is like your file storage, which gives you easy access to thoughts, knowledge, and emotions, which your conscious mind may pull up as needed.

Once the conscious mind processes a thought, it files it in a directory called memory in the **unconscious mind**. If the mind believes the thought is accurate knowledge, it stores it as a **belief**. Your brain automatically files every thought, emotion, belief, and memory. While your mind is assimilating current experiences, it is running scans of all your stored files, seeking relevant information.

If an **unconscious process** of your brain triggers an emotional response, your conscious mind will know the emotion, but it may not be aware of the reason for it. This is when **you must step back and learn what your emotions are telling you.**

Toxic Emotions or Toxic Thoughts?

Emotions **can inform you** of your thoughts, but they **should never guide** your decisions. Even though they generate powerful feelings, **emotions have no ability to decipher between right and wrong.** Emotions are neither good nor bad, but if they develop from strongholds and wrong thinking, they can deceive you or control you.

Not all emotions that feel bad are toxic. Grief feels bad, but the message grief portrays is deep love for another. People only grieve for what they love. **Toxic emotions are emotions that trap you or feed your flesh's sin nature, drawing you away from God or people.** Envy feeds the sin of lust or jealousy can cause dissention. Fear can be a healthy emotion that protects you from danger, or it can become toxic, crippling you from making positive changes in your life.

What determines whether an emotion is healthy or toxic, is the message or thought behind it and your response to it. For example, anger shows a real or perceived injustice; it is neither positive nor negative. However, your response to anger may be considered either good or evil. We can allow anger to fester into hate or use the information it gives us to resolve a conflict and forgive another person.

It is thoughts, not emotions, which are healthy or destructive. Therefore, it is vital to determine the truth about your thoughts. This keeps your heart in right standing with the Lord and prevents your flesh from using your emotions to trigger sin.

It may be difficult to identify the thought causing a certain emotion. Think about **what happened before you felt it. Are you feeling another emotion as well? What are you thinking now? Does this emotion feel like something you have experienced in the past?** Answering these questions can help you discover whether the feeling is rational or based on a lie.

Do not confuse thoughts with feelings. We can express feelings in one or two words, but if you need a sentence to express a feeling, you are likely sharing a thought. “I feel like I don’t deserve love” is a thought, not an emotion. “I feel shame,” on the other hand, expresses an emotion.

Questions to Ponder

- 18.6) How well do you handle your emotions? Explain.
- 18.7) Do you feel emotions which seem to have no cause? Explain.
- 18.8) Pay attention to your emotions this week. Using the questions in bold above, examine the thoughts behind each emotion. Are these toxic or healthy thoughts?
- 18.9) Were you unable to identify the underlying thought of an emotion? Describe the emotion and the circumstances surrounding it.

Congratulations!

You have completed the heart check on your thoughts!

Questions to Ponder

- 18.10) Review all your answers from the lessons on thoughts and write down any ways in which you do well.
- 18.11) Write about any areas discussed in the lessons on thoughts where you need to improve.
- 18.12) How do you feel about this heart check?

Lesson 19 — Your Actions, Part 1

Actions

Your actions show the condition of your heart. Situations lead to thoughts, which result in actions. Examine your actions to discover the feelings and thoughts that triggered the action. We must know why we behave as we do to understand and guard our hearts.

Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it. (Proverbs 4:23)

We invest our time, money, and attention in what we treasure.

Integrity

If your words say one thing but your actions say another, you are disingenuous. Scripture says to let your words be simply “yes” or “no” (see Matthew 5:37), referring to your integrity. Your word alone should be as dependable as a vow. Consider this parable:

*“But what do you think? A man had two sons. And he went to the first and said, ‘Son, go and work in the vineyard today.’ And he answered, ‘I will not,’ but afterward he changed his mind and went. And he went to the other son and said the same. And he answered, ‘I go, sir, but did not go. Which of the two did the will of his father?’ They said, ‘The first.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Truly, I say to you, the tax collectors and the prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you. For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes believed him. And even when you saw it, you did not afterward change your minds and believe him.’”
(Matthew 21:28 – 32)*

Questions to Ponder

- 19.1) How do the things you say differ from your genuine feelings and actions?
- 19.2) Do you ever give into laziness, avoid work, or make excuses?

This parable applies to every life situation. If our words say one thing but our actions say the opposite, we are not trustworthy. We see this lack of integrity in **the masks** we wear for certain people, **lies** we tell to fit in, **excuses** made to avoid work, and **claiming to** believe or like something to gain approval. In every case, our actions do not match our words or what is really in our heart. When this happens, we are not being honest.

Who is wise and understanding among you? By his good conduct let him show his works in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast and be false to the truth. This is not the wisdom that comes down from above, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there will be disorder and every vile practice. But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. And a harvest of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace. (James 3:13 – 18)

Questions to Ponder

- 19.3) Jealousy and selfish ambition (seeking to acquire success at the expense of another) produce disorder and vile actions. How have your jealousy or ambition become harmful?
- 19.4) True wisdom comes from good motives and leads to peace, mercy, reasonableness, and other good actions. Describe the positive result of your good conduct?

*So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.
(1 Corinthians 10:31)*

Question to Ponder

- 19.5) We are told to glorify God in everything we do, even the little things! In what ways do your actions glorify God?

Scripture speaks of “numbering our days.” This refers to our brief existence on earth compared to eternity. As we consider our limited number of days, we make what we do in those days count, and choose not to waste any time.

*Who considers the power of your anger, and your wrath according to the fear of you?
So teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom. (Psalm 90:11 – 12)*

Questions to Ponder

- 19.6) How much time do you spend on self-gratifying or trivial activities?
- 19.7) What activities do you consider a waste of time?
- 19.8) How do you expect the Lord wants you to use your time?

How you invest your money and possessions is a powerful statement to the condition of your heart. It displays either your love for God and people or your level of greed. God wants you to give from the genuine desire of your heart, not just because it is the “right thing to do.”

Generosity goes further than giving stuff. Often the most valuable gift we can give to another is our time and our ear. Good listeners support and encourage others. Giving your time is a genuine display of love and kindness to a person and service to the Lord.

*Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion,
for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)*

***Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.
(Luke 12:33 – 34)***

No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money. (Luke 16:13)

Questions to Ponder

- 19.9) In what do you invest a significant amount of money?**
- 19.10) If your spending does not represent your treasure, what changes must you make?**
- 19.11) Do you hold your possessions with a firm grip, or are you open to giving them away if the situation calls for it? What are you unwilling to let go?**
- 19.12) You invest your time and attention in what you treasure. Are you quick to give time to others? Why or why not?**
- 19.13) Are you attentive when listening to others? Do you let other things—the time, your phone, or a squirrel outside—distract you?**

FRUSTRATION IS A LOCK



PATIENCE IS THE KEY

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

THE LORD IS THE LOCKSMITH, THE MAKER OF EVERY KEY

I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)

WHAT IS THIS FRUIT?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:22-23)



Lesson 23 — Problematic Thinking

Cognitive distortions are irrational, exaggerated patterns of thought that convince our mind to believe something untrue. These thought distortions go beyond simple negativity; **they may solidify a negative thought into a belief.**

There are many ways your thinking can distort your view of yourself, other people, and the world around you. Your ideas may have come from how you learned to relate in childhood, your life experiences, or when your belief system conflicts with the reality you experience. This is natural: Our mind attempts to make sense of what we do not understand and protect us from being hurt.

Some thoughts are automatic responses to an experience. These thoughts often line up with core beliefs about yourself, others, and the world. **Automatic thoughts are like a thinking habit.** You think without knowing you are thinking, and when these thoughts are negative, you may see even a positive event in a negative light. Thoughts that cause shame, bitterness, anger, fear, or insecurity may even lead to symptoms of depression or anxiety.

Check Your Thinking

- Read the “Problematic Thinking Patterns” worksheet.
- Check your inventory worksheets for thought patterns that may have caused misunderstandings or led to a toxic situation.
- This worksheet is not an exhaustive list but provides a good starting point to show the adverse effects that can result from your thinking.



**Use the “Problematic Thinking Worksheet”
to examine ways you are thinking about
your experiences this week.**

- 1. Watch for yourself or someone else to use one of these thinking patterns and write about it in your journal.**
- 2. Look for an example of each type of distorted thinking.**
- 3. On the worksheet, check the box next to the thought distortions you notice in yourself.**

Patterns of Problematic Thinking Worksheet

What thoughts are keeping you from a full recovery? These are your stuck points thoughts that keep you from forgiving another, or that keep you angry or insecure. Often, these thoughts originate from problematic thinking patterns.

Directions:

Check the boxes next to a pattern you recognize in yourself and write an example for each checked pattern of how you have seen this pattern in your thinking.

- Fortune-telling** – Jumping to conclusions, predicting or assuming a future outcome, or expecting the worst possible outcome to happen.
Clue words: “What if ...” statements.
- Magnifying or Minimizing** – Magnifying is exaggerating a situation or blowing it out of proportion (i.e., making a mountain out of a molehill). Minimizing discounts the importance of something relevant. Often, they work together.
Example: Your team wins a game, but you minimize the win because you missed a goal, and you magnify your failure to get the goal.
- Filtering** – Filtering out either positive or negative information about a situation.
Examples: The attitude that “having integrity won’t pay my bills,” or ignoring disciplinary action from a boss and only focusing on praise from a coworker (or vice-versa).
- Polarized Thinking** – Oversimplifying things as good/bad, right/wrong. This is also referred to as “black and white” or “all or nothing” thinking. This way of thinking does not acknowledge gray areas or contributing circumstances.
Example: You accuse your spouse of failing to contribute to the family because they did not clean the house—ignoring the fact that your spouse was sick in bed most of the week.
- Overgeneralization** – Drawing a conclusion based on one or two incidents. You perceive an incident as an event that will happen again and again, or as a pattern that will continue forever.
Clue words: “All,” “None,” “Always,” “Never,” “Every,” “Constantly,” “Can’t,” “Won’t.”
Examples: “I **can’t** get my bills right, **every** month I am late on something.” Or someone cancels plans with you, and now you do not believe you can count on them.
- Personalization** – Taking what others do personally or comparing yourself with others. This thinking causes you to assume another’s actions are a response to you or your behaviors. It may also be taking the blame for things outside of your responsibility or control.
Example: “She did not say anything at the meeting; I must have made her angry.” “I should have been able to stop the accident.”

- Labeling** – When a person makes a mistake or something happens you dislike, you label the person, object, or situation based on that experience.
Examples: “The homework assignment is stupid.” “She is so lazy.” “I am a failure.”
- Mind-reading** – Assuming the thoughts of others with no evidence of their opinions. This could be an assumption that a person has negative thoughts toward you, or assuming you know why a person acts a certain way.
Examples: “They will think I am worthless.” “He must think I am stupid.” “She has no good reason for staying home; she must be hiding something.”
- Emotional Reasoning** – Considering your emotions as proof of the reality of a situation.
Examples: “I feel fear, so there is danger.” “I feel stupid, so I am stupid.”
- Should Statements** – Believing if you or someone else did something different, a situation would have had a better outcome. This thinking often places unrealistic expectations on yourself or others and may lead to shame, anger, or bitterness.
Clue words: “Should,” “must,” “ought.”
Examples: “I should have known that car was coming.” “I should have known I couldn’t trust him.” “He ought to have more gratitude for everything I did for him.”
- Blaming** – Holding other people responsible for your pain or seeing everything bad as someone else’s fault entirely.
Example: “I tripped because you got in my way.”
- Self-serving Bias** –Believing everything good that happens around you points to your excellent character, but negative events are out of your control.
- Example: People with this thinking may refuse to admit their flaws and go to great lengths to prove they are not wrong. They may see themselves as always being right, believe their opinions are facts, or fail to consider the opinions or feelings of others*
- Fallacy of Change** – The expectation that other people will change what they think or do to make you happy. This thinking insists on having its own way and may pressure or manipulate people to enforce it. Your happiness requires that another person change.
Example: Refusing to eat a meal with the family because you dislike the prepared food.
- Just World Fallacy** – The assumption that you get what you deserve in life, or that everything must be fair and equal. It is the belief that good things happen to good people, and bad things happen to bad people.
Examples: “They deserve to live in poverty because they do not work hard enough.” “I went out on a date with my coworker because my husband cheated. It’s only fair.”

Lesson 26 — Coping Strategies

How Should We Deal with Emotion?

Scripture shows us the correct way to deal with emotions in first Peter:

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. Be sober-minded; be watchful. Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same kinds of suffering are being experienced by your brotherhood throughout the world. And after you have suffered a little while, the God of all grace, who has called you to his eternal glory in Christ, will himself restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.

(1 Peter 5:6 – 10)

Let emotions alert you to a situation and give you information:

- **Humble yourself.** Do not rely on your way of thinking to understand. Seek God's wisdom and give your concerns about the situation to Him. Tell Him how you feel! He cares for you, and He will help you.
- **Keep your mind sober.** Do not use alcohol or drugs to run away from your emotions. *(Note: This is referring to self-medicating. Never stop taking medications prescribed under a qualified physician's care without your doctor's guidance. This may cause serious harm.)*
 - A sober mind is also a steady, sound mind. Do not allow your thoughts to spin out of control. Take them to the Lord first.
- **Keep guard against the lies of the enemy.** He will try to spin you up or use your emotions against you. Do not let him.
- **Resist the enemy:**
 - Trust that the Lord will keep you in whatever you are going through.
 - Know you are not alone in your pain; God is with you, and others have suffered what you are suffering and come through it.
 - Understand that your suffering is only for a short time. When the season is over, God Himself will restore, confirm, strengthen, and establish you.
 - Seek and believe truth.

The following strategies are the first steps in managing your emotions.

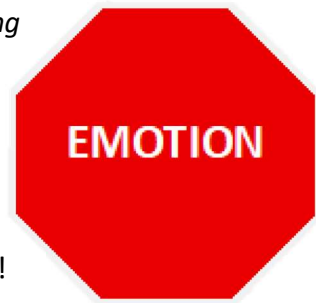
The moment you feel negative emotions or face temptation,

S.T.O.P. then T.H.I.N.K.

Strategy: S.T.O.P.

The acrostic S.T.O.P. can help you remember what to do when a strong emotion comes as a surprise. It is important **to stop at the initial thought** before the emotions get too powerful and spin you out of control.

Treat your emotions like a stop sign. You are not trying to stop the emotion; you are stopping your thinking. When an emotion surprises you or appears negative, recognize it as you would a stop sign when you are driving. The vehicle of thought must come to a complete stop! When thoughts spin up, it is exceedingly difficult to regain control.



Stay

Stay at the feet of Jesus. Become grounded in the present. Do not hang out in the past or look toward future concerns. Focus on the here and now. Find a point of focus, like the chair you are sitting on, for example. The only thing required of you is simply to breathe. Put your concerns on a shelf in your mind. Wait until you are in a better place or the Lord directs you to act before taking the concern off your shelf.

They who wait for the LORD shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40:31)

Trust

Trust that God has it. This is the power of letting. **Let** God hear your emotion, **let** Him know your concern, your anger, or your fear, and **let** Him take responsibility for the outcome. In things out of your control, do not search for ways to force the situation into your control. Remember, the Lord knows what is best, and He sees the situation clearer than you do.

Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths. (Proverbs 3:5 – 6)

Observe

Observe the conditions that could contribute to the emotion. Are you tired? Hungry? Sick? Overwhelmed? Did you take medicine? Ladies, are you near your cycle? All these things can magnify the emotion you feel. Examine the situation. What is happening that you dislike? What is concerning you? Is the emotion you are experiencing out of proportion to the circumstance?

But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. (2 Corinthians 11:31)

Pray

Pray that the Lord will reveal what you need to know or the actions you should take. Be humble and do not lean on your own understanding. Remain calm: Time is on your side. Wait for an answer from the Lord.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (James 1:5)

Strategy: T.H.I.N.K.

First use the STOP strategy, then you can THINK.

Turn

Turn the emotion into information. What information does the emotion tell you? What are your actual beliefs about yourself or your situation? Seek the Lord for the truth about the situation.

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. (Galatians 5:16)

Honest

Be honest and humble. What are you learning about yourself from the emotion? Are you being inconsiderate or self-centered? Are you insecure or worried? Are your expectations reasonable?

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

Investigate

Investigate all the options. Identify your assumptions and look for alternative plausible explanations. What information is still unknown? Are the expectations of others reasonable? How could the enemy be using your emotion to cause harm? What lies are you hearing or trusting?

The simple believes everything, but the prudent gives thought to his steps. (Proverbs 14:15)

No

No snap decisions. Learn to tell yourself no. Step back and take time to assess the situation. Gather your thoughts, ask questions, and get truthful information. Powerful emotions tempt us to jump to conclusions. You cannot take back a snap response, and it often will do more damage than good. Before you act, give yourself a cooling-off period to process your emotions and what happened to trigger them. Allow God time to move on your behalf in the situation. Avoiding impulsiveness prevents choices we regret. **The path of least regret is rarely the easy or quick path.**

If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. (Proverbs 18:13)

Keep

Keep sober-minded to prepare your mind for action. Guard your mind by focusing your thoughts on the Kingdom of God and whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, and anything worthy of praise (see Philippians 4:8).

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

Lesson 27 — Persevere

What is perseverance? The Scripture uses words like “steadfastness,” “endurance,” and “patience.” The Merriam-Webster dictionary says perseverance is persistence in doing something despite difficulty or delay in achieving success. It is hard to keep doing the right things, to keep having faith, when the answers seem far away. It is hard to keep on when the battle seems endless, and to keep standing up in our weakness. Yet we prosper if we do not give up.

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9)

We Must Persevere

The Lord allows us to experience trials to test us and strengthen our character. We enter the Kingdom of God through many tribulations. (Tribulation: A cause or state of great trouble or suffering.)

In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world. (John 16:33)

When you do something new, prepare a new product, or promote a new program, you test it, right? You will run trials to check what works and remove any bugs. Tests and trials are also a necessary part of the process of transformation to make us a new creation in Christ.

Perseverance through Difficulty Is the Growing Pains of Character

The Lord knows the hidden things in our heart that we struggle to see. We may think we have overcome a character defect, but when the right trial comes along, that defect can rise to the surface again. Our trials and stresses shed light on our weaknesses, helping us to see where we are and how much we have grown. Each trial we face brings us deeper into the root of our character defects so God can do a complete work in our hearts.

The Lord does not allow trials and tests so He can grade our progress. Our trials benefit us, helping us see where we need to grow and how far we have come, refining us, making us perfect and complete. They strengthen our faith, nurture our love, make our hope certain, and mold us into a reflection of Jesus—the person God predestined us to become to receive His eternal promise.

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

For you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (James 1:3 – 4)

For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. (Romans 8:29)

When we persevere, we are blessed with eternal victory!

*And you will be hated by all for my name's sake.
But the one who endures to the end will be saved. (Matthew 10:22)*

Be the Tree!

Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit. (Jeremiah 17:7 – 8)

He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. (Psalm 1:1 – 3)

Perseverance starts with trust. God is the only place worthy of your trust. We trust in Him, but **He IS also our trust**. If you have a dozen eggs, you can put some eggs in a basket and others in your refrigerator, in a pan, on your counter, and even save a couple to throw at someone's house. It is the same with trust. You can put trust in the Lord and put trust in your shelter, in weapons, in your skill, in your wisdom, in your family, or in your friends. Jeremiah is telling us to trust in the Lord, but also to make the Lord the place which holds all our trust. Our trust **is** the Lord, **like putting all your eggs in one basket; you put all you have in Him**.

Scripture compares perseverance to a tree planted by water. The tree planted can stand in the heat; it does not wither from drought; instead, it always produces fruit. The tree's roots keep it connected to the source of life-giving water. **The Lord is our source of life**. When we stay connected to our source, we can stand the heat of the refiner's fire and will not wither in times of lack. Our lives will never stop bearing fruit. We will prosper in all we do because we stay grounded in our source.

And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. (Colossians 1:17)

Stay Grounded in Your Source

You cast off many things during your inventory, emptying yourself of past pain, lies, fear, sin, and guilt. Now it is time to put on something new. You must replace what you took off, filling the holes left in your heart. The trick is to fill them with suitable things.

First, you put off your old self and renewed your mind in truth. This was your inventory and heart check. It is plausible that you will discover more things to put off as you walk through life with God. The process of removing lies and renewing your mind is ongoing. After putting off your old self, you must put on your new self in Christ. The book of Romans tells us the **first thing** you put on is Jesus, so you can be transformed into His likeness.

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

*But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.
(Romans 13:14)*

Jesus is our source. Once we put Him on, we stand strong by putting on the whole armor of God. **This is how we become the tree planted by the water.**

Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. (Ephesians 6:11)



Read Ephesians 6:11 – 18

This armor, mentioned in Ephesians, is our relationship with God. The **belt of truth** keeps the armor on. Rebuking the enemy's lies in exchange for God's truth, knowing His word, and living a life of honesty and integrity, keeps the other pieces of armor in place. The **breastplate of righteousness** protects your heart, keeping your heart in check so no sin can creep in and take hold. Your **shoes** guard your walk. Walk in the footsteps of Jesus in every moment of your day. The **gospel of peace** keeps you confident. In every circumstance, keep your **shield of faith**—your trust in God. Every dart the enemy can throw will bounce off this shield. Guard your mind with the **helmet of salvation**. The enemy attacks your mind, the place which births emotion, desire, sin, doubt, love, and hate. When you think wrongly, the enemy gains a foothold, and everything goes wrong. Rest assured, you are the Lord's, and His Word is true for you.

Your offensive tool is the **sword of the Spirit**, fighting against enemy's attacks. The Holy Spirit deciphers God's Word, speaking directly into your life. Finally, **cover everything in prayer** and pray for your brothers and sisters in Christ.

When you dress in God's armor, you can stand!

Questions to Ponder

Read the following CHOICE strategy and put it into practice.

27.1) Write about using the strategy.

27.2) How did the strategy help you?

27.3) Where did you find the strategy difficult to implement?

Strategy: C.H.O.I.C.E.

You will stand strong with the Lord each day when you choose well. **Choose** Him first in each moment, and you will persevere every day, in everything.

Character

Choose excellent character in trial. STOP and THINK so you do not react in your flesh, but in the wisdom and love of the Lord.

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

Hope

Place your hope in the Lord. Remember the promises of God and count on them.

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

Optimism

Optimism in trials brings us joy, because we are confident that the Lord will work through everything for our benefit. Keep a heart of gratitude, remembering the Lord's provisions. Know with certainty that He finishes the work He starts. Optimism comes from hope. Hope deferred makes the heart sick.

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

Immovable

Be the immovable tree. Stand firm and do not allow your faith to waiver. The Lord has your back. He is the strength and the source allowing you to stand.

Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. (1 Corinthians 15:58)

Connected

Stay connected to your source. Keep the Word of the Lord in you and live your life in Him. Allow everything you do and all that you are to come from Him.

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

Escape

Escape from flesh temptations. The Lord provides a way to escape temptation, including temptations to doubt God, fear circumstances, act in anger, or gratify a desire contrary to the Lord.

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

Strategy: S.I.L.E.N.T.

Stop

Catching anger right away is the key to managing it. Identify it, then take steps to clear your mind. Look for the physical signs of anger. When you first notice anger, take a time-out to walk, exercise, practice breathing or relaxation techniques, or talk with your coach or accountability partner.

Identify

Identify the cues or events that cause your hostility. Is the neighbor leaving trash in your yard or playing music too loud? Were you on hold too long, or did another's incompetence cause you to fail? Is someone stealing from you, or degrading you and spreading lies? What is the triggering event? What warning signs alert you to anger?

Look for the **physical cues** (i.e., bodily responses such as tight jaw or muscles, fast heart rate, surge of adrenalin, etc.), **behavioral cues** (glaring, raising your voice, etc.), **emotional cues** (other feelings like fear, hurt, jealousy, etc. that accompany or precede your anger), and **thought cues** (any thoughts that are increasing your hostility. Ask: Do I see images of aggression or have ideas of revenge?).

Ladder

Remember the anger ladder. Monitor your anger. If you struggle with severe anger issues, check your place on the anger ladder each morning and throughout the day. Write about it in your journal. Manage your anger on a moment-by-moment basis. Examine your cues and the related event and note the highest rung you climbed on the anger ladder. How are you bringing your feet back to ground level?

Explore

Explore the feelings and situations behind the anger. After you have identified the specific conflict, try to go further. What information can you learn from your anger? What about this situation caused you anger? Is a relationship unhealthy? Are you being mistreated, manipulated, or abused? Are you feeling inadequate or afraid of something? Do you want what you cannot have? How does this situation impact your life?

Negotiate

Negotiate the solution. Are you offended because of past experiences or assumptions? Is the perceived wrong legitimate? Are you being reasonable or taking something personally? What was your intent? Is it possible the other person did not intend harm or had a good motive? Should you resolve the conflict or deal with it in your heart? Discuss the issue with the person involved in love.

Take

Take back your rights. You can resolve a conflict without allowing people to walk all over you. You have a legitimate right to be treated with respect and dignity. Conflict resolution always involves forgiving, but that does not mean you must put yourself in a position to continue suffering harm from another. Be assertive but not aggressive when standing up for yourself.

Lesson 30 – Combat Anxiety & Panic Attacks

Anxiety disorders are a never-ending circle. Anxious thoughts lead to physical symptoms, which lead to behaviors that maintain and increase the anxiety.

It starts with a thought or belief. Sometimes we experience the symptoms of anxiety first and are unaware of the thought or belief causing it. As a result, we assume our thoughts come from experiencing the emotion, but the truth is that the physical sensations we feel come from our thoughts.

We choose behaviors we expect will improve our anxiety, such as isolating from social scenes, attempting to take control, or avoiding challenging situations. These behaviors **lead to new beliefs**: We assume we are incapable or out of control. The new beliefs maintain or even increase the anxiety, and then this cycle repeats.



To break the cycle, you must break the chains of the circle using these three steps:

1. **Calm** the physical symptoms of anxiety. Live in the moment and use relaxation techniques.
2. **Challenge** your anxious thoughts and look for problematic thinking patterns.
3. **Discover and stop** the behaviors that maintain and worsen your anxiety, such as avoiding situations or criticizing yourself.

Truth You Can Trust In

God's perfect love casts out fear (see 1 John 4:18); His Word shows us truth that we can cling to when we experience anxiety and fear. Keep your mind focused on the truth in His Word.

- God gives us a spirit of power and self-control. Anxiety and fear are liars, tools of the enemy.
FEAR: F – False E – Evidence A – Appearing R – Real

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

- He will strengthen you to handle life's stressors.

Fear not, for I am with you; be not dismayed, for I am your God; I will strengthen you, I will help you, I will uphold you with my righteous right hand. (Isaiah 41:10)

- He will supply your every need.

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

- He gives us a purpose and a future. We do not need to worry about the future.

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope. (Jeremiah 29:11)

Even to your old age I am he, and to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made, and I will bear; I will carry and will save. (Isaiah 46:4)

- You can move on!

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 3:14)

Strategy: R.E.A.S.O.N.

Trade in the chaos of anxiety for reason! We will have stressors in life. James 1:2 says to “Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,” but the one suffering with anxiety feels a need to control the trials instead of rejoicing in them. Learning to deal with anxiety in a healthy, biblical way **allows anxiety to work for you instead of controlling you**. Remember the acrostic R.E.A.S.O.N. for dealing with anxiety:

Relax

Relax your body and slow your breathing. Anxiety clouds your mind, preparing your body to fight or flee. This causes an adrenalin rush, rapid heartbeat, muscle tension, etc. Your body is not preparing your mind to think, but to take emergency action. By calming your physical response, you can clear your mind. (See the end of this chapter for relaxation tools.)

Examine

Examine your surroundings to help ground you in the moment. Stay in the here and now. Focus on an object in your hand, or do a task like washing dishes, and focus only on that task.

*Therefore do not be anxious about tomorrow, for tomorrow will be anxious for itself.
Sufficient for the day is its own trouble. (Matthew 6:34)*

Actual

Is there an actual threat or a real reason for your anxiety? Search your surroundings. Is there an external threat? What are the triggers?

Shift

Shift your mindset. Peace comes when your mind is stayed on the Lord. Meditate on the Word of the Lord and His truths; do not allow what you feel or see to deceive you.

You keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you, because he trusts in you. (Isaiah 26:3)

Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (Philippians 4:8)

Offer

Offer your burden to the Lord. Pray with gratitude in your heart for all God has done. It is difficult to worry about the future when you reflect on how the Lord has helped and blessed you in the past. Humble yourself and do not look to your own wisdom or try to take control. Give your anxieties to God and give Him the responsibility for the outcome.

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you. (1 Peter 5:6 – 7)

New Thinking

Renew your mind and think differently. Changing how you process information involves seeking truth and rejecting messages that reinforce insecurity, pain, shame, and fear from past situations. Seek wisdom to discern truth from the problematic thinking prompting your anxiety.

If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him. (James 1:5)

Lesson 31 — A Completed Inventory

A New “Heart Check Plan”

Progress Check and New Goals

You have completed the inventory of your past and examined patterns in your thoughts and actions. You may see how one event from your life set the stage for other events. Most likely, this information has changed how you think about your life, yourself, and God, and influenced a different way of dealing with situations.

Look at the “Heart Check Plan” that you created before starting your inventory. What progress have you made towards achieving your goals? Have your goals changed?

Make New Goals or Write the Goals You Are Still Working Toward

List the areas you wish to correct

For each item you wish to correct, write the result you want to see.

Introduction to Book Three

Relationship with God

Having a relationship with God is vital to our faith. It is through relationship that we learn to understand the God we follow and know ourselves as individuals created in His image. It is only through our relationship with God that we can grasp who we are, identify lies about ourselves, and understand our purpose. Having a right relationship with God allows us to have healthy relationships with people and brings us to a place of biblical love for self. Confidence in God can give us confidence in ourselves—something we often lack.

To have confidence in yourself, you need to know the true source of your worth and value. In the last book, you took a step toward knowing yourself by examining what is in your heart. But to truly grasp your identity, you must know God. That will be the focus of this book.

In This Book

Blessings & Gratitude

In this chapter, you will learn how to change your focus from negative things in your life and discover how the Lord uses them for good, and you will learn to recognize hidden blessings.

Restoration

This chapter will focus on making amends and forgiving others. This helps put us in a right relationship with the Lord, releasing us from the burden of guilt and need for retribution, and relieving the pain in our heart for good.

Purpose

Your appreciation for life changes as you discover purpose and value through our God. This allows your confidence for your future to grow. You should not ask whether you are able. The real question is, do you believe God can make you able?

Loving Who You Are in Christ

You are worth everything God has for you because He has made you worthy. In this chapter, you will learn how you cannot love God or others without loving yourself. You will learn the difference between humility and living in humiliation. You will love the person God created you to be!

Identifying & Removing Lies

Who does God say you are? What is the truth you should hold, in contrast to the lies and labels you have been carrying through life? You are not what you do. You are not your past, your failures, or your mistakes. You are not the labels others have placed on you or the labels you place on yourself. So who are you? Do you trust the report of the Lord, which is truth and leads to life, or are you deceived by the report of the enemy, a lie that leads to death? Whose report will you believe?

Lesson 32 — Blessings

Serve the LORD with gladness! Come into his presence with singing! Know that the LORD, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! For the LORD is good; his steadfast love endures forever, and his faithfulness to all generations. (Psalm 100: 2 – 5)

The Lord Makes Your Life a Blessing!

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. (Romans 8:18)

In our inventory, we give a lot of attention to the negative things that happened in our lives. Here we look at how the Lord has used these situations to our good, and we recognize hidden blessings.

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

It is easy to praise God when things are going well, but it is more difficult to praise Him in trials, pain, loss, and suffering. How do you react to life's difficulties? How do you respond to people failing you? Are you grateful through painful circumstances or when suffering loss?

Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name. (Hebrews 13:15)

I will offer to you the sacrifice of thanksgiving and call on the name of the LORD. (Psalm 116:17)

Scripture calls our praise a sacrifice. What makes gratitude and thanksgiving a sacrifice? The Hebrew word used for sacrifice is *zabach*, which means to slaughter. This raises the question: What does gratitude slaughter?

Praising the Lord slaughters self and destroys pride. When you give our gratitude to the Lord, you are sacrificing boasting in yourself to boast in Him. Gratitude sacrifices your right to self-pity. You must give up your attitude of grumbling and complaining, taking your attention off self, circumstance, and your right to “vent.” Giving thanks slaughters our flesh to set our hearts on the goodness of the Lord. It is not possible to wallow in misery when you are praising the Lord.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving, and his courts with praise! Give thanks to him; bless his name! (Psalm 100:4)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (Philippians 4:6 – 7)

Do all things without grumbling or disputing. (Philippians 2:14)

Try this brief experiment

In your mind, say the alphabet and count to twenty simultaneously. It cannot be done. You may go back and forth between numbers and letters with super speed, but your **conscious mind** cannot think of both at the exact same moment. It is not possible to consider two thoughts at once, proving that while you are reflecting on praiseworthy things, negativity cannot inhabit your conscious thoughts.

The Mind of Christ

*For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?
But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:16)*

Fill your mind with God's word. Fix your eyes on Him, and even in the most trying situations, you will see hope, truth, and a future of promise. **Negativity, fear, and worry are the fruit of a world deprived of God.**

God is good; He wills only good, and He works all things together for the good of those who love Him. He never has a gloomy outlook. **Therefore, a gloomy outlook does not unify us with God's mind and will.** God working all things for good means everything, even bad things, are beneficial for the believer. If you receive a situation as negative, you are not seeing it the way the Lord does. You have a corrupted perspective.

Negative thoughts are void of God's Word. The solution is more than attempting to speak God's Word into a circumstance to alter its outcome. It is knowing **God's mind** regarding your situations. It is **believing that truth and His purposes prevail** through every inconvenience and trial and in our lives. This is what it means to "fight the good fight of faith."

**A Christian's confidence is knowing that God moves in everything.
A life surrendered, walking with God, cannot fail.**

Identify Negativity

When you react to situations with worry, or have concern about the opinions or responses of others, are you trusting the Lord? Reactions that are fearful or riddled with anger and negativity show a place in your life where the truth of God's Word has not yet penetrated. **Use your negative thoughts and doubt** to discover areas devoid of His Word, to motivate your prayers, and to guide you into a deeper relationship with and greater trust of Him.

Questions to Ponder

- 32.1) In what situations or areas of your life do you have a poor response? Where is there negativity in your thoughts?
- 32.2) How can you apply God's Word to the situations you identified?
- 32.3) Consider your negative situations, outlooks, and thoughts. In which areas do you recognize a need to grow in trust of the Lord?
- 32.4) How can you give praise to God in these situations?
- 32.5) In what areas are you still resentful of God? Where do you find it impossible to recognize anything good?

Lesson 34 — Forgiveness

During your inventory in Book Two, you found times that you hurt people, and times people hurt you. Although you gave your past pain to the Lord, **complete freedom** from anger, guilt, and fear requires that you release unforgiveness in your heart and make amends for your wrongs.

We will begin with forgiveness. Why start there? Sometimes, looking at your resentments toward others allows you to recognize your own wrongs. These situations may help you discover amends you need to make (though this is not always the case).

Questions to Ponder

34.1) Define forgiveness. In your understanding, what does it mean to forgive someone?

Forgiveness Is Not ...

Do you struggle to understand forgiveness? Society distorts the meaning, making true, biblical forgiveness a hard concept to grasp.

Do you find yourself replaying certain situations over and over in your mind, or do you feel like you must forgive someone repeatedly **for the same transgression**? If so, you may misunderstand forgiveness. Scripture commands believers to forgive, but many have no clue what that means. People often believe forgiveness means accepting someone's apology and not bringing the matter back up. This is not the definition of forgiveness. This cannot eliminate your pain; instead, it masks it. You need not forgive the **same event** multiple times. True forgiveness happens once per offense.

One common definition of forgiveness is a **decision to release resentful feelings** toward another who has harmed you, without condoning, excusing, or forgetting their wrong. Yet this definition is lacking. **How do you release resentful feelings without getting justice?** This definition bases forgiveness on **feelings**. With this notion of forgiveness, you create an **obligation** in your mind to no longer experience anger, even if it is entirely reasonable to have anger about a situation. **In reality, you are not forgetting the offense; you are attempting to forget what you feel about the offense.**

If your attempts at forgiving are ending resentment, you are probably understanding forgiveness in this way. Any trigger that reminds you of the wrong done to you brings back pain, and then you need to forgive again. It may take years for the resentment in your heart to dissipate, and this can cause a deeper, **repressed** resentment because you are pushing pain aside instead of addressing it.

Forgiveness Is ...

Let us look at what is true in the false ideas of forgiveness discussed above. **Forgiveness is a choice** you make, but true forgiveness releases pain and resentment. You do not forget the offense, nor condone the wrong behavior. **Real forgiveness is a decision, not to release resentment, but to offer forgiveness.** People misunderstand forgiveness **because they do not understand the choice** they are making.

Releasing resentment is not forgiveness, rather is the result of forgiving.

The Greek biblical word for forgiveness is *aphesis*, which means dismissal, release, or pardon. We know a person should “pay” for harm they cause, and we have a right to justice. The demand in our heart for justice creates a burden of resentment and anger until restitution is made. **But it is also our God-given right to remedy the debt owed for harm another caused. Forgiveness is the remedy that cancels the debt.**

Consider a loan forgiveness program. The program “forgives” the owed debt and thereby cancels the debt. The lender can no longer ask you for the money because **the debt no longer exists**. It cleared as if paid in full, and the lender will never bring it back up again. The lender does not carry around a burden, waiting for the day you pay your debt.

In a similar way, actual forgiveness releases our right to retribution by giving the Lord our right to remedy the debt owed to us. This takes away our resentment as well. The Lord carries the burden of our retribution. **Collecting on the debt becomes His responsibility, and it is over for us.**

God wants this responsibility. Our sense of justice is corrupted by our emotions and sin nature. When we are harmed, we sometimes feel the consequence pales in comparison to the pain a person caused, wanting them to suffer more for their offense. When we are the offender, our efforts to resolve issues are sometimes lacking and disingenuous.

Because God is just, His forgiveness is based on the actions of the one needing forgiveness, but **our forgiveness cannot depend upon the actions of the one who hurt us.** Only God can remove a person’s sin, and only His retribution is just. If the offender repents and comes to the Lord, He is right to forgive the offense. We can trust the Lord will work to bring the offender to repentance, and if they refuse, we can trust the Lord to handle it. **Either way, our forgiveness guarantees justice.**

The Rock, his work is perfect, for all his ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity, just and upright is he. (Deuteronomy 32:4)

Forgiveness

God Himself models forgiveness for us. When we repent or turn away from our sin, He is faithful to forgive. Sin requires a penalty, and Jesus paid that debt. The wage of sin is death. **Jesus is like the loan forgiveness program that cancels our sin debt.** Our lives are the price we owe for our sins. **We pay the debt, one way or another.** If we decide to continue in sin, we pay the debt eternally. If we give our lives to the Lord, Jesus pays the price for us.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)

The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. (1 Corinthians 15:56)

When we repent, the Lord separates us from our sin as far as the east is from the west, and He remembers it no more. Our debt collector no longer has the right to harass us, and sin loses its condemning power. When God forgives, He does not “forget” our sin; **He no longer remembers it.** What is the difference? God knows we committed the sin, but when he forgives, He no longer brings it to His memory to rehash or act on it. **God does not dwell on our past mistakes, and neither should we.** He helps us correct our mistakes and move forward. A sin forgiven is over. We need not continue to ask God’s forgiveness for past wrongs.

Likewise, when we forgive someone for their wrongs to us, we do not need to remember or dwell on their sin. Yes, we know what happened, but we trust the Lord to make it right, and it opens the door to **restoration** of the relationship, **if the person is repentant** for their wrongs.

*For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.
(Hebrews 8:12)*

*As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us.
(Psalm 103:12)*

Why Forgive?

- We forgive because we are forgiven.

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

- As we forgive others is how we are forgiven.

*For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.
(Matthew 6:14 – 15)*

And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. (Mark 11:25)

Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven. (Luke 6:37)

Then his master summoned him and said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart. (Matthew 18:32 – 35)

- We are all sinners needing forgiveness.

If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (1 John 1:8)

- We forgive repeat offenses.

Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21 – 22)

The Heart of Forgiveness

Scripture tells us that forgiveness is a genuine act of love. We are to love our enemies. Forgiveness begins with **pity**. What is the other person's situation? Pity for another does not excuse their actions; it is empathy for the pain in their hearts, which led them to hurt us. If we can understand the pain another has gone through, it is a step toward forgiving them.

Having a heart of **gratitude** makes it possible to forgive even devastating harm. If you are grateful for good resulting from a situation, forgiveness comes more easily. If you are grateful for the forgiveness you have received, it is easier to forgive another.

How Do I Forgive?

First, look at the harm and understand the situation. This does not justify another's actions, but it removes some of the emotional sting, allowing you to consider the whole picture.

- Start by asking yourself these questions:
 - What was the actual harm done?
 - Was the wrong intentional? What happened to cause the person to act that way? Is there room for pity?
 - Were their hurtful words or actions a response to something I did or said?
 - Was I correct in my handling of the situation? Were there wrongs on both sides?
- Next, release the offender from their debt of retribution.
 - Give it to the Lord and ask Him to take your pain and resentment. Allow the burden of justice to fall on His shoulders and not yours.
- Finally, expect God to be faithful and just, knowing that justice happens in His timing and may not be instantaneous.

Remember, **God is as patient with others as He is with you**. Have confidence that justice will come. If the offender repents and changes his way, then justice has come. If he does not repent, the Lord administers His justice. Either way, your pain is vindicated.

When Do I Forgive?

You should forgive as soon as possible. Otherwise, hurt festers inside and builds resentment in your heart. Forgiveness is for your freedom as much as, or more, than it is for the person you forgive.

Restoration

Forgiveness is not restoration. These are two separate things. To restore a relationship with someone requires that both parties understand the problem and walk in agreement. This is especially true when the person **continues to cause you the same harm**.

Reconciliation comes after a person shows repentance. Remember, repentance means the person changes how they treat you. **You can** forgive someone who is **not** repentant. However, you should **not restore a damaging relationship** that continues to hurt you. Restoration should happen only after the person repents. Reconciliation often requires rebuilding a relationship from a healthy starting point, or else the same harmful situations could repeat.



Make no effort at contact if harm could come to you or another person. It is not always necessary to tell someone you forgave them.

Ask your coach if you are unsure whether you should contact an offender or restore a relationship with someone.

Your coach is **not** permitted to tell you what to do in any given situation, but he or she may have additional insight that can help you make a wise decision.

Questions to Ponder

- 34.2) Do you understand forgiveness better since reading this lesson? Explain, in your own words, what forgiveness means, and how to forgive another.
- 34.3) Do you still hold resentment and unforgiveness toward anyone?
- 34.4) Write a letter to each person you need to forgive. Explain their actions and how you want to release them. *Do not give them the letters.* They are only meant to be a step to help you process your feelings.
- 34.5) Forgive any offenders and pray, giving the situation to the Lord. Give Him your burden, pain, and resentment. Relinquish your right to retribution to His perfect judgment and put your justice in His hands.

The next book goes into more detail about restoring relationships and dealing with conflict.

Lesson 38 — Addressing Shame

Questions to Ponder

- 38.1) Do you *feel* like you love yourself?
- 38.2) How do you treat yourself with love?
- 38.3) Think about the definitions of love in the previous lesson. Based on these definitions, how can you love yourself better?

Are You Bad?

Surely I was brought forth in iniquity; I was sinful when my mother conceived me. (Psalm 51:5)

Among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
(Ephesians 2:3)

Do you ever feel confused when you try to think of yourself as righteous, justified, or a saint? Would you call yourself “good”? How do you reconcile the idea that you are righteous when you know your sinful thoughts and ways? If you are always confident in your righteousness, you are in the minority. Maybe you compare yourself to “better” Christians, wear a Christian mask, or fall short of your expectations. When you examine your heart and see the sin and wickedness within, it may be difficult to “feel” righteous, **yet Scripture says our faith is our righteousness and our justification is by the sacrifice of Jesus.**

Defining Good and Bad

God did not design good to exist apart from Him. He is good, and apart from Him nothing can be good. **Therefore, evil is what exists in the absence of God, and sin is the force which perpetuates evil.** The evil, hardship, and destructive force of decay and death were **not** God’s design for this world. These things resulted from sin entering the world. The same pattern that ensnared Eve in the garden continues today, as shown in the book of James. No one is exempt from sin.

But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.
(James 1:14 – 15)

Eve had distorted thoughts when the enemy **tempted her** to disobey God. Her **desire for wisdom enticed** her, and then the desire **gave birth to her plan of action**: eating the fruit. The sin committed **brought forth death**, or separation from God. Mankind lost their divine nature, exchanging it for an “evil nature”—our sin nature.

God knitted each of us together in the womb as a perfect creation, yet we are tainted at conception by sin’s power. God did not create wicked people. He created people who became wicked because they have a corrupting sin nature. **Only God can change it.**

There is good news, though: **God knew this would happen and developed a backup plan**, even before laying the foundations of the earth. Jesus agreed to pay the penalty for our sin with His own blood, thus removing the separation of man from God, bringing life, and allowing us to regain fellowship with God. We become clean from our sin; our divine nature restored. As we head into our eternal existence, we will receive a new, incorruptible body, unaffected by the power of sin.

What does this mean to you? By accepting Christ as your Lord and Savior, you gave God permission to **change your nature**. In Christ, you must no longer carry the label of bad, the label of shame. You are a **redeemed saint** living in an evil world with a **nature prone to sin**. You will never be perfect while living on this earth, but your life in Christ will show fruit of **His likeness**. We have a promise that one day we will be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing, if we can persevere. **Becoming Christlike is a life-long process**.

Questions to Ponder

38.4) In what areas of your life do you feel inadequate?

38.5) How do you handle your mistakes?

38.6) In what ways do you allow past failures and mistakes to define you?

38.7) How should your thoughts regarding your sin and shame change?

Labels

From our earliest moments we want to define things. Born with curiosity about our world and ourselves, we look to others to understand our place. We begin life mimicking behaviors and actions we see, attempting to discover our limits and our identity.

This process covers us with labels. As our vocabulary grows, the label game begins. Every experience, mistake, assumption, and influence adds a label. We strive to be special and unique, to excel, and to stand out because we want to define our labels. These labels become our identity.

Identity labels

We project the identity labels we want others to see in us—labels like powerful, secure, and creative. These **identity labels are our “walls.”** We cover ourselves in these walls to give us a sense of self-worth and value. We seek people with similar walls to find belonging. Identity labels define how our mind perceives the person we **should be**.

As we go through life, **people attempt to modify our labels with their own**. (You are pretty, ugly, the love of my life, a brat ...) The negative labels people and our experiences place on us become shame in our hearts. Shame creates more shame as our own minds betray us, reinforcing this distorted picture of ourselves.

Shame Labels

The Insults and condemnation other people claim for us produce shame labels. These labels may also come from expectations others want us to meet, or from praise and flattery for an image we cannot maintain. Shame labels shape how our mind perceives the person **we are**. We bury shame labels deep beneath our walls (our identity labels) to keep them hidden.

The way others treat us and their words are a powerful influence guiding our perception of our worth. People's words and our circumstances continually reinforce this skewed perception. The enemy takes advantage, whispering lies that we are not enough: not good enough, not smart enough, not attractive enough, not successful enough. We then end up comparing ourselves to others or to some unachievable expectations we decide we must meet.

Our insecurities drive us to be better and better, but we always seem to fall short of our "enoughs." This reinforces the labels others have given us. We then make a choice to either accept those labels or combat them with our own. **Yet the truth is that none of these labels define us.** The only accurate labels are the ones given to us by the Lord, and therefore, believing the label lies of ourselves and others, leads to shame.

What is shame? We all make mistakes and have varying degrees of guilt. We do wrong, apologize, try to make it right, and then move on. However, sometimes our mistakes reinforce negative beliefs we have about ourselves. **We exchange the guilt of *doing something bad* for a deep-seated belief that we *are something bad*.** This is the shame that keeps us defeated.

Words influence how we understand our identity, but our labels do not define us. **They are just a sticker on the outside of the package with a misleading ingredients list**, giving us a false view of our worth. If we believe our labels, we will become either pumped up in pride, or waste away in shame and feelings of worthlessness.

Questions to Ponder

- 38.8) What words or actions of your parents or caregivers when you were a child influence your thoughts or reactions now?
- 38.9) What words or events from your early childhood sent you positive messages?
- 38.10) What words or events from your early childhood reinforced your shame?
- 38.11) Consider your teen and adult years. How have events and words affected your internal belief about your worth?
- 38.12) List the identity labels that define you.
- 38.13) List the shame labels that define you.
- 38.14) Reflect again about the labels that define you. Do you see anything new or recent?
- 38.15) What experience caused each shame or identity label you listed?
- 38.16) Looking back on the labels you have believed throughout your life, how have your shame and identity labels influenced your responses?



TIP

You are **not** what you do.
You are **not** your past, your failures, or your mistakes.
Only the Lord defines your identity.

Introduction to Book Four

Your Journey Home — The Future

You have learned many things through this journey: how to love yourself, identify the enemy's lies, trust God in your hurt, and turn to Him when you mess up. You walk through life with the Lord by your side. Remember how far you have come!

As you begin this book, you might be experiencing a mixture of emotions. You may feel confident in your progress and ready for this journey to end, or you may be concerned about repeating past mistakes and questioning your ability to discern truth from lies. This book will help you hone the skills needed to maintain your victory, stay confident, and prevent a relapse into old thinking.

The enemy is always in your ear, wanting you to fail, but you know a secret: He loses! God turns his plans upside down. All the enemy meant for your destruction becomes your blessing. You will not fear falling when you remain diligent and keep your eyes on your source.

The close of one journey begins another. Your relationship with the Lord grows deeper as your life begins to flow forth from His. The lessons in this book will teach you to fight spiritual enemies, have strong relationships, handle conflict, and step forward.

In This Book

Your Journey Home

You have a hidden enemy trying to sabotage your future. Conquer your flesh by making the Lord your only stronghold.

Choosing Healthy Relationships

Learn about healthy and toxic relationships, and about setting boundaries. You will also learn how to identify detrimental behaviors in yourself and others.

Conflict Resolution

An in-depth look at resolving conflicts and establishing effective communication.

Moving Forward

Learn to live *from* God instead of *for* Him. Establish useful habits to protect your focus from slipping. Write your story and discover ways to serve with *Rebuilt*.

Lesson 41 — Your Journey Home

How do you feel knowing your time with *Rebuilt* is coming to an end? It is the close of one season in a lifelong quest. Your growth does not cease when you complete the last page of this book. The deep-rooted sin and strongholds interwoven in your heart are difficult to pull out. You may notice you are continuing to be tested in old strongholds and problematic thinking patterns, or you may discover new ones. This is the Lord's way to **fortify your freedom** and **strengthen your faith** in Him. The tools you have learned have set you on the right course to weather future challenges and make the Lord your only stronghold.

*The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear?
The LORD is the stronghold of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? (Psalm 27:1)*

*The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed a stronghold in times of trouble. And those
who know your name put their trust in you, for you, O Lord, have not forsaken those who
seek you. (Psalm 9:9 – 10)*

Process of Progress

Healing the hurts in your heart is like cleaning out a physical wound. Slapping a bandage over a serious wound without giving it proper care and treatment traps all the yuck inside, allowing infection to fester and spread to the rest of the body. To properly care for a wound, you must cleanse it thoroughly. You must debride the wound to prevent any infection from remaining. The deeper the wound, the deeper you must go to clear it out.

In the past you used many things, perhaps even Jesus, as a Band-Aid® to cover emotional and spiritual wounds without dealing with the root or cause of the injury. Just as with physical injuries, the longer you allow an emotional hurt to fester, the more digging is required to remove the corruption it caused.

By this point, you have **pulled off your emotional bandage, cut away the damage, and cleared the festering infection underneath**. You no longer cover up your wounds, pretend they do not exist, or believe they can improve on their own. But even with proper treatment, deep emotional trauma takes time to heal. You may experience complete freedom in some areas while infection is still being purged in others. The process peels back layer after layer until the Lord reveals every hidden poison in your heart.

This book will serve as an aid to strengthen and prepare you for the continuing journey ahead. The principles presented here are meant to help you **prevent relapse** and **continue the healing process**. You will further your relationship with God, develop healthy relationships, establish reasonable boundaries, and foster better communication.

Where Are You?

You made considerable progress on this journey. Before continuing, take a moment to assess your growth. This will prepare you to deal with future struggles and give you confidence in your successes. **For each question that follows, state how much you thought or believed the idea before you started this journey, and how much you believe the idea now. Is there a large change? Are there areas where you would like to see more change?**

Questions to Ponder

Provide two answers for each question below, one for before you started this journey and one for where you are now. State your answers as either percentages, or on a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being not at all and 10 being the maximum amount.

- 41.1) How well did/do you learn from your failures?
- 41.2) How often did/are you choosing change (doing and thinking differently)?
- 41.3) How much were/are you living for God?
- 41.4) How much were/are you living to survive?
- 41.5) How much did/do you trust God's Word is true *for you*?
- 41.6) How secure were/are you in your relationship with God?
- 41.7) How much trust did/do you give God?
- 41.8) How often did/do you hear God's voice?
- 41.9) Were/Are you bandaging your wounds or facing them?
- 41.10) How much did/do you believe that God invests in you? Explain.

Consider your responses to the previous questions when answering the following.

- 41.11) In what ways do you trust God, both now and before your journey began?
- 41.12) In what areas do you recognize the most change since beginning *Rebuilt*?
- 41.13) In which areas do you note the most change?
- 41.14) In which areas do you note the least change?
- 41.15) Where would you prefer to see more change or improvement?

Where Are You Headed?

Head for the finish line! This life is a race to eternity, a training ground for our future. The prize? A crown, a kingdom, an eternal existence with no pain or tears. Keep your eyes on the prize. God's Word says not to grow weary of doing good. Do not give up! Stand firm and confident!

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we imperishable. (1 Corinthians 9:24 – 25)

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. (2 Timothy 4:7)

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (Philippians 1:6)

And let us not grow weary of doing good, for in due season we will reap, if we do not give up. (Galatians 6:9)

Questions to Ponder

- 41.16) How have your priorities changed? Define your priorities for the future.
- 41.17) How do you see your life unfolding differently after *Rebuilt*?
- 41.18) How does this differ from what you expected for your life before you began *Rebuilt*?

A Very Important Chapter!

Why Focus on Relationships?

Relationship is the key to recovery. Relationship with God foremost, then relationship with self, and now relationships with others. Think back on your journey. You are likely to discover most of your trouble and pain originated **directly or indirectly** with other people. It is vital to build healthy relationships, identify toxic behaviors, communicate well, and handle conflict biblically **to prevent falling away from God and relapse.**

Healthy, caring relationships add a rich blessing to your life. Challenging times are not so difficult when you have someone by your side. Yet the most tender, loving relationships can cause you the most pain when you feel betrayed, rejected, or left behind by your loved one(s). Unavoidable pain is part of this life. Jesus understands these hurts, as He too experienced rejection, betrayal, and loss. **He helps you through these situations.** You are not alone.

Relationships can be toxic or dysfunctional. God's Word gives you all the aid you need to avoid or navigate these types of relationships. **The people with whom you associate matter to God and to your recovery.** People have a significant influence in your life and may lead you to question your value and worth. Toxic people dump their burdens on your shoulders, judge you, lie to you, reject you, harm you, and use and manipulate you. The effects of another's sin have a far reach, often right into your heart.

Through this journey, you have learned how important it is to love yourself. You understand that your worth and value are inherent to you, not dependent on your success or another's opinions of your worth. This alone is a powerful aid to building healthy relationships. One of Satan's greatest tools is your fear of rejection and shame. **Without that influence, the fear of man loses its power,** and God's voice becomes clear. Healthy boundaries help you identify and cut loose from the bondage of toxic relationships. Effective communication makes misunderstandings less likely to cause pain and division.

People's words and actions affect our lives. The way you deal with life issues either makes you victorious or destroys you. Handling conflict God's way will insulate you from the negative effects of people-problems while developing a Christ-like character in you and keeping you safe. **Engaging in healthy conflict is a way to show love to yourself.** The objective of recovery is **not to avoid pain and conflict.** Rather, the goal is to walk through your trials confident in God's protection.

You can have confidence in God's help. Recall Jesus' prayer for His believers in John 17:

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not ask that you take them out of the world, but that you keep them from the evil one. (John 17:14 – 15)

Lesson 43 — Circles of Relationship

Nothing feels more rewarding than a healthy relationship, or more devastating than an unhealthy one. Are you pursuing a friendship with someone who should be an acquaintance? We long for close, real companionship, for another person to fully know us, but Jesus should fill those needs first. Moving forward with Christ may mean reevaluating your relationships.

Relationship is the giving of your heart to another. Therefore, this lesson defines relationship by how much you trust another with your heart and not by marital or blood relation.

What Is a Friend?

In our culture, we often call anyone we know a friend. Friends may be related to you, but not all your relatives are your friends. Scripture warns us about having too many people we call friends. You may have 500 or 1,000 friends on social media, but are they authentic friendships? Most people we call friend we should really consider acquaintances.

A man of many companions may come to ruin, but there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother. (Proverbs 18:24)

Throughout Scripture, examples of friendship share one commonality: They are all sacrificial relationships. True friends are rare. You may have only one person in your life that you could consider a genuine friend. A friend lays down his or her right to retribution, to be self-seeking, and hide behind walls. A friend knows your innermost you. They show loyalty, devotion, and dependability. A friend gives wise counsel that leads you to the Lord and righteousness. They will **not** always agree with you, and they do not smother you in flattery. These are the people you want in your inner circle.

This level of friendship bears lasting fruit. Examples in Scripture show that friendship is the greatest connection, the greatest love you can have for another person. Friendship is reciprocal and sacrificial. One beautiful illustration of friendship in Scripture is that of Jonathan and David. The Lord knit their souls together. What hurt one hurt the other. What rejoiced one gave joy to the other. They would sacrifice for one another, even to their own detriment.

As soon as he had finished speaking to Saul, the soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David, and Jonathan loved him as his own soul. (1Samuel 18:1)

Scripture shows us another such friendship in the relationship between Naomi and her daughter-in-law, Ruth. After the death of their husbands, Naomi directed Ruth to return to her people to protect her from a life of hardship. Ruth refused to go, showing loyalty to Naomi, and illustrating a friendship forged in the love of God.

But Ruth said, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you. (Ruth 1:16 – 17)

The reward of genuine friendship is two lives knitted together and love greater than any other relationship, apart from the love of Jesus. Friendship is not just about what one does for or gives to the other. **Friends reciprocate with selfless love, joy, trust, belonging, companionship, and loyalty, sharing their lives, and being known by one another.**

What Is an Acquaintance?

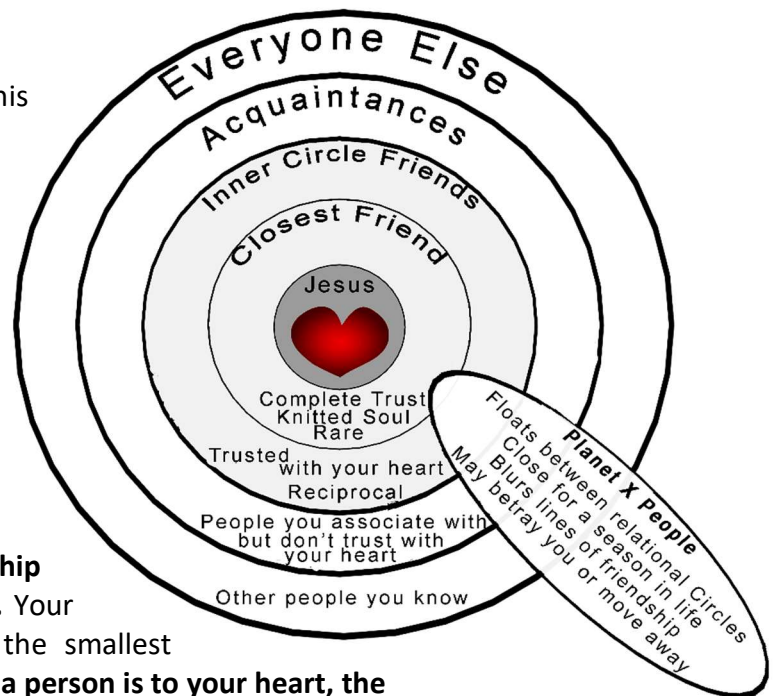
Most of your relationships may not fit this definition of friendship. Instead, they are probably acquaintances. These are folks you interact with on a regular basis but **cannot trust with the innermost parts of your heart**. An acquaintance may be a relative, or someone with whom you minister, work, or socialize, but **lack a reciprocal or sacrificial relationship**.

The Q Chart

The Q chart shows circles of relationship by how close a person is to your heart. Your most trusted and closest people are the smallest circles nearest to your heart. **The nearer a person is to your heart, the more vulnerable you become.** Yet these are the most rewarding relationships. Notice that **the closer it gets to your heart, the smaller the circle is.** Larger circles represent more people than the smaller circles.

Here is what these circles represent:

- The shaded area represents your inner circle.
- The center circle represents your heart, and **the only one** who fits in the circle with your heart is **Jesus**. He has full access to your heart and is your first and closest friend.
- The closest friend circle has the **one** closest friend that you **absolutely trust** with your heart. This **may or may not** be a spouse or family member. This relationship represents mutual “best friendness.” Having multiple people in this circle is difficult, and in most cases impossible, to maintain.
- Your next circle is your inner circle friendships. It contains certain friends or family members you **trust with your heart** but are not as close to as the person in the previous ring. They must be trustworthy, people you feel safe to confide in, and who share the same level of trust in you. **Relatives in this circle must also meet this criterion.**
- Then you have acquaintances. These are friends and relatives you spend time with for a variety of reasons. You may enjoy their company very much, but you do not give them **the same level of trust** as your inner circle friendships, **or the trust does not extend both ways.**
- The last circle contains **everyone else** you know, but with whom you lack any significant interactions.
- Then there are what we call the “Planet X People” because they break orbit. They float in and out of the different circles. **These relationships are short-term.** These folks impact your life for a season or for specific reasons. They may move away, grow distant, travel a different path in life, lack the loyalty to stick around. They may even use or betray you.
- Strangers are outside of the circle.



Not Everyone Should Be a Friend

Genuine friendship requires **vulnerability**, and that is frightening for many people. People who have been hurt, rejected, used, or manipulated fear openness with others. Yet we rob ourselves of one of the greatest gifts God gives when we live with our hearts guarded.

The Lord knows the risk of opening our hearts and lives to another person, which is why **He warns us to use wisdom when choosing our friends** and warns against allowing the influence of dishonest, manipulative, or negative people into our inner circles. Friendship is always mutual. No one should coerce you into a friendship. Likewise, if your investment in someone is not reciprocated, reconsider the relationship.

*One who is righteous is a guide to his neighbor, but the way of the wicked leads them astray.
(Proverbs. 12:26)*

Healthy Friendships

Look at what defines a healthy friendship. Are your relationships healthy?

- **Mutual Choice** – Friendship is not one-sided, chosen for you, or coerced through guilt or intimidation.
“Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil” (Ecclesiastes 4:9)
- **Mutual Benefit** – A friendship is reciprocal, not codependent. In a reciprocal relationship, both people benefit from mutual acts of love and companionship. Codependent relationships give a perceived benefit based on need or fear instead of from an overflow of genuine love.
“Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).
- **Mutual Respect** – In a healthy friendship, each person respects the other’s individuality. They accept one another’s differences and decisions. They are not jealous, controlling, or judgmental, but are quick to overlook faults, give grace, and forgive generously.
“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves” (Philippians 2:3).
“Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor” (Romans 12:10).
- **Mutual Concern** – Friends know each other intimately and will share their lives with one another. They hurt for one another’s hurts and rejoice over one another’s victories.
“Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Philippians 2:4).
- **Mutual Beliefs** – Friends must share the same beliefs. You cannot walk through life with someone who is taking a different road.
“Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind” (Philippians 2:2).
“What accord has Christ with Belial? Or what portion does a believer share with an unbeliever?” (2 Corinthians 6:15).
- **Mutual Growth** – Friends grow together and make one another better. If you are the smartest person you know, it is time to acquire different friends.
“Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another” (Proverbs 27:17).
“And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works” (Hebrews 10:24).
- **Mutual Trust** – Friends are open and truthful when they make mistakes, offend someone, or make poor choices. They put your wellbeing above their risk of rejection.
“Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful” (Proverbs 27:6).

Examine the relationships in your life and the way you relate to others.

Answer the questions below, then fill out your own Q chart.

Questions to Ponder

Answer the questions below using this lesson's definitions of *friend* and *acquaintance*.

- 43.1) Describe the type of friend you are. How is the love of Christ evident in your friendships? Where is it missing in your friendships?
- 43.2) Are you the type of person you would want in your own inner circle? Why or why not?
- 43.3) How open are your friendships? Are your closest friendships superficial, or do you both see one another's inner man—the deepest part of who you are?

List everyone you interact with in person or on the internet. Include all relatives.

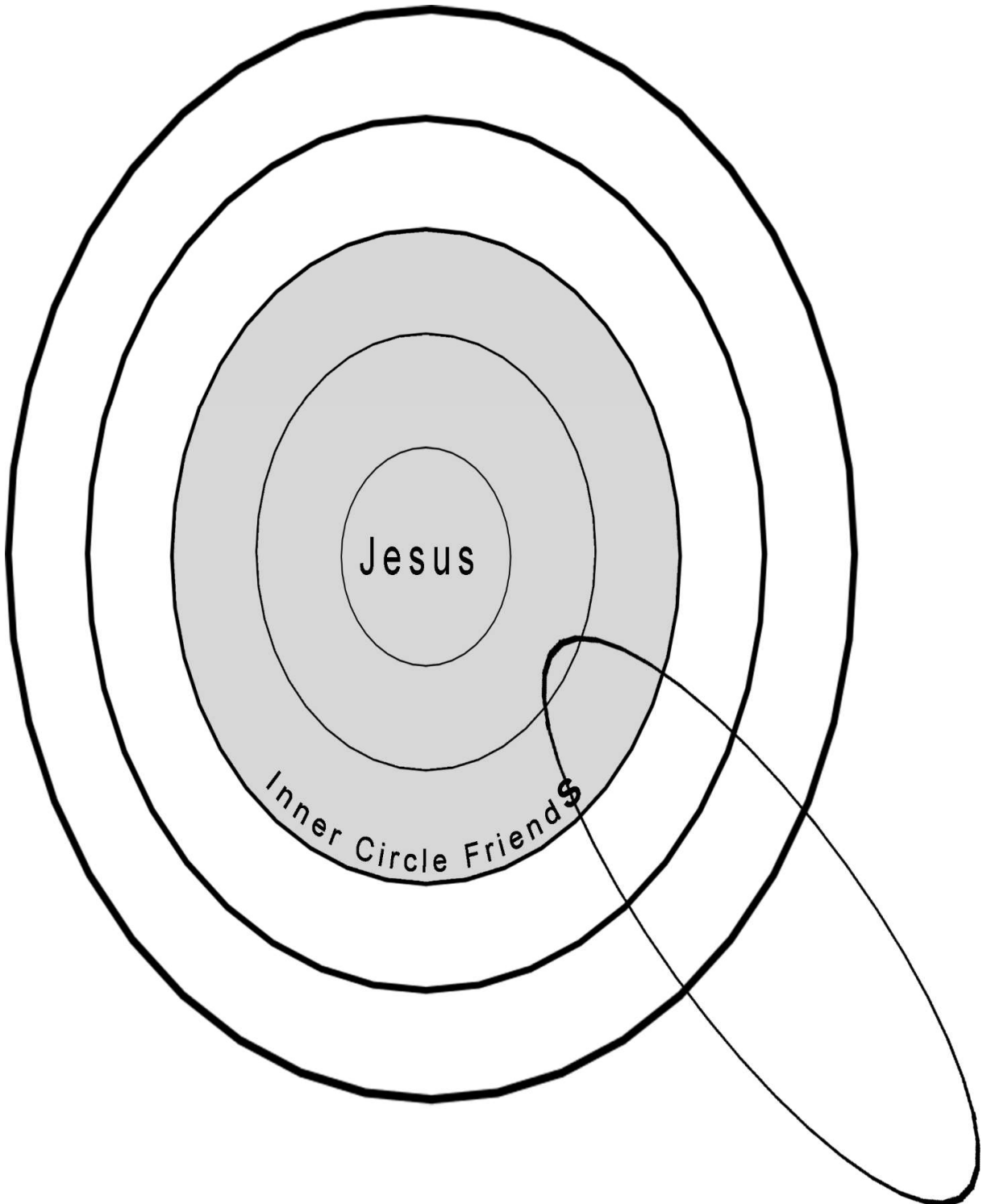
Use this list to answer the questions below and fill in the Q chart.

- 43.4) Examine your close friendships. What level of trust do you have for each person?
- 43.5) It is easy to see close relatives (spouse, children, parents, siblings) through a filter of your experiences with them, yet people change and grow. Examine these relationships. What level of trust do you give each person now?
- 43.6) Are family members in your inner circle only because they are family? Would they hold the same role in your life if they were not related? Why or why not?
- 43.7) Do you have people in your life who will keep you accountable and sharpen your faith (iron sharpening iron)?
- 43.8) What people in your life share your beliefs and theology?
- 43.9) Do you have a genuine friend?
- 43.10) What person (or people) in your life do you need to invest in more?
- 43.11) Whose influence in your life sways you away from the Lord or his commands?
- 43.12) Are there people to whom you should minister but keep out of your inner circle?
- 43.13) Which relationships should you reevaluate in your life?
- 43.14) Is there anyone in your life with whom you should not keep close company? Is there anyone you should avoid altogether?
- 43.15) Would those whom you consider in your inner circle say you are in their inner circle as well?
- 43.16) If those in your inner circle understood how this lesson defines friendship, would they say you fit that definition of a friend in their lives? Explain the ways you fit and do not fit that definition with each person.
- 43.17) Jesus is in your innermost circle. Would He say you reciprocate that level of friendship with Him?

Q Chart Worksheet

Fill in the Q chart. Add names of people in your life to the proper circle.

Who is in your inner circle? *(You may make copies of this page.)*



Lesson 45 — Hidden Dangers

IMPORTANT: Do not attempt to diagnose another person or yourself.

Often, people with destructive behavior experienced harm from their own trauma or dysfunctional relationships. However, do not attempt to diagnose another person or yourself. Instead, **use the terms in this lesson to identify the toxic behaviors in yourself or others that harm your relationships.**

The following lessons deal with some of the **most** toxic relationship dynamics. **It can be difficult to identify these dynamics in a relationship when you're in the midst of it, and it can be hard to leave the toxic environment.** The information below can help you spot hidden manipulation, control, and enabling, as well as false thinking passed down from past generations. If you believe you are in a damaging relationship, please let your coach know. They have additional resources and can guide you to **professional help**.

Codependency

Relationship is reciprocal by nature, meaning that both parties give to and receive from the relationship. Codependency distorts the reciprocal nature of a relationship. One person in the relationship meets his or her emotional needs (such as approval, worth, and value) by attempting to fix, enable, or mask another's unhealthy behavior. One is needy, the other needs to be needed. When Jesus fills all our needs, we are not dependent on another person to fill us. We become able to give to people out of an overflow of love. **Healthy relationships come from a desire to give oneself to another. Unhealthy relationships come from an attempt to fill a lack or a need.**

Codependent relationships prevent one or both parties from leading independent lives apart from the relationship. The relationship takes precedence over individual choices and pursuits. Codependency exists in most relationships where at least one of the people suffers from addiction, abuse, neglect, narcissism, or mental illness. The enabler sacrifices their individuality to care and cover for the dependent's physical or emotional issues.

Each person in a codependent relationship depends on the other's issues. Therefore, **healing one individual does not heal the relationship.** The strongholds no longer exist for the healed person, while the codependent continues to require that their needs to be met. **Both must heal or the relationship may not be sustainable.**

Codependency can exist between spouses, parents and children, friends, or coworkers. It is easy to live in denial about a codependent relationship, especially when you love the person or have made a significant investment in their life. Codependency may affect entire families, and toxic behaviors can be passed down to future generations. Codependent families often fear relying on outsiders, and they may hide or refuse to acknowledge problems in the family unit.

Gaslighting and Manipulation

Manipulation in a relationship destroys the one being manipulated. **Gaslighting is a particularly detrimental form of manipulation used to control and twist the reality of the victim.** The manipulator will lie or skew the facts of a situation to their benefit or to defeat the other person's argument. A gaslighter may reject any answer you offer to defend the truth and argue with you to a point of exhaustion.

People who are gaslighted question their reality: *Did I remember that wrong?* The perpetrator gains control through a consistent misrepresenting of facts to confuse the victim, making them believe they are stupid or crazy.

A person who gaslights often displays passive-aggressive behaviors. They may put unrealistic expectations on the other person or engage in an ongoing conflict if the person disagrees. They might neglect a person's needs until they get their desired result. Ghosting, shunning, or ignoring are also forms of passive-aggression.

This kind of manipulation in a relationship keeps you spinning. Your accuser may act angry at himself for hurting you in one moment, and the next minute he is blaming you. The confusion this causes creates a belief that you are not good enough. You may even begin to question, "What is wrong with me?" Not able to find the answers, you reject yourself and begin to lean on other people, including your abuser, to know how to be.

Healthy people communicate to be understood and to understand others. A gaslighter only seeks to prove that he is right and refuses to acknowledge a different perspective. Gaslighting feeds on a person's fear of the manipulator's rejection and desire for their approval.

The following lists do not diagnose any mental illness or disorder.

Signs of Codependency

In the following lists, note all frequent or recurring signs in your relationships. If you feel unsafe, seek immediate help. Your coach has resources to help you.

Do you, or does someone in your life:

- Spend all your energy meeting a person's needs and/or take responsibility for their happiness
- "Love" people that you can pity and rescue
- Feel trapped in a relationship
- Make most or all decisions
- Often rely on someone to decide for you
- Do most of the work to keep peace in a relationship
- Struggle to identify your feelings, or minimize, deny, or lie about how you feel
- Fear rejection or abandonment, or feel rejected if someone refuses your offer to help
- Engage in passive-aggressive behavior and/or consistent negativity
- Seek a sense of security and safety in someone else
- Hesitate to trust people
- Suffer low self-esteem or feelings of guilt or shame, or compare yourself with others

- Have difficulty saying “No”
- Struggle to sacrifice your own needs to please another
- Take responsibility for another person’s wrong actions (i.e., apologizing for them, hiding their mistakes, or letting them off the hook)
- Defend and depend on the relationship, even at personal cost, believing it to be a selfless act
- Act over-sensitive or defensive in response to another’s thoughts or feelings
- Violate boundaries, dictating the choices another person makes
- Have difficulty adjusting to change

Signs of Being Gaslighted

Do you:

- Have difficulty deciding because you do not trust yourself to make right choices
- Feel you lost yourself, or you remember yourself as a different person from who you are now
- Feel as if you cause another’s misery
- Second-guess yourself, feel confused, or question your sanity
- Doubt things occurred the way you remember them or question your reality
- Often get accused of being too sensitive, wrong, insane, emotional, or overreacting
- Lie or make excuses because of fear of being criticized, attacked, or ridiculed
- Feel wrong and inadequate (“I should be a better spouse/friend/etc.”)
- Apologize even when you feel you were wronged
- Fear something is wrong or threatening but cannot identify it
- Make excuses for another person’s behavior

Questions to Ponder

45.1) Thinking about past relationships and your childhood family, do you recognize any of the signs of codependency? State which relationship and give examples.

45.2) Thinking about current relationships, do you recognize any of the signs of codependency? State which relationship and give examples.

45.3) Do you recognize any sign that someone may be gaslighting you? Explain.

45.4) Give past and current examples of when you have been gaslighted.

45.5) Do you see yourself gaslighting others? Who do you gaslight and how? Give examples.

*If you are in a manipulative or toxic relationship, **speak to your coach. He or she has additional resources available** for you and may direct you to professional help if needed.*

Lesson 48 — Conflict

The last chapter dealt with atypical situations found in serious dysfunction. **Conflict is not a dangerous concept in most situations.** In this chapter, we will learn about healthy conflict. First, let us review what we already learned.

- **Conflict** brings resolution and restoration. A **fight or quarrel** is a power struggle to prove your point, not a genuine attempt at reconciliation.
- **Search your heart** before engaging another in conflict. Is your anger justified? What is the other person’s perspective? What could skew your perspective?
- **Go directly to the person** who sins against you and privately address the wrong. Do not seek validation of your emotions from a third party.
- **Be quick to address a matter** to give the devil no place to meddle in the situation. If someone has a problem with you, address the issue right away. As much as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

Why Engage in Conflict?

The easiest way through any issue is straight ahead. Always address a problem right away. It may make you sick just thinking about conflict, but **buried problems fester; they do not go away.** They escalate in your mind, so any reminder of the transgression brings back every hurt feeling.

Refusing to deal with an offense is unfair to you and to the one who offended you. They may be unaware of their offense or be responding to a hurt you caused them. Regardless of how much you love the other person, running away or refusing to communicate leaves unresolved pain for everyone involved, causing bitterness.

Agree to Disagree?

Have you ever heard someone say, “Let’s just agree to disagree on this”? People think differently. Sometimes it is not worth breaking unity with another person to prove your point. This can be a good way to end frivolous arguments while respecting another’s differences.

On the other hand, people often misuse “agreeing to disagree” to prevent someone with an opposing viewpoint from speaking their thoughts, to end uncomfortable conversations, to shift blame, or to avoid conflict altogether. This prevents ideas from being heard and **stops a conflict that may bring healing.** It is never okay to agree to disagree to avoid dealing with your wrongs or to allow another to avoid dealing with their wrongs toward you.

Questions to Ponder

48.1) Do you notice a difference in the way you handle conflict now compared to the way you handled conflict before beginning your journey? Explain

Questions to Ponder

48.2) What problems do you still have with conflict?

48.3) How do you avoid conflict or agree to disagree to keep peace in a situation?

To Judge or Not to Judge

When conflict arises, people may accuse you of judging them, or you may feel you are being judged. Perhaps the verse most taken out of context and misapplied is Matthew 7:1, “Judge not, that you be not judged.” Sometimes we **must** judge another’s actions. Misunderstandings clear up when you read further and in context with other passages of Scripture.

Judge not, that you be not judged. For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, “Let me take the speck out of your eye,” when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye. Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls before pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn to attack you. ... Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. (Matthew 7:1 – 6, 15)

How will you recognize the “wolves,” “dogs,” and “pigs” if you do not judge? When someone is in sin or harming you, **it is perfectly acceptable to judge their actions**. However, when you look at another through the lens of your strongholds, you cannot make a righteous judgment. **First, you must examine your own heart** to discover the truth.

- Did you “take the log out of your eye” by examining your own heart and motives?
- Take an honest look from the other person’s perspective. Are they right?
- Is this a situation in which you should show understanding and grace?
- Does your perspective of the conflict seem out of character for the other person?
- Is this an ongoing issue or a simple mistake you can overlook? Not every situation requires confrontation.

Right Judgment

Sometimes we **should** judge, and we **can** discern good and evil. However, right judgment of another’s actions requires maturity in Christ.

- You must use discernment to judge righteously; do not base your judgement on appearances.
- You may judge a person’s actions as right or wrong by God’s standards.
- You are to judge those in the church and purge evil people from your inner circles.
- God judges those outside the church.

And his delight shall be in the fear of the Lord. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear. (Isaiah 11:3)

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you.” (1 Corinthians 5:9 – 13)

For everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, since he is a child. But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their powers of discernment trained by constant practice to distinguish good from evil. (Hebrews 5:13 – 14)

Do you ever wonder why in one verse are we told to judge some people, and in others we are told not to judge people? The difference is in **how** we judge them.

- We should not pass judgment on unbelievers.
- We must not judge people before checking our own heart (removing the log from our eye).
- Judging wrongly is when we speak evil against a brother (a fellow Christian).
- Right judgment is sincere, impartial, full of mercy, reasonable, gentle, and wise.
- You must not judge a weaker believer for **their lack of faith**.

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. (Romans 2:1)

Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor? (James 4:11 – 12)

But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, open to reason, full of mercy and good fruits, impartial and sincere. (James 3:17)

As for the one who is weak in faith, welcome him, but not to quarrel over opinions. (Romans 14:1)

Questions to Ponder

- 48.4) When have you judged another wrongly? Explain.
- 48.5) Do you tend to pass judgments on others based on what annoys you?
- 48.6) When have you judged someone for something that you yourself did/do?
- 48.7) What does it mean to not judge the world? (“For what have I to do with judging outsiders?”)
- 48.8) Do you argue with or judge others if they hold a different opinion? If so, why?

Engage in Conflict

Scripture tells us to reconcile **with the one who offended us and with those we have offended**. It is our responsibility to put forth genuine effort to resolve the issue, **regardless of who was at fault**. Our pride and anger often demand that a person come to us for resolution, but this is not God's way. We must take responsibility and resolve the issue in a timely manner. The longer a matter goes unresolved, the more difficult it is to resolve. The longer questions and misconceptions go unanswered, the more opportunity for vain imaginations to make an offense seem worse than it was.

***Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.
(Colossians 3:13)***

***Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,
and give no opportunity to the devil. (Ephesians 4:26 – 27)***

When the Issue Is Against You

If you know someone holds an offense against you, examine your heart and see if you are in the wrong. Either way, go to the person and hear their heart on the matter. If you are in the wrong, apologize and repent. If you are confident your actions were right, do your best to help them understand the situation. Apologize for misunderstandings and your part in the offense. Do **not apologize or feel guilt** for a problem you did not create. People often project their guilt onto others when emotions are involved. Set feelings aside and focus on the truth of the situation. Put your best effort into resolution; it is the other person's choice to receive or reject what you say.

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

Some things to remember when someone has an issue with you:

- Go to the person you harmed or offended. Do not make them come to you.
- Hear the other person out completely and consider what they say before responding.
- Search your heart and the Lord to discover the truth in the situation.
- Offer an honest apology and repent of any wrongdoing.
- Ask for their forgiveness and ask the Lord to forgive you as well.
- Abide by their wishes regarding how to move forward in the relationship. Do not force forgiveness or push for relationship if they, or you, are reluctant.
- Once you did all you can do, leave the rest in God's hands.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.
(Matthew 5:23 – 24)

Lesson 49 — Communication

The way we communicate will always reflect either Christ or the world. It is difficult to communicate in God's love when our emotions are out of control. Preconceived ideas about a person can influence the way we communicate with them. People often hear what they expect, rather than the actual words spoken. **The key to effective communication is for each person to honor the other in the way they listen and the words they speak.**

Effective Listening

- ❖ **Actively Listen** – Active listening honors the one who is speaking. Instead of planning your reply, give your full focus to comprehending the message the other is trying to convey. It is easy to listen from your perspective and assume a person thinks like you. Ask questions to discover the point that **the speaker** wants you to understand. Give the speaker your full attention and maintain eye contact (but do not stare—that is creepy).

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

- ❖ **Avoid Interrupting** – This is easier said than done, especially when you are a quick thinker, or someone is long-winded. Allow the speaker full expression of his or her thought. The person will feel heard, and you will gain a clearer understanding of their message. Sometimes it helps to jot down notes as a reminder of what they said to address it later, allowing your full focus to stay on the one speaking.

A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion. (Proverbs 18:2)

If one gives an answer before he hears, it is his folly and shame. (Proverbs 18:13)

- ❖ **Avoid Distraction** – Do not allow pets, children, or other environmental factors to draw your attention away from the speaker. If possible, turn off your phone or silence the notifications.

For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven. (Ecclesiastes 3:1)

- ❖ **Keep an Open Mind** – Do not look for what is wrong in another's words, but listen from his perspective. Listen with impartiality. You may learn something new, or it may alert you to a wrong understanding. Wait for the speaker to finish before deciding whether you agree or disagree.

The heart of the righteous ponders how to answer, but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things. (Proverbs 15:28)

Effective Speaking

- ❖ **Speak Truth in Love** – Make sure your words are honest. In love, speak your genuine thoughts and feelings, even if you know the person will disagree with you. Do not avoid speaking truth to spare someone’s feelings but speak with gentleness and compassion when sharing a hard truth. Do not make up stories, exaggerate, or leave out important details. If you cannot speak truth, it is best to say nothing.

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

Better is open rebuke than hidden love. Faithful are the wounds of a friend; profuse are the kisses of an enemy. (Proverbs 27:5 – 6)

- ❖ **Be Direct** – Do not talk around an issue to avoid answering a question, hoping a person will “read between the lines.” Do not give a disingenuous answer. **Being misunderstood contradicts the purpose of communication.** Get straight to the point and give full, clear descriptions, details, and examples to communicate an unmistakable message to the listener.

The heart of the wise makes his speech judicious and adds persuasiveness to his lips. (Proverbs 16:23)

- ❖ **Use Kind Words** – Honor other people with your words, remembering that unkind words can hurt. Your tongue holds the power of life and death. Before you speak, think about how your words may sound to another. Avoid rejection, avoidance, scorn, sarcasm, ridicule, threats, accusing, or blaming. These are cruel, abusive, and ineffective in communication.

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

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

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

Whoever belittles his neighbor lacks sense, but a man of understanding remains silent. (Proverbs 11:12)

- ❖ **Use “I” Statements** – Use “I” statements every time you are sad, angry, defensive, or need to confront another person about an issue. It is far more effective to focus your speech on yourself than on another. When the word “you” is used to address a problem, it puts the listener on the defensive. No one wants to hear how they are wrong, but they are more open to hearing you say “I think” or “I feel.” Instead of saying, “You left dirty dishes in the sink again,” say, “I am upset that the dishes were not done.” Or, instead of saying, “Why don’t you fix this?” say, “It would help me to know your plans about this.” Use “I”

statements to express thoughts, feelings, concerns, or to share how a behavior affects you. Then state what you need to happen.

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

To speak evil of no one, to avoid quarreling, to be gentle, and to show perfect courtesy toward all people. (Titus 3:2)

Body Language

- ❖ **Your Body Speaks Louder Than Your Words.** Keep open body language as you engage in communication. Assume a listening position, unguarded and engaged. Your face will give you away if you are disingenuous. If your expressions are interested and reflect the other's feelings, the person will trust your words are genuine. **Your body will speak your language** if you are open and honest.

A worthless person, a wicked man, goes about with crooked speech, winks with his eyes, signals with his feet, points with his finger, with perverted heart devises evil, continually sowing discord. (Proverbs 6:12 – 14)

But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified. (1 Corinthians 9:27)

Questions to Ponder

- 49.1) Are your listening skills effective? Where can you improve?
- 49.2) How can you become more attentive while listening? What distracts you from listening?
- 49.3) Do you interrupt? Are you considering your response while another is talking?
- 49.4) How open are you to hearing another person's perspective?
- 49.5) Are your speaking skills effective? Where can you improve?
- 49.6) How honest is your communication? Do you say what others expect or want to hear? Do you exaggerate or leave out details?
- 49.7) Is your communication direct and to the point, or do you try to get your message across without saying what is truly on your mind?
- 49.8) Do you use many details and examples to make sure your messages are clear?
- 49.9) Are you thoughtful? How often do you use sarcasm, ridicule, threats, accusations, or blame, to respond to another's questions or comments? Do you ignore them?

Effective Communication

Effective communication may be difficult when you or another have a vested interest in the conversation's outcome. **Be intentional about how you communicate.** The following tips can help:

- ❖ **Observe the Conversation** – Use your emotions to teach you; do not allow them to control you. Prepare your mind to observe the conversation and actions of others without absorbing their negativity. Let their words roll off you. When you focus your mind on observing, it is more difficult to absorb the other person's words as a personal attack.

*Do not take to heart all the things that people say, lest you hear your servant cursing you.
Your heart knows that many times you yourself have cursed others.
(Ecclesiastes 7:21 – 22)*

- ❖ **Do not Become Vexed** – Vexation is when we feel worried, annoyed, or frustrated. One of the greatest traps laid by the enemy is to use other people to push our buttons. Once we lose patience and show annoyance or irritation, we lose the conversation. There is an old saying that you catch more flies with honey than with vinegar. You may not want to catch flies, but this old saying still rings true. When your responses become grumpy or bitter people stop listening. On the other hand, it is impossible to escalate a conflict with someone who always replies sweetly and refuses to be baited into a heated quarrel. Gentle kindness and patience will serve you well. Do not become discouraged when you mess up. Strong emotions make it difficult to respond in love. Keep trying. It will get easier.

The vexation of a fool is known at once, but the prudent ignores an insult. (Proverbs 12:16)

With patience a ruler may be persuaded, and a soft tongue will break a bone. (Proverbs 25:15)

- ❖ **Be Discerning** – Always seek the Lord's wisdom when communicating with another. Listen for subtle manipulations and falsehoods but respond with kindness. Your integrity is more important than making sure they understand your emotional state. Redirect conversation back to the truth. Use wisdom when deciding what you share and how you speak.

*The wise of heart is called discerning, and sweetness of speech increases persuasiveness.
(Proverbs 16:21)*

- ❖ **Respond, Don't React** – Respond to the situation; do not react to it. We **react** in emotion; we plan **responses**. Reactions further turmoil while responses will guide you through the problem. Once your handling of a situation becomes unreasonable, intense emotions overshadow everything you say. Plan a calm, reasoned response.

*Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.
(Proverbs 14:29)*

Lesson 50 — Make Your Recovery Grow

Just when you think you know God, He reveals more. If you spent your lifetime studying God's Word, you would never come close to understanding all God's attributes.

***If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.
(1 Corinthians 8:2)***

There is always a deeper level of relationship and spiritual growth to attain. Do not think you have arrived. The Lord continues to raise you from one level of glory to the next. It only gets better! **Here, your purpose is found in the journey, not the destination.** God sealed the destination the day you gave your life over to Christ. Hold fast to the truths you know but continue to press on to greater things that lie ahead. In this life, it is the journey that matters.

Not that I have already obtained it [this goal of being Christlike] or have already been made perfect, but I actively press on so that I may take hold of that [perfection] for which Christ Jesus took hold of me and made me His own. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the [heavenly] prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature [pursuing spiritual perfection] should have this attitude. And if in any respect you have a different attitude, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us stay true to what we have already attained. (Philippians 3:12-16 (AMP))

And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit. (2 Corinthians 3:18)

The rest of your *Rebuilt* lessons will focus on ways to maintain the progress you have made, deal with additional issues as they arise, build healthy habits, and continue to grow ever closer to the Lord. Moving forward requires stepping into a new level of relationship with the Lord to allow His work to grow deeper in your heart.

Questions to Ponder

- 50.1) Is there anything stopping you from giving your all to Christ? Explain.
- 50.2) What do you think is the difference between living for Christ and abiding in Him?
- 50.3) What would your life look like if you began living from Him?

Stop Living for Christ, and Begin Living from Him

If you were asked how you live for Christ, what would you say? You read your Bible, serve your neighbors, serve your church? Are you a prayer warrior? These are important activities for a believer, but if you are not abiding in Christ; they are mere works of your flesh.

Jesus requires more; He requires that we abide in Him. To abide is to remain or continue in Him, to live or dwell in Him. Scripture says we are to lose our lives to save them. Our lives do not belong to us; rather, God bought us for a price. Do you understand the depth of what this means? **The cost of following Christ is giving up your life and living from His.**

For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”— yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist. (1 Corinthians 8:5 – 6)



“Therefore, you must put Him first and then let everything flow from that. Let everything begin with Him and flow forth from Him. That’s the secret of life. To not only live for Him, but to live your life from Him, to live from His living, to move from His moving, to act from His actions, to feel from His heart, to be from His being, and to become who you are from who He is ... I am.”

Jonathan Cahn, *The Book of Mysteries* (Lake Mary, FL: Frontline, 2016). Used with permission.

God created you unique. His command to give up your life does not suggest giving up the specific traits that make you, you. Instead, it means to submit all of who you are to Christ’s will and authority. When you are “all in,” you can claim with Paul, “It is no longer I who live but Christ in me” (Galatians 2:20). This is the place where you stop living from your flesh.

The name of God is literally “I AM.” His very breath formed everything; all that exists came from his being. **He is our source, which gives us life and sustains us.** Without Christ we are a dying mound of flesh trying to find life in artificial sources, such as our job, friends, success, wealth, family, and even our morals. These are false gods and idols that **give us a false sense of living** but cannot truly give us abundant life.

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

Our source must change. **When the world is our source, we live from our need, but when God is our source, we live from Christ’s abundance.** Let the essence of who you are, your thoughts, actions, and desires, flow from Him. Allow your “I am” to flow from the “I AM.”

To abide in Christ and allow him to abide in you is, in effect, **becoming one with God.** The old corrupt nature no longer has room to exist. As you rise to life in Christ, every surrendered part of you takes on His likeness. Your life becomes Jesus’ hands and feet to a lost world. Every word you speak and every thought in your mind is birthed by His wisdom, and He guides each step of your feet.

You would not intentionally remove a limb, pluck out an eyeball, or cut out a healthy organ. **God is part of you, and you are part of Him.** Trying to move without Him would be little different from trying to run a marathon without your legs. Living life **for** God instead of **from** Him is like running a race with artificial limbs. A prosthetic limb can help you get your life back after a devastating injury, but you will never be fully connected to it.

Our sin caused a handicap, which prevents us from living the way God first designed us to live. **In our flesh, we seek artificial gods** to fill this missing part of us. As **believers, we may rely on our religious works** and our understanding, yet we can only become whole by **becoming one with God. He is the missing piece** of our being, which makes us complete.

But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. (1 Corinthians 6:17)

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:1 – 4)

Questions to Ponder

50.4) Considering what you have just read, how would you define living from Christ?

50.5) How will this look in your life?

Put on the Blinders!

If you have ever witnessed a crime or accident, you know each person's story is different. This does not mean that one person is lying, and another is speaking truth. It is a matter of perspective. Each witness has a distinct vantage point, and as a result, each narrative of the same event varies. None of the witnesses see the complete picture; they can only speak to what each personally saw. Their testimonies are like puzzle pieces. The investigator attempts to fit all the pieces together to form a big picture and discern the truth.

Your eyes are your witnesses, taking in information about current circumstances. **Your mind is the investigator**, making assumptions based on what your eyes perceive, but these are often flawed assumptions. Your witnesses only see from the narrow perspective that revolves around you, filtered through desires, preconceived ideas, worldview, and experiences. **God, however, sees the big picture we cannot comprehend.** He sees details of the heart, which no person can witness. Abiding in Christ allows a **new understanding** from God's perspective, **with healthy eyes** focused on the eternal.

That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which he has called you, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints. (Ephesians 1:17 – 18)

The eye is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy, your whole body will be full of light. (Matthew 6:22)

Discover a God Perspective

The Lord can open the eyes of your heart to new revelation and understanding. It is far easier to seek His truth in times devoted to worship, prayer, and study. When finances, people, and situations become overwhelming, or your desires in life conflict with God's, focusing on the eternal can seem like an impossible task.

To walk in God's truth, put blinders on your natural eyes and see with God's perspective.

This is something many believers spend their lives unable to grasp because we function in a natural world. Those who grasp it, like the first believers, live abundant lives, walking with God in boldness, confidence, and contentment.

Use the following suggestions to live life with the mind of Christ:

- ❖ **Stop Trying to Make God Fit Your Life** – Ask to come into the Lord's presence **to walk with Him** through **His** day. Do not try to make God **or His word** fit your life; instead, make your life fit with Scripture and God's plan. Your relationship with the Lord comes first. Do not worry about what others do; focus on what **you** are doing. When He leads your days, He shows you how to live rightly, who to pray for, and who needs help.
- ❖ **Do Not Stop Moving** –The law of inertia in physics states that something in motion or rest will stay in motion or rest until acted upon by an outside force. This principle can be applied to your relationship with God. Once you start moving with God, you will continue moving with Him unless an outside force stops you. **Distractions become the force that stops your forward movement with God.** When you are living **for** Christ, any crisis, financial burden, political issue, person, or distraction of the world can take your mind off Him. When your life flows **from** His, directed by His leading, the mundane and difficult tasks of life will not draw you away but bring you closer to Him. Are you giving your attention to worthy things, or are you distracted?
- ❖ **Rest in God, Not in the World** –It is easy to turn your attention off the Lord to just "live your life." **To be one with God means we can't take a break from Him.** Remember, He bought you for a price; it is not **your** life you are living, but His. He is part of you, and you are part of Him. To claim that you require a break from God is like demanding a break from your right arm.
- ❖ **How You Rest Matters** –We often confuse entertainment with rest. Have you ever come home from vacation exhausted? Your break **left you entertained, but not rested.** To rest in the Lord, is taking a break from life's burdens to focus your attention on Jesus. True rest is **not fulfilling a litany of religious duties, but** devoting time to **simply enjoy God,** spending intimate time with Him alone, in His creation, or in fellowship with His people. Play is important too, but not at the expense of resting in the Lord. His rest keeps you moving forward. Mind-numbing pursuits or worldly entertainment are not rest but distractions.
- ❖ **Do Not Grow Weary of Doing God's Work** – You know you have taken back the control you once gave the Lord when you neglect your walk with Christ. Neglecting prayer, study, or worship is a clue that your rest is laziness. You will remain idle until an **outside force,** such as a trial or crisis, brings you back to the feet of the Lord.

- ❖ **Stop Taking God for Granted; Take Evil for Granted** – We live in a fallen world, and bad things happen. Evil exists. Take this truth for granted. The expectation that bad things happen focuses our eyes on the Lord’s blessings, fixing our thoughts on God and strengthening our faith. When we take God and his goodness for granted, every trial and evil grabs our attention. Troubles seem bigger, and doubt creeps in. We may wonder, “Where is God?” or “Why hasn’t God acted?” and our faith wavers.
- ❖ **Remember, Everything Works for Good** – Our minds create a concept of good and bad to determine how we view a situation. This perspective is often founded on what we like or dislike. This is a worldly perspective. When we have the mind of Christ, we can experience joy in our trials because they work for our perfection and completion. God makes “bad” circumstances benefit us, and He blesses us with “good” gifts. When you encounter hardships, focus on the Lord and how He is using the situation to finish His work in you.

Today Starts a New Journey

Let today begin a new journey with the Lord, one that takes you into a deeper relationship, where you stop living for Christ and start living from Him. No longer think of or address the Lord as if He is separate from you. Live as one entity, working for an eternal purpose greater than this world. This is living in truth. Today, as you continue your journey, **you have a choice**. Do you stay where you are, or jump “all in” with Christ?



**We exist *for* God, but our existence flows *from* Him.
We live from Him and through Him.**

- ❖ It is not about applying the word to your life but living your life from His word.
- ❖ It is not making scripture fit your life; it is making your life fit the scripture.
- ❖ It is not about inviting Him to walk with you through your day, it is about asking to come into His presence and walk with Him through His day.

Questions to Ponder

- 50.6) What is the main understanding you have taken away from this lesson?
- 50.7) How will you apply a new perspective as you move forward with God?
- 50.8) How can you change the way you enter God’s presence each day?
- 50.9) Are you setting your attention on activities that do not benefit God’s purpose?
- 50.10) Have you made a choice to be “all in” with God? If not, why not?
- 50.11) How have you taken God for granted?
- 50.12) How can you take evil for granted?

Lesson 51 — Preventing Relapse

Satan's strongholds have fallen and now your only stronghold is the Lord. The enemy's arrows bounce off the shield of your faith. Your adversary once fought hard to keep you away from God. He lost that battle, yet he does not lose graciously. His attacks will continue, but now **his goals have changed**. How do you walk through life without falling into former detrimental thoughts and behaviors?

It is important for you to be aware of the enemy's new strategy. He wants to

- **Make you ineffective** for God's Kingdom
- **Tempt you back** into old strongholds
- **Destroy your confidence** in an area God has gifted you

Paul was no stranger to spiritual warfare. He understood that **we have three enemies fighting against us** as we live out a spiritual life with Christ:

- We wrestle spiritual **powers and principalities** of darkness and evil
- We struggle against the **world** (people and systems against God), which hates God and His people
- We battle our own **flesh**

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places. (Ephesians 6:12)



TIP Obvious demonic or “supernatural” activity may come about because you have opened a door through occult activity or influences, witchcraft, or other agreement held with the devil. You must break your agreement with the enemy and come into agreement with God so you can rebuke the devil in Jesus’ name. This may require prayer and fasting. If you feel you need help with demonic attacks or oppression, consult with your *Rebuilt* coach.

Some people understand “spiritual powers and principalities” as only referring to demonic activity, but often **spiritual authorities are subtle, disguising their attacks in what appears good or right in our eyes**. They ally with our flesh and the world to prevent us from pursuing our calling and advancing the Kingdom of God.

Our spiritual enemy attacks our mind, using our flesh to cause thoughts of rejection, loss, desire, anger, or fear. His purpose is to tempt us away from Christ and our calling and cause bouts of depression, temptation, or anxiety. **However, we do not need the devil to sin or tempt us. Our own sin nature may draw us away if we do not keep it in check** by walking with

When You Stumble or Fall

Maturity in Christ means **growing well and failing well**. Putting the past behind you does not mean old character flaws will never resurface. God removes our deeply ingrained false beliefs one piece at a time, layer by layer. A person's words or a circumstance may trigger a thought which allows jealousy, fear, control, or insecurity to sneak its way back into your heart. Be careful to avoid the trap of doubt if old behaviors, thoughts, and feelings resurface. Instead of dwelling on your failure, search your heart for the problem the Lord is trying to reveal. Bring it to Him and **continue in a new understanding of an old lesson**.

If the Lord brings a new character issue to light, examine its root, uncover the truth, repent, surrender it, and return to God with a clean slate. **Do not fear more pruning**. Like a stumbling toddler, realize the error, get up, and try again. Never forget you nailed your flaws and failures to the cross. Reject the enemy's lies and move on.

It is important to recognize trials and failures are a good thing. Every obstacle teaches a valuable lesson. It is in these moments that our growth is the greatest. Be open to being wrong and reject feelings of insecurity and unworthiness. Instead, ask yourself, **"What is God doing?"** and **"What does this teach me?"**

For the sake of Christ, then, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities. For when I am weak, then I am strong. (2 Corinthians 12:10)

Each morning becomes a new opportunity for a **fresh start**. Failure does not mean you have lost the Lord's favor. When you become disillusioned, keep true to who you are in Christ. Stay content, knowing God works everything for your benefit.

*For his anger is but for a moment, and his favor is for a lifetime.
Weeping may tarry for the night, but joy comes with the morning. (Psalm 30:5)*

Questions to Ponder

- 52.1) Consider the "Mindset of Growth." What are the most important points to apply in your walk with the Lord?
- 52.2) Are there still strongholds and character flaws with which you struggle?
- 52.3) Which strongholds or character flaws do you feel you have completely overcome?
- 52.4) How will you think about future problems, failures, or trials?

Vision and Plans

But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him." (1 Corinthians 2:9)

Where do you see your future? Do you have a desire to serve God's Kingdom stirring in your heart? If you seek His direction and guidance, He will lead each step to fulfill that desire. A life submitted to the Lord's will is greater than your expectations and imaginations, and it will translate into an eternal purpose.

Daily Heart Check

A good way to judge yourself honestly is with a daily heart check. Contemplate your day each evening as you journal. Search your heart for wrongs you have done and ways you have walked righteously. Keep your eyes on the Lord regardless of what is happening around you. Continue having the mind of Christ, your love and thoughts unified with the Lord.

Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. (Psalm 51:8)

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. (Philippians 2:1 – 2)

1. **In the morning** – Begin your day by consecrating it for the Lord’s purposes. Pray, worship, and study.
2. **Throughout the day** – Seek the Lord every moment and choose His ways in each decision. Guard your mind to keep the mind of Christ.
3. **In the evening** – Journal about your day and perform a short heart check. Thank the Lord for your blessings and the work he is doing in your heart through your trials.

The following questions may help you evaluate your day and check your heart.

- Was there conflict today? Did I ignore it or address it? What in my heart may have led me to see this issue incorrectly?
- In what situations did I fail today? In what ways did I place confidence in my ability apart from the Lord?
- How did I do well today? Where did I have confidence in God’s work through me?
- Am I thankful for something I used to take for granted?
- How was I distracted? Are distractions taking from more important things? How can I solve this issue?
- Has something occurred today that brought forth regret, discontent, or ingratitude?
- Am I worried? Where is the hope in this situation?
- Did I have patience and seek the Lord as I walked through my day?
- How did I grow in the Lord today?
- Did I have pride today, or did I try to control a circumstance? Did I doubt God?
- Was I tempted today?
- Did I feel (and how did I handle) fear, insecurity, frustration, fatigue, or being overwhelmed?
- Is a major issue happening in my life right now? Am I trusting God for the outcome? Am I seeking the Lord for wisdom and giving Him control?
- What is God showing and teaching through my trials today? Am I trusting Him in the trials?

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How to Have Confidence

How can you be confident moving forward? The answer is not dependent on who you are, specific to a denomination, based on your gifts, your talents, or your success rate. Your confidence is based on and in the Lord, who has all knowledge and power. He gives gifts and talent to everyone,

You can find confidence in the power and purpose behind your abilities. The power comes from the Lord, and the purpose is His will. Those whose confidence lies in their talents or gifts are missing the One who enables the gifting. This is a counterfeit confidence.

The question is never “Are you able?” Rather it is “Do you have confidence in the God who makes you able?” When you have the master instructing you, is there anything you cannot do?

Picture a woman who fumbles around the kitchen, barely able to fix a simple meal. Her daughter is having a large graduation party and wants her to cook an enormous dinner for everyone. Yet the woman has never cooked such an elaborate meal.

Terrified, she realizes she does not have the money to hire a caterer for the party. But she knows a master chef, and she calls him for advice. He tells her everything she needs to buy, how to prepare the food, which seasonings to add, and how to cook it.

Now the woman has every confidence in her ability to fix the dinner. However, her confidence is not in her own talent but in the ability of the master chef guiding her.

To lack confidence in yourself is to lack confidence in God, the one guiding you through life. He is the master of everything, and there is nothing He cannot lead you through!

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Battling Pride

I love photography! It is my favorite hobby, and one I wanted to make a career. Before shooting an event, I met with the client and asked questions until I had a detailed understanding of the final product they desired.

I knew precisely what they wanted before setting the stage for the shoot. Then, I began preparing the setting, creating the mood, and choosing the poses that would make my clients' photos into treasured and irreplaceable memories. My talent was often praised as I found beauty in the ordinary and captured those spontaneous moments that would otherwise be forever lost.

Why did I abandon my aspiration to be a professional photographer? Because it is exhausting! My clients constantly argued with me, pompously touting their flawed theories of how the stage should be set, what would work, and what I should do. They grumbled and complained, thinking they knew better how to produce the desired results.

But I was the photographer. I had the knowledge and experience. I knew the lighting, angles, and poses. I knew what they should wear and how they should stand. I understood the subtleties that make a photo great. After all, that was the reason they hired me.

This fictional scenario illustrates a truth in our relationship with God. He knows the beginning and the end and all that falls between. He knows how everything works because He created it all. Is there anything He can't do? Yet we argue and complain, thinking that His way will not provide the desired results. We think we know better than the professional and want it done our way. The Lord set the stage and put every piece in place. It is our job to swallow our pride and get out of His way.

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