

# VICTORY

## OVER THE

### SELF-CENTERED LIFE

By Paul G. Caram, Ph.D.

Finding freedom from the prisons of self

Enriching our relationship with others and God

Coming into our inheritance and divine fruitfulness

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## DEDICATION

With deep gratitude and loving esteem, this *Christian Maturity Series* is dedicated to the honorable

**Brian J. Bailey**

**President of Zion Fellowship International**

my spiritual father and able teacher from my youth in the sacred mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, whose exemplary life and ministry have inspired my love for Christ and His Truth; who has always been to me, and to all of us who know him, the ideal Christian gentleman, irreproachable and charitable. And above all, he is a man approved of God, a man to whom God shows His face!

# PREFACE

Deadends, routines, ruts, mind-sets, habits, conflicts and torments—all of these are prisons of the self-life from which man cannot or does not know how to free himself!

This book is not written to unbelievers. It is addressed to born-again, Spirit-filled Christians who are struggling with these very issues. A believer battles against an ungodly world system and Satan, but these, in fact, are *not* his greatest enemies. It should be recognized that our greatest problem is not with Satan or his demons and fallen angels, nor with the world and all of its lures and peer pressures. No! Our greatest battle and problem is much closer to home. It lies within ourselves, in the very center of our being. It is *from within* that we open or close the door—either to God, or to Satan and the world. Yes, the greatest enemy we face is within ourselves—within our own hearts.

Jesus taught on the most critical issues of life, and He concentrated on the subject of *the heart* more than anything else. He did so because this indeed is the crux of all issues (Proverbs 4:23). The need for a new heart has *always* been the greatest need in man.

But God has not left His people without hope, for He has provided a means for every one of us to have a new heart and a new spirit. And yet this does not come in one instantaneous stroke as from a magic wand, but this new heart comes gradually, step by step, as we continue to follow His plan for our life. Finding that new heart and freedom from the prisons of the self-life is what this book is all about!

As one author said, none of today's most advanced forms of human science and analysis can ever rid man of his real bondages. That is because *the source* of man's trouble is ignored—the problem in his heart of an innate, voracious EGO. Self-centeredness, as you will see throughout this manual, is at the bottom of the many prisons man creates for himself. No, Satan is not our greatest foe! Unredeemed, unsundered, unenlightened areas of the inner life are the greatest opponents man faces.

I have believed for some time that the Church, not the world, should have the answers for mankind's maladies; for the real problems in man are spiritual. It is our earnest hope and prayer that this manual will be a part of the answer!

*Paul G. Caram*

# VICTORY OVER THE SELF-CENTERED LIFE

## A Manual for Increased Discernment

VICTORY OVER THE SELF-CENTERED LIFE is the second of a series on the subject of Christian growth. The goal of this course is to gain a heart and mind that are free of all conflict, and to find lasting answers to maladies that are robbing us of joy and peace. This is also the earnest desire and objective of our Lord Jesus Christ, whose truth has been presented to us to set us free...for He has purchased for us *life*, and life that is more abundant (John 10:10). Since the beginning of Adam's race, man has dug himself into mental, emotional and spiritual pits, without knowing how to free himself of them. Man has fenced himself into prisons of the self-life—routines, ruts, habits, bondages and evil passions from which he *cannot* or *does not know how* to escape.

Even born-again, Spirit-filled Christians struggle with these matters. And while it is true that the believer battles against the world system and against the devil, these are *not* his greatest enemies! It should be recognized that our greatest problem is not with Satan, nor with principalities and powers, nor with the world and all of its lures and peer pressures. No! Our greatest battle and problem is much closer to home. It lies within *ourselves*, in the very center of our own being. It is *from within* that we open or close the door—either to God, or to Satan and the world. The greatest problem we have is within ourselves, within our hearts (Mk. 7:20-23; Mt. 15:19-20).

God, however, has not left man without hope, for He has provided for us the availability of a new heart and a new spirit by means of a new covenant. And yet even this does not happen with one instantaneous stroke as of a magic wand, but it comes step by step as we continue to obey and respond to God. Jesus taught on the most critical issues of life, and He majored on the subject of *the heart* more than anything else because this is indeed the *crux* of all issues (Prov. 4:23). The need for a new heart *is* and *always has been* the greatest need in man (Mk. 3:5; 6:52; 8:17; 10:5; 16:14).

### SATAN IS NOT OUR GREATEST PROBLEM!

**Unredeemed, unsundered, unenlightened areas  
of the self-life are the biggest obstacles man faces!**

- **We have a sinful nature.** Even after Satan and all of his evil spirits are locked up and put away, man still has a selfish, stubborn and rebellious nature with which to contend. This is seen in Zechariah 14:16-21. Satan will be bound for a thousand years as shown in Revelation 20, yet even then man's nature still resists and rebels against God. This is the reason we cannot blame everything on Satan. If Satan were removed from the scene today, all of our problems would *not* disappear immediately, for there is a resistant, self-willed nature that lies deep within man. Satan gains entry where he finds a weakness or where there is an open door that welcomes him. Therefore, the problem is not Satan as much as our own heart. Unredeemed, unsundered, and unenlightened areas of the self-life are invitations for Satan to come in.

- **A pure heart is the key to keeping Satan out.** Jesus said, "The Prince of this world cometh and hath nothing in me" (John 14:30). As a man, Jesus had no unsundered areas in His life that allowed Satan to come in. Every door was shut, every crevice was sealed—the mind, the senses, the meditations, the motives, the will, and the affections were all consecrated to God. Satan was unable to find one opening where he could get his foot in the door. If there is anything in our life that Satan can toy with, he will. Satan is not afraid of people who can preach, prophesy or do miracles. In fact, Satan even *encouraged* Jesus to do miracles (Mt. 4:3). But he is deathly afraid of men who are bent on doing the will of God, for these are the ones who will destroy him and *replace* him.

- **Hypocrisy opens the door to Satan.** Peter asked Ananias, "Why hath Satan filled thine heart?" (Acts 5:3). This is a heart-searching question. "How did the devil get into you?" Ananias tried to appear more generous than he really was, seeking the applause of man. Satan gains strongholds in hearts that are *deceptive*. Satan is deceptive and finds an abiding place in those of like nature. Before Peter could ask Ananias why the devil got into him, he had to face the same question in his own life. Just a few years prior, Christ said to Peter, "Get thee behind me Satan, for thou art an offence unto me, for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men" (Mt. 16:23). Satan had worked through young Peter because his heart had self-seeking motives.

• **The danger of holding on to sin** - A few years ago the elders were praying for a woman who was in dire need of deliverance. She had been involved in the psychic world in her past but continued to entertain other spirits, and there were around sixty demons that needed to be expelled from her. The ministers prayed earnestly and were able to cast out all of the spirits except for the last one. This little devil then spoke through the woman and said, “I want to come out, but she won’t let me!” God then gave her a choice, saying, “My power is here to deliver you if you wish to be delivered!” Unfortunately she chose to cling to her psychic ways, and many more spirits rushed back into her (Mt. 12:43-45). Therefore we can truly see that the problem is not Satan, but the heart! She *loved* what she was practicing, and Satan had a foothold in her life because of the welcome she gave him. Satan *thrives* in people whose nature is sympathetic to his.

• **Bold, rash, cocky statements invite Satan in** - “Satan hath desired thee, that he may sift thee as wheat” (Lu. 22:31-34). Satan saw some *chaff* in Peter and had come to test Peter on several of his challenging remarks. Proclaiming rash, bold statements are like waving a red flag to a bull, and Satan comes charging. Peter was bragging of his superior dedication, asserting that he would never forsake the Lord, even if all his brethren did (Mk. 14:29-31). Peter, by his bold declarations, had set himself up for an unnecessary test. (Satan is allowed to test us on the remarks we make, especially if they are not true). We can avoid unnecessary tests and keep Satan away more by walking in wisdom and in humility!

• **The love for an evil habit** - The *power* of a habit is usually in the *love* for it. Until a man is changed in his *desire*, he will gain no lasting deliverance, because bondages always come back when they are fed! In fact, anything we habitually *practice* we become addicted to. Many sincere Christians long for deliverance from bad habits, yet there is another part of them that loves what they are doing. Therefore, God must deal with the *will* and *desire*. God can work in our hearts to *will and do* His good pleasure if we ask Him (Phil. 2:13). Give God permission to deal with the love you have for your habit. Give Him your heart and allow Him to change your desires (Prov. 23:26). Many who desire to walk on the highway of holiness conclude—“It’s too hard, it’s unattainable for me.” It may not be an *easy* path but it is *possible*, by grace.

• **Unforgiveness** - Unforgiveness opens the door to Satan. Satan, who is bitter and unforgiving, fellowships with those of like nature. Many times people do not feel forgiven by God because they have not forgiven others (Mk. 11:26). When a man does not forgive another, he will be enslaved to the one he resents, and his thoughts will be controlled by the one he has not forgiven. Unforgiveness delivers a man over to the tormentors (Mt. 18:21-35). Depression and stress result from holding a grudge. Paul said Satan would get an advantage over us if we do not forgive (2 Cor. 2:10-11). Forgiveness is not always a feeling! It is an act of the will, with God’s grace helping us.

• **Stubbornness** - “They... ceased not from *their* own doings, nor from *their* stubborn way” (Judg. 2:19). We cannot blame everything on Satan. Stubbornness and self-will are the real problems in man, not Satan. Did you know that the greatest problem a missionary faces on the field is getting along with other missionaries! This is a heart problem (not a Satanic one). Paul and Barnabas split up over a heated disagreement, and neither was willing to give in (Acts 15:36-41). Barnabas hardened his heart, chose another course, and totally faded out of the narrative in the Book of Acts. He is scarcely heard of again. Barnabas could have remained in the forefront throughout the rest of Acts. But by allowing his heart to be offended, he chose plan B. Many Christians choose another course in life because of an offense, but surrender part of their crown in doing so because they have been *deflected from the course God had chosen for them* (Rev. 3:11).

• **Insecurities** - Insecurities and other areas of weakness also make man vulnerable to the oppressions of the devil. Read Numbers 5:12-14. In Numbers 5:14, a spirit of jealousy came upon a man because he *thought* his wife had been unfaithful to him; but she had not. His imaginations, suspicions and insecurities were openings where oppressions of the devil broke in against him, and then worked through him. Never mind rebuking the spirit of jealousy here. Get the man’s inner life built up with the Word of God, the power of the Holy Spirit, a renewed mind, and the grace of God.

• **Lack of discipline** - Undisciplined ways open a believer to the attacks of the enemy (Prov.16:32; 25:28). When people are loose and undisciplined, protective walls are broken down, leaving them vulnerable to the attacks of evil spirits. Giving place to drugs, alcohol and immodesty are examples of having no rule over our spirit. All of these cause the walls that God has put around us to crumble, permitting evil spirits to gain entry and domination. Disobedience, too, and *laziness* break down these hedges of protection, allowing men to be bitten by the Serpent (Read Ecclesiastes 10:8). Sit down sometime and make a list of the things that could be breaking down God's protective hedge around you.

• **Imaginations** - Imaginations also allow the enemy to advance upon us (2 Cor. 10:3-5; Gen.37:28-35). Jacob thought or imagined that his son Joseph was dead. Joseph was *not* dead! Whether it is real or only imagined, we can suffer much in our minds. In Jacob's case, his thoughts brought the spirit of heaviness for twenty-two years. Jacob spent years in mourning and in depression over imaginations he pictured in his mind. God desires to deliver us from our natural minds.

• **Love of the world** - Paul said, "*Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world*" (2 Tim. 4:10). We cannot blame Satan for the backsliding of Demas. Demas had excellent teaching. He saw unusual miracles, felt the power of God, had excellent Christian fellowship, and a fine example (Paul) before him. Demas *loved* the world. The problem was in his heart. It was not Satan or a lack of Christian fellowship, or any of the other typical excuses people use for backsliding.

• **Perverse motives** - (Acts 20:29-31) Paul had preached at Ephesus for three years, warning them daily to get rooted, grounded and established in God and in His Word, because there was coming a time when Paul had to leave them. They would be required to stand on their own under young leadership and be tested. (Every church and every individual will be tested at some time). Paul preached over a thousand times there, but with all his pleading and exhorting, several in the congregation had *other motives* in their hearts. Some wanted to draw away disciples to *themselves*. Can we see that the problem is not Satan, as much as unredeemed, unsundered areas of the self-life!

• **Unwillingness to admit faults** - A pastor asked a man in a mental ward, "Would you rather be right or would you rather be out of here?" Instantly he replied, "I'd rather be right!" It was this very attitude that had put him there to begin with (see 2 Tim. 2:25-26). I am convinced that sometimes the only way to recover ourselves from the snare of the devil is by *admitting the truth about ourselves* rather than justifying our ways or defending our position. Often the only way to gain deliverance is by first confessing—"I have a problem! This is what I am like." Thus, because of a refusal to acknowledge the truth about himself, it is not uncommon for a Christian *never* to be delivered from his bondage. Therefore, Satan continues to have dominion and power in that area of his life. Job was delivered from his trial *only* after he recognized and admitted his fault.

(1 Kings 11) Solomon was a great preacher who had turned from God during times of great success. The Lord, being faithful to him, raised up a problem (an enemy) to try to get his attention and to turn him around. Solomon did not get the message, so God sent another problem, then another (1 Kg. 11:13, 23). Solomon then did what most backslidden preachers do. Instead of turning back to God, he fought the enemy. Many Christians and backslidden preachers cannot discern whether it is *God or Satan* who is sending a problem. When there is sin in our life we *know* who sent it! Many backslidden ministers, instead of acknowledging that God is trying to deal with them and turn them around, say that Satan is out to destroy them and their ministry. And then they appeal to the people for more money to help them fight the devil (Isa. 9:9-13). Thus, the problem is not Satan! He is only used by God to chastise us, and to be the opposition that develops us. The real problem is our heart. Satan is only here to test us (Rev. 2:10; 20:10). When God is through using Satan to test us, He destroys him.

Wrong motives, rebellion, self-pity, unthankfulness, unforgiveness, hardening of the heart, reading the wrong material, listening to the wrong music, being in the wrong places and with the wrong people—all of these things are the real reasons Satan gets in. What we may need to do is *more* repenting and perhaps *a little less* rebuking of Satan for everything. There are times when *turning on the light* is more appropriate than *rebuking the darkness*.

## *THE NEED FOR A NEW HEART*

**Rebellion and a hard heart** were Israel's greatest problems, and they are ours as well (cf. Neh. 9:26-30). The necessity of a new heart and a new spirit have *always* been the greatest needs in mankind. Because of this, God provided a new covenant whereby a new heart would be possible and available to anyone who was willing to have this operation performed in his life (Jer. 31:31-33; Ezek. 11:19-20; 36:25-27). But failure to stay on God's path will thwart this work!

**What do we mean when we say "heart"?** When you read about *the heart* in scripture, the reference is not to that physical organ in our body that pumps blood. It is not the fleshly, physical heart in the center of our chest that brings life and stimulation to the rest of the body. When the Word of God speaks of the heart, it is referring to the very center of our spirit, the very core of our being where lie our deepest motives. This is also the central focus of our real problems. *The heart is actually much deeper than the mind* (although we have many problems in our mind too). The mind is the instrument of analysis and logic. But the heart dictates to our mind what to muse upon. The heart is the seat of our affections, motives, and worship. The mind is *stimulated* by the heart. (See diagram on page 32.)

**Jesus preached more on the heart than any other issue.** The heart is where *all* of our real problems are (Mt. 15:18-20; Mk. 7:21-23). Jesus said, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, foolishness, pride, and blasphemy." Thus, our greatest need is for a soft, compliant, changed heart. We are told to "keep [or guard] our hearts with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). All of life's actions, choices and decisions spring from what is deep within our hearts. The heart even of a Spirit-filled, crucified believer must be guarded carefully and continuously against pride and excess (2 Cor.12:7).

### *WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT IS IN OUR HEARTS*

- **We do not know ourselves or what our real needs are.** (2 Chron. 32:31). God allows situations and people to come into our lives in order to show us what is in our hearts (1 Chron. 28:9).
- **God takes His people through the wilderness to show them what lies within.** (Deut. 8:2). The purpose for dry, difficult times is to help us see what lies within us. We really do not know our hearts. God has to show us.
- **The Psalmist prayed that God would show him himself.** "Cleanse me from secret [unconscious] faults" (Psa.19:12). "Search me O God, and know my heart, try me and know my thoughts" (Psa.139:23-24).
- **Paul said he wanted to know himself, even as God knew him** (1 Cor.13:12). He also confessed that he did not know what was in his heart, but that God knew (1 Cor. 4:3-5; See also Lev. 4:2-3; 4:13; Luke 9:55).
- **Jeremiah said the heart is deceitful and desperately wicked, and that no one can know it.** God has to show us what He sees. It is pride to think that we by our own intuition, instinct or cleverness can discern what is in the hearts of others, or what is in our own hearts, *apart from revelation*. God alone knows and He must show us (Prov. 21:2; Jer. 17:9-10).
- **Job was blind to a problem in his heart.** After he was convinced of his need, he confessed it and was delivered from his trial. Next to knowing God, the most important thing is to know ourselves and to know what really is at the bottom of our problems. We will not be delivered from a bondage until we *see* it, confess it, and ask God for mercy and cleansing. Ninety percent of the solution is when we are able to *see* our problem. What we *think* is the solution, and what really *is* the solution, are two very different things. In the natural, we could have a shooting pain down our leg and think we have a leg problem. In reality, the root of the problem could be in our lower spine because of an oppressed nerve. The analogy is true in our spiritual life too. We should ask God to show us what is at *the root* of our struggles! We may be surprised!



## ***HARDNESS OF HEART***

**“Harden not your heart.”** Scripture repeatedly warns man *not* to harden his heart. If God says not to do it, that means there is grace (enablement) not to do it. Therefore when man hardens his heart, it is an act of the will and a rejection of God's grace. (Heb. 3:8; 3:15; 4:7; Psa. 95:7-8; Deut. 15:7; 1 Sam. 6:6; Prov. 28:14; Dan. 5:20; 2 Chron. 36:12-13; Mark 3:5; 8:17; Mt. 19:8). Even the apostles had to guard against this daily (Mk. 6:52).

**What is a hardened heart?** Hardness begins when a man is hurt or offended over something. Then his heart closes. If the offense is fostered, the heart grows bitter. If the person continues to harden his heart, defiance and rebellion set in. Every time a man hardens himself, he digs himself deeper into a pit. Hardening of the heart, if it continues, could even lead to suicide. This subject will be developed more as we go through the course.

**When a person hardens his heart, he has rejected available grace.** Grace (divine enablement) is always available when we are in need (Heb. 4:16; 2 Cor. 12:9-10). God never allows His people to be tested beyond what they are able to bear (1 Cor. 10:13). Therefore, when an injury, disappointment or even a disaster comes our way, grace is *instantly* available. Immediately also we are faced with a decision—“Will I harden myself and cherish the injury, or will I call upon God to sustain me with His grace?” When an individual becomes bitter, it is because he has *chosen* to reject this grace and harden his heart instead (Heb. 12:15). Thus, it is a choice!

**How does man harden his heart?** Through practice! In the same way that a weight-lifter hardens his outer man through much regular vigorous exercise, so also is the inner man hardened. Callousness develops and the heart becomes toughened as a man *practices* hardening himself when he is hurt. Hearts become hard by *exercise*.

**Hardening the heart is the first step into the pits.** Most mental and emotional problems can be traced back to the person's hardening his heart when he was hurt in some way. If a man *continues* hardening his heart when he is hurt, he could dig himself so far down into the abyss that he loses the ability to cope with his feelings and life itself, and might even become a victim of suicide. The way to avoid this dreadful pit is by *reversing* his behavior and *repenting* of these wrong reactions—by depending upon grace and responding with meekness and forgiveness, instead of hardening the heart.

**Why do people harden their hearts?** It is a *false comfort* for their hurt, and it feels good. But it leads to a pit of darkness. One wife said, “It feels so good to hate my husband after all he’s done.” Esau, *to comfort himself* from his injury of losing the birthright, purposed in his heart to kill his brother Jacob (Gen. 27:42). Job hardened himself in his time of sorrow (Job 6:10). The tendency of all men is to harden themselves, including you and me.

**Hardness of heart - the reason marriages fail.** (Mt. 19:7-8; Mk. 10:2-9). Hardness of heart is the inability to forgive or care anymore, a heart that has grown cold and indifferent. When we remove our spirit from our spouse, close ourselves off from others, push people out of our life, and cease communicating—we have hardened our heart.

**Pride is a major reason people harden their hearts.** According to Exodus 8:15, a hard heart is a *strong* heart with plenty of fight left. Pharaoh, an example of this, hardened himself ten times. His heart was proud and strong. People with a great deal of pride harden their hearts the most. Therefore, God hardened Pharaoh. *Humility* is the key to having a soft heart. God softens and opens the hearts of those who *practice* opening their hearts to Him (See Acts 16:14).

**A hardened heart never brings God's blessing, but the opposite.** “Who hath hardened himself against Him and prospered?” (Job 9:4). When we harden ourselves against someone or because of a difficult circumstance, we are actually hardening ourselves against God who has allowed the situation to come into our life. You will observe in scripture that every time someone hardened his heart, it never brought God's blessing but a frown. It is impossible for God to bless a hardened heart. A hardened heart says in effect to the Spirit of grace—“Get away from me, I would rather cherish my evil feelings. I have a right to be offended.”

**A hardened heart will eventually result in God's judgment.** (Josh. 11:20). When a person *repeatedly* hardens himself and rejects God's grace (cf. Heb. 10:29), after a while God begins to harden him. (God hardens those who have repeatedly hardened themselves.) Pharaoh is a vivid scriptural example of this.

# VICTORY OVER THE SELF-CENTERED LIFE

**“To proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound.”**

**(Isaiah 61:1)**

## ***TOPICS TO BE COVERED:***

- **The struggle of two natures**
- **Our goal - having an excellent spirit**
- **Things we inherited from our first parents - Adam and Eve**
- **Result of the Fall - Self-centeredness**
- **Redemption from the Fall - Others-centered**
- **Perils of pride - the greatest problem of the self-life**
- **Developing a servant’s heart - the key to overcoming self**
- **The need for a renewed mind**
- **Concepts God wants to change**
- **Understanding man - spirit, soul, and body**
- **Cautions and guidelines for discernment - overcoming soulishness**
- **Guidelines for right doctrine - Reasons Christians have error**
- **What is our inheritance?**
- **What enemies must be conquered to obtain our inheritance?**
- **What are the weapons we use on our spiritual enemies?**
- **Spiritual circumcision**
- **Overcoming the final pockets of resistance - (31 Kings)**
- **Responding the right way to injury**
- **Summary of keys for gaining victory over the self-life**
- **Other closing remarks**

## THE STRUGGLE OF TWO NATURES

- “From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even from your lusts that war in your members?” (Jas. 4:1). The message of James is addressed, *not* to the unredeemed or the unbeliever. He is speaking to blood-washed, Spirit-filled Christians. Truly there is a war going on within us, but it is a war that we can win, by grace.

- “Why am I thus?” (Gen. 25:22-23). This is the age-old question. Lord, why am I like this? Why do I feel this way? What is wrong with me? Rebecca of old experienced a similar struggle within herself. Instead of going to the psychiatrist to find her answers, she enquired of the Lord and asked, “Lord, why am I thus?” God replied saying, “There are two manner of people within you.”

This answer has great signification, for it represents the struggle of the flesh and the Spirit within us. Of course, there were twins struggling within her womb (*Jacob* representing the spiritual, and *Esau* representing the carnal), but the application and significance of the allegory is remarkable to every one of us.

- The Corinthian believers, though born-again, Spirit-filled, sanctified, and possessing all the gifts of the Spirit, had some terrific battles with the flesh. Paul called them *carnal*. They were plagued with envy and strife, and some were even falling back into immorality and drunkenness. How could believers who were indwelt by Christ continue to act this way?

### We Have Two Natures

(1 John 1:8 versus 1 John 3:9)

#### 1 John 1:8

“If we say that we have no sin [nature] we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” The Word of God clearly states that we have a sinful nature, and that we are to confess that we have one. To deny that we have a sinful nature is deception (1 Jn.1:9; Jer.17:9; Isa. 6:5; Rom. 7:24).

#### 1 John 3:9

“Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin because he is born of God.” Christ in us cannot sin. He is that holy seed that is born within us, and He cannot sin (1 Pet. 1:23). Yet at times we indeed sin. Where then does this sin come from? This sin comes from the old Adamic nature with which we were born.

- Paul, the interpreter of the new covenant stated (in the present tense), “I find a law that, when I would do good, evil is present with me” (a reference to the old nature); and that “It is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me” (Rom. 7:17; 20-23). Paul clarifies the fact that there is still a nature of sin that is *resident* in the members of our body (1 Cor. 9:27; 2 Cor. 12:7).

- Jesus Christ had two natures. He was the *Son of Man*. His body was made of Mary’s substance, of Adam’s race. He was of the seed of David, of Abraham. His body therefore was fashioned exactly as ours. Jesus was made in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom.8:3) and was tempted in every way we are (Heb. 2:14-18; 4:15). But He never yielded! Jesus was and is also the *Son of God*. His spirit and soul are eternal. He came down from heaven to inhabit a body of sinful flesh. As a man living in a body of human sinful flesh, He condemned sin in the flesh by never yielding to its lusts.

## WHAT IS THE REMEDY FOR THE OLD NATURE?

- When we are born-again, Christ comes into us and we *begin* to have a new nature. He is literally born in us as a seed (1 Pet. 1:23). Christ desires to grow within until He is fully formed (Gal. 4:19). But even after our new birth and the infilling of the Holy Spirit, there are still many struggles with the flesh! (*The flesh, the old man, the old nature, and the carnal man* are synonymous terms that describe what we are born with). The thing that deals with our “old man” is *the experience of Romans 6:6*.

- **Romans 6:6** is a definite, absolute experience that is to be distinguished from the new birth and the infilling of the Spirit. “*Knowing that our old man [was] crucified with Christ, that the body of sin may be [rendered inoperative].*” The word “knowing” comes from a Greek word meaning, “a knowledge that comes by an experience.” This knowing that our old man [was] crucified is not a head knowledge or something we just take by faith. It is an encounter with God. God longs to bring every believer into this experience. Something dramatic takes place when Romans 6:6 is experienced. Our old man is rendered powerless. Our old nature is *arrested* and brought into subjection so that we are able to rule over him. Romans 6:6 gives us the power to make a choice—either for holiness or for the flesh.

### A Personal Experience

When I was a young Christian, I struggled immensely against the power of sin. After being baptized in the Holy Spirit I was strengthened, but still there were numerous battles and torments in the mind and flesh. I went into a season of fervent prayer for a whole year, and my consuming desire was to be freed from the struggles of the old life in order to live a holy life for God. Sometimes I would pray six hours a day because the battle was so severe. One night I struggled like Jacob did when he wrestled with God to have his nature changed (Gen. 32:24-30). In the morning God met me, and I have never been the same since. It was a landmark experience that I always look back to because my struggle with temptation was *immediately* broken and I was turned into another man (1 Sam.10:9). I would have to say that this was the greatest experience of my life, even far greater than the baptism in the Holy Spirit.

That morning, I did not know what had struck me. There was a new anointing upon my life, and even my eyes began to see things differently. It was as though scales had fallen from my eyes. The peace that filled my heart was indescribable, especially after such a long hard battle with the flesh. The power of sin was dealt a deathblow. At last, the heavy burden was gone and sin no longer had dominion over me. Over the years I have come to understand that what I had encountered that morning was the reality of Romans 6:6. My *old man* had been rendered inoperative, that henceforth I should not serve sin. The remedy for my old nature, purchased on the cross nearly 2000 years ago, had been unleashed upon my life.

As you carefully compare all other scripture with this, the Romans 6:6 experience is *not* the *eradication* of the old nature. He still exists but is arrested and put on the cross. He becomes weaker and weaker as we refuse to feed him or exercise him. But our new man (Christ in us) grows stronger and stronger as he is nourished and exercised. We can find an analogy of the battle of the new man against the old man in 2 Samuel 3:1. In this passage, Saul (carnal) grew weaker and weaker, but David (spiritual) grew stronger and stronger.

Even after Romans 6:6, holiness is still a choice, a battle. We have to *reckon* (or count) our old nature dead, and then *yield* our members to God (Rom. 6:11,13,14). Hence, holiness is still a battle, a choice. Before Romans 6:6 we almost do not have a choice, and in a sense sin has dominion over us in certain areas of our lives. Romans 6:6 gives us the power to make the choice for holiness.

**Romans 6:6 puts our old man on the cross. It *arrests* him. However, our old nature is never eradicated: it never ceases to exist during this life in our mortal bodies. At the resurrection, we will receive our new bodies which are exempt from the old nature. Full redemption is not complete until the resurrection (Rom. 8:23). Remember, the word “dead” never signifies oblivion.**

## ***HAVING AN EXCELLENT SPIRIT***

**Our Goal** is to achieve the quality of an *excellent spirit*. This brings a believer into favor with God and man. Daniel possessed this (Dan. 6:3). An excellent spirit is the result of wisdom entering our hearts (Lu. 2:40; 2:52). Wisdom is knowing how to react and respond to people and situations. It is also the ability to see things from God’s perspective. Wisdom is God’s gift to the worthy seeker, and He longs to impart it *liberally* (Jas.1:5).



**Wisdom** produces an excellent spirit. When we begin to see situations through God’s eyes, we will be changed. Criticism, complaining, and fretting will cease. A renewed mind totally transforms us into another person. Most of our problems stem from not seeing things as God does (Isa. 55:8-9). God spoke to a pastor one day and said, “If you could see what I am seeing, you would do the same thing.” His fretting stopped!

Wisdom will also help us to fulfill the commandment of 2 Timothy 2:24-25—not to strive with the erring but patiently teach them and lead them to repentance. Wisdom, too, produces purity in our hearts. Wisdom knows how to distinguish matters, and prudently avoids classifying *everyone* and *everything* into the same category. Wisdom is the key for building a home. Wisdom has seven pillars upon which a home must be built. Read Proverbs 9:1, James 3:13-18.

## ***THE FALL OF THE HUMAN RACE***

*(Genesis chapter three)*

**When our first parents transgressed in the garden, their fall caused all of us to fall too, for we were *in* them. Every one of us are affected by what they did! All of their identical weaknesses and tendencies have since been passed on to us. Observe the following as you read the account of the Fall in Genesis chapter three:**

- Satan attacked the woman when she was away from her husband. He induced her to make a major decision without first consulting her husband, who was her leader. From the very beginning Satan's main attack has been against marriage, for he has sought to divide man and woman. Satan's central target is marriage, especially the woman.
- Satan was doing everything in his power to get Eve to do what he had done, and that was to *exalt self*. He said to her, "This fruit will make you like God: you will have extraordinary intelligence. Here, try it!"
- Eve was receiving the nature of Satan more and more as she continued to listen to him. This is a word of caution!—We receive the nature, spirit, and mentality of those we listen to and open up to. Never hold a dialogue with Satan as Eve did. The longer she listened, the more she became like him.

The weaknesses of Adam and Eve have been passed on to us. We were *in* them. We are the very substance of them, spirit, soul, body and mind. But we too are responsible for passing on a *nature* to our children. Actions and decisions that *we* make affect the spiritual condition of our children. The spiritual condition of a mother and father when a child is conceived is what they give to their child. When parents are stubborn and disobedient, this is exactly what they give to their child. But when the parents are obedient to God, the children have an obedient spirit too. Children are a living mirror to their parents. Therefore every victory *we* gain is a victory for our children—natural or spiritual.

### ***PROBLEMS WE INHERITED FROM OUR FIRST PARENTS***

**1.) To doubt, question, or challenge God's Word -** (Gen. 3:1) . Satan's first step of strategy is to cast *doubt* upon God's Word. He said, "Yea, hath God said?" As Eve listened, she started thinking and saying the same thing. She was receiving his spirit into her. The serpent used rationalization to explain away everything God had warned against. Then Satan made a *flat denial* that there would be judgment, saying, "Ye shall not surely die!" (Gen. 3:4). (There won't be any consequences ... you misunderstood what God meant, go ahead and do it!) And Eve believed him. (See 2 Cor.11:3.)

**2.) Pride! Desiring to be something God did not intend us to be -** (Gen. 3:5) "Ye shall be as gods." Satan always wanted to be God, so now he suggests this to Eve. "You will be God" (Isa.14:12-14). What is in the heart comes out the mouth. Eve accepted the idea and received the same evil spirit into her mind, a spirit that said, "*I want to be God.*"

**3.) Determining matters by how we feel, or by how things look,** rather than by what God has said. The forbidden fruit, according to Genesis 3:6, was "pleasant to the eyes." Things that are forbidden have a peculiar *attraction*. It looked good, and it made her feel good.

Eve kept *looking* at the forbidden fruit and *thinking* about it. Finally infatuation got the best of her. Remember, our eyes and emotions are *deceptive*. Jesus warned us not to judge matters according to how they *appear* (Jn. 7:24 Isa.11:3-4). God had already said, “Do not even touch it” (Gen. 3:3). Most sin begins with the *eyes*, then are strengthened by the *meditations*. Finally sin becomes an *act*. Sin therefore can be nipped in the bud.

**4.) Curiosity to know what God did not intend for us to know** - The forbidden fruit was “to be desired to make one wise” (Gen. 3:6). However, this was knowledge that God did not want to reveal. The serpent continued to insist cunningly — “One taste of this fruit will open your eyes to be like God. You will have superior intelligence.” Satan’s motive was to get Eve to *exalt herself*, just as he had done (See 1 Kgs.1:5). Satan wanted her to act independently of God and her husband! He wanted her to be *liberated*! By this means Eve would be *unprotected* and then ensnared by the serpent.

Fallen man has an immense desire to know what is forbidden. The fallen nature is fascinated with spiritism, the psychic world, the mysterious, astrology, e.s.p., mind over matter, reincarnation, etc., and longs to be able to know and predict the future. Fallen man loves theories, philosophies, psychology, and other “ologies” that seem intelligent but are false. Thus, the scripture declares, “God has made man upright, but he has sought out many devices” (Ecc. 7:29; Rom.1:21-22).

**5.) Adam desired human love more than God’s love** - (Gen. 3:6; 1 Tim. 2:13-14). Eve was deceived. Adam was not. He came on the scene and realized what she had done. He did not want to lose her and was immediately faced with a crucial decision. “Whom do I love most, God or Eve?” Not desiring to lose her, he identified himself with her and also partook of the forbidden fruit instead of obeying the commandment of God. In effect, he loved *her* more than he loved God. This was Adam’s root sin. Without a doubt this is mankind's greatest weakness also. How many times has human love, friendship, and the choice of a mate (without consulting God) been more important to a Christian than doing God’s will! But when human love is exalted above God’s love, the result is *always* conflict and sorrow.

**6.) Hiding ourselves, turning inward** - (Gen. 3:8-11) “Adam and his wife *hid* themselves from the presence of the Lord.” Another terrible trait of the fallen sinful nature is that it makes man afraid of God and afraid of others. It creates walls, suspicions, imaginations, and fears. The Fall causes man to hide, shield, evade, withdraw, defend, and retreat from others and from God. The fall has made man introverted, enclosed, and unwilling to expose and open up his heart to God. Self-centeredness and self-consciousness are direct results of the Fall.

**7.) Putting the blame on others** - (Gen. 3:12-13) Adam *blamed* Eve and God! Then Eve *blamed* the Devil. Adam said, “The woman *thou* gavest me.” Eve said, “The serpent beguiled me.” A remarkable evidence of the fallen nature is that mankind is overprotective of his insecure ego, and seeks to shift the blame for his faults onto others. “If only she had not said or done this. If only this had not happened.” Man *blames* others in an attempt to ease his own feelings of guilt. God wants an honest confession from *me*! My problems begin to get solved *only* when I confess where the real problem lies—*in me*, not the other fellow. Honest confession of *our* faults, not our neighbor's, releases us from bondage! (Prov. 28:13).

The hardest thing for a backslider to do is to admit his own faults and failures. He would rather blame God, circumstances, his mate, parents, a boss, or a minister he claims is a hypocrite. He will blame everyone and everything for his condition, but not *himself*. Cain the son of Adam never showed remorse for the murder of his younger brother, nor did he ever confess his guilt. He only complained that his sentence was too stiff (Gen. 4:9-13). Many criminals will tell you they have been *framed*, instead of giving an honest confession of their own wrongdoings. Do you remember the thief on the cross in the Gospel of Luke 23:39-43? Here was a criminal making an honest confession that he was getting what he justly deserved. *This is true repentance!* He made it to heaven too! Remember the difference between these two criminals. One blamed himself but the other blamed God and complained that He had sentenced him too severely.

## ***THE FALL HAS MADE US SELF-CENTERED***

- Trying to be something we are not supposed to be: Pride, ambition - "*I will be God.*"
- Curiosity, fascination to know things we are not supposed to know: Something for self
- Making major decisions by emotions, without consulting God or counsel from the godly
- Preferring human love and friendships more than God's love and favor
- Turning inward: Afraid of God, shunning others: Withdrawing, retreating, evading
- Challenging, questioning, doubting: rationalizing away the Word of God
- Shifting blame to others in order to ease feelings of guilt, and to protect one's own ego

CHRIST wants to free us from ourselves and from self-centeredness, in order that we might become His lovely bride without spot or blemish (Eph. 5:26-27; Rom.12:2). Christ is not self-centered, nor will He be wedded to a bride who is self-centered. He became the Last Adam and won back everything the first Adam lost. The first Adam was self-centered, the Last Adam was others-centered, a servant, and totally unselfish. Becoming *a servant* like Jesus is the key to overcoming self-centeredness, and becoming His Bride (2 Cor.11:2-3).



# RESULT OF THE FALL

## SELF-CENTEREDNESS

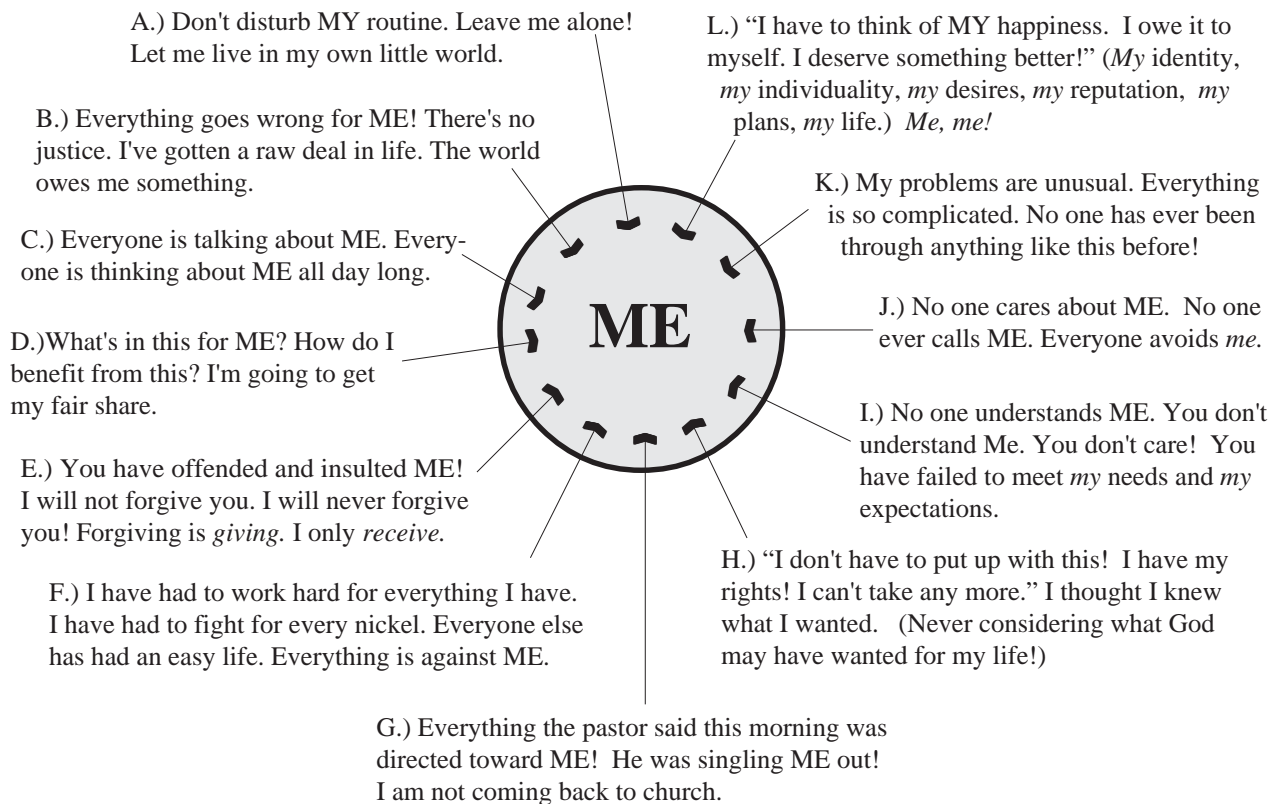
SYMPTOMS OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS are these—pride, anger, self-pity, touchiness, depressions, moodiness, easily hurt and offended, grudges and other conflicts. Self-centeredness means just what it says—everything revolves around ME. It relates everything that is said or done to one’s self. By nature we are all self-centered.

God asked Adam, the father of our race, “Where art thou?” He continues to ask all of Adam’s children the same question! There are numerous areas in our lives where we are still *hiding*. Often because of a bad background (being unwanted, rejected, abused or neglected) people close themselves in and build a wall around themselves and live in their own little world. God wants to break through this crust that has built up around the heart.

Our inner man has many *rooms* and inner chambers. We’ll call them inner recesses. Many of these chambers are still locked. God has a key for every one of these areas where we are still imprisoned or unproductive. He desires to liberate us in all the inner recesses of our being. God wants every part of us to be opened up to Him, and fruitful.

### MARKS OF SELF-CENTEREDNESS

(Note the absence of a servant's heart)



FACT — In many broken marriages, the one partner knows very well what *the other* has done to grieve him exceedingly, but he has little awareness of what *he* has done to exceedingly grieve his partner! Self-centered people are very sensitive to their own needs, but are insensitive to the needs of others. Self-centeredness and selfishness are the main reasons marriages fail.

**Someone wrapped up in himself has got a very small package!**

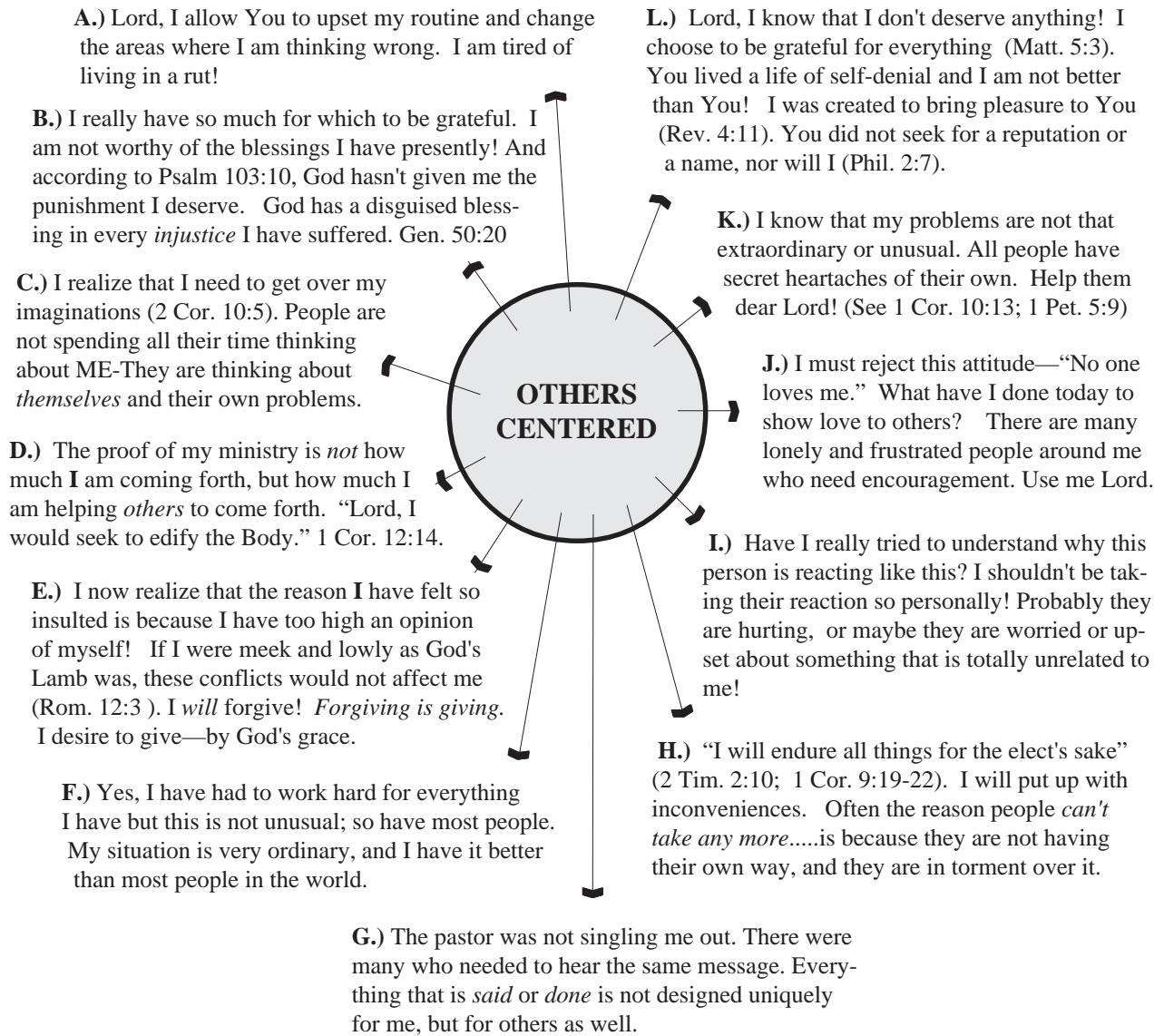
# REDEMPTION FROM THE FALL

## OTHERS-CENTERED

(Being a Servant)

### THE NATURE OF GOD IS TO *GIVE!*

- \* John 3:16 God so loved...that He *gave*.
- \* Rom.15:3 For even Christ *pleased not Himself*.
- \* Acts 20:35 It is more blessed to *give* than to receive.
- \* Matt. 20:26 Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your *servant*.
- \* Mark 10:45 Even the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister. . . and *give His life*.



God can clear up all these maladies in our soul, if we are willing. It will take *time*, and it may be painful at times—but He is able to redeem us totally (Psa.130:7). God would deliver His people from every imagination, every prison, every bondage, and every rut. God is not a God of *ruts*. Christ longs to rescue His redeemed from the death-grasp of self-love, and shed light into every area of our souls where there is darkness and where we are still *hiding*.

**Comparison of the OLD NATURE  
To the NEW NATURE God Wants to Give.**

(Acts 20:35)

**IT IS MORE BLESSED TO  
GIVE**



A STRONG PERSON

AN UNSELFISH PERSON

LIFE REVOLVES AROUND OTHERS  
(What can I do to help?)

SERVANT'S HEART - NOT MY WILL

POSITIVE - BRIGHT, CHEERFUL  
(Has a believing heart)

SECURE - CAN SAY, "I WAS WRONG."

LIGHT IN THE INNER MAN  
(A heart exposed to the Light)  
(God has searched out the heart.)

HUMILITY = STRENGTH

Jesus is humble - free from all conflicts,  
and He has perfect peace.

DIVINE LOVE **GIVES**.

NEW NATURE: When we are "born again"  
of incorruptible seed...we have a new Father,  
we are in a different family, and we begin to  
take on a new mind and a new way of life!

**GIVERS NEVER BEG**

**THAN TO  
RECEIVE**



A WEAK PERSON

A SELFISH PERSON

LIFE REVOLVES AROUND SELF  
(What's in this for *me*?)

INDEPENDENT - MY WILL, MY RIGHTS

NEGATIVE - GLOOMY, DEPRESSED  
(Has an unbelieving heart)

INSECURE-CANNOT SAY, "I WAS WRONG."

DARKNESS IN THE INNER MAN  
(A veil of pretense, shielding)  
(God would search out our *hiding places*.)

PRIDE = WEAKNESS

Satan is proud - is filled with conflicts,  
confusion, torment.

SELF LOVE **RECEIVES**.

OLD NATURE: Nature of Adam and Eve-  
The nature we inherit when we are born  
This old nature is self-centered, self-seeking  
and self-conscious. It is proud and grasping.

**BEGGERS NEVER GIVE**

**St. Francis prayed: "Lord... to love more than to be loved; to understand more than to be understood!"**

## ***PERILS OF PRIDE***

### **Pride is the Greatest Problem Man Has**

Satan is not our greatest enemy. Our greatest enemy is self, and pride is the greatest problem of self. Pride is at the bottom of most of our struggles! Even if Satan were bound right now, man still has a *nature of pride* which must be carefully watched and restrained (2 Cor.12:7). Men fall because of pride (Prov.16:18; 29:23).

### **Pride is the Reason Satan Fell**

PRIDE opposes God and seeks to exalt self above God and the will of God. This is the reason God resists the proud. Satan wanted something for *self* that God knew was not good for him to have. Satan wanted *equal rights*. He demanded equal voice and equal say with God (Isa.14:12-14). Lucifer wanted to run the universe. Pride rose up within him and he thought —“I am just as capable of running heaven as God is.” (Note the five times Satan said, “I will.”) Pride is also at the bottom of great deception. Please read Obadiah 1:3.

God had already conferred upon him extraordinary beauty, wisdom and charisma (Ezek. 28:12-15), but he was not satisfied with all of these! Satan wanted to be unequalled and unexcelled. He desired to be King of all kings, and Lord of all lords. When God denied him his prideful desire, he sought to turn all of heaven against God, and he succeeded with one third of the angels. Pride is at the bottom of great iniquity and rebellion. Pride has torn and tormented Satan for eons of time, and he will yet seek to run the world through a man he will produce in our days—the Antichrist.

“Who *exalteth himself* above all that is called God or that is worshipped” (2 Thes. 2:4, 2:3-12). Here is the deification of self—a man drawing all attention and worship to himself. Satan will inhabit this man and receive worship for himself. This is what pride is all about—something for *me* (1 Kgs.1:5; Acts 20:30; Jer. 45:5).

### **Pride Displaces God**

PRIDE is a concentration upon ME—my will, my ways, my ideas, what I want . . . and it pushes God off the throne. Pride resists God and the will of God, in order to exalt *self* instead. Pride is at the root of all sin because it displaces God and puts self upon the throne. Man’s greatest problem is this—“*I am my own boss . . . I run my life, not God.*” As our Father and Creator, God desires to be enquired of and have input into everything we do (Lu. 4:4; Isa. 50:4), but pride says to God in effect —“Get out of my life, I am running the show, not You.” Romans 1:18-32 is a displacing of God.

PRIDE cannot tolerate being *crossed*. Pride is offended and insulted easily, which then sets off other evil passions such as grudges and bitterness. Pride is the *source* of most torments. This is the reason none of today's most advanced methods of treatments (psychology, psychiatry, etc.) have any lasting solutions, because they ignore man's greatest malady—an inflated, self-centered, voracious ego—Pride!

PRIDE never allows man to rest! Jesus was totally free of emotional turmoil because He had conquered pride. He said, “I am meek and lowly in heart” and He told His Bride to learn this from Him, that herein we would find rest in our souls (Mt.11:29). Humility is the key to freedom in the hearts of men. But Satan and anyone else who is filled with pride, has no peace. Job 1:6-12 suggests that Satan is continuously tormented and restless, “Going to and fro in the earth and walking up and down in it.” Pride and the absence of peace go hand in hand.

PRIDE is the reason men and women harden their hearts. As we have already mentioned, a proud heart is a very strong heart. It is a heart filled with plenty of fight. When people harden their hearts, it is because they have a very proud, strong heart. Pharaoh is an excellent example of this (cf. Ex. 8:15).

## ***WE HAVE NO REASON TO BE PROUD BECAUSE:***

- **We were created by another.** We came as helpless infants, and we had no say in the matter. We did not choose to be male or female, strong or feeble (Psa.100:3; 1 Cor. 6:19-20; Job 38:4).
- **We have a sinful nature that we cannot change.** (Jer. 13:23; Psa. 39:5; Isa. 64:6). If there is anything righteous within us, it came from God. Nothing good originates in us (Rom. 7:18-21).
- **We have no ability or power but what God has granted.** All ability—physical, mental, or spiritual - comes from God (Deut. 8:18; 1 Cor. 4:7; Jn. 3:27). Man has no ability *in himself* to do anything.
- **We cannot control our destiny or guide ourselves.** (Jer.10:23; Jas. 4:13-16; Ecc. 8:8). Man cannot control tomorrow, nor does he understand himself or have the answers to his real needs.

Therefore, when a man is proud, he is **deceived**. Paul urges us not to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. And to not be wise in our own conceits. The problem is in what we are *thinking!* By nature we have a haughty mind (Rom. 12:2; 12:3; 12:16; Prov. 23:4; Obadiah 1:3; Gal. 6:3; 1 Cor. 8:2).

## ***THE FRUIT OF PRIDE***

**Because there are many different forms of pride,  
some of the following may or may not apply to us.**

INTRODUCTION: Pride is at the bottom of most of man's problems. When a man is suffering and struggling with a bondage or torment of some kind, to tell him that his real problem is "pride" or "self" can be very frustrating unless you explain just how this can be so. The following is an attempt to do this! Of course, not all bondages and fears are rooted in pride. Some problems can be inherited. Others could stem from being neglected or abused as a child, or from some other trauma. These are factors that cannot be ignored. But I am convinced that *in addition* to these complexes and a low self-image—*pride, self-centeredness, and a hardened heart* (wrong responses because of pride) heavily contribute to one's bondage.

### **A PROUD PERSON IS A WEAK PERSON FOR THE FOLLOWING REASONS:**

**PRIDE** - is an absorbing sense of one's own greatness and importance. Because of this, a proud person is easily hurt and offended when he is not treated *just so*. He is not the master of his emotions and is, therefore, weak.

**PRIDE** - is the desire to be at the top, to be unexcelled, unequalled; Therefore, a proud person will step on others and use others to get there. Here again, the proud person is driven by another force and is not the master of his emotions. When King Solomon fell into pride, his thought-life was constantly occupied with how unrivaled and unparalleled he had become (Ecc.1:16).

**PRIDE** - because it makes us pretend to be something we are not, puts us under undue strain. *When you are strained, you are drained*. Therefore pride also drains us emotionally and is responsible for burnout and breakdowns. Humility releases us to relax, be ourselves, and accept ourselves. Remarkable humility produces remarkable peace and tranquility within.

**PRIDE** - makes man *pretend* to be something he is not. Pride therefore makes us false and hypocritical. But humility produces genuineness within, and transparency!

**PRIDE** - is a high opinion of one's self, looking down on others and their opinions. Pride can be very rude, while a mark of greatness is the ability to receive from anyone on any level. Pride makes a man *very small*.

**PRIDE** - is presumptuous and assumes to have the answers, when it does not. Because of pride, people will not listen to others. Therefore pride is also a lack of wisdom.

**PRIDE** - causes man to cherish lofty ideas about himself, or allures some to live in dream worlds. —“No one is as great as I am” or, “I am the answer to the world's problems!” (See Gal. 6:3, Obadiah 1:3.)

**PRIDE** - can be at the bottom of embarrassment or even shyness. A shy person will not make himself vulnerable, and very carefully protects himself—“What if I make a mistake! What if I am criticized! I might be humiliated.” Pride could be at the root of certain kinds of fears. Pride is very protective of self. Jesus, our Captain, however, was humble and *vulnerable*, and was willing to look like a failure.

**PRIDE** - is self-seeking and craves for the praise of man. Pride strives for a great *name* or title for itself, and popularity. A proud person wants publicity, loves to be the center of attention, and is more concerned about what people think of him than what God thinks (Jn. 5:44). Pride uses rhetoric and huge words that most ordinary people cannot even pronounce, in order to exalt self and to sound superior. Satan also is an intellectual, and complicated, and so are Christians who are proud (2 Cor. 11:3). Jesus used the simplest choice of words when He taught. And Jesus never pursued an *earthly* reputation (Phil. 2:5-8).

**PRIDE** - is the reason for a fierce disposition. When you are down (i. e. humility), no one can put you down, but proud people have terrific outbursts of wrath when anyone touches their ego. They also flare up or explode when they do not have their own will and way. With wrath comes bitterness, grudges, and many other evils.

**PRIDE** - is a major cause for the lack of peace. Many conflicts cease when pride is purged.

**PRIDE** - is a major contributing factor to most mental and emotional disorders. Pride tears and torments a man, draining and depleting his soul and body of all its energy and reserves. The Proud One (Satan) is mentally and emotionally distorted because of his great pride. Mankind also is mentally and emotionally disturbed because of the wretchedness of his pride.

**PRIDE** - resents correction or suggestions, with an attitude - “I know what I am doing; I don't need you or anyone else to tell me what to do.” But Proverbs 1:5 exclaims, “A wise man will attain unto wise counsels.”

**PRIDE** - makes it grievous to say, “I was wrong, I am sorry!” (Lev. 26:40-41). Pride will justify errors and mistakes in order to protect *self*. A sign of strength and nobility is to acknowledge that we are human and made a mistake, but a proud person is weak, and must vindicate himself and have the last word. Job found fault with God, but none with himself, making himself more righteous than God. Job was adamant and said he would *die* before he would change his mind (Job 27:2-6; 35:2).

**PRIDE** - cannot let go of an offense. Humility can just let it go! “It is to a man's honour to pass over an offense” (Prov. 19:11). A proud man demands vindication and “justice” for himself. Pride demands an apology for small offenses and also makes it hard for the offender to apologize.

**PRIDE** - is so absorbed with *self*, that it is supersensitive to its own hurts, but very insensitive to the hurts of others. The proud person is unaware when he is injuring another. (You can hurt another and be insensitive by saying - *You don't care!*)

**PRIDE** - makes it difficult to forgive. Pride dwells on *hurts* . . . “I am hurt”— and lets everyone know it, too!

**PRIDE** - is the source of rebellion, defiance, and revenge. Satan in his pride wanted to be at the top. When he didn't get his way he became vindictive. Since that time he has done everything in his power to turn all the inhabitants of heaven and earth away from God. Pride has made Satan insanely jealous of all positions of leadership, and he undermines authority on every level. He is the author and promoter of all the *liberation movements* today!

**PRIDE** - is independent and insensitive, with attitudes like this: “I can make it on my own. I don't need you or anyone else. Nobody tells me what to do! I don't have to put up with this!” (1 Cor.10:12; Prov.18:12). Humility says, “Please help me, I don't have all the answers. I really need your input and prayers . . . I cannot make it without you!”

**PRIDE** - makes man complicated and over-technical. Men of humility, however, are free of strivings and contentions. Humility silences wars and strifes within. *Surrender* is a key word for peace. Peace will fill our souls as we submit to God and appreciate and listen to our Christian brethren (Prov.13:10; Jas. 4:6-10).

**PRIDE** - causes one to harden his heart. A proud heart is a strong heart with plenty of fight and resistance left— Pharaoh hardened his heart over and over again (Ex. 8:15). Ask God to give you a heart of flesh, a heart that does not resist. Remember, a hard heart opposes God and His grace (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5-6; Prov. 3:34; Psa.138:6; 2 Chron. 36:11-13).

**PRIDE** - brings deception (Obadiah 1:3). *The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee*. Deception thrives in a proud heart. Every false religion and false doctrine comes because of pride. The founders wanted to have a new idea that no one had ever thought of before - the pride of being *original*. Pride makes a man think he can do it better than anyone else, including God. “Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools” (Rom.1:21-22; Gal. 6:3; Rom.12:3; 1 Cor. 8:2).

**PRIDE** - is one of the greatest reasons a person cannot get along with others. Because of pride, people *cannot cope* with life situations. Pride is unable to handle offenses, and cannot bear having its will crossed. “I can't take anymore; I am going to lose my mind”—is often said by those who are not having their own way. Satan did not get his way and has been *tormented* with evil feelings ever since. But the people who have experienced genuine humility are able to cope. Their spirit is free!

**PRIDE** - is the main reason for arguments and debates (Prov.13:10). *Only* by pride cometh contentions (debates). Wise men are flexible, gentle, reasonable, and are able to defer to the wishes and viewpoints of others, without compromising.

**PRIDE** - is a reason we cannot break before God. For some, to break before God or the brethren is a sign of weakness, but this is not true at all. The weak person is the one who has hardened himself. Because of pride Zedekiah refused to hearken, give in, or surrender to the word of the Lord. He was afraid to lose face. His pride caused Jerusalem to be burned and his children to be slaughtered (Jer. 38:17-23; 2 Chron. 36:11-13).

**PRIDE** - is the main reason for lack of unity. By nature, man seeks to promote himself and his own ideas. “For all seek their own [interests] not the things which are Jesus Christ's” (Phil. 2:21). On one occasion God spoke to a certain church and said, “In the *low place* there is unity where you can esteem others better than yourselves, where you can prefer others before yourselves” (Phil. 2:3; Rom.12:10). Can we see how humility promotes unity! How much unity is in our marriage?

**PRIDE** - resists the word of the Lord and is quick to call others “*out of order*” or “*false*” (Jer. 43:2). The proud men accused Jeremiah of prophesying falsely. Pride therefore destroys discernment. *Enlightenment* is a fruit of humility (Mt.11:25).

**PRIDE** - is the reason people think they are better than others (Deut.17:20). Pride is also the reason for bragging and boasting (Jer. 9:23-24). Pride (which is deception) makes people think they are extraordinary and unusual, perhaps because of success or some special gift or talent. But why should we look down on others? Everything we possess has been given to us by God (Jn. 3:27; 1 Cor. 4:7; Deut. 8:17-18). Even the Apostle Paul was vulnerable to pride, though he was Spirit-filled and had the *dead to sin* experience. (Compare Romans 6:6 with 2 Corinthians 12:7.)

**PRIDE** - makes people think they are infallible. Delusion and deception come from pride. Pride brings about the sin of overconfidence. I have heard people say they have never made a mistake with their spiritual gifts (gifts of prophesying or word of knowledge). But this is deception and pride! Our attitude should be, “Lord, it is so easy for my mind and emotions to distort what You are trying to say. Please overrule my humanness! I need You every moment, Lord!” (Jn. 5:19, 30).

**PRIDE** - is the opposite of love. Love is totally unselfish (1 Cor.13). But pride seeks its own interests—“What’s in this for me?” Pride only thinks of itself. ME! If pride is the opposite of love, then pride also genders hate.

**PRIDE** - is an enemy of God. Pride resists and opposes God. Pride defies God and the will of God. Pride is independent and alienates itself from God. Pride and a hardened heart go together. Whenever someone *hardens* his heart, it is because he has a *proud* heart. God hates pride, and so should we (Pro. 6:16-17; 8:13; 1 Jn. 2:16-17). God cannot bless a proud, hardened heart. Pain and suffering are for the purpose of destroying pride and hardness, so that God can bless us.

**PRIDE** - causes us *not* to have the victory over Satan, who is very proud. If we are like him and react as he does—we have no power over him. Humility—becoming like the Lamb—is the key to having authority over the Proud One. When a believer or preacher starts getting cocky, *he removes himself* from God’s protective canopy and Satan ensnares him, and he falls. Elijah was mocking the heathen priests of Baal, but there was still a queen to be dealt with. Satan worked through this woman to strike fear into Elijah’s heart so that he ran (1 Kg.18:27; 19:1-3; Prov.16:18; 18:12; 29:23). Read *James 4:6*.

**IS THERE ANY WONDER WHY GOD RESISTS THE PROUD? — PRIDE RESISTS HIM!**

## Lovers of Self

**“This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.  
For men shall be lovers of their own selves” - 2 Timothy 3:1-2**

All the sins mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 grow out of *self-love*—covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those who are good, traitors, headstrong, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God, and false spirituality. All of these are rooted in selfishness and self-will.

In our generation perilous times will come because men are lovers of their own selves. The days of Noah were just like today. They, too, were lovers of their own selves. *The exaltation of self* brought the world to corruption and the consequent flood.



## **P R I D E . . . (In Summary)**

- Is self-seeking.
- Looks down on others and disdains the opinions of others.
- Is rude and cynical. Makes man pretend to be something he is not.
- Puts man under undue strain while he is playing a role.
- Has an overwhelming sense of its own importance or greatness.
- Wants to get to the top and will step on others to get there.
- Resents correction or suggestions; therefore, is a lack of wisdom.
- Presumes to have the answers when he does not have them.
- Seeks for the praise of man, a name, a title, and publicity.
- Goes into intellectualism, uses huge, complicated words to inflate his ego.
- Is the reason for a fierce disposition: Is touchy and easily offended.
- Is at the bottom of many mental and emotional disorders, and even suicide.
- Makes it grievous to admit his faults or failures: Cannot say, "I'm sorry, I was wrong."
- Is a major reason for no peace: Is always upset or stewing about something.
- Makes one supersensitive to his own feelings, but insensitive to the feelings of others.
- Allures people into dream worlds, and to have unrealistic thoughts of self.
- Exalts itself: Wants to be distinguished, unexcelled, unequalled, and unique.
- Is at the root of certain kinds of fears and shyness: Will not allow self to be vulnerable.
- Is tormenting. Pride is *the source* of most turmoil and conflict in the soul.
- Makes a man complicated, over-technical, and confused, just like Satan.
- Is usually the greatest reason people cannot cope with life and others.
- Is the reason for deception and error (Obadiah 1:3)
- Makes people assume that they are infallible.
- Is at the bottom of rebellion, defiance, and vindictiveness.
- Is independent: Puts down others to lift up self.
- Is the main reason for arguments (Prov.13:10).
- Is the cause of disunity. "In the low place there is unity."
- Is the reason one cannot break and give in to God, the brethren, or others.
- Is the greatest reason we cannot get along with others . . . especially at home and in marriage.
- Is the reason people harden their hearts. Pride cherishes hurts. Pride resists God and others.
- Is the reason man brags, boasts, and thinks he is better than others.
- Resists the word of the Lord and is quick to call others *off* or *out of order*.
- Is quick to find fault with others, in order to exalt self.
- Is the opposite of love. Pride is therefore a form of hate.
- Causes us not to have the victory over Satan, who is very proud.
- PRIDE IS THE BIGGEST PROBLEM WE HAVE.

## **SECRETS TO STRENGTH**

The Jews looked for a Messiah who would deliver them from the yoke of Rome, rid them of their oppressors and subdue all of their enemies. But Christ came to deal with other kinds of enemies—enemies that were *much greater* than these. He came to defeat **the unseen forces** that motivate evil governments and fallen man. And He came to master and overcome a fallen nature which man could never conquer. Christ came to defeat a tremendous archangel (Satan) and all his evil angels and demons. And He came to defeat sin and a sinful nature. This required *unbelievable* strength! Spiritual battles require by far the most strength of all—strength against pressures of the mind, against sin, doubts, fears, temptations, and Satan.

Great spiritual strength, wisdom, and a pure heart are needed to defeat Satan. Let me try to illustrate: Satan was full of pride! To defeat pride and the Proud one, it required total humility and humiliation. Satan was self-willed. To defeat the Self-willed One, it demanded one who could say with His whole heart, “Not my will but thine be done.” To defeat bitterness, someone had to suffer tremendous injustices but then respond by saying, “Father forgive them.” To defeat self-pity, there had to be a man who could say, “Weep not for me but for yourselves and your children.”

Jesus defeated Satan on every point! He stripped Satan and all the evil spirits of their power, by *the way* He lived and died (Col. 2:15). Jesus died as a perfect Lamb—without bitterness. But remember, it was *not* the fact that Jesus died that defeated Satan. It was *the way* He died that defeated Satan. As a man, Jesus defeated the old sinful nature of man because He never yielded to sin (Read Rom. 8:3; Heb. 4:15; 2:14). Christ has completely won the victory for man, yet man must totally rely on Christ to gain this total victory. Christ longs to make known to us the secrets of His strength and victory, through His available grace (2 Tim. 2:1).

### **JESUS WAS THE STRONGEST MAN WHO EVER LIVED BECAUSE:**

- \* **He was the Most Humble.** Humility produces great inward peace. Satan cannot shake a man with peace. Rom.16:20
- \* **He had the Most Grace.** He was *full* of grace and truth because of His humility. Jn.1:14, Jas. 4:6, Prov. 3:34
- \* **He was the Most Wise.** He had divine perspective of people and situations and knew how to respond. Lk. 2:52
- \* **He was the Most Servantlike.** He had no *self-will* to be crossed. He was obedient unto death. Mk.10:42-45; Phil. 2:8
- \* **He was the Most Unselfish.** He gave and gave without expecting back. (Love is totally unselfish.) Lk.17:7-10
- \* **He was the Most Lamblike.** He had no retaliation or bitterness and committed injustices to His Father. 1 Pet. 2:23
- \* **He was the Most Dependent.** Dependent people are strengthened by God, and do not fail. Jn. 5:19; 5:30.
- \* **He was the Most Anointed.** He loved righteousness and hated wickedness. He was the Anointed One of Psalm 45:7.

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| <p><b>SATAN</b><br/>(<i>Pride</i>)<br/><i>Torment</i><br/>Hate . . . . . Love<br/>A lord . . . . . A servant<br/>Self-willed. . . . . Surrendered will<br/>Offended-hard. . . . . Broken-mellow<br/>Vengeful-bitter. . . . . A Sweet Lamb<br/>Self-centered. . . . . Others-centered</p> <p><b>5 Self-Assertions</b><br/><b>Isaiah 14:12-14)</b><br/><i>I will</i> ascend into heaven. . . . . Made Himself of no reputation<br/><i>I will</i> exalt my throne. . . . . Took on a servant’s form<br/><i>I will</i> sit upon the mount. . . . . Made like an ordinary man<br/><i>I will</i> ascend above the clouds. . . . . He humbled Himself<br/><i>I will</i> be like the most high. . . . . Obedient unto death on the cross</p> | <p><b>JESUS</b><br/>(<i>Humility</i>)<br/><i>Peace</i><br/>Love<br/>A servant<br/>Surrendered will<br/>Broken-mellow<br/>A Sweet Lamb<br/>Others-centered</p> <p><b>5 Self-Abasements</b><br/><b>(Philippians 2:5-8)</b><br/>Made Himself of no reputation<br/>Took on a servant’s form<br/>Made like an ordinary man<br/>He humbled Himself<br/>Obedient unto death on the cross</p> |
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# ***BECOMING A SERVANT***

## **Key for Overcoming Self**

(Mk.10:42-45, 9:33-37). *Greatness* was on the minds of the disciples, even as it is on the minds of many today! The disciples were thinking of greatness in natural terms. They asked, “Lord, who is the greatest in the kingdom of God?” Jesus replied with some unexpected answers, and He used *two* things to illustrate greatness. He said—“Humble yourself as a *child!*” “Become the *servant* of all!”

### **Servanthood is Often Disdained**

The concept of being a servant is generally looked down upon in the American society. The average working man does not like to think of himself as a servant to his employer. Most managers do not want to be servants to the laboring man. Union officials do not want to be servants to the managing class. Many blacks who have struggled for recognition do not want to be a household servant or take subordinate jobs. They would rather be teachers, doctors, lawyers, or administrators. This is true of most people. The concept of *servicing* is generally looked upon disdainfully in the world. The world in general wants a position, a title, a great name, a mansion, a fancy car, a servant and someone to wait upon them. Yet Jesus taught that this is the exact opposite of greatness in His kingdom. “*He that is great shall be servant of all.*” Politicians, newsmen, and even some ministers, in many instances are set up as celebrities, paid huge salaries, and are almost unapproachable.

### **Yet Servanthood Exalts Us**

History bears it out (as well as God’s Word) that the ones who are the greatest are those who *serve* the most! Albert Schweitzer left his beloved homeland to go to Africa to devote himself to the service of mankind. He spent his whole life easing the misery of fallen humanity. Albert Schweitzer is considered one of the greatest men of his time. J. Hudson Taylor and many others like him were great servants, and in being great servants, were great people. Even in the secular world, inventors like Edison, Ford and others became great as they sought to serve humanity with their inventions. Henry Ford, for example, wanted to bring cheap transportation to the common man; and the more he served, the greater he became. Thomas Edison wanted to serve people with the electrical appliances he invented, and the more he served, the more he grew.

The Japanese have a *servant mentality*, and they are blessed because of it. (Any part of the Word of God that is obeyed brings blessing, whether obeyed by sinner or saint). The managers are programmed to be servants of the workers. In humility they say to their workers, “We are in this together, we’re a team, please help us! We don’t know all there is to know about production and procedures. Please give us suggestions and help us to do a better job!” Because of this attitude, the average auto worker in Japan gives between eighteen to nineteen suggestions per year, and about eighty percent of these are used. But in America this is not so! The Japanese, because of their servant mentality, are outdoing the proud Americans in their auto industry. In 1980, for example, America was surpassed by Japan in total output of autos. The management in America has not come across as a servant, nor does it greatly encourage suggestions. It is not nearly as willing to listen to new ideas, to learn or to be taught! The attitude of a teachable, humble servant is not in American management. Pride rules instead! “*This is the way we do it! We know what we are doing, like it or leave!*” Because of this the average auto worker only offers about two suggestions a year, and only half of these are used. What is needed in America is managers who are *servants* to their workers. (Pat Robertson, CBN president).

One well-known American businessman learned to be a servant late in life when he was at death’s door. John D. Rockefeller became a millionaire by means of *monopolizing* the early oil industry in America. Rockefeller was not a servant, he was a miser. But with all his fortunes, he became gravely ill and was almost to the point of death at only age 50. Mr. Rockefeller’s tight hand loosened, and he started giving his fortunes to hospitals, schools, and to other worthy causes. Something remarkable began to take place in his soul and body. His health started to return. In fact, he so fully recovered that he went on to live to the ripe old age of 98. The blessings of Isaiah 58:7-8 became a reality in his life! By becoming *a servant* to others instead of a hoarder, a metamorphosis took place in his soul. The healing that took place in his soul, healed his body as well (Prov. 4:20-22; 11:24-25).

## KEY TO HARMONY IN MARRIAGE

The key to getting along with our mate (and with others in general), and the key to gaining victory over the self-centered life is developing the heart of a *servant*! Jesus was the greatest servant of all time. He was totally unselfish! (Genuine love is unselfish - 1 Cor.13:4-7.) Jesus was easy to get along with. He was never moody, easily offended, or demanding. He never insisted on having His own way. Jesus was understanding and forgiving, and He held no bitterness. A servant does not struggle with these sicknesses in his heart. Let us try to understand why!

*Selfishness* is the main reason people cannot get along or cope. A servant, however, exhibits the very opposite of selfishness. A servant is devoted to the welfare and needs of another, not his own. In almost every marriage that fails, the root of the problem has been the absence of a servant's heart . . . or to put it in other words—*selfishness*. Marriage cannot possibly work until a man and woman have learned to be servants. A marriage cannot grow until two people are growing *spiritually* and becoming like the Unselfish One. Therefore, we should seek God for a *growing relationship* in our marriage—we should seek to have the heart of a servant!

LISTEN TO THE WORDS OF JESUS , THE GREATEST SERVANT OF ALL TIME!

*(Self-denial is at the very heart of Christianity. Note how unselfish and giving Christ is!)*

- **“It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). “Weep not for me” (Luke 23:28).**
  - **“I did not come to be ministered unto, but to minister, and give my life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).**
  - **“I came not to do my own will, but the will of Him who sent me” (John 6:38).**
  - **“Not my will but thine be done” (Matt. 26:29, Luke 22:42).**
  - **“My Father loveth me because I lay down my life” (John 10:17).**
  - **“He that shall lose his life shall find it” (Matt.16:24-25).**
  - **“Father forgive them for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).** (Asking mercy for persecutors)
  - **“If therefore ye seek me, let these go their way” (John 18:8).** (Protecting His disciples)
  - **“Then said he to the disciple, Behold thy mother” (John 19:27).** (Asking John to take care of His mother)
- Jesus constantly thought of others. As He was dying upon the cross, He was thinking of His mother's welfare.

Not long ago a secular survey showed that the happiest people are those who take time helping and caring for others. The same survey showed that selfish people (people who are only looking out for themselves and are unwilling to be inconvenienced by others) are almost *never* happy. The paradox is that selfish people are the ones who are *trying the hardest* to be happy. Divine order *first* commands, “Give, and it shall be given unto you” (Lk. 6:38).

### THE SELF SYNDROME

- You have failed to meet MY needs and expectations!
- You have not satisfied ME or my desires!
- You are insensitive to ME! You don't care!
- I have to think of MY happiness!
- I owe it to myself. I deserve something better.
- I have my rights. I don't have to put up with this!
- I can't take anymore. I am leaving.

None of these are found in the heart of a servant. Servants are more concerned about the needs of others than their own needs.

The very heart of Christianity is a denial of self, and not doing my own will (Rom.15:1-3).

ATTITUDES OF SELFISHNESS - Meet my needs, wait on me, take care of me, be sensitive to me, understand me, fulfill my expectations and desires. But one should ask himself this question—How sensitive have I been to the needs of my spouse? Have I tried to understand and meet his or her needs? (Mt. 7:12). The *attitude* of a selfish mate is something like this: “I got married so that all *my* needs could be fulfilled! You have failed to meet my needs. I am quitting.” This is so typical of the world's love. “I love you as long as you make me happy! If not, I quit!”

## DEVELOPING THE HEART OF A SERVANT IS THE KEY TO:

- Getting along with our companion.
- Getting along with others.
- Gaining the victory over self.
- Having the presence of the Lord.
- Becoming like the Lord.
- Mental, emotional, and spiritual health.

Jesus is a servant of all servants.  
He walks with the lowly, for He is lowly.  
Jesus walks with those who are like Himself.

## MARKS OF A SERVANT

**1.) A SERVANT IS** unselfish, someone who is devoted to the welfare and needs of others. He is not all taken up with his own life and interests, but lives to serve others as well. Therefore, a servant is not self-willed. The attitude of our Lord Jesus Christ, the greatest servant of all time was, “Not my will but thine be done.” It was not, “Meet my needs” or “Wait on me” but rather, “I came to serve, and give my life a ransom for many” (Mk.10:45).

**2.) A SERVANT IS** not proud, but possesses humility. Therefore a servant is not easily offended or angry. As we have repeatedly said—people with inflated egos have terrific tempers. Humble people have sweeter dispositions; they are not *complicated* or always getting hurt. Therefore a servant has peace. A servant does not have lofty opinions of himself; thus, he does not become angry when he is not *recognized* (Rom.12:3; Col. 3:22-24). He is just there to help, and to seek the honor of the One he serves. Jesus was “meek and lowly in heart” and had rest in His soul. Likewise, the true servant is meek and humble and has rest in his soul too. (See Matthew 11:28-29.)

**3.) A SERVANT IS** not demanding, or requiring equal rights. Jesus never insisted on justice for Himself, or His *fair share* . . . nor did He require anyone to wait on Him, meet His needs or give Him special attention. Instead, His attitude was, “Blessed are the poor in spirit” which literally means—“Blessed are the bankrupt” (Mt. 5:3). A real servant is poor in spirit. He does not insist on his rights, nor does he assert that he deserves *more of this, better of that, or equality*. Have you noticed that people who are always demanding their rights are never happy? This is the way of the world, and it is a violation of the laws of the kingdom of God. Only the poor in spirit have the realities of the kingdom life. (The kingdom life is peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.) Only a true servant has this kind of contentment.

**4.) A SERVANT HAS** joy. Those who serve, those who are *givers*, are the ones with true joy. Jesus is a servant. He has great joy, and He gives this joy to true servants (Jn.15:11; Prov.11:24). Men who hoard or withhold always come to poverty of spirit. Joy is for *givers and servers*. Joy is reserved for those who do God’s will, not their own (Mt. 25:21,23).

**5.) A SERVANT IS** not independent. He does not have the attitude, “No one tells me what to do—I do not need you or anyone else; I can make it on my own!” Nor does a servant use that irresponsible saying—“I don’t have to put up with this!” There are many things in life that we *do* have to put up with. Paul said, “*I endure all things for the elect’s sake*” (2 Tim. 2:10). Paul put up with delays, disappointments, criticism, and some nasty looks. When life gets rough, a true servant remains loyal and continues to plod on. A true servant is there to serve—not for what he can get for himself. In First Corinthians 9:19, Paul said, “I became the servant of all . . . that I might save some.” Paul was saying, “I put up with inconveniences, I adjust myself to all men, I defer to the wishes of others so that some might be saved.” Can we be a true soul-winner and not be a servant?

**6.) A SERVANT IS** one with no reputation to defend. A servant has no spirit of competition. He seeks to strengthen and encourage his brethren everywhere, yet is content to remain out of the picture. Jesus never wanted a worldly reputation (Phil. 2:6-8). He never tried to make a great name for Himself. Unfortunately some preachers do! The Lord never struggled with identity or individuality problems. His identity was in another—in His Father. True identity is the identify we find in God. Identity is discovered as we become a servant, and as we realize we were made for another (Rev. 4:11).

A servant is *real*. He is not playing a role or putting on a mask. Jesus taught that by losing our lives (our identity and individuality) we would find them (Mt.16:25). Also, in marriage we need to lose our identity and be willing to blend into a unique oneness with our companion.

**7.) A SERVANT** will do over and above his duty without expecting a *thank you*, or a pat on the back in return. Jesus teaches us to go the extra mile and then not to think that we have done anything extraordinary. Practicing the precepts of Luke 17:7-10 helps to keep bitterness out of our heart. So much depends upon our *outlook and response* to matters. There will be occasions in our life when we are unthanked, unappreciated, unrewarded, and unrecognized for all our hard work, even by other Christians and those who are over us in the Lord. We will gain a mighty victory by adopting the attitude of Colossians 3:22-24, which says in effect: “*I am not working for man. I did all of this for the Lord. My reward will come from Him.*” And remember, “The Lord who sees in secret will reward you openly” (Matt. 6:4, 6, 18). Let us make sure we are working for God, not for man.

**8.) A SERVANT IS** the one who has God’s presence (Isa. 57:15). God *dwells* with those who are of a humble and contrite spirit—those who possess the spirit of a servant. God walks with the lowly servant for God Himself is a servant! A *servant* ranks the highest in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 20:26-28). Every one who truly walks in the steps of the Master will *become* servant-like, and in becoming servant-like, will become great in *His* sight.

**The heart of Christianity is a denial of self—not doing my own will.**

**Even Christ did not please Himself. (Romans 15:1-3)**

**By love we should serve one another. (Galatians 5:13)**

## **A Servant's Heart**

**The true test of a servant is  
if I act like one  
when I am treated like one.**

**GOD WALKS WITH SERVANTS. HE HIMSELF IS A SERVANT.**

# ***BECOMING CHILDLIKE***

## **Another Key to Greatness**

Whenever Jesus spoke of greatness, He narrowed it down to one essential thing—*Humility!* He used two object lessons to illustrate humility—a **little child** and a **servant**. Both have the quality of humility, and therefore, greatness! Jesus was asked, “Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?” His unexpected answer was, “Whosoever shall humble himself as a little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” Of course, we are not referring to being *childish*, but the quality of *childlikeness* (cf. 1 Cor.14:20).

**Little Children have three desirable qualities that we need in order to excel in the kingdom. A child is:**

|                 |                  |                      |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Trusting</b> | <b>Teachable</b> | <b>Unpretentious</b> |
|-----------------|------------------|----------------------|

**TRUSTING** - We tend not to *trust* as we get older. We lose that childlike quality. A child does not have suspicions, reasonings, and questionings. He simply *accepts* what he is told. He relies implicitly on his mother to feed him what is good. He has no preconceived fears of being poisoned. We later lose that quality of trust because we have become hardened by life, by pride, and by sin. Yet, we cannot properly love if we do not trust. God wants to restore this childlike quality of trust (Prov. 3:5-6).

**TEACHABLE** - A child has an immense appetite and capacity for learning. A child has an open, enquiring mind, and this is very desirable (Prov. 2:1-10). He is pliable, interested, questioning and experimenting all the time. Openness of spirit is a great capacity God can use. God can do very little with people whose minds are closed and hardened. *Hunger* for the Word of God is sown as we spend time waiting upon God, in His presence. Hunger is a divine gift of grace. Only God can plant it there! Our part is to wait before Him and pray, “Lord, Draw me!” (Song of Solomon 1:4).

**UNPRETENTIOUS** - (Real). A child is himself. He is not trying to put on a facade. A child likes you for what you are. He does not put people into social ranks or classes. He does not care what position you hold. He has no prejudice. He accepts people for who they are, not for what he can get out of them. A child is not self-conscious in a sense, for he states what is on his mind and has no guile.

As adults, our tendency is to be a *pretender*. We program ourselves to be tough, to look successful, to appear to have everything under control, and to exhibit no weaknesses. Hollywood helps to promote this too. But this is all false! The young people try to look *cool*, wear certain kinds of clothes, and talk a certain way. But this is putting on a mask and playing a role. No one wearing a mask or playing a role is truly great. Little children are just themselves, they are *real*. (Some of the above are quotes from CBN President, Pat Robertson).

“Except ye be converted and become as little children” (Mt.18:3). True Christianity requires us to be real! Being in the light demands an honesty to confess that we have weaknesses, and that we cannot make it on our own. There is no entry into heaven without childlike faith, until one accepts the simple gospel message that Jesus died for our pardon! But also there can be no *growth* in our Christian life without *continuing* to humble ourselves as a little child. “Whosoever shall humble himself shall be exalted.” For this very reason it is the mercy of God that He allows us to have a crisis or problem that we cannot solve on our own, so that we have to humble ourselves to ask others and God for help. Humbling ourselves opens the door for new life-changing and redeeming *grace* to be poured into our lives.

The qualities of those who are the greatest in the kingdom of God are found in *servants* and *little children*. Becoming childlike and a servant are keys for overcoming the self-centered life. By nature we are not childlike, we are pretenders. By nature we are not servants, we are *lords* who are running our own lives.

**“In malice be [like] children, but in understanding be men” (1 Corinthians 14:20).**

**Children have not been hardened by pride or sin. We must return to being childlike.**

\* \* \* \* \*

## SUMMARY

| <b>A SERVANT</b>  | <b>A LITTLE CHILD</b>  |
|---|--|
| Is Unselfish<br>Devoted to others, not self<br>Not self-willed<br>Humble, not easily offended<br>Of a sweet disposition<br>Uncomplicated, has peace<br>Unrequiring of recognition<br>Not demanding of attention<br>Does not require equal rights<br>Not insistent upon something better<br>Has joy from giving and serving<br>Is content<br>Not independent, but responsible<br>Will put up with inconveniences<br>Has no reputation to defend<br>Will adjust to others, defer<br>Has no spirit of competition<br>Loses his life (identity)<br>Goes second mile, expects nothing back<br>Willing to stay out of the picture<br>Has God’s presence.<br>Is the greatest in the kingdom of God | Is Trusting<br>Accepting<br>Not suspicious<br>Not devious<br>Believing<br>Unchallenging, yielding<br>Not hardened by pride and sin<br>Teachable, unresisting<br>Open-minded<br>Hungry to learn<br>Pliable<br>Unpretentious<br>Is himself, real<br>Guileless<br>Has no prejudice<br>Without malice<br>Has pure motives<br>Does not put people into classes<br>Uncomplicated<br>Simple<br>Not contradictory<br>Is the greatest in the kingdom of God |

The spirit of a **little child** and the spirit of a **servant** have one thing in common. Both have the quality of *humility*. God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble. Therefore the servant and the childlike receive the most grace and become the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. These will be the closest to Jesus in heaven. Servants and children possess qualities we should seek and covet. To be Christ’s Bride, we need a childlike spirit and the spirit of a servant. Christ possessed both of these in His life, and He looks for those who are willing to be made compatible with Himself.



## THE NEED FOR A RENEWED MIND

(Romans 8:6-7). Our natural mind is an enemy of God. It always opposes what God is saying. Isaiah 55:8-9 tells us that our *thoughts* are not God's thoughts. Therefore, neither are our *ways* His ways. The natural human mind is a *center* of man's problems. The nations ACT the way they do because of what they are THINKING! Thus, for God to revolutionize an individual or a nation, He first has to change the mind! As God renews and changes our minds, we will be transformed. Romans 12:2 is a key verse for life.

### Our mind needs to be changed:

- About how we view others.
- About how we view ourselves.
- About how we view the Lord.
- About how we view life situations.

Often the purpose of a trial is to mellow us and cause us to see something we were not able to see before. When we begin to SEE, we will be transformed! (Read Job 42:1-6)

**The Key—A renewed mind transforms our nature. Attitudes and dispositions change as God is able to get through to us on something we were not seeing before. May God open our eyes.**

Paul says we are battling against *imaginings* (reasonings), and then he tells us that every *thought* must be brought into subjection. The battle is with what we are *thinking* (2 Cor.10:4-5). Nearly all of our problems go back to an *idea*, something that was **sown** in our hearts. Over the years that seed has grown, and a mentality has developed. Many spiritual bondages are the outgrowth of wrong ideas that were sown, which are now producing the wrong fruit in our lives (Matt.15:3; 3:10). An idea can be a *spirit*. Ideas have a tremendous spiritual power and they can control us and the way we live. When you see a man with peculiar behavior or a strange life-style, you can be sure that it goes back to something peculiar that he is *thinking*.

The human natural mind is deluded and deceived, but the Word of God is light, and this light *reveals* and *destroys* our enemy (Psa.119:130). Satan has strongholds in our lives where he is *well hidden*, but when he is uncovered he wilts and flees away! Wisdom from the Word of God can amazingly wash away our uncleanness and ignorance (Eph. 5:26-27). Thus, we should ask God to thoroughly wash us with the pure water of His Word.

### What we believe is important because:

- An idea causes us to live a certain way—It develops a life-style.
- It produces fruit in our lives—either the fruit of the Spirit or the works of the flesh.
- An idea takes us somewhere—either into God's purposes or away from them.
- It will affect our eternity.

*Therefore it is folly to say, "It doesn't matter what you believe, as long as we love one another."*

Words are important! They are more than just sounds or inflections. Words are *spirit*. There is a tremendous spiritual power released from the tongue—either of good or of evil. Jesus said in John 6:63, "The words that I speak unto you are *spirit* and they are *life*." And in John 15:3, "Now are you *clean* through the words I have spoken unto you." Words shape our life and character. Words will either bring life or death because they are *spirit* (Prov.18:21). Wrong words can be cancerous to our spirit and they can turn us away from God, even as Eve was infected and turned aside (2 Tim. 2:17). If the right words can make us clean (Jn. 15:3) and bring life (Jn. 6:63), conversely the wrong words can make us unclean and bring death. It depends on *who* we are listening to. Satan ruined Eve with his tongue (2 Cor.11:3). Remember, the Serpent's power is in his *tongue*.

*People act wrong because they are thinking wrong!* "As a man thinketh, so is he" (Prov. 23:7). The nations live wrong because what they are *thinking* is twisted and perverse. We should not underestimate the power of the gospel light to overcome these dark spiritual powers that cloud the minds of men (Jn.1:5, Psa.119:130). May the Lord deliver us from every spirit that controls our minds, and thereby controls us.

## ***PROBLEMS WITH OUR HUMAN MIND***

**“Your thoughts are not my thoughts saith the Lord.” Isaiah 55:8-9**

We can be living in another world because of what we are thinking. Notions, delusions, and imaginations can cause a believer to dwell in a dream world and be out of touch with reality. Ask God to show you the spiritual *source* of what is guiding and directing you! Man's central nervous system is located in the mind. As God renews our minds, *thought patterns, emotions, nerves, movements, gestures and mannerisms* will be transformed to be like Christ's. God desires to make us majestic and comely for Himself. He intends His redemption to go *much* deeper than just forgiveness of sins. He would renew and redeem every part of us—spirit, soul, body and mind.

**1.) Imaginations** - (things imagined to be true, that are not.) (2 Cor.10:4-5). People suffer *much* from what they imagine—fears of what will happen in the future, fears of what others are saying or thinking, etc. Jacob was depressed and mourned for twenty-two years over the imagined death of his beloved son Joseph. Joseph was not dead. Contrary to what Jacob was *imagining*, Joseph was in Egypt being prepared to be a world-ruler! (Gen. 37:32-36). Numbers 5:14b gives an account of a spirit of jealousy coming upon a man because he *imagined* his wife had been unfaithful, but she had not! Imaginations invite the enemy in. Satan will toy with any weaknesses he can find. Ask God for grace over your imaginations.

**2.) Trying to figure everything out** - (Why? When? Where? How?) Entrust your future, your feelings, and the things that puzzle you, to God. You can frustrate yourself needlessly when you try to analyze how God is going to work out His plan for your life. Proverbs 23:4 commands us to cease from our own wisdom. The key is to *trust* in the Lord with our whole heart, without depending on our own understanding (Prov. 3:5-6). When we think we have everything figured out, that is the time to discard our own wisdom, for God has a totally different scheme in mind. When Joseph was seventeen years old, God showed him by a dream that he would have authority over his older brothers (Genesis 37). The details were scanty, however. God did not show him *when, where, or how*. If God had given him the details, it would have destroyed him. Let us trust God to show us what we *need* to know! The key is to *trust, not analyze*.

**Man has a great problem with an analyzing mind because he is used to making his own plans and decisions independently of God. When a man becomes a Christian, the momentum carries over. The new believer is not used to relying upon another for his decisions, plans and future, and therefore resorts to his own natural mind. The key is to learn to rely upon Another—God.**

**3.) Mental blindness** - (We can have a problem but be unaware of it.) All of us have blind spots. The problem is that we do not realize *where* we are blind. “*Every man* is right in his own eyes” (Prov. 21:2). Everyone thinks he is right, and that his way is right. Every man in the Bible had a problem in his life because of something he was blind to. James and John did not understand “what spirit they were of” (Lu. 9:54-55). Leviticus 4:2-3 mentions an anointed priest (a minister) who was sinning through ignorance—proving that a leader can be *anointed* but still be blind or in error in certain areas of truth. The Laodicean believers thought they *had it all* but God said they were “poor, blind and naked” (Rev. 3:17). Job was exhorted to pray for his self-blindness in Job 34:32. Some believers go to their graves never learning what God was trying to show them. Ask God to give you a pliable spirit. God is able to open up our minds to understanding (cf. Lu. 24:45).

**4.) Meditating on disagreeable things** - (negative, fearful, violent, retaliatory thoughts.) Our mind is composed of three things—*brain cells, blood, and spirit*. Therefore what we choose to meditate upon affects our body, soul and spirit. Evil meditations stimulate the nervous system, glands, and organs, causing them to overreact, thus shooting excessive secretions into the blood stream, making us sick, physically and spiritually.

These unsavory thoughts must be *reversed* because they can literally poison our spirit, soul, and body. Learn to refuse to *meditate* on evil, or what someone has done to hurt you. Pray for them. First Peter 1:13 commands us to “gird up the loins of our mind,” implying that it is in our power to turn thoughts on or off. Paul tells us what we should choose to meditate upon (Phil. 4:8). Sometimes we cannot be healed from a sickness *until we reverse something* that is unbecoming to our soul (criticism, envy, bitterness, fear).

**5.) A haughty mind** - (a mind that meditates lofty thoughts about itself.) Romans 12:3 cautions the believer against thinking too highly about himself. The temptation to think that we are special or “extraordinary” is ever present, especially when one has unusual gifts or power from God (2 Cor. 12:7, Gal. 6:3, Obad. 1:3, Deut. 17:18). A haughty mind opens the door to fantasy, deception, and delusion. Peter exhorts each believer to be *clothed with humility* (1 Pet. 5:5). Let us pray that our minds and thoughts would be clothed with this covering of humility.

**6.) Living in the past** - (successes or failures.) Living in the past hinders our growth (Ecc. 7:10). When our minds always revert back to *yesterdays* the tendency is for us *not* to seek God for a fresh touch from Him today. Christians must live with an ever-present sense of expectancy—that God has something new to say to us *today!* New encounters and fresh experiences with God are needed *today!* Paul exhorts us to forget the things which are behind and to lay hold of what is set before us (Phil. 3:13-14). The Israelites failed because they continually desired to return to the place they had come from—Egypt. Missionaries sometimes leave the field prematurely because they *long* for their homeland; but in doing so, they forfeit God's plan for their life (Heb. 11:15). Forget the *good old days*. God has something better for us *today* (Prov. 4:18).

God also wants His people to forget about the hurts and injustices of the past. One of the greatest marks of maturity is the capacity to understand that injustices are working on our behalf to promote us (Gen. 50:20). Joseph refused to be absorbed with the numerous injuries of his past! He was able to discern and recognize that injuries and injustices only serve as instruments to move us closer to the throne. Remember, there is a *disguised blessing* in every injustice if we keep our spirit right. Also, we should ask God for grace to *forget* past failures and sins. Accept full pardon and forgiveness from Christ (Heb. 7:25). And we must not continue to remind our spouses of past failures and sins either.

**7.) Depression** - (A gloom that overshadows the mind.) Depression can make life's outlook appear dismal or even hopeless. Our generation is a depressed generation! On one occasion Job was so depressed that he said, “Mine eye shall no more see good” (Job 7:7). Job thought his situation was hopeless and that he would never be happy again. He was wrong! There are several major causes for depression. Depression was understandable in Job's case. He had lost his family and business, and his reputation was ruined. Close friends misunderstood him, and he was deathly sick. Likewise, young Joseph had been imprisoned for a crime of which he was innocent. Despondencies such as these are understandable. And there are times in the dealings of God when we will experience discouragement and periods of depression. But there are many other forms of depression from which the Holy Spirit yearns to free us!

*There is a heaviness, a gloominess, that is not of God. It is something from which we should be delivered!* Our portion in life is victory, not discouragement and defeat. God desires to give us the garment of praise in exchange for the spirit of heaviness, and gladness instead of mourning (Isa. 61:3). God wants us to focus on *Him* and upon what He is saying, rather than zooming in upon the deplorable situations in the world or in the Church.

Depression also is connected with a *wrong perspective* of matters. God's perspective sets us free! The *truth* makes us free! Remember, the sun is always shining! Above the black clouds on a rainy, gloomy day, the sun is shining brilliantly! Depression is like a cloud of gloom that hangs over the mind, shadowing us from the light of God's presence and glory. Rebuke that dark cloud, and ask God to command His light to break through the *clouds of gloom*.

## Burnout

Burnout, depression, and emotional stresses usually stem from unresolved spiritual conflicts in the heart, rather than from a hectic crowded schedule. *Unforgiveness, guilt, fears*, and other unbefitting maladies deplete the soul and body of energy and reserve. If these are prolonged for any great length of time there will be severe exhaustion or even a breakdown. Many problems in the body are caused by problems in the soul. These are called *psychosomatic*. And because these are spiritual problems, I believe the Church should have the answers. The medical world does not have any lasting answers!

The medical world describes clinical depression as “*unexpressed, suppressed anger*.” Therefore the world encourages man to vent his wrath and demand his rights in order not to allow pressures to be bottled up within. But neither is this the answer! For every time the old nature is exercised, he only becomes stronger. A better approach to the problem is *first* to understand what is at the bottom of our anger. Anger for example, is kindled within when our *rights* are not surrendered to God and something we clutch to is tampered with. Also *expectations* tremendously determine whether we have peace or depression. Recently a professional ball player killed himself because of one wrong pitch he threw several years ago that ruined his hopes of getting into the world series. Consequently he had suffered from acute depression for three years and was no longer able to cope. This is the reason we should never concentrate all of our hopes and expectations on *a career, an endeavor, a business, or a person* but rather upon things eternal, and upon the One who will never let us down (Psa. 62:5).

I know a godly woman who lost both of her parents within the space of one year. She had been very close to her father and mother, and the grief she felt at her loss became overwhelming. During these bouts with grief and sadness, God spoke to her and said, “This is not glorifying to Me! Give Me your sorrows; I have already borne them!” The Lord gave her a special verse of scripture from Isaiah 53:4 which reads—“Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows.” God revealed to her in a new and vivid way, that Christ not only died for our sins and sicknesses, but also for our *sorrows and heartaches*. (As Christians we should know the things that have been freely given to us from Christ! - 1 Cor. 2:12).

God does not want us to bear *any* unnecessary sorrows or burdens! No, not even bereavement! Christ has provided a means for us to *release* our feelings and heartaches so that we are not subjected to their bondage all of our lives. And when Mrs. Audrey Bailey began to feel overwhelmed with bereavement, she went into her room, got down on her knees and started rolling off all of her sorrows on to Jesus. This took some effort and *persistence*. But as she repeated this time after time, the victory was gained and she was completely freed from sorrow. The truth is—we cannot rid ourselves of any of these feelings in our own strength. Keep giving them to Jesus—and be free! He has already borne them (1 Pet. 5:7).

### *A Few Helps for Depression*

- Forgiveness
- Right Expectations
- Humility
- New Promises
- Right Confession
- Thankfulness
- Surrendered Rights
- Joy
- Deliverance
- Praying in the Spirit

Let's consider these now on pages 28-29.

As previously mentioned, there are many *causes* of depression. If you suffer from depression or emotional disorders, I would suggest that you go to God and to anointed men and women of God for the answers, not to a psychiatrist. God alone knows what our real problems are. Diagnosis is difficult! It is often hit and miss with doctors. But even if their diagnosis is correct—it is God and God alone who has the only real solution. He alone has the answers and wants to show us what to do. Listed below are a few general guidelines for winning the victory over depression. (See pages at the back also.)

### ***A FEW HELPS FOR DEPRESSION***

- **Forgiveness.** Grudges drain our emotions and nervous system and can bring on depression. Forgiveness literally saves us from the pit of depression. Forgiveness must become the very essence of our nature—it is God's. The very basis of Christianity is forgiveness. Where would we be if God had not forgiven us? Forgiveness, however, is not a feeling, it is an act of the will. Yet we must rely entirely on God's grace (enablement) for this ability to forgive. Pray it through!

- **Expectations.** We should never place all our hope in temporal things or we will be disappointed, or even devastated. Know the Word of God in order to understand what should be the object of your hopes and expectations.

- **Humility.** Humility sets man free from depression. Humility keeps a man from hardening his heart and becoming bitter. Humility and a broken spirit will also release us from the bondage of being supersensitive. When hardness and resentment are cured, other inner turmoils will go . . . along with the depression.

- **New promises.** Everyone needs something new for which to hope. Hope lifts us beyond our present circumstances. One time Elijah was so depressed that even a visitation from angels failed to console him (see 1 Kg. 19:4-8). The only thing that could rescue him from his despondency was a *new vision*. God sent him to the Mount of God to speak to him. When David was distressed, he encouraged himself in the Lord (1 Sam. 30:6).

- **Right confession.** (Rev. 12:11) Satan is overcome by the word of our testimony. Never rehearse what the enemy is saying and never agree with him, or you will strengthen him against yourself. Discouragement is the direct result of agreeing with the enemy instead of agreeing with God. Thus, always side with what God is saying about your situation.

- **Thankfulness.** Thankfulness turns a disaster into victory. When we are thankful, we have the victory. Remember, we do not even deserve what we already have, and we should never feel that we deserve something *more* or something *better*. A thankful man keeps his spirit free from depression. Depression thrives in the one who is unthankful for his circumstances.

- **Surrendered rights.** If depression is *suppressed anger*, and if anger is the result of violated rights, then the key to getting the victory is surrendering our rights and preferences to God. Let us give Him our rights—our home, our car, our clothes, our future, and even our right to be understood. What we surrender to God becomes His responsibility.

- **Joy.** Joy is purifying and healing to the soul. It is our strength (Neh. 8:10, Prov. 17:22). If depression is caused by the absence of joy, then a new baptism of joy is the remedy for depression. Joy cleanses the heart of hurts, grudges and other ill-feelings. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23). It *grows* as we continue to walk with God.

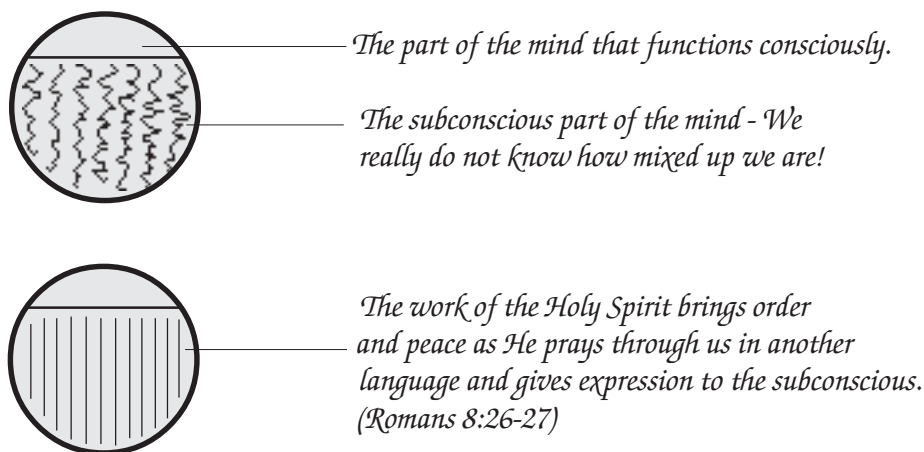
- **Deliverance.** Depression, along with many other emotional problems, is often the result of responding the wrong way to an injury. Depression, and the propensity to depression, could also be an inherited weakness. Whatever the cause or contributing causes, there could be a long-standing bondage that only an *act of deliverance* from God could remedy.

There was a young man in a deliverance service who had a powerful spirit of depression afflicting him. God described this afflicting spirit by a vision He gave to several of the ministers. This spirit of depression was like a mighty oak tree that had grown over the years in this young man. It had become bigger and bigger, stronger and stronger. Every time the young man and others had prayed against this depression, it was as though lumberjacks were hewing away at the bottom of this mighty tree. Now, the tree was ready to fall. All the ministers began to pray together and took the final swings. The tree came down! The depression began to lose its grip, and the man started to recover.

(Matt. 3:10, 15:13). “Now is the axe laid to the root of the tree; every tree which beareth not good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire.” There are growths in our inner life which must be hewn down by prayer and the Word of God. These are not symbolic—these trees and growths are very real. But even when a “tree” has been cut down or there has been a deliverance, still there is a stump, and it could grow back again! The question then arises—What climate allowed this *tree* to flourish so well? Why was this tree there to begin with? Therefore even after a deliverance, if the root of the problem is not remedied, it will grow back again. Given the right climate and nourishment, it will grow back. Therefore God must continue to deal with the roots in the heart.

• **Praying in the Spirit.** God has given His Church a marvelous gift that many believers still have little knowledge of. God has given His people the ability to speak in a supernatural language in order to better communicate with Himself. This gift also enables the believer to give expression to inner turmoils and have an outlet for frustrations, which by our human mind alone we could never do. The Apostle Paul had this gift, as also did all of his churches. Paul said that praying in another tongue edified [or built him up] (1 Cor. 14:4, 14:14, 14:18, Rom. 8:26-27). The diagram below helps to explain this:

### The Mind



The conscious thoughts are only a little of the subconscious action that reaches the mind. We know something is wrong—we feel frustrated, anxious or depressed, without being able to put our finger on our problem.

By praying in tongues, the Holy Spirit gives expression of the subconscious, and as a result brings tranquility from inner turmoils (Rom. 8:26-27). We often do not know how to pray, but the Holy Spirit prays through us and knows exactly what the needs are and how to pray for them.

As the Holy Spirit ministers healing to the *subconscious*, the conscious mind is also cleared of chaos and turmoil; hence, as sickness is so influenced by the thought-life, it is conceivable that a Spirit-filled, tongues-speaking believer should be far more free from worry, frustrations and sickness. Therefore exercise the ability to speak in tongues and bring healing to the soul, spirit, mind and body. (Diagram and exhortation by Brian J. Bailey)

**8.) Wrong concepts -** (About God, About Others, About Ourselves) Sometimes people who become our best friends were at one time our worst enemies because of an *idea* they had about us, or an *idea* we had about them. Imaginations and prejudice are wedges that divide people. “Ye were sometime foreigners and enemies in your mind yet now are reconciled” (Col.1:21). “*Enemies in your mind.*” At one time all of us were enemies of God because of thoughts we had about Him. But when we had a glimpse of His loveliness, our mind and attitude changed and we were reconciled to Him.

**WE HAVE PRECONCEIVED IDEAS WE MUST OVERCOME!**  
**(About God, Others, and Ourselves)**

- **About God** - One reason we are not like the Lord is because we do not see Him as He really is (1 Jn. 3:2). How can we be conformed to the image of the Son if we do not know what He is like, or what to pattern ourselves after? If our concept of God is that of a hard taskmaster, we are going to be hard, and in turn be hard with others. This mentality induces one to see only the scriptures that portray God as judge, but to gloss over the many other verses that reveal His mercy and graciousness. Wrong concepts throw a wrong slant on all the rest of the scriptures.

- **About Others** - How many times has God had to change our mind's about people! We are so rough and so critical of others because we do not understand them or see them as God does. If we could understand why people act the way they do, I am sure we would be much more tolerant and merciful to them. A changed mind changes our whole attitude and disposition. *A renewed mind is a vital key to a changed nature* (Rom.12:2).

- **About Ourselves** - How God sees us is usually very different from the way we see ourselves. Paul prayed to know himself, even as God knew him (1 Cor. 13:12). Our opinion of ourselves is usually not God's opinion. Our opinion of ourselves could be too low or too high. Sometimes a believer is confused and acts in a wrong manner because he is trying to **be** something that God has not asked him to be. When we try to **do** and **be** something God did not intend for us, there will be turmoil and confusion. Ask God to show you what *particular* function you have in His Body.

**KNOW YOUR LIMITATIONS!—Do not try to BE everything, KNOW everything, or DO everything! We are only a part of Christ's body. Every part is important, but different. Every one of us is called to a particular function in His body, and we should have an understanding from God what our particular function is. God only gives us grace (divine enablement) to function in the particular calling He has chosen for us. When a believer goes beyond God's will and calling, there is no grace, and he fails miserably. For example: When a man is called to be an evangelist, but he tries to be a pastor, he will miserably fail!**

**9.) Lack of concentration** - This may be for several reasons: 1.) It could be from fatigue. 2.) It might be from having too much on our mind. 3.) Maybe it is from a lack of discipline that our mind wanders. The mind needs rest, even more than the body. We should be careful to get enough rest, and be sure we are rolling off all of our cares and worries onto the Lord. *It is spiritual to take care of our health!* If we do not take care of our bodies, Satan will attack us when we are weary and worn down. Sometimes getting out and doing something *physical* will take our minds off our cares, and this can help throw off depression. Taking a brisk walk sends fresh oxygen to stimulate our brain. Oxygen is life!

Martin Luther was hidden away in a monastery and was suffering from the *contradiction* of doctrinal differences and religious strife. Luther had not been exercising or eating wisely. He was depressed and under spiritual attack from Satan and was about to have a nervous breakdown! (For Luther, rebuking Satan was not the only answer!) A close comrade told him to go out and work in the garden every day. With exercise, fresh air, and sunshine, he was able to turn his mind away from his cares. Luther's health had quite a turnaround—physically, mentally and spiritually. It probably helped with a problem of constipation, too.

Over-seriousness can be a problem, especially for devout young Christians. It is possible to *try too hard to keep your mind on the Lord!* On the job a Christian must keep his mind on his *work*. Our employer is paying us to do a job, not to be in another world. An overzealous Christian can try so hard to be spiritual and to keep his mind on the Lord, that he is unable to concentrate on his work, resulting in costly mistakes for his employer. Doing our job well is being spiritual!

Our call is to be married to the Lord. Marriage should be a relaxed relationship! What would you think of a wife who tried with an attitude of *strain* to love her husband all day long. This would not edify the husband, or her. Yet, this is exactly how it is when a believer tries *too hard* to love the Lord and keep his mind on Him all day long. It is unnatural and draining! God wants our relationship with Him to be relaxed and one of trust and faith.

**10.) Lack of peace** - It is *not* normal to have a troubled mind. When a Christian is continuously bothered with anxiety, there is a definite problem. God wants to give His people lasting solutions. He would deal with the *source* of everything in our life that is robbing us of peace and joy (Psa. 94:12-13). There are many reasons for the absence of peace in one's life, but so often the problem goes back to something unresolved in the heart (grudges, impure motives, unbelief, etc.). God does not want His people to go through life tormented. This thought will continue to be developed throughout the course.

- **Fretting** —“Fret not thyself because of evil doers” (Psa. 37:1). God does not want us to be upset or lack victory because of the mischief people are doing on the job where we work. God wants us to have peace irrespective of what may be happening around us. David said, “Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies” (Psa. 110:2).

- **Unbelief** — A lack of trust in God's care of us. “What shall we eat, what shall we drink, what shall we wear?” In the ten trials that Israel failed in the wilderness en route to Canaan, most of them involved the complaint that God was not going to take care of them. Jesus said, “O ye of little faith” (Matt. 6:25-34, v30-31, Deut.1:27).

- **Cares of Life** — (Luke 10:38-42). v.41 “*Martha, Martha, thou art [anxious] and troubled about many things.*” Here is a perfect picture of a homemaker who is impatient and angry because of all the chores that have to be done around the house. To Martha, no one else was doing his share of the work, and no one seemed thankful for all she was doing. She needed to do a little *more* of what her sister Mary was doing. Mary took time to sit at the Master's feet to hear His words. Spending time with the Prince of peace, brings peace. Martha's focus was on *cares*, Mary's was on *God*. Mary had peace but Martha did not. With a crowded schedule it is good just to stop and spend time with God. Everything works out better and goes smoother when we do. Above all we must *learn* to cast all our cares upon the Lord (1 Pet. 5:7, Isa. 53:4). Too often we carry unnecessary burdens in our minds. Let us give our cares to Jesus continually. Remember, He has already borne them.

Thankfulness — is the cure for complaining and bitterness. Catastrophes become victories when we can begin to thank the Lord in our circumstances. When we can thank the Lord in our trial, we are on our way to victory.

Contentment — If we cannot be content with what God has already provided, we will not be content when we get the things we want. For example: If we are unthankful for the house God has provided, when we get a better one, ultimately we will not be happy then either. Then we will want improved appliances and furniture, and on and on. May God grant that we will learn that happiness does *not* depend on circumstances or things. Happiness depends on a changed heart.

**11.) Confusion** — A confused mind can be the product of many things. One could be confused simply because he is immature and does not know the truth. Confusion could be the result of wrong motives. It could be the consequence of trying to *do* or *be* something God never intended. Confusion can be the fruit of going to too many people for advice and hearing numerous conflicting viewpoints. Confusion could be God's judgment for disobedience (Deut. 28:28-29). Ultimately the way to have a clear, understanding mind is being *totally surrendered to Jesus*.



Jesus said we will have discernment if we are sold out to do the will of God (Jn. 7:17). It is a heart issue! A man will know what is right and what is *at the source* of matters when he is surrendered to God and to the will of God. “The pure in heart shall see God [and see as he sees]” (Mt. 5:8).

An intelligent mind or high IQ is **not** the prerequisite for understanding spiritual matters or knowing God. Neither is it necessary to study Hebrew or Greek extensively. The world (and some theologians) exalt the mind, yet they are unable to see eye to eye, or grasp some of the simplest truths. Thus, the key to comprehending the truth is not a keen mind, but a surrendered heart. A man’s understanding will be obscured if his heart is not consecrated to God (Dan. 9:13, 12:10, Deut. 29:4). *Understanding* is God’s gift to the righteous, and not every Christian possesses this blessing.

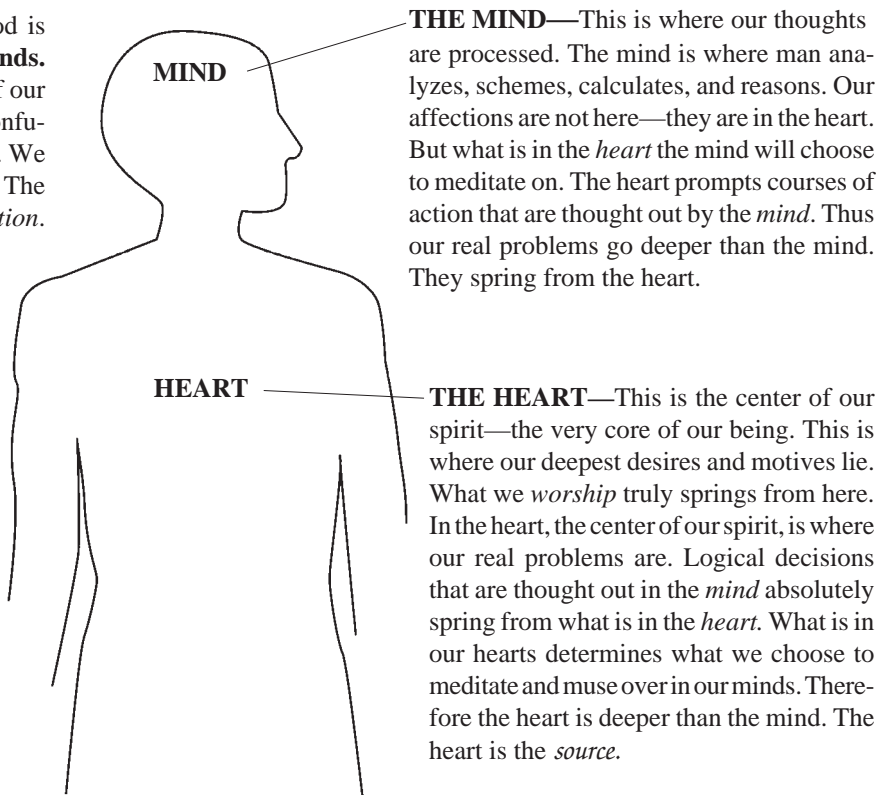
**12.) Human reasoning** — Our natural mind is one of our biggest enemies (Rom. 8:7, 2 Cor. 10:4-5). The whole world has *mental problems*, and so do we. It's just that a Christian has fewer. The nations *act* the way they do because of what they *think*. God says, “Your thoughts are not my thoughts” (Isa. 55:8-9). People end up in hell because of ideas, traditions and delusions they prefer to believe instead of the truth. The world’s logic and philosophies all go against the *Word of God*. Therefore any rationale that opposes and contradicts the Word of God cannot be worthy of our attention or audience. (Please read Colossians 2:8; 1 Corinthians 1:21, 3:18.)

### THE HEART AND MIND COMPARED

Philippians 4:7 — The peace of God is needed in both our **hearts** and **minds**. These are the *two* sending-stations of our being. The mind is where we have confusion, and where things do not add up. We very much need peace in our thoughts. The heart, however, is the center of *affection*. We need peace here, too.

**“The Meditations of the Heart.”**  
The heart *thinks* in the sense that its *motives and affections* dictate to the mind what issues to think through logically and decide—(Psa. 19:14).

Not everything is a heart problem. The heart may have pure motives and yet the mind could be misinformed or ignorant of the issues. Thus it is truly possible to have a mind problem without having a heart problem.



While it is true that we have a multitude of problems with our minds, the root of most of our real problems is in our **hearts**. Talk and communication often are not the answer, if the heart is not changed. What is in our hearts directly affects our thinking and communicating. Scripture does **not** say that divorce is from a lack of communication. Scripture says that divorce is the result of a hard and stony heart (Matt. 19:8, Mk. 10:5). Often the reason for poor communication is a heart that cannot and will not give in...and an unwillingness to listen or defer to another's point of view. Thus, the real problem is *spiritual*. Hardness of heart is the greatest problem we have—a problem God can change if we are willing to humble ourselves to receive His grace.

## ***WRONG CONCEPTS GOD WANTS TO CHANGE***

**(Our need for a renewed mind)**

**Romans 12:2, Isaiah 55:8**

### **Negative Concepts**

An idea or *concept* has tremendous power. It is a spiritual force that controls the way we act and live. An idea takes us somewhere too! Negative and distorted ideas produce the wrong fruit in us, and they will also ruin a relationship of trust. We cannot properly love the Lord or others without a relationship of trust, which is why we must rid ourselves of false concepts. Below are a few examples of negative concepts God desires to cleanse from our minds.

### **Erroneous Ideas That We Must Change**

- 1. Because of my past evil life, I could never amount to anything much in the kingdom of God. I am disqualified from being a fruitful and productive Christian! I will always be second rate.**
- 2. What I dread is what God will make me do! He will send me to Africa, make me marry someone I don't love, and give me a job I cannot tolerate. What I desire, to that God will surely say no.**
- 3. I am unworthy. I am nothing. I am worthless. God wants us to hate ourselves.**
- 4. I can do nothing! God does not want us to have any confidence in ourselves.**
- 5. I don't know how God could ever love me!**
- 6. I don't know how God could ever forgive me!**
- 7. God always wants me to be impoverished in order to keep me humble!**
- 8. God gave me this spirit of fear and timidity to keep me from becoming proud!**
- 9. God led me into sin so I could see how empty it was, come to the end of myself, and turn to Him!**
- 10. With every blessing God gives, along with it there must always come a thorn.**
- 11. I should always be awaiting a calamity in order to be broken from all my pride!**
- 12. I will never do *anything* until I absolutely know God is leading me to do it. I don't want to make any mistakes or be in the flesh!**
- 13. The more I pray, the more answers I will get. (If I pray four hours, I will get four hours worth of answers. But if I only pray one hour, I will only get one hour's worth of answers.)**
- 14. Anyone who is not a Christian has absolutely nothing good in him!**
- 15. Add your own!**

## COUNTERING WRONG CONCEPTS

### *Being Transformed by the Renewing of our Mind*

**1. God could never use me because of my past.** This is false! Whatever the past, God wants every one of His sons and daughters to be fruitful and productive in His kingdom. This means *you!* “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit.” John 15:8 includes every believer, not just a selected few. Before St. Paul was converted, he had been a man of violence and blasphemy. He was responsible even for the bloodshed of many innocent believers. After his conversion he felt no condemnation for his past life (Rom. 8:1), though he was not proud of it. He became the writer of most of the New Testament. If Paul was the “chiefest of sinners” according to First Timothy 1:15, and God still used him in extraordinary ways, then surely there is hope for any of us! Whatever you may have done in the past, Christ is able to make you pure and holy in His sight (Eph.1:3-8). He is able to save to the uttermost! (Heb. 7:25). Remember, God wants every one of His believers to be fruitful, and you are not excluded! When we say *fruitful*, this does not suggest that you have to be behind a pulpit. There are numerous ways to be productive. Ask God how you can glorify Him best.

**2. What I cannot tolerate is what God will make me do!** Because of the issues we struggle with in our own hearts, and because of scripture verses such as, “In this flesh dwelleth no good thing” or “O wretched man that I am,” the tendency of some has been to think that anything they would desire therefore must be wrong, but anything that is repelling or repulsive must be of God. But this is not necessarily true at all!

The fact is, God often guides us through *desire*. And sometimes this is not taken into consideration enough! When a believer delights himself in the Lord, God puts desires into his heart, and then He *gives* him these desires (Psa. 37:4). God places desires in our hearts for a certain kind of ministry, a particular country He is calling us to, a vocation, and even the choice of a marriage partner. And although *desire* in itself is **not** a fail-safe method for guidance, neither should it be totally ignored! (The problem is, our desires may need to be cleansed.)

ABILITY and DESIRE are often clues to what God is calling us to do. Two of the greatest indicators needed to confirm our calling, whether secular or spiritual, are *ability and desire!* God is a good manager and economist. The task He gives us to do in life will be something that we are skilled at (ability), and what we enjoy doing (desire). God is not going to choose something for us that we abhor (job, location, mate, etc.). God has an investment in us, and He wants us to reach our maximum potential and effectiveness in His kingdom. Think of this in the natural! How unwise it would be for a manager to select for a job a man who was unqualified and who hated what he was doing! It would be counterproductive for the boss and the employee. It is the same way in the affairs of the kingdom of God.

How many times have you heard people say something to this effect: “I know God is going to send me to Africa because that is the last place I would ever want to go.” Or, “I know God is going to make me marry someone who is repulsive to me.” Mentalities like this are immature, and they destroy a relationship of *trust*. Distrust of the Lord hinders our relationship with Him! This is a major reason people are afraid to fully open their hearts to God, and a major reason people will not make a total commitment to Him. God wants to deal with these *notions* that separate us from being totally His!

Any geographical location God chooses for us, His presence will be there, and we will be happy there. If God calls us to a foreign land, He can give us a burden and desire to go there. The mate God chooses will be one we can have affection for. I highly question the *revelation* of the young man who said, “God told me to marry this girl but I hated her.” I do not believe God told him that! Even God has desire for His bride (Isa. 62:5). It is scriptural to have *desire* for the one you marry!

Do not be too hasty to accept what is repulsive to you. Do not assume that every spiritual manifestation that makes you feel uneasy is of God, that it is just your old nature repelling it. The manifestation could be of the flesh or of the devil. Ask God to show you if it is His Spirit or yours that is resisting a spiritual manifestation.

**3. I am unworthy, I am nothing, I am worthless.** The strange thing about these confessions is that they are all true in a sense, but when they are carried too far they become error. Any truth that is carried to an extreme becomes error. While it is true from Paul's own inspired words that "In this flesh dwelleth no good thing," yet when a believer constantly adapts this "*I am no good*" syndrome, it produces at least three unsavory things:

- a.) A preoccupation with *self* instead of the Lord.
- b.) A focus on the negative things in one's self. (Self-depreciation never brings release or life.)
- c.) A discrediting of the Holy Spirit for all the *good* things he has done in one's life.

Some men confess how *great* they think they are, others how *wretched* they think they are. But both have one paradoxical thing in common—a preoccupation with *SELF*. Self-depreciation never helps anyone; it never brings life! Therefore, rather than focusing on ourselves, how good or bad we think we are, it is best to major on Christ. For we are only changed as we behold Him (2 Cor. 3:18, 1 Jn. 3:2). Let us spend time in God's presence and ask Him to deposit some of His goodness and greatness into our hearts. *Lord, I receive from You right now!*

Let us not dwell upon the darkness (how awful I am), but rather upon the Light and how great He is. "Lord, I am looking at who You are in me, and what I am going to become because of the workings of Your Spirit in my life!" We should not always consider *what we have not yet become*, but rather we should look back to see how far we have come. We must concentrate on all the good things Christ has already done in our life, and dwell on this!

(Philemon 1:6). Paul told Philemon that his faith would be better communicated to others as he began to acknowledge all the good things that were in him by Jesus Christ. Truly, Christ has deposited many good things in our hearts. These impartations should be acknowledged and confessed. We should give the Lord credit for all the transformations He has wrought in our lives, and we should begin thanking Him for the completed work He is going to perform. "Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you shall [complete] it" (Philippians 1:6).

Worthiness comes from God! He makes us worthy by the mighty workings of His Spirit in our lives, as we yield to Him. Here is the proof—"They shall walk with Me in white *for they are worthy*" (Rev. 3:4). As the Lord clothes us with His beautiful and majestic garments, He will be able to say of us as He said of His Jerusalem bride, "Thy beauty was perfect through My comeliness which I had put upon thee saith the Lord" (Ezek. 16:14). We are worthy because He makes us so.

Although it is necessary to hate pride and everything in our lives that is unlike the Lord, yet it is not healthy to hate ourselves or constantly degrade ourselves. Everyone needs a good sense of self-worth! We cannot properly love others if we cannot love ourselves. "Love thy neighbor as *thyself*." Jesus was able to love others because he had no feelings of inferiority or insecurities. He was completely whole! We do not possess the full nature of Christ until we are whole too. Complexes are just as much a part of the Fall as pride and arrogance.

**4. I can do nothing!** Again, this is a true statement but when it is carried too far, it becomes a preoccupation with self. It emphasizes my *inability* rather than God and His mighty power. Paul testified with confidence, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me." David declared with faith, "By my God I have run through a troop and leaped over a wall." (Phil. 4:13, Psa.18:29, 60:12).

The truth is, God *does* want us to have confidence! It is one thing to say, God can do anything! But the real question is, "Can God use *me*?" We need that holy reassurance and self-confidence that God can use *me*. Yes, God is all-powerful, but if I do not believe that God can use *me*, I will not succeed.

**5. I don't know how the Lord could ever love me!** Expressions like this may sound pious and humble, but wait. . . this is bringing God down to our level. We are making Him small and like a mortal man! Man may not find it in himself to love, but God is much greater than man. God is love!

**6. I don't know how God could ever forgive me!** This again is bringing God down to the level of man. Personally I *do* understand how the Lord could love and forgive me—simply because *He is God!* God bled and died for me, that is how important I am to God! Because God is so great, He could love and forgive me! We should never bring God down to man's level. Let us accept His greatness. . . a greatness that loves, forgives, and receives us.

**7. God wants me to be impoverished to keep me humble!** Many people can handle *difficulties* better than they can handle *prosperity*, and yet being poor in itself has nothing to do with humility. Someone who is poor could be extremely proud and unthankful. But a man with riches might possess great humility! The mature Christian is able to handle times of plenty as well as times of leanness. Paul had seasons in his life when he *abounded*, but other times when he *suffered need* (Phil. 4:12). It is unscriptural to take a vow of poverty. Paul had seasons of abundance. (Prov. 30:7-9).

Humility has nothing to do with money. Humility is an attitude of dependence on God and others. (“I need your prayers, your suggestions, and input.”) Therefore a rich man could be very humble. Job illustrates this truth very well. Job was very wealthy yet very dependent on God. A poor man on the other hand could be very proud and independent.

*Quietness* cannot be equated with humility. Someone who is *loud and outgoing* is not necessarily proud, and another who is *quiet* is not necessarily humble. It could be the other way around. Quietness has nothing to do with humility. A quiet person could be silently cherishing lofty thoughts about himself and may be thinking how much better he is than others.

Humility defined—An attitude of dependence upon God and others. A modest opinion of self.

Meekness defined—No retaliation. A holy acceptance of our circumstances.

**8. God gave me this spirit of fear to keep me from becoming proud!** This is false! According to Second Timothy 1:7, God does *not* give us the spirit of fear. Fear is an enemy. Fear never releases life, it only binds! Suffering releases life, but fear does not. God has lots of other ways to keep us humble. Recognize fear as a bondage. Fear keeps us from doing the will of God. Seek God for a complete deliverance from fears and phobias. God has a unique answer for every one of our fears. David said, “I sought the Lord and he heard me, and he delivered me from *all* my fears” (Psa. 34:4).

**9. God led me into moral sin so I could see how empty it was, and turn to Him.** This of course is false too! God never leads anyone into sin. Sin is disobedience to God, and He never leads any man into that! “Every man is tempted when he is drawn away by *his own* lust, and enticed. Do not err my beloved brethren” (Jas. 1:13-16)! When a person falls into moral sin, it is because he has gone his own way and broken through roadblock after roadblock. God never leads anyone into sin. People simply go their own way until they are sick of it!

**10. With every blessing God gives, there must also come a thorn!** This is a negative attitude of distrust and unbelief. We will experience difficult times in our Christian life, but also many times of blessing. When God blesses, He can be very lavish! “The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich *and He addeth no sorrow with it*” (Prov. 10:22).

**11. I should always be awaiting a calamity!** (Always expecting the worst.) Some Christians are expecting God at any moment to send a disaster in order for them to have brokenness of spirit and piety. But this is a mentality of fear and bondage. And besides, it is not true. Do not expect your baby to be born deformed, or your mother to die in a car accident! A believer should not live his life constantly expecting a disaster to befall him. Purifyings and breakings are a necessary part of life, but God does *not always* use hardships to accomplish these! Often times *pleasant* experiences are the means God uses to soften and purify the hearts of His people. God uses tender care in His dealings with His Bride!

If we have sinned seriously and God is putting a restriction upon us, remember Psalm 103:8-14. Psalm 103 was written after King David fell into sin with Bathsheba. It is a Psalm of restoration. In 103:10, David said that the Lord did not give him the judgment he deserved. *“He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.”* Any judgment meted out to us for our sin is not what we deserve—we deserve much more! Therefore, God is very gracious!

**12. I will never make a move until I know God is in it. I must not make a mistake!** Some decisions in life are crucial, and we must be sure that we have God’s mind and direction before we go forward. Marriage is an example. However, with many other decisions, God requires us to step out in faith. So often God guides us while we are in motion. If you sit still waiting for God to move you, then you might be sitting there for the rest of your life! If you want God to use you with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, then you must be willing to step out and use them and be willing to make a mistake! (2 Tim. 1:6). Often the people who desperately need to be sure they are right before they do *anything*, are those who are not willing to make a mistake or look foolish. Be willing to make a mistake, but do not sit still. God will guide us as we are moving. God seldom guides if we are just sitting there. He guides and directs while we are in motion.

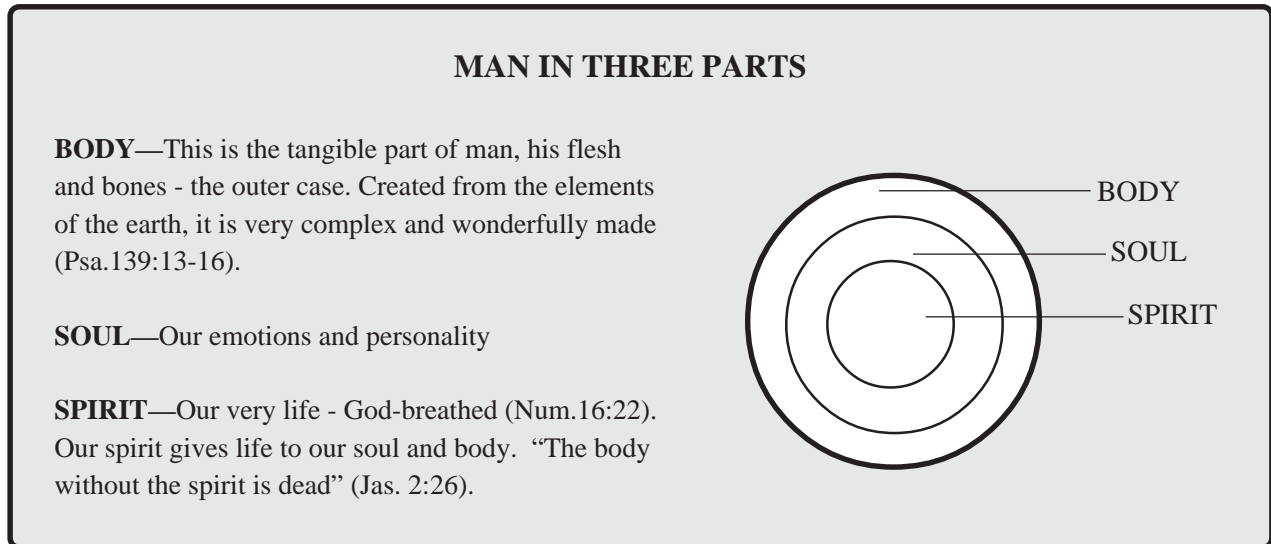
**13. The more I pray, the more answers I will get!** (If I pray four hours, I will get four hours' worth of answers, but if I only pray one hour, I will only get one hour's worth of answers.) Doesn't this sound too mechanical? This is not a relationship of love—it is an employer-employee setup with God! It says in effect to God, “I have put in my time and work, now you owe me this much.” But what God desires is a *response to His promptings*. This comes from a relationship. It is not necessarily how long we pray or fast that brings the power and presence of God. Sometimes it is just a small act of obedience that brings the desired breakthrough.

R. Edward Miller of Argentina had prayed many months for revival. Later he gathered together a small group of believers to join with him in prayer. One young girl said, “I have the strangest impression that I should start tapping on this desk.” (Reverend Miller told her to do so, but she thought it was too ludicrous.) Still the strange impression continued! Finally he and the others started tapping on the desk, but when *she* reached over and touched the desk, the power and wind of God rushed in! Everyone there was mightily overpowered by a new wave of Pentecostal fire, and this fire swept across the whole nation! Many thousands were converted and baptized in the Holy Spirit. What did it take to release the power of God? Something that is *totally absurd* to our natural mind! It was one small act of obedience. Yet, this is what God requires—He simply says, “Obey My voice!” Response to whatever God is putting His finger on releases God to work on our behalf (Jer. 7:22-23).

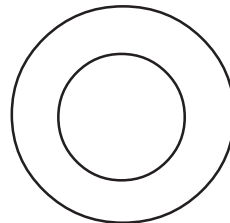
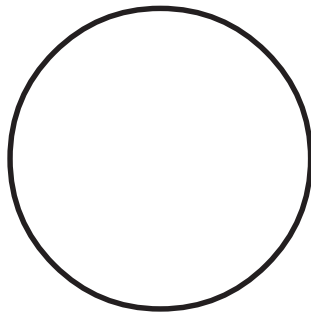
**14. There is nothing good in man, especially unbelievers!** This is an incorrect theological statement! Jesus said that “even sinners love [agape] those that love them” (Lu. 6:32). Even unbelievers have sacrificed their lives for others, or donated organs of their bodies so that others could live, etc. Of course, any goodness within a believer or unbeliever all goes back to God. All goodness comes from God! Most unbelievers have *some* good in them. This is not to say that they are going to heaven. Christ is the only door into heaven! But to say that there is nothing good at all in man is incorrect!

## UNDERSTANDING MAN

Man is a trinity. He is spirit, soul, and body. “Man is a spirit, possessed of a soul, living in a body.” Our body is tangible and is made of the elements and minerals of the earth. It is our outer case. The soul and spirit are *intangible*, but have a form that much resembles our body. First Thessalonians 5:23 says that all three areas of man need to be sanctified (cleansed, renewed, and redeemed). The diagram below in concentric circles illustrates man in three parts.



**AT DEATH** —  
*we have this . . . . .*



**At death** the spirit and soul are separated from the body. The body disintegrates into dust again, until the time of the resurrection when the same dust is recreated into a new and incorruptible body. This new body is then reunited with the soul and spirit. At death, the soul and spirit of a believer leave the body and go immediately into heaven, into the presence of the Lord (2 Cor. 5:1-8, 2 Pet. 1:13-14). The spirit and soul have a form that much resembles the physical body, so that departed soul-spirits have identity and can recognize each other. Death simply means *separation*. Death is not oblivion! Death separates the body from the soul-spirit. James says that the body without the spirit is dead (Jas. 2:26). The *second death* mentioned in Revelation 2:11, 20:14 is eternal separation from God in the lake of fire for the unredeemed.

Romans 8:23. “The redemption of our bodies.” The total redemption of Christ is not complete until our bodies are resurrected. The Apostle Paul wanted his body back as soon as possible. He wanted a better resurrection. The degree to which we allow Christ to work within us during our lifetime will determine what degree of glory our body will have in the resurrection (Phil. 3:11-14, 3:20-21, Heb. 11:35, 1 Cor. 15:40-44). For all eternity, man was created to be three entities—body, soul, and spirit. God has intended for man to have his body for all eternity. Death is only a temporary situation. Therefore, seek to have the best resurrection possible. Sell out to the will and plan of God for your life (Phil. 3:11).

**All three parts of man** were created by God and were made to be under the subjection of the Holy Spirit. All three areas—body, soul, and spirit need to be redeemed and cleansed (1 Thes. 5:23). Man is a spirit, clothed upon with a soul (emotions, personality, makeup), living in a body. The spirit is our very life. This is what God breathed into man the day He formed him. The spirit gives life to the soul and body. Whatever controls our spirit, controls the rest of us.

**Our spirit needs cleansing.** We can have a haughty spirit (Prov.16:18). Our spirit can resist God and be unyielding. We need a broken spirit. The spirit, we could say, is our heart. What we are in our spirit is who we really are! Our spirit is the very center of our being. Our deepest motives lie here— and what we truly worship is here. Whatever dominates our spirit determines who we really are! Thus, we should ask God for a clean spirit, a pure heart. We cannot discern other spirits until our own spirit is clean and surrendered to God. In First Corinthians 2:9-14, there are **three** classifications of spirits: 1.) Our human spirit; 2.) The spirit of this world; and 3.) God's Spirit. When a man rejects God's Spirit, he automatically becomes susceptible to the spirit of this world. Thus, our spirit is *the battleground* between the two.

When we are born again, our *spirit* is quickened and comes alive to God. Before this our spirit was *dead* in trespasses and sins. “Dead” means separation, not oblivion (Eph. 2:1-5, 2 Cor. 4:6). At new birth our *spirit* comes alive. It becomes alive to God, and there is a new awareness of God and of the spiritual realm. Also, when we are baptized in the Holy Spirit, our *spirit* is immersed in God's Spirit. But the apex of *spirituality* is when God's Spirit can freely flow through a *cleansed spirit*, with the soulish emotions and body being under subjection.

**The ideal life is for the spirit to control the soul and body.** Before the Fall, Adam's spirit had dominion over his soul and body, as God had intended. Man is a spiritual being and should be governed by the spirit. With the Fall, darkness and separation came into the spirit of man. God had said to Adam concerning the forbidden fruit—“In the day that ye eat thereof, ye shall surely die” (Gen. 2:17, 3:3). He was referring to a spiritual death, not physical. Adam did not die the same day. He lived another 930 years. A *spiritual* death occurred, which also caused the body to *begin* to die. Ever since the Fall, it has been an uphill battle to be spiritual. Often the soul and body are ruling, instead of the spirit. The ideal is for God's Spirit to control man's *spirit*, which then controls the soul and body.

### **The Problem of Souliness**

*Hebrews 4:12*

God wants His people to be *spiritual*, not *soulish*. Oftentimes the soul (emotions, fears, moods, partiality, etc.) gets in the way of the Spirit and hinders the flow of the Holy Spirit. A soulish person is dominated by the emotions which bring on depression, discouragement, and other feelings. God wants us to discern the difference between soulish and spiritual. The Word of God divides soul from spirit (Heb. 4:12). The Word of God can show us what is genuinely spiritual (what is originating from the Holy Spirit through our spirit) and what is coming from the soul or emotions. The Word of God can show us what our real problems are and why we are frequently depressed or angry. We do *not* need to go to the psychiatrist. God alone knows what is at the bottom of our conflicts, and He is well able to show us clearly from the Word of God.

Hebrews 4:12—The Word of God divides soul from spirit. It separates souliness (feelings, emotions, natural thinking) from what is truly spiritual. The Word of God not only shows us what is soulish or emotional, but it also reveals the deepest motives of our spirit. The Word of God locates our problems and shows us what is wrong in our soul (emotions) and in our spirit (motives). It is like a light that is turned on within. “The entrance of thy Word giveth light” (Psa.119:130). Often we are unable to put our finger on our real problems, but the Word of God pinpoints and remedies them.



We must overcome soulishness, for when we are dominated by our feelings, we will not be stable in character, and will make decisions according to our emotions. Emotions are also very partial. *Pity* and *need* should not be what prompts one to go to the mission field—a *divine call* should be the motivation. People who are soulish are very susceptible to other spirits moving upon them and prompting them, deflecting them from God's purposes. Emotions can be good, however, if produced by the Spirit.

**The soul must not rule! The spirit, with God's Spirit overshadowing, should rule! The soul must be under the control of the spirit and Holy Spirit. Listed below are some other evidences of the soul ruling:**

- Infatuation—fantasy, dream worlds - Petting is very dangerous. We must rule our spirit (Pro. 4:23).
  - Hysteria—Job's wife was hysterical, telling Job to curse God and die. Women are urged to sobriety.
  - Fears—Fears of the soul can block the flow of the Holy Spirit.
  - Partiality—emotions that favor one above another - This is carnal love. It dulls one's discernment.
  - Self-pity—moods, depressions, oppressions, and being frequently subject to “dark clouds.”
  - Suspicions and imaginations—Soulish people are easily susceptible to these.
  - Living by feelings instead of by truth—We must “walk by faith not by sight.”
  - Humanism—which is sympathy and emotions, and denies that there will be judgment
  - False guidance—because of emotions, goose bumps, chills down the spine, and phenomena.
  - Inability to deal objectively—because of emotions that are out of control or not rational.
- \* People who live on emotional *highs* are usually the ones who sink to the greatest *lows*.

## The Temptation

Jesus was tested in spirit, soul, and body.

**SPIRIT**—In the area of motives and worship (Mt. 4:8-10).

*Satan promised, “Worship me and I'll give you the world.”*

**SOUL** — In the area of emotions (Mt. 4:5-6).

*Jump off the temple and excite everyone...show them who you are.*

**BODY**— In the area of appetites when He hungered (Mt. 4:3-4).

*“Command that these stones be made into bread.”*

We also will be tested in all three areas.

# GUIDELINES FOR DISCERNMENT

## Overcoming Souliness

When we say that a person is **soulish**, we mean that he is ruled by his soul—by his emotions and his natural mind instead of being controlled by his spirit and the Holy Spirit. The soulish man or woman is affected by problems in the soul such as mood-swings, depressions, complexes, fears, anger, and self-pity. This is your up-and-down kind of individual. But in order to have discernment, the believer's soul must first come into *rest*. All turmoil and confusion must be cleared up *within* himself before he can accurately assess what is going on *outside* himself.

*The ideal is to be ruled by our spirit*—That means God's Spirit moving through our spirit, with the soul being in subjection. The natural mind and emotions should be dominated by our spirit and God's Spirit. When the spirit is ruling, we are *spiritual*. God wants us to be spiritual, not soulish. Immature Christians are ruled and guided by their *souls*.

### Keys for Dividing Soul and Spirit

**1. Something spoken sweetly, “pleasing to the ear”, can still be wrong!** Our tendency is to *accept* what is spoken graciously, but *reject* what is harsh or rigid. Unfortunately **tone** is not always a fail-safe method to judge whether something is of God or not. Satan can be eloquent; he can also be kind and gentle, and his ministers often appear to be very righteous—Read 2 Corinthians 11:13-15. Do not be fooled by Satan's tactics! Paul said, “We are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11, Rom.16:18). Sweetness, kindness, and soft tone are not necessarily accurate evidences of the true anointing. The adulteress of Proverbs 5:3, 7:21, was very enticing.

**2. If we are misguided on something, we will still get “confirmations.”** We should not become *overly involved* with confirmations, signs, numbers, names, coincidences, and other phenomena. Much of this can be soulish, and a Christian could mistakenly believe he is being led by God. A number of years ago I was a resident teacher in a Bible school. One of the students was a handsome young man and twenty-five girls had the same revelation about him—“This is my future husband!” It was quite amazing how many infallible “confirmations” each one of them had. It was all soulish!

I remember a man who constantly had a lady named Genny on his mind. Suddenly, as he was driving down the highway he saw a huge billboard saying, “*Wouldn't You Rather Have a Genny?*” My point is—when we have something on our mind, we will *see* it and *hear* it everywhere. It will leap out at us from every side. If you buy a new Toyota, you will begin to see Toyotas everywhere; it is something you are conscious of and looking for. And when people mistakenly believe they have a revelation from God, they will begin to have *confirmations* from every direction. We must be purged of souliness! Many in the Church are guided by their *souls* on the question of marriage. Let us all use caution.

**3. Good men make mistakes.** Mature ministers sometimes speak what God is *not* prompting them to say. God reproved Nathan for saying something out of his natural mind to David (1 Chron.17:1-6). You may also recall the time when Elijah was speaking for God at one moment (1 Kg.18:21), but then in the very next breath he was speaking out of his own spirit saying, “I, even I only remain a true prophet” (1 Kg.18:22). It is just too easy to shift from God's Spirit to our own spirit when we are ministering. God draws attention to the fact that a whole congregation can be sinning through ignorance because the anointed teaching priest is in ignorance (see Lev. 4:2-3; 4:13). Prophecies are not always right; therefore they should be tested (Deut.18:21). Be careful about directive prophecies, especially those that involve marriage. Do not hang your future or eternity on a prophecy. Make sure you have sought God carefully, and that your decision is scriptural. (Is the prospective mate *unsaved* or *divorced*? Remember, divorce is a broken vow, a broken covenant!)

**4. Our opinion of a person is based on how they make us feel!** According to a survey, our opinion of a man or woman is based on *one primary issue* more than any other and that is—*How they make us feel!* A con artist with a good sense of humor and charm may have the ability to make us think, “Well, maybe he's just not that bad after all.” On the other hand, someone else who has good character, but lacks the gift of warmth and personality may be low on our list of favorites. But this, too, is a demonstration of soulishness, not spirituality. It is no accurate way to measure character.

**5. Our present feelings influence and distort our appraisal of situations.** If you were asked, “How is everything at your church?”, the chances are that your *feelings at the moment* would greatly influence how you would answer the question! Let me try to illustrate: Suppose your church was going through a time of blessing and many were having their needs ministered to, but you were in a dark, difficult time in your life. If you were asked, “How are things at church?” you would probably say, “Not very good, everything is dry. I can't get anything out of the services, and there are a lot of problems in the church!” The fact is, there is a great difference between the way things *are*, and the way we *feel*.

To a person who is depressed, *everything* is black! It is imperative that we put aside our feelings in order to discern the true situation. Herein is the difference between a soulish and a spiritual Christian—the one who is soulish assumes that what he is feeling *within himself* is an indicator of how everything else is *outside* him. However, the one who is spiritual puts aside his soulish feelings in order to appraise the real condition. I will try to explain what I mean in the following paragraph.

Years ago when I came into a Sunday morning service, I knelt down to pray at the altar as the organ was playing softly. I found God's presence there in a very wonderful way. Then one of the women came in. Things were very difficult at home for her, and she was very depressed and discouraged. Suddenly she began to rebuke and bind Satan, for in her mind she felt that the service was bound and being hindered by Satan. The service was not bound; she was under a dark cloud. She was judging the situation by how she felt within herself. But this is being soulish, not spiritual. We cannot discern what spirit is in operation until our own soul and spirit have been cleansed, renewed, and have come into rest.

**6. Be careful about the power of suggestion!** Words are creative. A man prayed in church one morning, “Lord, heal all our disunities!” The prayer *suggested* that everyone was against each other. They were not! Satan uses negative statements and prayers like these to actually create disunity. It channels everyone's mind onto “who is against who.” Be careful of the power of suggestion. Remember, too, that prophecies and exhortations tend to pull us in a certain direction, whether they are from God or not. You may have to reconsider some of the prophecies that were pronounced over you.

**7. Test anointings and sensations!** Satan has anointings. He is called “the anointed cherub” in Ezekiel 28:14. He counterfeits everything, including the anointing. Satan's music has a counterfeit anointing. Satan has ministers too, and they sound very righteous and very convincing, but they are inspired by a false anointing (cf. 2 Cor. 11:13-15). Spirit-filled Christians can be very affected by *sentiment*. We could have the goosebumps just from listening to the national anthem, or tears because of violins during a sad scene of a movie. Military music inspires feelings of strength and aggression. Love, hate, anger, and revenge are aroused if we allow ourselves to be absorbed in a motion picture. Sometimes what we term “*the witness of the Spirit*” is **not** that at all! It is easy to get a witness for things we want to hear, and hard to get the witness for what we do not want to hear. Often the thing we *need to hear* the most is what we *do not want to hear* the most.

**8. Satan can give peace, based upon presumption.** There is a counterfeit for everything that is genuine. Satan can give a man or woman peace, a false peace that is based on presumption. There are many people who feel they are ready for heaven, but they are **not** ready; and they will tell you that they have peace. This is Satan's peace. Even some Christians who have drifted into error feel they are totally right and justified in what they are practicing. This also is Satan's peace. It is deception!

During World War II, General George Patton took many foolhardy risks. His source of courage came from his belief in *reincarnation!* He believed he had lived before and that he would live again. And he thought he knew how he was going to die. Therefore all the risks he took were based upon false peace, which is a lie!

**9. Satan can imitate almost anything God does!** (Mt. 24:24, Rev. 13:13-14). Deception is a powerful spirit. We must not think that we can discern matters by our own cunning or cleverness, for we cannot. It is only by the mercy of God and by walking close to God in humility that we will be preserved from deception. Scripture warns us not to lean to our own understanding, or to be wise in our own conceits (Rom.12:16, Prov. 3:5-7).

Beware of books that are written about angels. In recent years the Church world has been flooded with books on the subject of angelic visitations. Unfortunately many of the encounters with angels mentioned in these books were with *fallen* angels. We should understand that even when our eyes are opened up to see the spiritual world (angels and spirits), we still may not be able to discern whether they are good or evil angels, because Satan's angels can be very beautiful, too. Joseph Smith, founder of Mormonism, had an angelic visitation, but the angel was one of Satan's. A whole new religion started because Smith failed to challenge the angel's allegiance. The angel Moroni is one of Satan's (see Gal.1:8-9).

**10. For guidance—Do not become overly involved with promptings or checks.** Some Christians feel *warned* or *checked* of God every time they try to make a decision. This is a problem of soulishness. Indecision is a bondage which can destroy a man. The effect of indecision is that it stops a man from doing *anything*. Do not necessarily anticipate *a special prompting* from God to get you going, or *a dramatic check* from God to stop you when you are pursuing a course. Truly there are genuine promptings or cautions from God, but this can be carried too far and can lead to bondage. If we are *always* looking for these, we will get them, but they will not come from God!

**11. Evidence of the true anointing—the complicated is made simple.** The true anointing makes matters clear and easy to understand. Some messages make your head spin because it is another spirit. You will also be washed and feel clean when you hear the *true* Word of God (Jn.15:3). After you have heard a sermon, ask yourself, “Do I feel clean or do I feel defiled?” Some sermons make you feel *unclean*. Also if the message is nebulous, vague, and hard to grasp, this could be evidence that the anointing was not pure!

## Review

### *Keys for Discernment:*

- Something pleasing to the ear can still be wrong. *Tone* and *attitude* are not failsafe ways to judge a source.
- We can still have “confirmations” for our direction, even when we are going the wrong way.
- Good men can make mistakes when they prophesy.
- Our opinion of a person must not be based on how they make us feel, but on their character.
- A cloud of depression can influence and distort our appraisal of situations.
- The power of suggestion can pull us in the wrong direction.
- Satan has anointings. We must test the sensations we feel.
- Peace can be from Satan. We can have peace that is based on presumption.
- Satan can imitate almost anything God does, including miracles, music, and preaching.
- There can be false *checks* or *promptings* which are a bondage and lead to indecision.
- The true anointing does not make us feel unclean. Did the message make you feel defiled?

# ***GUIDELINES FOR GOOD DOCTRINE***

## **Reasons Christians Have Error**

**1. LACK OF BIBLE KNOWLEDGE**— “Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures” (Mt. 22:29). Therefore, we must study. Otherwise we will be *ashamed* because we have no answers for others, or ourselves (2 Tim. 2:15). We should know what God has to say about every subject of life. God clearly indicates throughout His Word that He honors *diligence* of study (cf. Prov. 2:1-6).

**2. IMMATURITY**— Sometimes a Christian is in error simply because he is young, uninformed, and just does not know any better (1 Pet. 2:1-2, Psa.19:7-11). The Word of God can make *wise* the simple.

**3. PEOPLE ARE TAUGHT WRONG**— The problem then is surely in the *leader* (Lev. 4:1-3). A whole congregation can go into error because their anointed leader is in error or ignorant of certain areas of truth (Lev. 4:13, 4:3). Sometimes even good, anointed ministers have a blind spot. Ignorance does not excuse us, we are still guilty (Lev. 4:13, 4:22, 4:27).

**4. THE SIN OF OVERCONFIDENCE**— Some believe they are infallible—that they know the voice of God and cannot be wrong. But this is being foolish and cocky. Pride always precedes a fall (Prov.16:18, 18:12). I have heard people who operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit say, “I have never been wrong!” . . . but they have (1 Cor. 8:2).

**5. FAILURE TO TEST A REVELATION**— (Failure to test something you feel God showed you) Paul said, “Prove all things, hold fast that which is good” (1 Thes. 5:21, 1 Jn. 4:1). John warns, “Believe not every spirit, but *test* the spirits to see whether they be of God.” This includes impressions, feelings, voices, revelations and dreams. You should never accept any revelation, dream, prophecy, counsel or teaching that contradicts the written Word of God. If your revelation is authentic, then it will never contradict scripture. *Be in the light*. Allow mature brethren to examine your revelation.

**6. SINCERELY WRONG**— The terrible thing about deception is that people who are deceived strongly believe that they are right. And the *longer* they are wrong, the more convinced they are that they are right. Sincerity is just not enough! “There is a way that seemeth right to a man but the end thereof is the way of death” (Prov.14:12, 16:25). It takes more than sincerity to keep us on course! Are we willing to listen to others? Can we humble ourselves and go to others for help? Wisdom, humility, and the counsel of others are necessary for staying on course, not just sincerity. A man could be driving on Route 17 *West* sincerely believing he is on Route 17 *East*, but he is still going the wrong way. And the longer he travels, the further he is going away from his destination, though he is extremely sincere.

**7. WILLINGLY IGNORANT**— (2 Peter 3:5) Sometimes Christians are purposely evasive of truths they would rather not face. The attitude— “I am not responsible for what I don’t know” does not excuse us! We cannot ignore or evade certain truths or issues that God has put in front of us, for if we do so, we will not be perfected, and we will settle for an inferior place in the kingdom of heaven (Matt. 5:19). The trademark of those who are on Mount Zion in heaven is transparency—a people who are freed from every form of falsehood and deceit (Rev.14:5).

**8. A CLOSED MIND**— (Stubbornness, unteachableness) A Christian can have a closed mind because of his background, the way he was brought up, and his traditions. All of us have areas in our life where we are *closed*. A man might be open until a certain subject is brought up, then his heart closes. This could be for several reasons. He may have preconceived ideas. He may have been misinformed. Or maybe he just does not want to hear it. Ask God for a pliable, open mind (Lu. 24:45). This is a gift of His grace, and He can impart it to us in one moment. We will remain barren and unproductive in these closed areas of our lives until we allow God to change us.

**9. TOO INDEPENDENT**— Some Christians are headstrong and will not listen to anyone. Others go astray because they avoid the company and counsel of others who could be a safeguard and balance for them (Prov.11:14). Loners are often this way because they have failed to overcome hurts of the past, or were *never* able to adjust socially very well. It is one thing when *God* makes a man peculiar or different, but when **we** make ourselves peculiar, then we are very strange!

**10. DESIRE FOR ANYTHING SENSATIONAL**— Paul describes some believers as having *itching ears*. Read 2 Timothy 4:2-4. “Itching ears” means a man wants to hear something that goes beyond the boundaries of the Word of God (myths, fantasies, the mysterious, the sensational, the future). Acts 17:21 describes people who “spend their time in nothing else, but either to tell or hear some new thing.” King David knew the danger of delving into things that were over his head, saying in Psalm 131:1, “I do not exercise myself in great matters or in things too high for me.” Christians sometimes get into error by going on long fasts to try to have some extraordinary spiritual experience. We must be careful of our motives! Pray, “*Lord, I only want to **know** what You want me to know; I only want to **have** what You want me to have!*”

**11. IMBALANCED TRUTH**— When a truth is overemphasized, exaggerated, or too one-sided, it becomes error. Something may be true enough but when it is carried too far, it becomes error. Never major on *some* of the spiritual truths! Major on *all* spiritual truths. Safety comes when you major on *everything* God has to say, not just several things. When you focus on just one area of truth, the tendency is to minimize or even exclude the others. Minimizing, neglecting, or rejecting any part of the Word of God is to reject part of God Himself. Jesus Christ is the WORD OF GOD!

**12. SIMPLE (naive)**— The simple believes every word (Prov.14:15). A simple person is one who is easily swayed or influenced by others; one who has no convictions and therefore is easily deceived (Rom.16:18). The simple or naive man makes no distinction between good or evil and can flow with anything. God does not want His people to be simple and undiscerning but wise. The Lord commended the Church of Ephesus for having discernment (Rev. 2:2).

**13. PRIDE**— (The greatest reason for all error) “The pride of thine heart hath deceived thee” (Obad.1:3). Error and deception thrives in hearts that are proud. Be careful of desiring to have more or know more than everyone else. Pride is at the bottom of all false religions and false doctrines. Grace and truth are granted only to the humble (Jas. 4:6).

**14. WRONG MOTIVES**— (Acts 20:28-30, 5:3, 1 Kg.1:5). Deception comes into Christians whose motives have not been purified. Satan exalts himself and works through men and women who are exalting *themselves*. Satan gained entrance into the men mentioned in Acts 20:30 because of their unsundered motives. They caused a lot of division in the church.

**15. DELUSION SENT FROM GOD**— God sends blindness and deception to those who reject the truth but love sin and uncleanness (2 Thes. 2:11-12, Isa. 66:4, 2 Chron.18:18-22). But the pure in heart see God, and see as God sees (Mt. 5:8). When a Christian loses understanding and cannot grasp even the simplest truths, there has been a moral breakdown in his life and an unwillingness to repent. *Understanding departs* from the man who reverts to sexual immorality. Remember, the person who falls into immorality has been overtaken by an evil spirit. This is the thought of Proverbs chapter seven.

**16. INABILITY TO RECEIVE FROM OTHERS**—God speaks to us directly but He also speaks to us through others. In Acts chapters 8:30-31, 9:6, and 10:3-6, God used human agency to speak to the Ethiopian, to Paul, and to Cornelius. A major reason Christians go into error is because they cannot hear God speaking to them and correcting them *through other people*. Oftentimes a believer cannot hear God speaking to him through others because he does not *like* the person God is using. In rejecting the messenger, we are rejecting God, too. We are rejecting God’s remedy for our need if we reject *the person* God hand-picked to minister to us.

Years ago a pastor had a problem with one of the ladies in his church. She was a nuisance to him and had caused him some irritation. One Sunday morning when he got up to preach, he began to turn blue. He was having a heart attack. God anointed this same woman and sent her down the aisle to pray for the pastor. He refused to let her pray for him. He also kept his heart attack. The pastor had a hard time receiving help from this woman. He was refusing God's means of provision for his need. This is the reason we have to overcome our feelings and preferences and be able to receive from *anyone* God sends to us.

The ability to receive from anyone God chooses could make the difference between *life and death*. King Josiah died prematurely at age thirty-nine because he did not discern God's speaking and warning him through an unlikely source (2 Chr. 35:20-27). God was speaking to Josiah through a heathen king. It would have been easy for Josiah to discern God speaking to him through Jeremiah the prophet. Jeremiah had a good reputation, and he and Josiah were good friends.

### **WE WILL BE TESTED ON TRUTHS WE RECEIVE**

- Acts 20:27-32—Every church and individual will be tested to see if they are worthy of the truths they have received.
- 1 Cor. 4:1-2—We have been entrusted as stewards with the truth of God. We must be faithful to what we know.
- Mk. 4:24-25—If we are not faithful to the truths we have been entrusted with, God will not show us any more, and we will lose what we already have.
- 1 Cor. 11:19—God allows heresies to go through His Church in order to test the hearts of His people. When the plague of false doctrine goes around, the ones whose hearts are not right catch the epidemic. False doctrine shows who is who. It reveals who is not approved of God, and who is.
- 2 Thess. 2:3-12—God will allow Satan to produce his man (the Antichrist) in our generation. He will draw all the unrighteous unto himself, and some of these will be from the Church. God uses this man to cleanse His Church.
- Mk. 4:4,14-15—Do not be angry with Satan if he steals the Word you have sown in someone's heart. The problem is not the fowls of the air (evil spirits) who snatched away the sown seed, but a *heart* that did not receive it deeply.

## CONCERNING INHERITANCE

### What is Our Inheritance?

**Introduction**—An inheritance is a possession that is given to us by another. It is a blessing that is released and handed down to us when someone who loves us dies. When Jesus Christ our Lord died for us, unsearchable riches which had been stored up for ages were released to every one of His believers. The Lord made void any previous testaments when He promised us a new testament with its manifold blessings. But it was not until He *died* that the power of this new testament came into effect (Jer. 31:31-34, Matt. 27:50-53, Heb. 9:15-18). A will has no power until the one who made it dies. Observe the tremendous power that was released, and the new access to God that was made available when Christ the Testator died. At His death a marvelous inheritance opened up and has been presented to every one of His children.

“Master, what shall I do that I may *inherit* eternal life?” (Mk.10:17). An inheritance is never earned, it is *received* as a gift of grace. *Eternal life* is one of the blessings of the inheritance that Christ has willed to His children. But it does not end here. Inheritance involves much more than going to heaven! Inheritance is essentially two things! (Illustrated below)

### Inheritance Is Twofold

- **INWARDLY — THE LORD HIMSELF IS OUR INHERITANCE.**  
(Gen.15:1; Deut.18:2; Ezek. 44:28)
- **OUTWARDLY— THE NATIONS FOR OUR INHERITANCE.**  
(Psa. 2:8; 1 Thes. 2:19; Phil. 4:1)

### The Lord Himself is Our Inheritance

The greatest gift a man could ever possess is the Lord Himself. God promised many blessings to the families of Israel, but to the Levites He promised to give *Himself* (Deut.10:9, Num. 3:45). The Levites were given the right of the firstborn, a double portion of God’s Spirit. The highest calling anyone could ever have is to enter *fully* into the presence of God to minister unto Him (Psa. 65:4, Ezek. 44:15). This privilege is not given to everyone, for some disqualify themselves.

Thus, our first concept of inheritance should be the thought of *relationship*. We are called to inherit *Him*—to have a full relationship with God. The Apostle Paul’s first desire was to *win* Christ, not just to have a great ministry. Read Philippians 3:7-14. What is the **mark** and the **prize** of the high calling that Paul mentions in Philippians? It is to win Christ, to know Him, to have a better resurrection, and to be as close to Him in eternity as possible. This is the goal and the prize. Abraham was called to be a blessing to the whole world, but his central focus was not on this. His focus was upon what God had said to him in Genesis 15:1—“I am thy shield and exceeding great reward.” See also Psalm 62:5.

Now in the same way that Israel had to drive out the enemies in order to secure Canaan as their inheritance, so must all the enemies be driven out of our personal lives in order to inherit a full relationship with God. We have numerous enemies in our lives that hinder our relationship with the Lord—doubts, fears, resistance, ideas, etc. These enemies dull our sensitivity and intimacy with HIM. There are strongholds and pockets of resistance within us that oppose and resist the Spirit of our Heavenly Bridegroom.



Welcome therefore the Sword of the Lord into your life, that whatever may be standing between you and your God may be judged and subdued. The Lord is more concerned about ridding us of our enemies than we are, because the more these conflicts are subdued, the greater rest we will enter into, and the richer our fellowship with Him will be. And in this state of rest, God can flow through us with all of His power and glory!

Christ's inheritance is in the saints (Eph.1:18). Deuteronomy 32:9 says—"The Lord's portion is his people." Therefore, not only is the Lord *our* inheritance, but *His* inheritance is in us. **He** is our inheritance, **we** are His. Marriage causes two parties to find fulfillment in each other.

God asks, "What kind of house will you build me? Where can I find rest?" (Acts 7:48-49). This is a real revelation of the heart of God! He is looking for a place where He can feel completely at home and at rest—in us! And so He is saying, "Create a place in your temple where I can dwell." Jesus went into a literal temple to drive out what was evil with a *scourge*. Be prepared for Christ to come into your temple to do the same, in order that He may dwell in your life more completely!

"There remaineth very much land yet to be possessed" (Josh.13:1). This could be said of our inner life as well. There is still a lot of unconquered territory within. Let's call it *pockets of resistance*. In effect, the Lord was saying, "There is still a lot of work to be done in your hearts." The Sword of the Lord (the Word of God) can directly and pointedly show us our motives and where our enemies are hiding. Satan is powerful in our lives where he is *hidden*, but the Word of the Lord is able to uncover and destroy him. We cannot have the victory until what is holding us in bondage is *revealed!*

"Joshua made war *a long time* with those kings" (Josh.11:18). Some of our enemies are defeated easily and quickly, but others might battle against us for a long time. Ultimately we will win if we persist and do not give up (2 Cor. 2:14).

"How long are ye *slack* to possess the land which the Lord God giveth you?" (Josh.18:2-3). This is an exhortation to every generation. People literally go to their graves not fully inheriting what God had willed to them. Many Christians inherit only a fraction of what God has given to them. There must be an overcoming of hurts, offenses, temptations, and pressures in order to receive our full inheritance. Remember, only the *overcomer* gets the inheritance (Rev. 21:7). When believers fail to go on with God they are forfeiting part of their inheritance (Rev. 3:11, Heb.10:36).

When a devout Christian has faced the Sword in his own life and the issues of his own heart have been cleared up, he will then be able with that same Sword to drive out the enemies in the lives of others that God entrusts to his care. For it is only to the extent that *we* have victory that we will be able to lead others to victory. That same Sword will come through our mouths to cut bondages and destroy the enemies in a people God will give to us for an inheritance. This is the *second* aspect of inheritance (Acts 26:18).

**When the enemies are out of our lives and we have realized to some degree the first aspect of inheritance, God will then move upon us to give us the second aspect of our inheritance, for He is preparing us for a *people!* God desires to give us the heathen for an inheritance. When we have matured in our relationship with Him, He will want to reproduce us in others. He will use us to draw others to Himself and allow us to teach others the truths of His kingdom. (Maybe He is not ready to do that yet!) Someone has said—"When God reduces a man down to the true message, He will send him to the nations." Therefore, let us humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt us in due time (1 Pet. 5:6).**

## The Heathen For Our Inheritance

God wants to give us *a people* for an inheritance (a church, a mission field, perhaps a whole nation, people we lead to Christ). Paul said concerning his converts, “Ye are my crown” (Phil. 4:1, 1 Thess. 2:19). If the enemies have been driven out of our lives, then we will have the experience, insight, and authority to drive out the enemies in a people God entrusts to us. Then we can lead them into their inheritance in God (Acts 26:17-18). They will be *our* inheritance, but we will also be leading them into *their* inheritance too.

God’s Word, the Sword of the Spirit—is alive and powerful. It will drive out the enemies in our listeners as we preach the Word under the power of the Holy Spirit. Even after people are born-again, much idolatry and delusion in their minds and hearts must be faced with the sharp Sword. The Apostle Paul battled three things when he preached to his converts:

- 1.) Traditions - old religious ideas, habits
- 2.) Superstitions - vain imaginations, notions, evil spirits
- 3.) Worldly philosophies - humanism, perverted, natural thinking

The people God gives you are your inheritance. Make sure you get all the enemies out of them, and do not leave any pockets of resistance in them. Present them to Christ as a chaste virgin, as Paul said in 2 Corinthians 11:2.

### TO GAIN OUR INHERITANCE

#### WE MUST OVERCOME—THE WORLD, THE FLESH, AND THE DEVIL

In the Old Testament, God’s people fought against flesh and blood. Today our battle is not against people or flesh and blood. Our enemies are much greater. We are battling against the intangible, unseen forces of evil (wicked spirits, imaginations, reasonings, philosophies, delusions, fears, doubts, and a fallen nature). We should recognize that we are combating *intangible* forces, and the weapons we use to combat them are also *intangible*. (This will be enlarged upon in the succeeding pages.) Below are the *three* main areas of conflict we must overcome in order to inherit everything God has promised (Rev. 21:7).

- 1.) **The World** — The world system; the way the world thinks; its lures, peer pressures, and temptations
- 2.) **The Devil** — Satan and his demons and fallen angels - He is called the Tempter, the Accuser of the brethren, and the Father of lies. Satan's name means Adversary and Slanderer.
- 3.) **The Flesh** — The battle within ourselves. Our greatest problems lie here, and these are the hardest to overcome. We are struggling with a fallen nature and a heart that is deceitful and desperately wicked. Satan will toy with anything in our heart that is unconsecrated to God. When inward battles cease, we can better fight outer battles with Satan and the World.

*“He that overcometh shall inherit all things”*

Revelation 21:7

## OVERCOMING ALL THINGS

All the promises of God are to the overcomer (Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 26; 3:5, 12, 21; 21:7). There are qualifications to be met before we receive what God has promised—Heb.10:36. This is not just a *name it and claim it* situation, as some teach today. There are battles to be won first. Most of the conflicts man struggles with are not in the tangible realm, but in the soul, spirit, and mind. Thus, our problems are spiritual! To help define what must be overcome to inherit all things, I have listed below some of man's most common spiritual problems.

|                   |                     |                  |
|-------------------|---------------------|------------------|
| PREJUDICE         | LUST                | UNRELIABILITY    |
| RASHNESS          | IMMODESTY           | CHANGEABLE       |
| STUBBORNNESS      | CLASS-CONSCIOUSNESS | INSTABILITY      |
| INFLEXIBILITY     | SNOBBISHNESS        | IMPULSIVE        |
| RIGIDNESS         | FANATICISM          | IMPETUOUS        |
| IMAGINATIONS      | IMMODERATION        | PARTIALITY       |
| NOTIONS           | COMPROMISE          | OVERTALKATIVE    |
| DREAMWORLDS       | DISLOYALTY          | INSOMNIA         |
| SUPERSTITIONS     | INCONSISTENCY       | DEBTS            |
| LONELINESS        | UNFAITHFULNESS      | HOARDING         |
| PERFECTIONISM     | FLATTERY            | GREED            |
| EXTRAVAGANCE      | PHOBIAS             | DOMINEERING      |
| DESPONDENCY       | ENVY / JEALOUSY     | DEMANDING        |
| DISCOURAGEMENT    | ANXIETY             | FILTHY / SLUM    |
| RECLUSIVENESS     | ALARMISM            | LAZINESS         |
| INFERIORITIES     | WORRY               | BRAGGING         |
| INSECURITIES      | SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS  | CLOSED           |
| COMPLEXES         | PRIDE               | FRIGIDNESS       |
| CYNICISM          | TIMIDITIES          | INFATUATION      |
| SARCASM           | DOGMATISM           | UNREASONABLE     |
| UNTHANKFULNESS    | SELF-REJECTION      | DOUBT / UNBELIEF |
| COMPLAINING       | INDIFFERENCE        | DEFIANT          |
| INTROVERSION      | HUMORLESSNESS       | REBELLIOUS       |
| EMBARRASSMENT     | OVERSERIOUSNESS     | HARDNESS         |
| SHYNESS           | SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS  | ABRASIVE         |
| SKEPTICISM        | RATIONALIZATIONS    | DRUNKENNESS      |
| PESSIMISM         | ARGUMENTATIVE       | ANOREXIA         |
| NEGATIVISM        | ANGER / WRATH       | GAMBLING         |
| EXCUSE-MAKING     | SELF-PITY           | SWEARING         |
| EVASIVENESS       | MOODINESS           | DEBATING         |
| INDECISION        | BITTERNESS          | FAULT-FINDING    |
| ACCIDENTPRONENESS | DISHONESTY          | NIT-PICKING      |
| PROCRASTINATION   | GRUDGEFUL           | DISCONTENT       |
| CRITICISM         | UNFORGIVENESS       | TOUCHINESS       |
| REVILING SPIRIT   | HATEFULNESS         | OVERSENSITIVE    |
| DENOUNCING        | HYPOCRISY           | INDEPENDENT      |
| MOCKING           | DECEIT-LYING        | PHILOSOPHIES     |
| DISCORD-SOWING    | MANIPULATING        | WORLDLINESS      |

\* All the above are spiritual problems—problems in the spirit and soul of man, and they are also the cause of *disunity*. The resolving of these is essential for happiness and compatibility with others. Unity and happiness begin in the spirit first, not in the physical. Many young people try to find happiness in the physical first (premarital relations, etc.), but end up in misery because of the unresolved spiritual conflicts mentioned above. Unity begins in the spirit!

## ***OVERCOMING SPIRITUAL PROBLEMS***

### **The overcomer inherits all things**

On the next twelve pages is a list of obstacles we must overcome.

**Prejudice, Rashness** - Prejudice is to pre-judge. It is a judgment or opinion formed without due examination; a mental decision based on grounds other than reason or justice; a premature or adversely biased opinion. Prejudice is a spiritual problem, a problem of the heart. It is the opposite of wisdom, for wisdom does not place everyone in the same category. Prejudice is also a condition of rashness of spirit where hasty conclusions are drawn before all the facts are known (Isa. 32:4). “Does our law judge anyone before it hears his case?” (Jn. 7:51). Prejudice and envy put Jesus on the cross. Prejudice dulls our discernment and spirituality. “He that answers a matter before he heareth it, it is folly and shame to him” (Prov. 18:13, Matt. 7:1-2, 1 Cor. 4:4-5). God has no prejudice! Prejudice is the opposite of love. Love chooses to believe the best about people and allows them the benefit of a doubt. Love *believes all things* (1 Cor. 13:7).

**Stubbornness, Inflexibility, Rigidness** - This involves being inflexible in opinion or intention, or unreasonably obstinate (cf. Judg. 2:19). Stubbornness is resistance and unyieldedness, and God hates it. The Lord can do little with people who refuse to change or be *open* to change. God delights in ones who will ask for *His* pliability. God can impart this to us if we ask Him. Second Chronicles 30:8 warns, “Be ye not stiffnecked as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the Lord.” He pleads in Psalm 32:8-9, “Be not as the horse or mule which have no understanding, whose mouth must be held in by bit and bridle.” The horse or mule have to be pulled one way or another. God has no pleasure in *dragging* people or having to apply pressure. He wants to guide His people with His eye—just by a look or gesture. Allow God to develop within you a special intuitiveness to His Spirit!

**Imaginations, Notions, Dreamworlds, Superstitions** - Dreamworlds are an escape from reality. *Notions and superstitions* are hunches, impressions, ideas and feelings that are based on nothing tangible or substantial. You might be surprised how many Christians cherish false hopes or live in a dreamworld of some kind. God wants everything we believe in and hope for to have a sure foundation and fulfillment (Jer. 29:11). Take heed that what you are hoping for and what is guiding you is a true revelation from God. The Lord wants to establish our ways and thoughts (Prov. 16:3, 2 Cor. 10:4-5).

**Loneliness** - Loneliness is a spiritual problem. A man could be in a crowd but still be lonely. He could even be married and be lonely. Someone else who sits in the stillness of solitude away from civilization might be totally fulfilled. When a man or woman is lonely, it is a need for more of God. Colossians 2:10 declares, “Ye are complete in Him.” The woman at the well in John 4 had been married five times and was presently living with another man, but she was empty and thirsty. The Lord gave her the remedy. He said, *Drink from Christ who is the Fountain of Living Waters* (Jer. 2:13, Jn. 4:14). Marriage in itself is not a cure for loneliness, nor does it *satisfy* apart from God. Many married people are unhappy and are looking for love elsewhere. What then is the answer?—Fall intimately in love with your Heavenly Bridegroom (Psa. 16:11).

**Guilt, Blame** - Guilt is not a function of the mind. It is a problem in man’s spirit. By dealing with the brain, using shock treatments, psychology, or redefining morality, the real problem is never touched. The *only way* to be freed of guilt is by an honest confession of our faults and sins (Jer. 3:13) and by receiving mercy, pardon and forgiveness from Christ. Man shifts the blame to others to alleviate his feelings of guilt, but an admission of his own faults is the only way to release.

**Perfectionism, Extravagance** - The paradox of a perfectionist is that he will never come to perfection. A perfectionist has no victory unless everything is just the way he wants it. Jesus was the exact opposite of a perfectionist. He did not require everything to be *just so* in order to be happy. He was able to adjust to new situations and people, and to defer to the preferences of others. Actually, a perfectionist is very hard to live with. May we allow God to make us more *tolerant* of life situations and of others, especially those nearest us.

Solomon was a perfectionist and was extravagant (1 Kg.10:4-8). Unfortunately, he was not a perfectionist in his own spiritual life. He was particular only when it concerned his pride, his kingdom, his house, his clothes, his banquets, his arrangements, and his throne. But his inner “vineyard” was neglected.

**Discouragement, Despondency** - Discouragement is the consequence of listening to the wrong voice. It is the direct result of listening to what Satan is saying regarding us and our situations, instead of hearing what God is saying. God is always saying something good. *God is light!* We must not listen to gloom. It is imperative to look beyond our present circumstances and remember the character of Him who said, “I will never leave thee or forsake thee.” Jesus looked beyond His circumstances (Heb.12:2). David encouraged himself in the Lord (1 Sam. 30:6-7). Christians need to [encourage] one another daily because it is so easy to become discouraged and then hardened by all the temptations and pressures around us (Heb. 3:12-13). Never make major decisions (such as marriage) when you are down or discouraged. You will surely make a mistake! Wait for the dawning of a new day when your perspective is better, and you can hear from God more clearly.

**Recluse, Loner** - Being aloof is always an indication of unresolved problems in the heart. A bad childhood and background is one of the greatest reasons a person cannot or will not relate socially. Much enclosure of spirit occurs because of hurts and failures of the past, but these can and *must* be overcome. Every believer needs to find his place and fit in somewhere. To illustrate this—a board in a lumberyard is useless all by itself, but when it is joined with other boards in a building, it becomes an integral part of the building. A transmission, when removed from a car, is of no value. But when it is put into its rightful place in a car and it connects the engine to the wheels, it is of vital importance. Hot coals of a fire keep each other sizzling, but when one coal is moved off by itself, it goes out and turns black. This is analogous to a believer who is separated and off by himself. It is actually quite unscriptural to be a lone Christian (Psa. 68:6).

**Insecurities, Complexes** - God has an answer for every problem man faces. Everyone needs a good self-image and self-worth. Some men are not able to love their wives because they do not love or accept themselves. “He that loveth his wife loveth himself” (Eph. 5:28). “Love thy neighbor as *thyself*” (Matt. 22:39). Therefore, an individual must be able to accept himself. Insecurities and complexes are rooted in *lies*—“You are not good enough, you do not measure up, you are not as good as others, you are not worthy, etc.” Quickened truth can release us from the lies of the adversary!

“Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low” (Lu. 3:5). Valleys are low places that represent areas where we are *deficient and lacking* (feelings of inferiority, insecurities). God promises, “I will fill every valley.” Mountains are high places and are representative of *pride and haughtiness*. Paradoxically **both** of these can be in our lives at the same time—areas of pride, but other low-lying valleys of inadequacy that must be filled. God may require some of our high places of pride and arrogance to be leveled low *first*, before the valleys in our life can be filled.

**Cynicism, Sarcasm** - Cynicism is questioning the good motives and actions of others. Satan accused Job of serving God only for what he could get for himself. “Huh, he is not serving you because he loves you. Just take away all his blessings and he will curse you to your face” (Job 1:9-11). Cynicism is the exact opposite of the divine nature which bears, endures and believes all things. Divine love chooses to believe the best about others. Sarcasm comes from a Greek word which means *bitter laugh*. Sarcasm is produced by bitterness, and it seeks to undermine another with bitter humor. Job had turned sour during his trial and said to his friends, “No doubt ye are the people and wisdom will die with you” (Job 12:2). He was saying in effect, “When you die wisdom will cease! You have a monopoly on wisdom; no one else knows anything at all.”

**Unthankfulness, Complaining** - (Rom.1:21). Ingratitude is the first step to backsliding. Unthankfulness is often a major reason a Christian has no victory. Thankfulness conquers all bitterness and criticism, and brings the victory. (Numbers 11:1 shows how God feels about complaining.) When wives have problems with their husbands, the one main ingredient that is almost always missing in their lives is *thankfulness*.

When you ask a troubled wife to make a list of all her husband's good points and where he is praiseworthy, often she can't think of *any* offhand. She has only zoomed in upon his bad points and has long forgotten how to praise him and thank him for all his good points. Whenever God mentions husbands and wives in scripture, He always starts with the *woman* (Col. 3:18-19, Eph. 5:22-25, 1 Pet. 3:1-7). The woman is often *the key* to the marriage (Prov. 14:1). Most men cannot respond to God until the attitude of their wives is right toward them (Tit. 2:5). God always addresses the attitudes of a subordinate first. A man knows when his wife is resisting him in her heart. Bad attitudes, unthankfulness, and discontentment are three areas where women struggle the most in their marriage. If these are worked at, it probably will turn the marriage around. Try it and see!

**Introversion of spirit** - (Retreating and withdrawing into one's self, constantly dwelling upon and being absorbed with sorrow or a hurt.) Introversion is connected with virtually all mental-emotional disorders. The spirit and soul sink into themselves—so much so, that even the physical organs of the body press inward too. This is one explanation for feelings of tightness and suffocation, or having shortness of breath. Introversion of spirit causes the eyes not to focus on what is outside, but rather to look within or back at the past. This is that glassy, spaced out look.

Therefore, it is imperative for people to shift their concentration away from sorrows and *themselves* on to the needs of others. Most mental and emotional disorders are the result of *self-centeredness*, a retreating and withdrawing into one's self, and a concentration on ME. I recently learned that a thorn is actually *an introverted leaf*. Thorns resulted from the Fall! When a man is wrapped up into himself, he is like a thorn. Thorns and *introversion* are a result of the Fall . . . something God wants to unwind!

**Shame, Embarrassment, Shyness, Loss of Face** - Jesus refused to hide His face from shame and spitting (Isa. 50:6, Acts 5:41). This is a mark of *true* strength. Losing face or humiliation to any degree in the Orient is reason for suicide. But suicide is only an "out," a sign of weakness! Shyness, too, can stem from pride for it is a fear of exposure or making self vulnerable to a mistake or to being hurt. Shyness and self-consciousness are bondages God desires to free His people from, and pride could be at the bottom of them. Ask God for grace to overcome embarrassment and shame (2 Tim. 2:1).

**Skepticism, Pessimism, Negativism** - Unbelief is the father of these! (They could be hereditary. Ask God to deliver you from the bondage of this spirit and mentality.) But also, people who are not obeying God have problems with unbelief, just as Israel did in the wilderness (Heb. 3:12, 11:6). God is against "*an evil heart of unbelief*." Practice saying something positive when you are surrounded by darkness (Rev. 12:11). Choose to look at the bright side. Above all, be obedient!

**Excuses** - "And they all with one consent began to make excuse" (Lu. 14:18-20). People will give all the reasons why they cannot come to church or do the will of God. But what man calls *reasons*, God calls *excuses*. There will be no excuses before the throne of God on the Day of Judgment. We all understand human nature very well. We know that people do what they really *want* to do. They always manage to find the time and substance for it. But for what they really do *not* want to do, they find excuses.

**Evasiveness, Rationalizations** - Some Christians have the mentality of a "Philadelphia lawyer." They search for *technicalities* and *loopholes* in the scriptures that would justify the sins they desire to practice. But God wants His people to look into the Word of God with an honest and believing heart! May we allow the Word of God to change our hearts, rather than *bending God's Word* to make it say what we want it to. (Prov. 30:5-6, Matt. 5:19, Rev. 22:18-19, 2 Pet. 3:16).

King Saul was evasive. Earlier in his life the people found him "*hiding among the stuff*" (1 Sam. 10:22). This was indicative of his character, and his future reign as king. He could never face the issues squarely! In First Samuel 15:13-24, the prophet had to confront Saul repeatedly before he finally broke down and admitted his disobedience and that he had failed to do the will of God.

**Procrastination** - (To put off to the future) Scripture warns, “*Today*, if you will hear his voice.” Tomorrow may be too late (Heb. 3:7, 2 Cor. 6:2). “*Now* is the accepted time, *now* is the day of salvation.” (see Mt. 24:44, Prov. 3:28, 24:33, Eph. 5:16, Isa. 55:6.) The attitude that “someday I will do it” can destroy us. What is put off today may never get done, or it may be done too late. What is practiced becomes a life-style. Are we aware that *neglecting* the will of God can be just as harmful as *rejecting* the will of God. Sins of *omission*, and what we failed to do can be as serious as sins we *committed*. For example, failing to bring our children up in church is a sin of omission, a sin of what we did *not* do.

**Indecision, Vacillation** - (An inability to decide or a tendency to change the mind frequently; hesitation. To sway to and fro, to waver, fluctuate, or be irresolute.) This is characteristic of a double-minded man. He cannot make up his mind because he is torn between two desires (Jas.1:6-8). The result is instability. God rebuked Israel through the prophet Elijah saying, “How long [limp] ye between two opinions?” (1 Kgs.18:21). There are some who never get committed to a church or established into the will of God because of *indecision*. May we not spend our life going back and forth. Let us ask God for a resolved heart to do His will at any cost! Fears also can hinder one from making up his mind. God can give us grace over the spirit of indecision. Jesus had a determined mind. He declared, “I have set my face like a flint” (Isa. 50:7).

Learn to finish what you start! Do not begin one project, leave it half done and start another, then another. Jesus is the Author and Finisher of our faith. The Lord always finishes what He starts. God wants us to do likewise (Heb.12:2, 1 Sam. 3:12, Zech. 4:9). *Let's be finishers!* If we make it a habit to finish tasks, we will also finish our life's work here on earth!

**Criticism, Reviling, Denouncing, Mocking, Sowing of Discord** - (Sins of the tongue) Most sins we commit are with the tongue. The tongue is the most powerful member of our body because *spirit* issues forth from here. The power of life and death is in the tongue. God demands a correction in our conversation *before* He delivers us from our problems (Psa. 50:23). One sure way to lose our children to the world is by criticizing the church and the pastor. When the children hear our daily criticisms, their heart closes and they become disenchanted with the church, lose faith in the ministry, and go into the world. Going to a Christian school will not save our children unless there is reality at home. Many young people in Christian schools end up going into the world, especially when the parents are not *real* at home. How many children do you know who are walking with God, when their parents are not? Almost none! What are we talking about at home?

**Lust, Immodesty, Impurity** - (Unchecked appetites) Getting married does not control lust. If lust is not conquered before marriage, it will still be a problem after marriage. Many people who look at pornography or for sex on the street are married people, not single. Lust cannot be satisfied (Ezek.16:28-30). It must be purged from the heart. Lust is a lack of the fruit of temperance. Lust is *nourished* by constant wrong meditations, reading the wrong books, and watching TV programs that are lustful. It is also fed by opening our spirit to sensual music, being in the wrong places with the wrong people, and not spending time in God's presence seeking for new infillings of the His Spirit. “If we walk in the Spirit we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh” (Gal. 5:16). Premarital relations create future conflicts in marriage such as *guilt, distrust, and a loss of respect*. It is *evil* to stir up passions in a boyfriend or girlfriend that cannot be lawfully fulfilled. Make it your goal to be totally honorable during your dating and courtship days. Remember, courtship is the *foundation* of the rest of your life!

**You do not have to go through life tormented with lust. The “dead to sin” experience (Rom. 6:6) can break the power of lust. Seek God earnestly for an encounter with Him at the cross. God can *arrest* lust.**

The way a woman dresses has a tremendous effect on a man, even more so than vice-versa. A godly woman will dress in a fashion that draws attention to her countenance, not to other parts of her body. Modesty is always in season (1 Pet. 3:3-4). Peter says that the grooming of a woman's *inner life* (a meek and quiet spirit) is even more important than outward grooming (caring for the hair, jewelry, and having nice clothes). He is *not* saying, however, that outer grooming is unimportant!

**Snobbishness, Class-consciousness** - (Looking down on others, a feeling of superiority) The Apostle Paul said, “If any man think himself to be something when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself” (Gal. 6:3, Job 40:12). “In lowliness of mind, let each esteem others better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3). See also Romans 12:10, 12:16. Why should we feel superior to others? Everything we have is simply *loaned* to us by God (1 Cor. 4:7).

**Fanaticism, Immoderation, Intemperance** - (Excesses, extremes, overdoing something) Even good things can be carried too far—foods we eat or abstain from, neglect of the body or over-caring for it, convictions, lifestyles, etc. God desires *balance*. Paul said, “If a man strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned except he strive lawfully” [or according to the rules] (2 Tim. 2:5, 1 Cor. 9:25). Zeal must be mingled with prudence. Extremism can be harmful in anything. Even with spiritual matters it is possible to overdo it. Many sincere people have become casualties of *burn out* while trying with all their strength to serve God. Some have ended up with nervous breakdowns or broken homes. A man could lose his marriage and his children if he fails to spend time with them. When a man loses his family, he has lost his testimony and ministry too. Remember moderation!

**Compromise, Disloyalty, Unfaithfulness** - Compromise is being disloyal and unfaithful to the truths that have been entrusted to us by God. We are stewards (trustees) of His mysteries. Will you or I be faithful to what God has revealed? If we are faithful, then God will give us more. But if we are unfaithful, God will take away what we presently possess (1 Cor. 4:1-2, Mk. 4:24-25). God is a good economist. He will not entrust His mysteries and treasures to believers who treat them lightly. Proverbs 23:23 admonishes, “Buy the truth and sell it not.” The man who has paid no price for the truths he knows never really appreciates them, and lets them go for a cheap price. How much have the truths we know cost us?

**Flattery** - (A snare, a hook) To say something encouraging when a person is down is a blessing. But flattery goes beyond this, and the motive is not right. Flattery overdoes it and *wants something in return*. Never flatter anyone to get something in return, and never *receive* flattery from others. When people flatter or praise you, learn to *deflect* it to others and to God. It is easier to handle criticism and rejection, than flattery. Flattery inflates our ego and pride, and this can lead to a terrible fall. Learn to thank God for critics and those who do not appreciate you (2 Cor. 12:6-10, Prov. 7:5, 2 Sam. 15:1-6).

**Envy, Jealousy** - (Envy is a fear of being *replaced*, and has feelings of unhappiness and ill will because others have something desirable that they do not have.) Rachel envied Leah because she had children, but Rachel was barren (Gen. 30:1). It was envy that nailed Christ to the cross (Mk. 15:9-15). Jealousy is a suspicion and a fear of any kind of rivalry. Jealousy demands absolute loyalty (1 Sam. 18:7-9). *Envy* wants something that another possesses. *Jealousy* wants to be unequalled and uncontested. *Competition* and *comparing* are at the root of envy and jealousy, and these violate the Word of God. The Lord charges us through Paul not to compare and measure ourselves with each other (2 Cor. 10:12). First of all, the most important thing in our life should be to glorify God, not to draw attention to ourselves or to get something for ourselves. Scripture exhorts us to esteem others *better* than ourselves and to prefer others *before* ourselves (Phil. 2:3, Rom. 12:10). Having our own personal promises from God is another key for victory over envy and jealousy in our life. This takes our eyes off what others have (Jn. 21:21-22). Let us ask God for *our own* promises.

**Fear, Phobia, Anxiety, Hysteria, Alarmism, Worry** - David said, “I sought the Lord and he heard me, and he delivered me from all my fears” (Psa. 34:4). Fears are not of God, they only hinder us from doing the will of God (2 Tim. 1:7, 1 Jn. 4:18). Fears originate from many sources and can exist for many reasons. God has an answer for every single one of our fears, and He longs to give it. Fear is *not* our portion! Fear is an emotion of the soul, and the soul must not rule but must come under the subjection of the spirit and Holy Spirit. Most wives have a multitude of fears and need an understanding, praying husband to help them over the hurdle. Women are exhorted to *soberness and sobriety* in scripture, meaning they must conquer hysteria, anxiety, and alarmism (Tit. 2:4, 1 Tim. 2:9, 2:15, 1 Pet. 3:6). Many times God would use the wife to speak to her husband but when she is *out of control* with hysteria or alarm, then she will distort what God is saying and the man's heart will be closed and unable to receive what she is trying to say.



**Dogmatic** - (Self-opinionated) Dogmatism is arrogantly and authoritatively asserting one's opinion, without having anything substantial to back it up. God rebuked Job for "multiplying his words without knowledge." Job spoke presumptuously about issues he knew little or nothing about. Does this sound familiar? (Read Psa.131:1-2, Job 34:35, 35:16, 38:2, 42:3, 1 Cor. 8:2). Until God opens our understanding, we do not know anything at all (Dan. 2:30). We need a mind of humility (1 Pet. 5:5).

**Pride** - Pride is our biggest problem. We have absolutely no reason to be proud for the following reasons:

- We were created by another. We came as helpless infants and with no choice in the matter (Job 38:4).
- We have a sinful, fallen nature that we cannot change. We cannot make ourselves good (Jer.13:23).
- We possess no ability or power in ourselves (1 Cor. 4:7, Jas.1:17, Jn. 3:27). All ability comes from God.
- We cannot control our destiny or future; we cannot guide ourselves or understand ourselves (Jer.10:23).

**Self-righteousness** - Job, in finding fault with God while seeing no fault in himself, made himself more righteous than God (Job 35:2). And God told him about it, too (Job 40:2). Any righteousness or goodness we possess came from God. Thus, we have nothing to glory in, nor do we have any right to look down upon others. Read Luke 18:9-14.

**Self-rejection** - Self-rejection can be just as crippling as self-exaltation. Believers need a holy self-confidence and self-worth, just as Christ had. Jesus had no complexes or feelings of inferiority. In First Corinthians 12:15-16, Paul exposes the attitude of self-rejection—"Because I am not as important as the next fellow, I am no good at all." This mentality keeps people from using their gift or doing *anything*. This again is the sin of *comparing*. First Corinthians 12:21 goes to the other extreme, of self-superiority—"I am so important that others are not necessary."

**Indifference, Hardness, Carelessness** - (Apathy, a lack of interest, concern or feeling; an "I don't care" attitude) While a Christian must not be controlled by moods, emotions or hysteria, God does not want us to go to the other extreme and become hardened and emotionless, a stoic. Being placid or indifferent is the result of hardening the heart and closing ourselves off from others. God wants to rekindle a new flame in our hearts toward our call, our brethren, our family, and *Him*. If you are destitute of love, then God can *create* love within you. He is the Creator (Col. 4:17, Rev. 2:4, 3:15-20).

**Inhibitions, Timidities, Backwardness** - (Shyness and enclosure of spirit that hinders one from doing the will of God) Jeremiah felt inhibited, but God said to him, "Say not I am a child...for thou shalt go to all that I shall send thee, and whatsoever I command thee, thou shalt speak" (Jer.1:7-10, Ex. 4:10-12). Things that constrict us will gradually lose their grip as we obey God and step out by faith to do the things He tells us. There is grace (divine enablement) for everything God tells us to do (2 Tim.1:7). Confidence is gained each time we obey God.

**Overly serious, Humorless** - God is relaxed and at peace. He is not nervous or depressed. He is a God of joy, and He has a great sense of humor. The joy of the Lord is our strength. Satan harasses those who take life and themselves too seriously. Satan, however, has a difficult time dragging down the believer who is filled with *joy*. Not only is a sense of humor necessary for good spiritual and emotional health, it also is one of the most important and desirable qualities a man or woman looks for in a mate! If we allow Him to, God will bring the right circumstances and the right people into our lives in order to create the perfect Christian balance (Ecc. 3:4).

**Self-centered, Self-seeking, Self-conscious** - (Absorbed with one's self, needs, and wants) Paul said, "All seek their own [interests], not those things which are Jesus Christ's" (Phil. 2:21). The remedy is to take practical steps to turn the focus off *ourselves* onto others and their heartaches. Practice praying for others, thinking of others, and serving them. Learn to put others first. Ponder how others are feeling. Put yourself in their circumstances. Worshipping the Lord also turns the focus off ourselves onto Him. For this reason man benefits more from *giving* worship than God does from receiving it.

**Argument, Debate, Contention** - (Proverbs 13:10). “*Only* by pride cometh contentions.” Pride is the source of arguments and debates. When there is an impasse or a deadlock between two people, surely there is a problem of pride. Pride must have his way and have the last word, and there is no yielding! It always takes *two* for an argument—therefore, when there is an argument, we are part of the problem. Somewhere there is uncrucified pride. The book of Job is filled with arguments between good brethren. Everyone’s *spiritual pride* surfaced.

**Anger, Wrath** - Anger happens when our “*rights*” are stepped on. When rights are surrendered to God, anger ceases. Relinquish to God your most cherished possessions—home, car, clothes, reputation, and even your right to be loved and understood. Fighting and bitterness come forth when our rights are intruded upon. Dedicate your rights to God. Remember, *every injustice is a blessing in disguise* (Gen. 50:20). The life of Jesus was filled with injustices, yet He never demanded fairness. His rights were committed to His Father who judges righteously, and this was His secret to victory. Jesus had no anger problems (1 Pet. 2:21-23, Eph. 4:31-32, Col. 3:8, Jas.1:19-20, Psa. 37:8, Prov.14:29, 15:1, 16:32).

**Self-pity, Moodiness** - (“Poor me”) According to Paul, our temptations and struggles are *common*, no matter how extraordinary they may seem to be (1 Cor.10:13). It would be beneficial if we could realize how frustrated and lonely others are feeling. Maybe their struggles are worse than ours! A major step toward conquering self-pity is to first recognize that *everyone* is feeling the same things we are. Therefore, by expending time ministering to others, our own frustrations and soulish maladies could be alleviated. Jesus shed no tears for His own griefs, but bled drops of blood for mine.

**Bitterness, Grudges, Resentment, Unforgiveness, Hatred** - (*Grudge*—a cherished dislike; *Hate*—to greatly dislike; *Bitterness*—a quiet anger; *Resentment*—a harboring of evil feelings because of an offense; *Unforgiveness*—not giving in or giving up, but desiring to punish.) These are all synonymous, but have separate meanings as well. Still, they all have one thing in common—the desire to clutch to evil feelings. Therefore, God must do a deep redemptive work in our hearts so that we are enabled to *freely release* people from all offenses they have committed against us. God is able to give us a new heart of flesh and to take away our hard, stony heart. Divorce happens because of a hardened heart that can no longer forgive or give in (Mt.19:7-8). Each one of us is in dire need of a soft and new heart (Ezek.11:19-20, 36:25-27).

**Hypocrisy** - (Feigning to be what one is not) Hypocrisy is also self-blindness. “Thou that judgest doest the same things.” “Judge not that ye be not judged” (Matt. 7:1-5, Rom. 2:1). Jesus addressed the wretchedness of hypocrisy many times. How paradoxical that a man can so disdain and criticize another for something of which he is even *more* guilty. When we are extra harsh with another, we should examine ourselves and ask God to show us how *we* are blind to the same flaw.

**Deceit, Lying, Manipulating, Scheming, Falsehood** - These are all related and have a common denominator. The motive is to get something for self and to protect self. Rebecca was guilty of all these. Never mind rebuking Satan! These can be in the heart irrespective of Satan and his demons. Rebecca taught her favorite son Jacob to deal deceitfully behind his father's back, just as she did (Genesis 27). She was a manipulator and taught her son to be a conniver too. Jacob suffered for the rest of his life because of the crookedness she taught him. Rebecca never saw her favorite son again after the scandal of Genesis chapter 27. One sure way to ruin a good marriage is by repeating the actions of Rebecca. God hates deceit, but loves those who practice speaking the truth. As a matter of fact, the saints who will be the closest to the Lord in heaven are those *with no guile* in their tongue (Rev.14:5, Psa.120:2, 2 Pet.1:16, Prov. 8:7-8, Col. 3:9).

**Unreliable, Undependable, Changeable, Unstable** - (Jude 1:13 “Wandering stars”) Stars are used to find geographical position and location. They are consistent year after year. But *wandering stars* are erratic, roving about with no fixed destination. God says some people are like wandering stars (inconsistent, irregular, and undependable).

God wants men and women who are reliable, steadfast and stable so that others can find their way by looking at their lives. God cannot elevate people into vital positions of leadership if they are unreliable and irresolute (Jas.1:6-8, Prov. 24:21, Heb.13:9, Psa.15:4).

**Impetuous, Impulsive, Hastiness** - (Acting suddenly without thought, rash; being driven forcefully ahead by impulse.) This is the opposite of one who stops to weigh the consequences of what he is about to do or say. Learn the grace of contemplation (Heb. 12:1, Psa. 27:14, 37:7-8). Men like Moses and Jeremiah took time to hear what God had to say about the situations they faced (Lev. 24:12, Jer. 42:5-7). Young Peter's impulsiveness disgraced the Lord, and himself.

**Slum, Filthiness, Slothfulness** - This can be a spirit that is passed on from generation to generation. You can remove people from ghettos and put them into nice apartments, but soon after that becomes a slum too. Yet God is well able to cleanse and deliver one from the power of this foul spirit. Laziness and sloppiness are the exact opposite of God's nature. Our Lord Jesus was neat and clean, even though He was poor materially. He was highly disciplined, pouring out His soul unto death for others (Isa. 53:12). God frowns upon laziness and addresses the subject often in the Proverbs. A lazy man never amounts to *anything* in God's kingdom (2 Thes. 3:10-13).

**Philosophies, Reasonings, Humanism** - (Man's ideas) These stem from pride and independent minds who have rejected the Word of God (Rom.1:21-32, 2 Cor.10:4-5, Rom. 8:7, Col. 2:8, Obad.1:3). Many of the ancient Greek philosophers who are so highly praised today were homosexuals. Therefore, we should never embrace the philosophy of the ancient Greeks or any other philosophy that contradicts God's Word. Please do not go to a university to study human philosophy!

**Partiality, Favoritism** - "Isaac loved Esau...but Rebecca loved Jacob" (Gen. 25:28). Favoritism divided their home. Favoritism is carnal love, love that is dictated by *preferences*. (I like his or her personality, looks, or traits more than the other one, etc.) Divine love is impartial and unselfish. It accepts and loves people as they are (1 Cor.13:5, Jas. 3:17).

**Overly Talkative** - This is a violation of the Word of God and a lack of self-control. Let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak" (Jas.1:19, Psa. 39:1, Prov.10:19, 29:11). Let us learn to be good listeners. It is poor manners to interrupt a conversation and change the subject because something the speaker said reminded us of something else! Allow the speaker to finish what he was saying first! Good listeners also have the benefit of accumulating wisdom.

**Insomnia** - (Sleeplessness) Although this could be a physical problem, more often insomnia is a spiritual problem. It stems from unrest in the mind, spirit and soul. Pills only offer some superficial relief. What are some of the real reasons for sleeplessness—worry, tension, fears, bad feelings, taking the job home with you, or meditating on something that hurt you. Have we forgiven? Are we too competitive? Are the motives in our heart right? Is worry fraying our nerves? (Psa. 37:1, Prov. 3:24, Psa.127:2, 4:8, Mt.11:28-29). Some doctors estimate that ninety percent of their patients go away without having their *real* problems cured. Physicians can prescribe pills to help ease some of the misery, but the root needs are often untouched because they are *spiritual*. Thus, it is the Church that should have the real answers!

**Debts** - (Rom.13:8 - "Owe no man anything, but love.") Debts are an indicator of spiritual problems (though there are periods when the will of God allows us to pass through lean times - Phil. 4:12). Our national debt is astronomical! It is a sign of poor management, waste, overspending, no discipline, poor judgment, and a violation of many other spiritual principles. God wants to lift each of us out of the *bondage* of debt. Debt prevents us from doing His will. *How we handle money will determine whether we succeed in the ministry or as a Christian* (Lu.16:10-11). Ralph Mahoney, founder of World Map Outreach, was in a Christian boot camp for the training of young missionaries many years ago. His particular duty was to cook, and he asked all the eighteen boys to chip in \$2.00 each week. Only two and a half boys responded.

When forest fires broke out and the young men found quick employment at \$40.00 a day fighting forest fires, Ralph concluded, “At last, everyone will be able to put in their \$2.00 each week.” Still only two and a half boys gave their share. The other fellows were off buying fishing rods, rifles, guitars and cameras. And then Mr. Mahoney made a humorous but heart-searching statement. He said, “How many of them do you think are in the ministry today? You guessed it—two and a half!” Two are in the ministry full time, and one is part-time.

**Covetousness, Greed, Hoarding** - (Selfishness, clutching, grasping) God Himself is a giver. He said, “It is more blessed to *give* than to receive” (Acts 20:35). Contrariwise, the fallen nature hoards to itself. *Givers* are the happiest people in the world, hoarders are the unhappiest. Is it not ironic that hoarders who are trying the hardest to be happy are the world’s unhappiest people? This is because unknowingly they are violating numerous laws of life (Prov.11:24, 13:7, Lu. 6:38, Isa. 58:7-11). Christians also who are tight-handed with their money seldom receive any significant spiritual breakthroughs in their lives. Therefore the believer who longs to prosper in his spiritual life learns to be a *good giver*.

**Domineering, Overbearing, Ambition** - (Inordinate desire to control everything, including people’s lives) Lucifer wanted to be God and sought to run the universe (Isa.14:12-14). The fallen nature wants to dominate others, and wants to be *number one*. Our motive should be to *serve* God and others (see 1 Pet. 5:3, 2 Cor.1:24, 1 Kg.12:7), not ourselves. “He that will be great, shall be servant of all” (Mk.10:43-45).

**Demanding, Challenging** - We should never demand God or others to do anything for us! A demanding nature *reaps* anger when it does not get what it wants. (Anger and self-will are married to each other - Gen. 49:6, Tit.1:7). We should never demand God to give an account or an explanation of what He is doing, and never challenge His wisdom for the way He has led us. Job criticized God for the circumstances He allowed to come into His life. Israel, too, challenged God and tempted Him in the wilderness. It is all right to *ask, appeal, or beseech*, but never to demand or challenge God. He only shows grace to those with a humble attitude. Our attitude is what counts (Job 38:2-4, 40:2, Num.14:2-3).

**Bragging, Boasting, Glorifying** - Because we were created by another and we have no power of our own, and because everything we have was given to us by another, we have absolutely no reason to brag or boast. When we do, it is because *deception* has crept in and we have *forgotten* that we are but dust . (Gen.18:27, Jer. 9:23-24, 1 Cor. 4:7, Gal. 6:3).

**Coldness, Frigidity, Closed Personality** - (A withdrawing, retreating, or the removing of one’s spirit from another) This can damage or ruin a relationship, and it certainly prohibits a relationship from growing. Without whispering a word, you can say to someone—“Get out of my life.” Some families are very closed and will never express to each other their true feelings or what they really think. Others lack warmth and take any friendly gesture as being “too personal!” But I believe God wants His people to drop their guard and learn to be more open and *transparent* with one another. First John 3:14 says, “We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren” (see 1 Jn.1:7, Col. 3:12, Pro. 18:24, Rom.12:10, 1 Pet. 3:8, Rev. 3:20). Frigidity in a marriage relationship is almost always a spiritual problem—hard feelings, fears, guilt, or insecurities. When these spiritual problems are cleared up, there is freedom to show warmth and love. Unity does not begin in the physical, it begins in the spirit (the same mind and goals, with all the supersensitivities remedied). People do not need to go to sex therapists to learn how to touch or respond to each other. The problem is spiritual. Therefore men and women should go to God for the answers, not the world.

**Infatuation** - (Fantasy, a form of deception) Infatuation means being inspired and controlled by passion so as to deprive of reason and sound judgment. When this happens, an individual is being ruled by his soul instead of the spirit, by emotions rather than by the truth. Ask God to show you how He sees situations and people, rather than being led on by your feelings. *Our eyes and emotions can deceive us so easily* (Prov. 4:23). Infatuation can cause one to make disastrous choices and decisions that are irreversible. Much caution and prayer should be exercised in these crucial matters of life (Jn. 7:24).

**Unreasonableness** - (Showing little sense or judgment) The extreme of this is a reprobate mind which is incapable of sound judgment. A mixed up mind is God's curse to the disobedient and wicked (Rom.1:28). The ability to *know and hearken to what is right*, is a gift of God. We cannot discern what is right and wrong on our own (Deut. 29:3-4, Prov. 20:12, 11:14, 26:16). Unreasonableness is a spiritual problem, a problem of the heart. A heart that is willing to do God's will *understands* what is right and discerns matters (Jn. 7:17, Mt. 5:8). Ask God to deliver you from the curse of blindness and unteachableness. Paul prayed to be delivered from unreasonable (unteachable, unreconcilable) men (2 Thes. 3:2).

**Doubt, Unbelief** - These are the awful results of not obeying God, but hardening the heart. When God speaks, He expects and desires us to receive what He says with full assurance, not with questionings or challengings. He is worthy to be trusted! If we do not trust God, He may allow people to come into our lives who have no confidence or trust in *us*, just to help us understand how He feels. Doubt and unbelief are heart problems. (Mk. 6:51-52, 16:14, Heb. 3:8-12). (Heb.11:6).

**Brutishness** - (coarse, base, gross, uncivilized, irrational, animal-like, savageness) Scripture calls every man *brutish* who rejects the Word of God and despises correction. And he will have the characteristics of an animal, too. "He that hateth reproof is brutish [or like an animal]" (Prov.12:1, Psa. 92:6, 94:8, Jer.10:8,14, 21). Sometimes when a man of God backslides, he becomes like an animal because he has resented and refused correction.

**Rebellion, Defiance** - (Open, bold, resistance to authority) Man is *born* with defiance. "The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth" (Gen. 8:21). Dr. James Dobson says that *defiance* is the one thing you cannot overlook in a child. You can be easier on childish irresponsibilities (Bobby left his books on the bus again, or forgot to take out the garbage.); but *defiance* must be dealt with from infancy or it will grow until it becomes the ruination of your child. It is much easier to bend a small tree (one or two years old), than trying to straighten an eighty-year-old oak, so deal with it immediately.

**Drunkenness, and Other "Outs"** - Drugs, alcohol, dream worlds, and adultery are all an attempt to *dull* the mind to reality (Prov. 20:1). These are an escapism from feelings or situations one would rather not face, *an exit* from issues he feels he cannot cope with. And indeed no one can cope with these outside of divine assistance! A Spirit-filled believer has enabling grace available to help him overcome these bondages. Therefore, when these habits continue to overpower a Christian, available grace has been unappropriated or rejected, and the real issues evaded.

In Isaiah 22:11-13, the people had engineered an underground water canal in preparation for a long siege. God had raised up an enemy and was sending him against Israel to get their attention to turn them back to Himself. God was calling them to weeping and repentance. But what did the people do? Instead of turning back to God, they looked at the bleak situation and said in effect, "Let us eat and drink and get drunk, and maybe tomorrow the problem will go away!" This is the reason for repeating what has already been said. Grace for deliverance is available, but often people would rather not face themselves or their situations, or they refuse to put something right in their lives (Jer.18:11-12). Yes, drugs and alcohol call for deliverance from Satan, but Satan has gained entry because of a problem in the heart. God's condemnation of man is never because man has problems or sins, but because he *rejects the answer*. Read John 3:19.

**Anorexia** - This also is a demonic bondage, but the real issue is in the heart. Anorexia is rooted in a low self-image, a fear of being ugly or overweight, and a fear of being rejected. But in addition to this, people do not accept themselves the way God made them and are critical of God's handiwork. Someone has said, "*Criticizing the design is criticizing the Designer.*" Many people wish they looked like someone else, and this too could be rooted in pride and vanity. Christians must accept the way God made them and not compare themselves with others (2 Cor.10:12). Let us dedicate ourselves to doing God's will and glorifying Him with the body and mind He has entrusted to us by His wisdom.

**Gambling** - This is an obsession. It is *the fruit* of living in a dream world—“*The next time I'll strike it rich!*” God never ordained life to be such that a man should get something for nothing. Man must earn his way by sweat and toil. God intended for us to put our trust in *Him*, not in the *lottery*. “My soul, wait thou only upon *God*; for my expectation is from *Him*” (Psa. 62:5). Gambling is a focus on wrong expectations, a desire for instant success without working for it. It is not God’s way.

**Gluttony** - (Immoderation, lack of the fruit of temperance) Overeating can also be a *spiritual* problem. People tend to overeat when they are lonely or depressed. God wants to remedy the *root* of loneliness and sadness. Also, do not be a glutton for praise and compliments, especially from leaders (Prov. 23:2,3,8). You will vomit up what you *swallow*.

**Cursing, Swearing** - Peter cursed and swore when he was under pressure, and also because of fear. Romans 3:14-18 shows three main reasons people struggle with the problem of cursing and swearing:

- 1.) Bitterness
- 2.) No peace in the heart
- 3.) A lack of the fear of God

Romans 3:14 connects cursing with bitterness. Therefore all *bitterness* must be remedied. Romans 3:17 says that people who curse do not know the way of peace. A *troubled heart* is at the root of most swearing. God wants to give His people new victories of peace. Romans 3:18 also states that there is no fear of God in people who curse and swear. A new reverence for God therefore is a vital key for controlling the problem of cursing and swearing.

**Accident Proneness** - This is the work of an evil spirit which must be bound and cast out. Some people jumble almost everything they touch. They need deliverance. Consider the following promises from God: (Prov. 3:23, 4:12, Psa.1:3, 91:11-12).

**Stealing** - (Taking what is not ours) Stealing invites other evils into the heart. A person who steals will also *lie* to cover it up. Theft is one of the cardinal sins in the last days (Rev. 9:21). Judas was a thief, and this led to betrayal of the Lord. In Titus 2:10, *purloining* is the stealing of small items. Taking small items causes a breakdown in one’s character which leads to taking bigger things. There are many ways and forms of stealing. Absalom stole the affections of the people by flattery (2 Sam.15:1-6). Also, taking credit for something that belongs to another is stealing.

**Nitpicking, Faultfinding** - “Do all things without murmurings and disputings [faultfinding]” (Phil. 2:14). Jesus was always criticized by faultfinders (Matt. 23:23). Faultfinders are hypocritical because they are guilty of the same things (Matt. 7:1-5, Rom. 2:1). Instead of finding fault, let us try to build up others by reviewing their good points.

**Touchiness, Over sensitiveness** - If a man was “scabbed” (oversensitive, touchy), then he was disqualified from coming into the holy of holies (Lev. 21:20). Unhealed areas and sore spots cause us to *overreact* and to sin. May we allow God to deal with overly sensitive areas of our life.

**Discontentment** - Contentment is God’s gift to the holy (Ecc. 2:26) and to those who have been weaned away from requiring a multitude of “*things*” to be happy. David had been reduced down to one thing—his desire for the Lord. He had found “fullness of joy” in God’s presence (Psa.16:11, 27:4, 1 Tim. 6:6, Phil. 4:11-12). Contentment can be *learned*. God has already given us everything we need for our present happiness. If we cannot be satisfied with what we *have*, then we will never be satisfied with what we *want*. Unhappiness is not caused by the absence of things. Unhappiness is found in a heart that needs to be more captured with God's love and presence. And ladies, a new house is *not* the key to joy!

# “He that overcometh shall inherit all things”

## Revelation 21:7

Revelation 21:7 suggests that we will *not* inherit all the blessings if we do not overcome. What, then, are the obstacles in life that must be overcome?

*We must overcome:*

- Injustices
- Misunderstandings, even from friends
- Long delays from trials and tests
- Hurts and traumas of the past
- Generational iniquities we are born with
- Temptations, habits, and bondages
- Pressures from the world and peers
- Onslaughts of the Adversary
- Everything in our lives that is unlike Christ

We must not settle for *part* of our inheritance. The whole inheritance is granted only to fully developed sons. Sin is defined as “coming short of the mark.” If we fail to go on in our Christian walk, we are sinning (Rev. 3:15-19). Therefore, we must press in with all our hearts in order to reach the goal, win the prize, and possess our full inheritance.

**“For ye have need of patience, that, *after* ye have done the will of God ye might receive the promise” (Hebrews 10:36).**

## OUR WEAPONS

In this section of the course, we are trying to answer three important questions:

- 1.) What exactly is our *inheritance*?
- 2.) What are the *enemies* that must be displaced in order to gain our inheritance?
- 3.) What are the *weapons* we use against these enemies? (2 Cor.10:3-5).

We have already covered the first two questions. Now we would like to have a look at the third—what are the weapons we use against the enemies of our inheritance? These enemies, as already discussed, are intangible. Therefore our weapons must also be intangible and spiritual. We are warring against evil thoughts, undefined motives, hardness of spirit, wounds and traumas, and dark spirits that cloud the minds of men. On the next four pages is a list of our divine weaponry.

The New Testament is filled with military words and expressions—Fight the good fight of faith; We wrestle not against flesh and blood; Arm yourselves with the mind of Christ; I have fought with beasts at Ephesus; I would not have you ignorant of the great conflict I have for you; The weapons of our warfare are not carnal; Fellow prisoners and fellow soldiers; and so forth. Therefore, a Christian must face the fact that he is at war with another kingdom. When a believer is *passive and nonresistant* against Satan, he will gain no victories for himself or for others. Therefore, it is absolutely essential to be aggressive, or our inheritance will go unpossessed (Mt.11:12). Israel, too, had to fight for the land of Canaan (Josh.1:3). Unfortunately they settled for a coexistence with their enemies because of laziness (Josh.18:3, Judg 1:21-36).

**1. INTERCESSION**—(Warfare in the Holy Spirit) Paul said, “The weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty through God to the tearing down of *strongholds*....casting down *imaginings (reasonings)*...and bringing every *thought* into captivity, to the obedience of Christ” (2 Cor.10:4-5). Thus, our battle is against delusions and evil spirits that are blinding the minds of men (2 Cor. 4:3-4). There is a spiritual veil over people's minds, and they are unable to receive what is being preached. Therefore, preaching is not enough! It must be preceded by weeks and sometimes months of intercession.

### Intercession does several things:

a.) Intercession is *God speaking through us* against Satan and the powers of darkness. By intercession we are weakening and binding the dark spirits that are blinding our audiences. We may have to hammer and bruise these spirits repeatedly for months, whether by sharp rebukes in other tongues, or in English, or both (1 Cor.15:32, Eph. 6:12,). Intercession removes the veil that covers the minds of the people so that they are enabled to make their decision for Christ (Isa. 25:7).

b.) Intercession also brings conviction to our listeners. The power of the Holy Spirit shows the people where they are wrong. Intercession brings conviction and the fear of the Lord—“*I am going the wrong way, I am heading toward judgment!*”

c.) Intercession releases *life and power*. On the mission field it is *futile* just to preach! Preaching must be preceded by much prayer. People's minds are blinded by Satanic forces and also by generations of superstitions, traditions, and worldly philosophies. These obstacles plagued the Apostle Paul's listening audiences. Paul warred against these dark powers in prayer, then he presented the truth to his listeners. His results were staggering! Missionaries have said, “It will take generations for our people to change because they are so steeped in tradition and superstition.” But God is greater than this! Paul visited many difficult mission fields. He prayed mightily against the ruling evil forces (others striving with him in prayer—2 Cor.1:11, Phil. 4:2-4), and then he preached. God convicted and changed people. Paul had tremendous results in just a few years. In ten years he had flourishing churches in many parts of the civilized world. Paul never fostered the idea that it would take generations for the people to change.



Intercession is also necessary to bring all believers into *maturity*. Paul said he “travailed in birth” until Christ could be totally formed in the lives of the immature Galatians (Gal. 4:19). He prayed day and night exceedingly for the new Thessalonian believers, in order that their faith could be perfected (1 Thes. 3:10). He also felt *great conflict* and pressure as he interceded for the Colossian church (Col. 2:1).

**2. THE WORD OF GOD**—(The Sword of the Spirit - Ephesians 6:17.) Satan has always feared the sharp sword and those who know how to handle it skillfully. The Word of God is also a Light that exposes the enemy (Psa.119:130). The Word of God, when anointed, shows us what is wrong in our hearts and what to do about it. Jesus defeated Satan with the Sword (Matt. 4:4, 4:7, 4:10). Make sure your sword is sharp and that you know the scriptures thoroughly! Pray that God will give you wisdom to know how to *apply* scripture.

**3. THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS**— All the nine spiritual gifts mentioned in First Corinthians 12:7-11 are *weapons* that give the believer an advantage over the adversary! The gift of *the word of knowledge* reveals *what* is holding a person in bondage. It can also forewarn us of things ahead (Acts 11:28). The *word of wisdom* shows us what to do in any given situation. *Discerning of spirits* exposes the *source* of spiritual manifestations so that we are not fooled. *Miracles* (acts of power) are the ability to perform mighty signs and wonders, and to cast out evil spirits. Satan can be rebuked sharply with *the gift of tongues*. *Prophecies* grant us direction, hope and promises, and can clearly define the real motives of our heart unto us. Paul said that the personal prophecies pronounced over our lives helps us to fight a good warfare (1 Tim.1:18). *Faith* overcomes the world and Satan (Eph. 6:16, 1 Jn. 5:4), and can move mountains. And the *gifts of healing* undo the works of the Devil (Acts 10:38).

**4. ALL THE FRUITS OF THE SPIRIT**— (Galatians 5:22-23). Every one of the nine fruits of the Spirit are *strengths*. **Peace** enables us not to be shaken by Satan's assaults or lies, but to put him under our feet (Rom. 16:20). Without peace the enemy gains the ascendancy over us. **Joy** is our strength! Joy is a buffer against self-pity and unforgiveness, and it keeps Satan away. Satan cannot demoralize or discourage the Christian who is filled with joy. **Temperance** helps us to discipline and control our appetites and emotions. Satan takes advantage of those who are immoderate. All the fruits of the Spirit are *strengths*, and therefore a mighty defense. (See TRUE CHRISTIANITY, under “True Strength.”)

**5. GOOD CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**—(Heb.10:25, 3:13). Fellowship keeps us balanced, growing, and protected. Fellowship is a great defense against Satan. The Adversary fears groups who are knit together in unity, but he preys upon loners. Satan’s strategy is to scatter a flock and then pounce upon the isolated ones. Being alone is unscriptural and dangerous. The enemy talks most to the one who is alone. Share your revelations and the things you feel God has shown you with godly leaders He has put over you. “In the multitude of counsellors there is safety” (Prov. 24:6). Bring everything to the light. The enemy ensnares the isolated believer by giving him *questionable revelations*. Then he keeps him trapped by telling him not to share the revelation with anyone because they would not understand it or receive it.

**6. WORSHIP, PRAISE, REJOICING**—This releases us from self and inhibitions. Fears, timidities, and self-consciousness are the enemies that constrict us from doing the will of God and from being effective witnesses for Christ. “God has not given us the spirit of [timidity]” (2 Tim.1:7). Clapping the hands, praising, worshipping, and dancing before the Lord release us from the bondages of timidity and pride, unto a new openness of spirit to God. The Lord inhabits the praises of His people! God’s presence dwells among a rejoicing people. And where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty (2 Cor. 3:17). Joy and rejoicing are deadly weapons against Satan. Satan enjoys being around the ones who are negative, gloomy, critical, and bitter. This is *food and fellowship* for him. But he keeps his distance from those who are filled with God's joy. Satan has no joy, and he hates people who do. It is a healthy thing to be cheerful and buoyant!

On one occasion the evil spirits were speaking through demon-possessed people, and they said, “We hate it when the Christians clap their hands. Every time they clap their hands it is like *punching* us all over.”

Also the subject of dancing is now becoming an issue in the Church. All of us are aware that for every *good* thing that God does, there is a counterfeit! And into the Church world of today there is an infiltration of new forms and styles of dancing in the services. Dancing in itself is not evil. Even the Lord has the capacity for exhilaration and physical expression (Zeph. 3:17). King David danced with joy before the Lord *with all his might* (2 Sam. 6:14-15). Therefore, it is scriptural to dance before the Lord. But dancing should be *unto the Lord*—a spontaneous expression of joy unto Him. Dancing should not be legislated. It should never draw attention to one's self, nor should it be for show or entertainment. Genuine joy and dancing before the Lord can actually release us from numerous bondages—pride, fears, timidities, and self-consciousness.

Several years ago revival broke out in a Bible school where I was a resident teacher. One of the highlights of the revival was the Spirit's direction to dance before the Lord. It was really amazing to see the ministries that were born in this revival atmosphere. Many of the students were released from their bondages and enabled to prophesy the word of the Lord with boldness. During this time the Holy Ghost spoke clearly, saying, "I am giving you power to tread on serpents and scorpions as you are dancing." Genuine dancing in the Spirit is surely a weapon against Satan, and a means of spiritual release. Satan despises enthusiasm, and he scorns joy and rejoicing before the Lord.

**7. ANOINTED MUSIC**—Right music is a *great* key to releasing the spirit of prophecy, gaining deliverances from bondages, bringing healings, and releasing the spiritual gifts (2 Kgs. 3:15-16, 1 Sam. 16:14-23). If the right music can bring *deliverance*, then the wrong music can bring *bondage*. Music has been corrupted by Satan. He uses music to draw people away from God, unto himself. Satan's kingdom is promoted by music! The coming Antichrist will draw worship unto himself and unto Satan through means of counterfeit anointed music (Dan. 3:1-7, Rev. 13:8).

If you are a musician, then consecrate your gift to God and ask Him to help you have a pure anointing. Much of today's music is mixed with the spirit of the world. Remember, the right music is a weapon against Satan's kingdom. "It is God who teaches my fingers to fight" (Psa. 144:1). Anointed fingers on the *keys or strings* can bring great deliverances. Ask God to help you to play skillfully (Psa. 33:3).

**8. THE RIGHT SACRIFICES**—Making the right sacrifices enables us to bruise Satan. Job offered the sacrifice of thanksgiving after losing everything he had (Job 1:19-21). This was a blow to Satan! Satan had expected Job to turn against God and curse Him. Job overcame his circumstances and Satan when he offered the sacrifice of thanksgiving. The sacrifice of obedience (responding to what God is addressing in our life) is another sure way to bruise Satan (Jer. 7:22-23). *Every time we obey God we inflict injury to the adversary.*

The sacrifice of obedience is a sacrifice that Satan cannot make. In fact, Satan is not able to make any of these sacrifices. In Psalm 51:17 is another sacrifice—the sacrifice of a broken spirit. This sacrifice of a soft and broken spirit is the result of many difficult acts of obedience. This sacrifice enables one to destroy Satan who is hardhearted and bitter. We only have the mastery over Satan when we refuse to act like him. By God's grace, let us offer up all the right sacrifices and destroy the Accuser. (See TRUE CHRISTIANITY - True Sacrifices)

**9. RIGHTEOUSNESS**—Ephesians 6:14 speaks of the breastplate of righteousness. Righteousness is a breastplate that covers and guards our hearts against evil spirits coming into us. Without this breastplate we will be pierced through by the enemy, and evil desires and lusts come in. Righteousness protects our hearts. When a Christian is not living righteously, he is unprotected and vulnerable to many evil darts. We must be careful *where* we go and *with whom* we walk. Satan has a right to condemn us *and get into us* when we are not living right (Acts 5:3). Righteousness keeps condemnation out of our hearts and makes us bold and courageous against Satan (Prov. 28:1). Do not allow yourself to be open to attack by failing to keep your heart protected with the breastplate of righteousness. Jesus was girded with righteousness, and Satan wearied himself trying to find any entrance into His life (Jn. 14:30, Isa. 11:5).

**10. RIGHT CONFESSION**— (Rev.12:11) Satan is overcome by the word of our testimony, by what we confess. What we confess with our mouths is extremely important! We must never agree with or confess the feelings Satan gives us—(fears, doubts, evil feelings), or we will possess them. We possess what we confess! Also we must be careful what we say *to* God, and what we say *about* God. Caleb and Joshua said, “If the Lord delight in us, he will bring us into this good land. We are well able to overcome.” But all the others said, “Would to God we had died in the land of Egypt . . . Why hath the Lord brought us unto this land to slay us with thirst and the sword” (Num.13:30, 14:8, 14:2-3). After listening to this for two years, God finally held up His hand and decreed, “As truly as I live, *as you have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you.* Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness” (Num.14:28-29). God gave everyone what they confessed. Caleb and Joshua got into the land, and the rest of the people died in the wilderness.

Jonah struggled with feelings of unforgiveness against Nineveh and the Assyrians because of their extreme cruelty to Israel and other nations. Jonah did not want to preach to them, he wanted them to be judged. After some *persuasion* Jonah finally arrived at Nineveh and preached. And what he feared would happen, did happen! Nineveh repented, and God changed His mind about judging them. Jonah was furious! Nevertheless, listen to Jonah’s testimony and confession to God— *Lord, I knew You would change Your mind. It’s just like You to do this. You are such a gracious God, merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness* (Jonah 4:2). According to what Jonah said of God, that is how God dealt with him. “As you have spoken in my ears, so will I do to you.” God was gracious, merciful, slow to anger, and very kind to Jonah, and very patient too. God will deal with us according to our confession of Him. Therefore, our words to Him and about Him must be right!

It is important *to avoid* the following declarations— “This is going to be an awful day,” “There is no hope, what’s the use” or “Things will never get better.” Confessions such as these are *creative*, but they are also welcome mats to Satan. Our daily confession should be—“This is the day that the Lord hath made, we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psa.118:24).

**11. WISDOM AND PRUDENCE**— Wisdom enables the believer to discern the tactics and motives of Satan. Paul said, “We are not ignorant of his devices” (2 Cor. 2:11). Wisdom helps us discern the motives of *people*. David behaved himself wisely in Saul’s household (1 Sam.18:14). This walk of wisdom spared David on numerous occasions, for his enemies were determined to kill him. God’s wisdom is greater than Satan’s; therefore, God’s wisdom will help us have the victory over Satan (1 Cor. 2:6-8, 1:25). The spirit of wisdom is God’s gift to the worthy seeker (Jas.1:5-8).

**12. FAITH**— (The faith of the Son of God, not our faith) Faith is nourished by an intimate relationship with the Author and Finisher of our faith, and by our responding to Him when He speaks to us. Obedience leads to faith. Faith is a *gift* and a *fruit*. The fruit of faith is a defensive weapon, and the gift of faith is an offensive weapon against Satan. The shield of faith quenches all the fiery darts of the Wicked One (Eph. 6:16). A shield is a defensive weapon. This shield is the *fruit* of faith. It sees us through dark and difficult times of doubts and fears that come against our mind. It is like Job declaring in his dark trial—“When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold.” The *gift* of faith is an offensive weapon. This kind of faith removes mountains. It commands situations to change (Mk.11:23). Faith overcomes the world.

**Seek to be filled with the Spirit. Be open to spiritual manifestations which release us into joy. Praying in the Spirit also energizes and builds up the believer. Being full of the Spirit helps us not to fulfill the lusts of the flesh. Remember, the anointing breaks every yoke (Isa.10:27). Therefore, major on being filled with the Spirit (Jude 1:20; Eph. 5:16; 1 Cor.14:4, 18; Gal. 5:16).**

# ***CIRCUMCISION***

## **A Message of the Spirit Today**

**CIRCUMCISION— To cut away the flesh, a severing away of uncleanness—Spiritually, it is a cutting away of the natural, sinful, Adamic nature we are born with (natural desires, inclinations, and natural thinking).**

**UNCIRCUMCISION—Represents uncleanness. It means that the *flesh* (or what we are born with) is not yet dealt with—the old nature with its wrong desires, ways, thought patterns, and responses is still remaining.**

### ***No Inheritance Without Circumcision***

CIRCUMCISION refers to a spiritual work that is done in our hearts by the Sword (or Word of God). Even in the Old Testament Israel realized that physical circumcision had deeper spiritual implications. “Circumcise the foreskins of your *heart* unto the Lord” (Deut.10:16, Jer. 4:4). They understood that it represented an act of redemption in man’s spirit.

- (Genesis 17:7-14). In order for Abraham and his descendants to receive their inheritance, they had to be circumcised. Their inheritance was a physical land, Canaan. But also in that land was a holy mountain, Zion. Our inheritance is spiritual—a call, a ministry, a position in the Kingdom, a place close to the Lord. But without circumcision, there is no gaining of the inheritance.

In order to inherit all that God has for us, we must be totally circumcised. We must allow the keen edge of the Sword to cut away any areas of uncleanness or parts of us that are still *natural*. The purpose of the Sword is *to cut flesh* and *to destroy our enemies*.

Many have not permitted the Lord to thoroughly circumcise their hearts with the sharp edge of the sword. These areas of uncircumcision later become a man’s downfall when he begins to bear any significant fruit. (It is possible to get into *some* of our inheritance and then lose it.) Our safety is in *total circumcision* and holiness. Nothing is more wholesome than the total workings of the Sword in our lives by the Spirit.

- (Exodus 4:19-26). God sent Moses down into Egypt to bring the Israelites into Canaan, their inheritance. Bearing in mind that the Israelites had to be circumcised in order to come into the land, Moses attempted to bring them in when his own family was not circumcised, and God was angry with him. Circumcision was not a reality in his own home. Moses was violating his own message. His own son was not circumcised. God was about to judge him for not practicing what he was preaching. Circumcision is serious to God!

- (Joshua 5:2-9). A generation later when Joshua was about to lead the people into Canaan their inheritance, they had to stop at Gilgal to circumcise the new generation, for they could not inherit the promises of God without circumcision.

- (Ezekiel 44:9). One cannot totally come into God’s presence or come into the holy of holies if he is not circumcised. The Lord Himself is our inheritance, and *uncircumcision* prohibits a total drawing near unto His presence (Psa. 65:4). Ezekiel 44:10-14 shows that uncleansed sin in a minister (uncircumcision in heart) could ban him from the holy of holies.

## ***EVIDENCES OF A CIRCUMCISED HEART***

**1. NOT A SEEKER OF MAN'S PRAISE**—“*Circumcision that is of the heart, in the spirit, whose praise is not of men but of God*” (Rom. 2:28-29). True circumcision of heart is evidenced in people who are more concerned about what *God* thinks of them than what others think. “Whose praise is not of men, but of God.” These are God-conscious more than people-conscious. Shame, embarrassment, and the fear of rejection because of being identified with Christ is a serious form of uncircumcision. Some men and women may not even make it to heaven because they are so uncircumcised in this area of their lives (Jn.12:42-43). It is *natural* to be ashamed of Christ—because we are born natural and uncircumcised. But God wants to cut away this human tendency and bondage with His Sword so that we are not unnerved by what people are thinking or saying about us. Also, it is unscriptural to crave for the applause and approval of man. We should only seek God’s approval. Sometimes people will not do the will of God, or leave the church they grew up in, or go to the mission field because they are afraid of being misunderstood or frowned upon by relatives and friends. This bondage of uncircumcision hinders a family from getting the inheritance God has planned for them, unless the sword of circumcision is welcomed to cut away this naturalness.

**2. NOT STUBBORN OR RESISTING THE HOLY SPIRIT**—“*Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost*” (Acts 7:51, Jer. 6:10). When a man cannot hear properly, it is because the heart has a problem—it is uncircumcised. Stephen’s message was not received by the Israelites and unconverted Paul because of the hardness in their hearts, stubbornness, and being entrenched in *tradition*. These are all uncircumcision of spirit. When Christ speaks of having *an ear to hear*, He is referring to a circumcised ear. This is the direct result of a circumcised heart. We need soft, pliable, listening hearts. Our hearts must not be hard and resistant to God and His messengers. We are born with resistance in our hearts and that is because we are born uncircumcised!

Tradition is uncircumcision! Tradition can be a mind-set that limits what God wants to do. “*This is the way we have always done it; we are not going to change!*” The apostle Peter was blind in a major area of his theology, and it was hindering multitudes from coming into the Church. The Lord had said, “Preach the gospel to every creature under heaven” (Mk.16:15). But the early apostles (including Peter) preached only to the Jews and the proselytes in their synagogues. It finally dawned upon Peter and the apostles some ten years later that God wanted everyone, Jew and Gentile, to hear the gospel (Acts 10:28, 11:18).

**3. GENUINE WORSHIP, NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH**—“*We are the circumcision who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh*” (Phil. 3:3-5). Here are three other evidences of circumcision in heart.

“***Worship in the Spirit.***” The Father seeks those who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth (Jn. 4:23). There are some who ridicule the clapping and raising of the hands, rejoicing and dancing before the Lord, and other forms of spiritual worship. But this is uncircumcision! It is natural to despise these, but not spiritual. These manifestations of the Spirit are just exactly what God prescribes for man to be freed of his spiritual bondages.

“***And rejoice in Jesus Christ.***” Let us rejoice, not only in what He is doing, or how He is using us in the ministry. May we rejoice in Him, just for Who He is. This is another token of circumcision in spirit.

“***And have no confidence in the flesh.***” “Confidence in the flesh” is boasting in what I can do on my own. Sometimes preachers are so talented and have such charisma and personality, that they feel they do not have to seek God anymore. Then they fall! It is almost a curse for a man or woman to be over-gifted. Blessed is the man who ever feels his need for divine assistance (Jn. 5:19, 30). Only men who are *dependent on God* pray . . . men like Jesus. Christ had no confidence in what He could do on His own without His Heavenly Father. On the next page we gave listed fifteen symptoms of being “confident in the flesh.”

### Examples of being “confident in the flesh”

- Confidence in one’s own abilities or talents (1 Cor. 8:2, Gal. 6:3)
  - Natural charisma, personality, and good looks (Ezek.16:15, 28:17)
  - I can make it happen. I have the answers (Jn. 5:30)
  - My mind can figure it out; I can work things out. (Prov. 23:4)
  - I can make it on my own. I do not need anyone else. (Heb.10:25, 1 Cor.12:14)
  - I have discernment and intuition. I can read people. (1 Sam.16:7)
  - I can diagnose people’s problems—(the spirit of psychology). (1 Kg. 8:39)
  - I can tell whether it is truth or error by my ability. (Obad. 1:3)
  - I can make my own decisions. I know what is best. (Jer.10:23)
  - I can go here, make money, and plan out my future. (Jas. 4:13-14)
  - I can predict the future. I can interpret the Bible. (Eph.1:17-18)
  - I understand how the Spirit moves. I have had a lot of experience. (Jn. 3:8)
  - I have done this for years, I know what I am doing. (Lu. 4:4)
  - I know my heart, I understand myself. (Jer.17:9)
  - Running on past momentum or past experiences (Jud.16:20)
- All of the above are uncircumcision. They can hinder us from getting our inheritance.

**4. ABLE TO HUMBLE ONE’S SELF; ABILITY TO SAY—“I WAS WRONG”** For those who are uncircumcised in heart it is grievous to say—“I was wrong, I made a mistake, forgive me.” They would rather blame someone else than concede to any fault or weakness. The backslider hates to admit— “I have sinned” (Lev. 26:40-41). Those who are uncircumcised in heart also refuse to accept any punishment or restriction for their sin. (God expects us to accept punishment or restrictions for serious sins.) When a minister has a serious moral failure, he should be willing to step down for a time to regain credibility and to show the church that sin is not to be taken lightly. It is much more serious when a Christian *leader* falls than when a lay-person does. God has far higher qualifications and standards for a minister than He does for a lay-person. When a fallen leader refuses discipline or restriction, he is not truly repentant. This shows he is not deeply sorry that the Lord Jesus Christ and His Church have been shamed. He is sorry only that his *position* is in jeopardy.

### Three Reasons for Discipline Even After Forgiveness

(Leviticus 26:41)

- 1.) **To help remind the offender**—Without discipline, people often forget and *repeat* the same sins again. The imposed punishment is there to help remind him of that area of weakness. That weakness needs special attention.
- 2.) **To serve as a warning to others**—Others will think twice when they see punishments. It inspires a holy fear in them. The punishment says in effect—“Sin is serious.”
- 3.) **The punishment works out Christian character and grace**—The restrictions and afflictions of discipline after sin work out Christian character. Even when someone is being punished for sin, the punishments are doing a redemptive work in the heart. David had punishments for his sin of adultery and murder (2 Sam.12:10). Everything God does is His mercy.

## Scriptural Examples of Punishment

- **Moses accepted a restriction.** (Deut. 3:26). Moses could not go into the promised land because of losing his temper and speaking rashly to the congregation. He had also broken an eternal *type* when he struck the rock twice. God requires *more* from a leader, especially from someone as high up as Moses (Psa.106:32-33).
- **David accepted punishment for adultery and murder.** (2 Sam.12:10). David was told, “The sword shall never depart from your house.” Yet he had victory even while he was suffering. God did a deep work of grace in his life through his added afflictions. David acknowledged, however, that God did not give him the punishment he deserved (Psa.103:10). He knew he merited much more.
- **Hezekiah accepted punishment for his pride** after he revealed his secrets to the enemies (Isa. 39:1-8).
- **Asa would *not* accept a rebuke and punishment** for relying on the world for help, instead of trusting the Lord. God said through the prophet, “Herein thou hast done foolishly, from henceforth thou shalt have wars” (2 Chron.16:7-14). Asa became furious with the prophet. In doing so, he was showing anger against the Lord who was speaking through the prophet. Thus, Asa was uncircumcised in heart, in spirit.

**Spiritual circumcision enables one to confess his faults, failures, and his need of others. It is not hard for him to admit, “I was wrong.” True circumcision is *humility*; pride is uncircumcision (Lev. 26:40-41).**

**5. ABILITY TO LOVE THE LORD AND KEEP THE COMMANDMENTS**—“The Lord thy God will circumcise thy heart...to love the Lord with all thine heart...and to obey the voice of the Lord and do all his commandments” (Deut. 30:6, 8; 10:16). The Lord said that *He* would do it, but cooperation on our part is required! He promised also to circumcise the hearts of our children. God starts with the parents. In Corinthians, Paul implies that the true meaning of circumcision is to “keep the commandments of God” (1 Cor. 7:19).

**6. LOYALTY TO THE LORD AND TO OUR MATE**—(Jer. 4:4, 3:14, 3:20). God told Judah He was married to them, but that they had treacherously departed from Him in the same way a wife leaves her husband. God said their problem was an uncircumcised heart (Jer. 4:4). Disloyalty to the Lord or to a companion is because of an uncircumcised, hardened heart (Matt.19:8). The reason for all divorce and all betrayal is a hardened, uncircumcised heart. A hardened heart is unable to forgive or care any more. Thus, *unforgiveness is also uncircumcision*. May we allow God to circumcise our callous and insensitive hearts (Ezek. 36:26).

**7. A CLEAN TONGUE**—(Circumcised lips - Ex. 6:12, 30). Isaiah confessed that his lips were unclean in Isaiah 6:5. Of course, the real problem is not the lips, for it is out of the abundance of the *heart* that the mouth speaks (Lu. 6:45). Uncircumcised lips means that a man's words are impure because his heart is too.

**8. HEART UTTERINGS PURE**—Jesus was a minister of circumcision *for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to Abraham and the fathers* (Rom.15:8). The words of Jesus *circumcised* the hearts of His listeners. He came to bring the truth into the heart so that men's lives could be genuinely transformed. A changed, circumcised heart is the only kind of heart that is capable of obtaining the promises made to the fathers. A circumcised heart also fulfills Psalm 15:2, “[He that] speaketh the truth in the heart.” This kind of heart constantly and deliberately chooses to utter what is true. Let us stop and listen to what we are saying within ourselves!

**9. A BELIEVING HEART**—“O slow of heart to believe” (Lu. 24:25, Mk. 16:1). A circumcised heart is quick to believe. Israel missed the whole point about circumcision. They were overly involved with the ritual of *physical* circumcision, but insensitive to its message. A *symbol* is not the important thing, the *meaning* is! Their hearts were uncircumcised and unbelieving—this is the reason Moses' generation never reached the promised land. This is also why the generation of Christ could not recognize their Savior. Paul gives further meaning to circumcision in Galatians 5:6, 6:15. “Neither [physical] circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision [then he gives the spiritual meaning] but *faith which works by love*” and “*a new creature*” or changed life.

# ***SUBDUING THE FINAL POCKETS OF RESISTANCE***

## **The Thirty-One Kings**

*Based on A. B. Simpson's Tract*

Joshua 12:9-24 is a record of the thirty-one kings Israel had to drive out of Canaan in order to secure the inheritance God had promised them. Each of these kings represents an enthroned area of the self-life where *ego* still reigns instead of Christ our Lord. We'll call them *pockets of resistance!* These kings of the self-life are proud, independent and self-willed. Each king carefully guards his own area of domain, furiously opposing anyone who dares to tamper with even an inch of his territory. Unfortunately these thirty-one kings are also the cause of disunity among the brethren, for where *self* is reigning there is never unity! Therefore, if we are to enter into complete *rest*, and if we as individuals would come into true unity among our Christian brethren, then these thirty-one kings *must* be judged by the Sword.

Since these *kings* are reigning splendidly in our lives, they hinder us from having true love for the brethren. As we allow God's sword to judge these enthroned kings of the self-life, we will come to that blessed state of "unfeigned love of the brethren" (1 Pet.1:22). This message on the thirty-one kings is for believers who have already come through the wilderness, crossed over Jordan, and have a level of maturity. Yet, they require an inner crucifixion of these particular ruling lords of the self-life.

### ***EACH KING REPRESENTS A RULING LORD OF THE SELF-LIFE***

**KING 1 - SELF-WILL** (Someone who determines his own course of action) This is one of man's greatest flaws. He is his own boss—he is on the throne in place of God. Many Christians tend to make *their own* choices and decisions. Rather than asking God, "What is Your will? How can I please You?", man tells God what his plans are, and then asks God to bless them. We produce like kind! When a man is self-willed, he produces self-willed children. When the children go their own way, the father has a living object lesson before him! A sad and mystified father asks, "Why has my son gone his own way!" God answers back, "Now you know how I feel about you. Neither have you ever listened to Me." Let us pray for the nature of the Lamb who said, "Not my will but thine be done." (see James 4:13-16.)

**KING 2 - SELF-INDULGENCE** (Feeding one's ego) This person's favorite subject is *I*. He monopolizes conversations, talking about himself, his experiences, and his attainments. Our first duty, however, is to draw attention to God, and then stay out of the picture. We should always point to Christ. Paul said, "Look not every man on his own things, but every man on the things of others" (Phil. 2:3-4). "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth" (Prov. 27:2, 2 Cor.12:2-5).

**KING 3 - SELF-SEEKING** (What's in this for me? What do I get out of this?) Napoleon said, "The only people I care about are those who can benefit me!" He had no use for anyone else. May we never be guilty of *using* people for our advantage. True love, according to First Corinthians 13, is *unselfish*. Love seeks not her own, bears all things, and endures all things. This kind of love is *character*; it considers the needs of others first.

**KING 4 - SELF-COMPLACENCY** (Passivity—I am good enough as I am. I don't need to change.) The Laodiceans thought they had reached the apex of spirituality (Rev. 3:17). They thought they had it all. This is blindness and deception, of course (1 Cor. 8:2, Gal. 6:3). This attitude is the exact opposite of one who is panting after God (Psa. 42:1-2, Mt. 5:6). People who are *satisfied* as they are, have ceased to grow. Even the Apostle Paul said, "I have not yet attained . . . I press toward the mark." Unless we have an ongoing and progressing vision, we will dwell carelessly (Prov. 29:18). When individuals or churches have ceased growing, it is because they have stopped responding to *fresh truth*. They are living in the past and are satisfied with the past (Rev. 3:1). It is a horrible thing not to have grown for twenty years!



**KING 5 - SELF-GLORYING** (Vainglory, boasting, vaunting) “Lest Israel vaunt themselves against me, saying, Mine own hand hath [gotten me the victory]” (Jud. 7:2). Though this king says “Glory to God,” he really means, “*Glory to ME.*” He boasts of his successes and abilities. Perhaps he uses huge, complicated words and rhetoric to sound important and to impress others. Christ said if we seek the praise of man, this alone will be our reward (Mt. 6:2, 6:6). Ulterior motives deplete the heart of genuine faith (Jn. 5:44). Paul warns, “Let us not be desirous of vainglory” (Gal. 5:26, Phil. 2:3).

**KING 6 - SELF-CONFIDENCE** (Human strength, confidence in the flesh. Phil. 3:3) This entrenched king trusts in his own mind and in his own judgment. He is self-reliant. He does not need anyone—he knows what he is doing. He has everything under control and can work out his problems on his own. He is a self-made man; he has the answers. But this is the opposite of that holy dependence Jesus had, Who said; “I can do nothing of myself” (Jn.15:4, 5:30).

**KING 7 - SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS** (A dreadful bondage of worry) This king relates everything that is said or done to himself. Every word, look, and gesture is carefully studied. He assumes that everyone is thinking and talking about him. He is a prisoner of his own imaginations. Sometimes girls spend hours before the mirror getting every hair in place because they think everyone is scrutinizing them. It is such a release to *realize* that people scarcely *ever* think about us at all. The truth is, they are just like us, they are thinking about themselves.

**KING 8 - SELF-IMPORTANCE** (A sense of one’s own importance or greatness) This enthroned king has an inflated ego and is quick to give in to anger or depression when he is not treated as a king (Jer. 48:29). How many believers who have received knowledge and training for a few years, think they have outgrown their teachers and pastor! Some even drift into the deception that they are God's special messenger sent to correct all their leaders.

**KING 9 - SELF-DEPRECIATION** (Constantly degrading one's self) It is *not* beneficial to repeatedly run ourselves down or constantly be aware of our shortcomings. This is a preoccupation with *self* instead of a focus on the Lord, and it leaves a man powerless. It is better to say, “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” for then the emphasis is upon Christ rather than upon ME. Philemon 1:6 commands us to “Acknowledge every good thing that is in us by Christ Jesus.” Give the Holy Spirit credit for all the good things He has done in our life. Let us turn the emphasis off ourself, and onto Him. If we do not have a wholesome opinion of ourselves, then we probably won’t have a wholesome opinion of others either. God wants us to have a wholesome sense of self-worth. Self-acceptance is important for good spiritual health, too. “Love thy neighbor as *thyself.*” Thus, we are to love ourselves in a wholesome way.

**KING 10 - SELF-VINDICATION** (Defensive of rights, standing firm for one's position) This king has a need to be right. He demands his rights, defends his position, and justifies himself and his ways—even unto death. This king would rather die than give in. He is *not* convinced that “turning the other cheek” is really for today. Nor does he believe that injustices are ordained of God to move him closer to the throne (Gen. 50:20). Some Christians go through life never learning this lesson. The very idea of the Incarnation was *the renunciation of rights!* What about us? Are we better than Christ? A. B. Simpson said, “I solemnly believe that most of the blessings that have been given to me in my life and ministry have come because of the evil things people have said of me, and because God made me willing to allow them to do it.”

**KING 11 - SELF-SENSITIVENESS** (Overly sensitive, easily offended) This king is very protective of himself. He is very conscious of his own feelings, but is usually unaware when he is hurting others. Ironically, when he accuses others of being uncaring and insensitive to him, he is oblivious of how much *he is hurting them* by charging them so (Rom. 2:1). Resentment will not let go of an offense. Resentment is a bondage, the inability to let go of an injury! God understands all the reasons people struggle with this, and He also wants to give us the answer! Let's seek Him and hear what He has to tell us.

**KING 12 - SELF-SEEING** (One who can *only* see things from his own point of view) This is the king who rigidly asserts, “There is only one way to do it!” The Apostle Peter struggled with this *king* in his life. He was the one who always said “*never*,” but had to repent every time (Matt.16:22, 26:33, Jn.13:8, Acts 10:14). Job's three friends *refused to budge* from their philosophic appraisals of Job's calamity. They were unqualified, however, to counsel or console him because they had never seen, heard of, or experienced any trial like Job's. Therefore, they lacked the proper light to speak effectively into Job's tragic situation. Yet they insisted, “This is the only way to look at it!” The attitude of *this is the only way*, is symptomatic of several needs. It suggests that everything that can be known about the subject, is known. It also presents the attitude of *infallibility*. But true wisdom possesses a broad spectrum of matters, can offer other workable alternatives in gentleness, and knows when enough has been said.

**KING 13 - SELF-INTROSPECTION** (Always looking within) This king majors on verses such as, “In my flesh dwelleth no good thing” or “O wretched man that I am” (Rom. 7:18, 24). God never told us to analyze or figure out our puzzles with our human minds. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us that we do not know what is in our hearts anyway. The Lord is the One who tries our hearts and will show us what we need to know, in His time. Until then, we should be positive, at peace, and keep joy in our heart. Proverbs 3:5-6 says, *Trust* the Lord implicitly, and do not lean to your own understanding. Allow God to show you what you need to know about yourself, and let Him take you at His pace. He knows when it is best to speak.

**KING 14 - SELF-LOVE** (Overprotective of self and selfish interests) This king lives for *himself* and resents inconveniences or intrusions upon his private life, time, or substance. How contrary to the nature of God, Who willingly gave up conveniences and even His very life for others! Christ never chose the path of convenience. Some Christians refuse to go into the ministry or to a foreign field because of self-love—they love their life and their security. But in so doing, they are losing both. Joy is found where the will of God leads us. Happiness is where the presence of God resides. And the *safest* place on earth is in the center of God's will. Christ said, “He that loves his life [referring to self-love and self-preservation] shall lose it; but he that loses his life shall find it” (Mk. 8:34-35, Mt.19:29).

**KING 15 - SELF-AFFECTIONS** (Loving only those who love us—Luke 6:32-33) When we appreciate only those who appreciate us, we are *ordinary* Christians. Even sinners are able to do this! Are we thankful *only* for those who approve of us and praise us? Do we have little use for everyone else? Is our scope of fellowship small and cliquish? In a church of 300, are we friendly only to thirty? God desires to enlarge and make more charitable the hearts of every one of His people.

**KING 16 - SELFISH MOTIVES** (Doing favors for others with hopes of getting something in return - Luke 6:34-35.) This little enthroned king donates money to God in expectation of getting *more* back for himself. Much of today's *prosperity message* promotes this mentality—“Give to God so that He may return sevenfold back to you.” God truly is a generous God, and He loves to bless His people; yet our motive for giving should never be to get more back for ourselves. And remember—ministers and evangelists who are *genuine* avoid using up whole services just to appeal for money!

**KING 17 - SELFISH DESIRES** (Covetousness, something for ME) This king longs to look successful or have security. He will seek to have close friendships with prominent people in order to gain influence and power. Some try to marry into a particular family for wealth and prestige. We should check out our motives to see what is prompting our words and endeavors. *Lord, why do I really want this?* God can show us our motives (Psa.139:1-4).

**KING 18 - SELFISH CHOICES** (Choosing what we think will make us happy, instead of asking God what would edify Him) Lot made this mistake when he chose to dwell in Sodom (Gen.13:9-11). This king does not enquire of God for His will. He wants his own will. Since we were created to bring Him pleasure, we should always ask God which choice would please Him most (Rev. 4:11, Psa. 40:8).

If we are not bringing pleasure to our Maker, then we are living in vain. Life is filled with choices. This includes whom we should marry! Many Christians disobey God on this point! Marrying the wrong person can impair our chances of fulfilling God's call. Therefore, we must choose His choice, for this will ultimately bring about a happier and smoother marriage—a marriage that is glorifying to Him (Phil. 2:13).

**KING 19 - SELFISH PLEASURES** (To gratify self) Western society is pleasure-mad. Today the scripture is fulfilled that says—“Lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:4). Sports, cars, clothes, and hobbies can be idols too. Much of the Church is obsessed with an insatiable appetite for pleasure. Many Americans desire to move to Florida, not because they are longing to do the will of God, but to have a life of ease in the tropical climate. Some have allowed a *retirement mentality* to creep into their lives at a very young age. True pleasure, however, is found in the presence of God, and in the place of His will for our lives. In His presence is fullness of joy (Psa.16:11, 45:7). If I am living just to gratify myself, I am living in vain (see also 1 Tim. 5:6).

**KING 20 - SELFISH POSSESSIONS** (A grasping spirit) One sure way to cause hidden iniquity to surface from deep within the heart is when any latitude is given in the interpretation of a *Last Will and Testament!* Families and friendships have been destroyed over the bitterness of a contested will (Lu.12:13-15). Jesus did not encourage the man who had an argument over an inheritance to fight for a bigger share. The Lord saw a motive of *covetousness* in his heart (Lu. 12:15). Jesus warned that happiness is not measured by how many possessions we amass. The things people grasp for never satisfy anyway. Everything we clutch we will lose, sooner or later. Be openhanded! People who obtain riches or possessions by deceitful means end up being fools and without fruit (Jer.17:9-11).

When God gives us a gift or talent, it is for two main reasons: 1.) First, it is to establish and bless us (Rom.1:11); and 2.) It is for the purpose of blessing others (1 Cor.12:7). The gift is *not* to be kept to ourself! For example, when God gives us strength in a certain area, it is to help others who are weaker in that area. If we have health, then it is for the purpose of helping others who are not blessed with good health. Abundance of financial blessings are entrusted to some in order that they can help the poor. If our mate has an area of weakness, then God has probably given us extra grace in that area to compensate for his lack. Thus, we should not criticize people for their lack, but help them with our abundance. Our attitude toward possessions should be—“They're not mine, they have been entrusted to me by God in order to help others” (Lu.12:15-21; Acts 4:32).

**KING 21 - SELFISH FEARS AND CARES** (What is going to happen to *me*?) This king exemplifies the law of self-preservation. He is very protective of himself, and has an acute problem trusting God. “God is not going to take care of me!” or “God might let me fail!” Some fears stem from pride—I might look like a fool, or I might be humiliated. People worry for months about an oncoming event, only to find that their fears were totally groundless when it arrives. If our particular fear is rooted in pride, then humility can break our bondage.

**KING 22 - SELFISH SORROWS** (Self-inflicted sorrows or sorrows from wounded pride) “God let me down, God has not been fair to me.” This king is quick to charge God and others with *irresponsibility* and not caring. This kind of sorrow results from unfulfilled expectations - expectations of something God never intended one to have! If God thwarted some endeavor or direction, it was because He had something far better in mind, and showed His mercy. Remember, Godly sorrow brings *life*, but the self-induced sorrow brings *death* (2 Cor. 7:10).

**KING 23 - SELFISH SACRIFICES AND SELF-DENIALS** (Giving to satisfy self - 1 Cor.13:1-3). A man could give all his goods to feed the poor and his body to be burned as a martyr and still not have divine love as his ultimate motive. People can have peculiar motives. One may fast for forty days, not to draw closer to God, but to break a record or to have an experience to glory in. This is a fast to satisfy the flesh. Sometimes self-denials are with the motive of displaying religiosity. Watch sacrifices and self-denials! Let us make sure that our motives are right. Do you remember the story of the man who for twenty-five years sat on the top of a pillar and lived on roots and rations, all in the name of piety? What did it accomplish?—the very epitome of self-righteousness and self-consciousness! All it did was draw attention to *himself*.

**KING 24 - SELFISH VIRTUE AND MORALITY** (I am *holier than thou*.) This is the attitude—“I am a notch or two better than others because of my high standards and beliefs.” *We are the special chosen ones*. It produces a standoffishness from others and it is rooted in spiritual pride. The Jews, in general, felt that the Gentiles were beneath them. They would not eat with them or associate with them. If they came in contact with them through commerce, they would carefully wash their hands afterwards (Acts 10:28, 11:3). This king must be slain, or he will hinder many from coming into our churches.

**KING 25 - SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS** (I am what I am by my works and efforts) This is the attitude and idea that I have made myself good by my dedication and effort (i. e. by my devotional life, sacrifice, abstinence, separation.) While it is true that effort on our part is required to live a holy life, yet the fact remains that if we have any righteousness or holiness within, it is because of God's grace. Therefore, we have nothing of which to brag or boast. Job had a particular problem with self-righteousness. When Job found fault with God but none with himself (27:1-6, 32:1, 35:2), he was guilty of the deception of self-righteousness. Self-righteousness is piety that people think they have *earned* by their hard work and efforts. Therefore, they feel it gives them the right to look down on others who have not worked as hard as they have (Lu. 18:9-14, Phil. 3:9, Isa. 54:17, 64:4).

**KING 26 - SELFISH SANCTITY AND SANCTIFICATION** (Camping around a transforming experience of the past and glorying in this) This happens when a legitimate experience we had in the past becomes an idol and we fail to move on in God. When people camp around an experience, the experience goes sour (Rev. 3:1). We must have new life flowing into us all the time, for no *single* experience will cause us to instantly arrive at maturity. We must continue to grow and have new experiences all the time, or we will dry up. Paul said he had *not yet attained* in spite of twenty-eight years of walking with God (Phil. 3:12-14).

**KING 27 - SELFISH CHARITY AND GIFTS** (Giving with ulterior motives) Sometimes people contribute large sums of money to a church or organization, but there are strings attached. They want to control the work or *use* the people to propagate their own ideas and beliefs. Sometimes people give money and gifts in order to have public recognition or praise. God says, “Let it be between you and Me. Don't publicize it” (Mt. 6:2-4).

**KING 28 - SELFISH CHRISTIAN WORK** (When ministry is more important than relationship) The Ephesian church had become so busy doing the Lord's work that they neglected their relationship with God (Rev. 2:2-4). God never intended ministry to take the place of our relationship with Him. The ministry must not be an idol! A little boy pouts if you take away his toys, and so does an immature Christian when God tells him to sit down and be quiet for a while. Will we pout and lose the victory if God withdraws us from our ministry for a season to speak to us? The mature Christian is able to sit down and wait. The immature one almost backslides if his idol of ministry is touched.

**KING 29 - SELFISH PRAYERS** (Give me, give me, give me.) The prodigal son said, *Father, give me!* But after he squandered his substance he said “*Father, make me!*” Make me the son you want me to be (Lu. 15:12 vs. 15:19). Today's extreme prosperity gospel emphasizes *Give me!* Give me a quick answer, provisions, blessings, and the easiest way out of my problems. But the prosperity message has failed to emphasize *Make me!* Lord, make me fit for Your eternal kingdom, even if my circumstances are not always pleasant, and the answers I seek do not come immediately! Let us pray—“What can I do to bring pleasure to you, Lord?”

**KING 30 - SELFISH HOPES** (Dreamworlds, unrealistic expectations) The human heart fanaticizes about becoming famous or wealthy, or cherishes something that belongs to another. God wants His people to learn contentment in their present circumstances (Phil. 4:11). We must be sure that what we are hoping for is what God desires to give us (Psa. 62:5).

**KING 31 - OUR WHOLE LIFE** (Withholding our lives from God) Even our very lives must not be held as a selfish possessions but a sacred trust. Paul said, “Ye are not your own, you are bought with a price.” “Neither count I my life dear unto myself . . . so that I might finish my course with joy” (1 Cor. 6:19-20, Acts 20:24).

## ***LEARNING TO RESPOND CORRECTLY TO INJURY***

**Depression, emotional and mental disorders, and even suicide can almost always be traced back to an injury that was not responded to in the right way. How we react to disappointment, failure, rejection, and injury determines whether or not we will have good mental, emotional and spiritual health! It is the responsibility of the Church to teach the nations how to cope with and respond to injury.**

Man has dug himself deeply into pits by the *wrong* ways he has responded to offenses. This pattern begins during childhood. *Our response to injury* is far more important than the injury itself.

### **Major Steps into the Pit**

**A. A Wounded Spirit.** (A rejection, severe disappointment or injury of some kind.) Not responding to the offense the right way is the problem. This leads to step B.

**B. Hardening of the Heart.** (Bitterness) Scripture warns over and over again not to harden our hearts. Here read Hebrews 3:8, 3:15, 4:7, 4:16, 12:15. When a Christian is wounded or hurt, *grace* (divine enablement) is available immediately to sustain him and bring him through. People, however, often fail to appropriate this available grace and choose to keep their injury, thus becoming infected with bitterness and hate.

**C. Rebellion.** If a person continues to harden his heart, then *rebellion* will creep in. (Rebellion is a letting go of all restraints—an “I don’t care anymore” attitude—resulting in recklessness, foolishness, and serious sin.) Every time a person hardens his heart and rejects grace, he sinks *deeper* into the miry clay.

**D. Despair.** (Guilt for evil doing, confusion, and the inability to cope with a tormented mind. A loss of self-respect and self-worth.) This is an accumulation of all the above and more. Satan then comes with his lies saying, “There is no hope, there’s no use, there’s no way out. Just end it all.”

**E. Suicide.** (Self-destruction, spiritual or physical)

It is known medically and scripturally that most mental and emotional problems stem from the fact that *joy*, *peace*, and a sense of *hope* have vanished from the soul of the troubled person. Therefore, we must consider the reasons why *joy*, *peace* and *hope* have left an individual.

### **SUICIDE can be one of the highest forms of self-centeredness because:**

- **Suicide only considers itself** and is only thinking of self, not of others or God.
- **It devastates others.** (Family, friends, others.) Sometimes suicide can be an attempt to spite others.
- **It hurts God.** It is also stealing something that belongs to God (Psa.100:3, 1 Cor. 6:19-20).
- **It destroys future generations.** (Destroying oneself could also destroy future children.)
- **It thwarts God’s plans and purposes.** (Suicide is the opposite of, “I am come to do Thy will O God.”)
- **It is an escape** when I am not able to be LORD of my own life or control my life and circumstances.  
It is a rebellious attempt to escape from God's rule or from life.
- **It is a result of distorted expectations.** (What I wanted didn’t work out; so I will end it all.)
- **It is the opposite of a servant’s heart.** A servant says, “Lord, what do you want me to do? How can I please You?”  
Servants do not commit suicide, lords do. Lords run their own lives, and are their own gods. When they cannot have what they want or control their life, they destroy themselves. Hurt pride may be at the bottom of suicide.
- **It is a lack of the fear of God.** The fear of God puts a holy dread in our hearts of coming short of God’s plan and purposes for our lives. Suicide is a destruction of that plan because of a lack of this holy fear (Heb. 4:1).
- **Suicide is weakness of character.** It is *an escape*, to avoid facing life and one's self. In the Orient, people commit suicide because they cannot bear to lose face, but Jesus Christ faced shame and spitting head-on (Isa. 50:6).

A while back I read a story about a boy who tried out for a little league baseball team. He and several of his friends were trying out for the same position, and all three were very qualified! When the coach had to make a difficult choice, the boy was not chosen. He was devastated and unable to cope with feelings of rejection and failure. His response to this and other life situations was forming a behavior pattern that would end up in suicide attempts and time in mental hospitals later on in life. (Mental/emotional problems begin with wrong response patterns in our *youth*.)

The young man hardened himself against his coach and teammates. As he grew older the same behavior patterns continued when life did not go his way. In married life he was unable to cope with any irritations or infractions, nor did he do any better on the job or with his boss. All of these inner conflicts, and guilt for living with another women led him to suicide attempts. This poor man had been digging himself deeper and deeper into his own pit and prison of selfishness and self-centeredness for years. Probably he was quite unaware of the numerous laws of the kingdom of God he had been violating. When God's laws are violated, the laws of *life* are violated.

## ***HOW PEOPLE DIG THEMSELVES INTO A PIT*** (Causes of Mental-Emotional Disorders)

**1.) A WOUNDED SPIRIT** - (A disappointment, rejection, loss, or injustice) God never allows His children to be tested with anything they cannot bear (1 Cor.10:13). He always makes His *grace* (enablement) available to us when we are injured (Heb. 4:16, 2 Cor.12:9). A *wounded spirit* is the first step into the pit if it is not dealt with correctly (Heb.12:15).

**2.) HARDENING OF THE HEART** - (Bitterness) Scripture warns us repeatedly not to harden our hearts (Heb. 3:8, 3:15, 12:15). When an adult or child becomes hard and bitter, it is because he has resisted and rejected available grace and chosen rather to harden his heart. The *spirit of grace* is insulted after constant refusal (Heb.10:29). Karl Marx focused upon the injustices and oppressions of the laboring man in his day and became bitter. As a young Christian, Marx rejected available grace and hardened his heart instead. God's grace can equal and *exceed* any injustice or hurt we are facing.

**3.) UNFORGIVENESS** - This depletes emotional energy and leads to severe depression. It can affect the mind, nervous system, and all the glands and organs of our body. Unforgiveness also opens the door to Satan (2 Cor. 2:10-11, Mt.18:32-35). Overwork is not the primary cause of *burnout*. Burnout is usually caused by unresolved problems in the heart (ill feelings, unforgiveness, bitterness, fears, etc). With a wounded spirit, a hardened heart and unforgiveness bringing on depressions and much more, we can see how an individual is well on his way to the pits. But below is another vital contributing factor to emotional breakdowns—wrong expectations!

**4.) EXPECTATIONS IN THE WRONG PLACE.** This is a major contributing factor to the conflicts man feels. Wrong expectations can leave a man or woman totally devastated. God never intended for man to find his *all in all* in another human being (a girlfriend, boyfriend, mate, children) or in a career, profession or anything else. Our expectations should be in God Himself and in Him alone (Psa. 62:5). Therefore, when a person's whole life is wrapped up in another person, a career, or something else—if that goes sour his whole world is destroyed too. This is what happened in the life of the boy who wanted to be a baseball star. His whole life and identity was wrapped up in baseball. When he was by-passed for the position he wanted, to him it was the end of the world.

**5.) GOD’S PERSPECTIVE LACKING** - (God’s view of injustices) When people are unable to see matters from God’s perspective, they think thoughts like this—“I have been cheated.” “It’s not fair.” “I have my rights.” Here again is the reason people are so vexed and tormented in their souls! It is because they cannot see the hidden hand of God behind injustices (Gen. 50:20, Rom. 8:28). Joseph understood that every injustice or *raw deal* that ever came into his life was ordained of God to move him closer to the throne. The life of Jesus was filled with injustices. Every injustice, however, worked on His behalf to give Him a Name above every other name in heaven and in earth (Phil. 2:5-11). Unfortunately the young ball player had not been trained in Christian principles, and was unable to comprehend that when God blocks the direction we are pursuing, it is because He has a better alternative in mind.

**6.) THANKFULNESS MISSING** - Another reason people are so unhappy is because they look at others and *expect* equality. When others possess something that they do not, they feel they have been *cheated*. Scripture warns against *comparing* ourselves with others (2 Cor.10:12). This warped sense of equality that the world promotes only produces bitterness. Our attitude should be: “I do not even *deserve* what I have now!” God wants His redeemed ones to learn the grace of being thankful **in** and **for** all things. Thankfulness *cures* all complaining, bitterness, and criticism. Could the young ball player thank the Lord when he did not make the team? Could he congratulate the other boy who did? Did he care anything at all about the third boy who also did *not* make the team? (Rom.12:10,15, 1 Thes. 5:18). Of course not. He was only thinking about himself.

**7.) PRIDE - ( Something for ME)** Perhaps the biggest contributor to emotional conflicts is *pride*. Big egos cannot tolerate being *crossed* or denied what they want. Remember, it is not lambs who become offended and stay that way, but lords. One of the greatest reasons people “end it all” is because they want to be Lord of their life and to be in control of their circumstances. When they are unable to be in charge, they look for an *out*. What is the way then to peace and a sound mind? It is by having a servant’s heart, and delighting to do God’s will, not our own. Are we violating Romans 12:3? Are we dedicated to making Jesus *Lord* of our lives, or are we seeking to be Lord? Remember—The root of all sin in man is that he wants to be Lord of his life, instead of allowing God to have His rightful place.

**8.) REBELLION** - This is an “I don’t care anymore” attitude. The heart has become hardened. An offense has been cherished. Expectations have been placed where they should not. Thankfulness and God’s perspective have been missing. Grace has been refused and rejected. Now rebellion is setting in, and the offended one is going off into sin in an attempt to dull and drown out feelings he cannot or will not deal with—moral sin, drugs, or alcohol. Perhaps he or she is doing all this to spite an offender . . . parents, a boyfriend, a girlfriend, or an estranged mate. When grace has been refused, the ability to deal objectively and the ability to cope with feelings is lost. And the abyss gets deeper and deeper.

**9.) GUILT - The result of sinful living.** (A defiled conscience, condemnation, a loss of self-respect and self-worth, a sense of being worthless) The only remedy for guilt is *an honest confession* of faults and wrongdoings without blaming others (Jer. 3:13). The abyss has opened its mouth even wider since there is still a refusal to acknowledge—“I have sinned. I am offended. I have hardened my heart. I have gone my own way. I am bitter and hateful. I am unforgiving. I am wrong.”

**10.) DESPAIR** - (A loss of all joy and peace and a sense of hopelessness) Now the condition has worsened and the abyss has nearly swallowed its victim. The heart and mind are tormented with guilt and confusion, and a multitude of other *feelings*. And the ability to cope with life is almost gone (Hos.13:9). Yes, Satan overpowers and forces people to do what is unseemly, but remember—*people’s previous actions and decisions have brought them to this place of vulnerability*.

**11.) SATAN’S LIE** - Satan is a dirty fighter. He kicks a man when he is down (1 Pet. 5:8). When his prey is worn out and vulnerable, Satan then overwhelms him with his lies, saying, “There is no hope, there is no use or any way out, you will never be happy again. Just end it all!”

12.) **SUICIDE (self-destruction.)** This is the end result of not dealing with all the preceding.

People are not born in a *pit!* They dig themselves into one by wrong responses to life's difficulties (Ecc.10:8). Each time a man hardens his heart, he deepens his pit. If you have climbed into a pit by any or all of the preceding, then you can also climb out again by *reversing* what you are doing, with God's grace helping you! You will probably need the help of others too.

### ***SUMMARY***

#### **Steps into the Pit: (and contributing factors)**

- \* **A Wounded Spirit** - an injury, rejection, or severe disappointment
- \* **Hardening the Heart** - false comfort. This is fostering the hurt and refusing grace.
- \* **Unforgiveness** - desire to punish an offender or God; cherishing an offense
- \* **Wrong Expectations** - the heart becoming too attached to something mortal—  
a violation of Psalm 62:5
- \* **God's Perspective Lacking** - failure to see God's hidden hand of blessing in an injustice or difficulty
- \* **Thankfulness Missing** - not thanking God in and for every situation—a feeling of getting *a raw deal*.
- \* **Pride** - This is the root of conflicts and torments.  
A crossed ego sets off many other “juices” (i. e. evil passions).
- \* **Rebellion** - casting off all restraints, turning to sin and degradation; an “I don't care anymore” attitude
- \* **Guilt** - loss of self-worth and self-respect from living a shameful life
- \* **Despair** - all peace, joy, and sense of hope gone; Inability to cope with a tormented, confused mind
- \* **Satan's Lies** - “There is no hope; What's the use, Just end it all”
- \* **Suicide** - self-destruction

By His truth, the Lord would uncover and expose the camouflage of Satan's pit.



# ***ESSENTIAL GUIDELINES TO HELP KEEP US OUT OF THE PITS***

## **Climbing Out of the Pits and Staying Out**

FOR FREEDOM FROM SELF:

**Develop a servant's heart.** Put others first. Focus on their needs, not yours. Desire God's will, not your own.

**Renounce all self-pity.** — (The “poor me” syndrome) *Everyone* has struggles and frustrations (1 Cor.10:13).

**Never harden your heart.** This is false comfort and a wrong defense mechanism. Rely on *grace* for injuries.

**Fully forgive and release all your offenders.** Lose your desire to punish those who hurt you. God will justify.

**Do not avenge yourself.** It only makes you harder. Exercising the old nature strengthens it (Prov.24:29).

**Remove all guilt; stop blaming others.** God will take care of offenders; just keep your own attitudes right.

**Practice thinking merciful thoughts.** Practice tenderness. Words and actions are conceived in our *thoughts*.

**Pray for offenders.** Say something good about them (Lu. 6:28). Do not continually rehearse offenses.

**Have God's perspective on everything.** Realize that injustices are ordained of God to promote and bless you.

**God will vindicate you sooner or later.** God will bring everything to light on judgment day (Ecc.12:14).

**Remember that Jesus suffered injustices too.** We are not better than He is. (Jn.15:20).

**Be purged from “It's not fair!”** Accept everything God sends as more than fair and designed for our benefit.

**Surrender rights and self-will.** Anger and conflicts cease when we dedicate our rights to God.

**Practice the golden rule.** (Mt. 7:12). Treat people the way you want them to treat you.

**Allow God to deal with pride.** Pride is the *source* of most inner conflicts and turmoil. Humility is peace!

**Have the right expectations.** Make sure your affections and expectations are *not* focused upon things mortal.

**Do not compare.** Bitterness results when we compare ourselves to others and expect equality.

**Be thankful.** We do not deserve something better. We do not even deserve what we have (Eph. 5:20).

**Do not demand equal rights.** The “poor in spirit” (Mt. 5:3) do not demand equal rights, but lords do.

**Be content.** Be satisfied with God's wonderful presence. His presence brings fullness of joy (Psa.16:11).

**Have fulfillment.** Fulfillment is doing what we were created for—bringing pleasure to our Maker (Rev. 4:11).

**Have right motives.** Desire only what God wants you to have or you will bring grief to yourself and everyone around you (1 Kg.1:5, Acts 20:30).

**Do not be a perfectionist.** Be able to defer to other's desires and opinions. Perfectionists are hard to live with.

**Seek for a totally renewed mind.** View everything (situations, yourself, and others) from God's perspective. Fill yourself with the Word of God—His Truth will set you free from every bondage (Jn. 8:32).

**Keep a living faith and a positive confession.** (Rev.12:11). Satan is overcome by the word of our testimony. Satan is strengthened every time we confess what he is saying. Only agree with God. We can talk ourselves into defeat and break down God's protective hedge by confessing Satan's lies—"I'll never make it, it's too hard, what's the use, I'll never be happy again." *Do not give Satan any power* (Ecc.10:8).

**Do not live in the past.** Forget past failures and regrets—the "what if's" and "if only's" (Phil. 3:13, Heb. 9:25).

**Stop worrying.** *Worry* causes burnouts and breakdowns more than overworking. Ask God to get at the roots of what is causing worry. "Be anxious for nothing" (Phil. 4:6).

**Ask God for new promises.** Everyone needs a progressing and ongoing vision, something new to hope for. Even Jesus looked beyond His present circumstances and was able to endure because of what was set before Him (Heb.12:2).

**Obey; Respond to any new light God gives you.** (1 Pet.1:22). This is the key to growth. Every time we obey God and respond to what He is saying to us, we are changed. Growth and genuine guidance cease when we say NO to God, or we ignore what He is saying.

**Change your conversation.** (Psa. 50:23). God may not deliver us from our trial or difficult circumstances until our *conversation* changes. Job was not delivered until he stopped criticizing and reviling (Job 42:1-12).

**Be willing to go through the fire.** Fiery trials are for the purpose of dealing with problems in our lives that are not glorifying to God, and are also to remove the things that are robbing us of joy and peace. Daniel's three friends were thrown into a fiery furnace, but the only thing devoured by the fire was their *bondages* (Dan. 3:21-28).

**Be open to change.** Do not be content to stay in your routine of life. Allow God to expand and change your mind. We will never change until our *minds* are changed! God has many new, fresh experiences ahead. Keep pace!

**Be full of the Spirit.** The fruits of the Spirit (joy, peace, etc.) are essential for good mental, emotional, and spiritual health. Seek to be filled with the Holy Spirit and His divine fruits. Ask God to help you not to reject the manifestations of the Spirit. The movings of the Spirit (rejoicing, clapping of the hands, etc.) bring release from spiritual bondages, and fill you with joy. This is the very thing we need for spiritual and emotional health.

**Seek for the experience of Romans 6:6.** This is the "dead to sin" experience. Christ not only paid for our sins, He also made provision for our *sinful nature*. On the cross He purchased everything we need to be whole, including the ability to conquer sin. Although Christ has purchased everything we need (Eph.1:3), we must walk on with Him in order to possess them. God will lead us into the "dead to sin" experience as we continue to hunger and thirst for righteousness.

**Reverse wrong responses.** If you are in the pit because of wrong responses, you can also climb out by making the right ones. A deliverance minister or man of God usually cannot lay hands on a man and say, "Be completely delivered from the pit." Prayer and the power of God may be necessary initially to get a captive going in the right direction, but seldom is he totally delivered unless he takes some proper steps *of his own* toward his freedom.

Even when a prison door is unlocked and opened, the prisoner must walk out of it in order to be free. Sometimes even when the gates are opened people choose to remain in their prison. This was true of the Jewish captives in Babylon. Upon conquering Babylon, the Persian king Cyrus opened the two leaved gates and told the Jewish exiles they were free to go home (2 Chron. 36:22-23). Only *some* responded to the available freedom. Many others remained in Babylon, comfortable in their bondage. Prophetically, Isaiah commanded the captives, “*Shake thyself, loose thyself* O captive daughter of Zion” (Isa. 52:1-2). God does His part, but man must do his part too!

Several years ago I saw a documentary on wolves. A mother wolf had a litter of pups that were kept in a small pen for four years. They were born in captivity and never went anywhere outside of the confines of a ten by ten cage. One day the researcher opened the cage door. Remarkably, the wolves were afraid to go out. Each day they sheepishly took a few steps further outside the security of the cage they had lived in all their lives. Eventually they gained confidence and their minds were reprogrammed enough to live normal lives. It took many new steps to gain this freedom and life of normalcy. The wolves could have stayed in that cage for the rest of their lives with the gates wide open.

This analogy is true for man too. Even when the prison door is opened, man must take many steps out to gain reorientation into a normal life. Remember, every step that Israel took into Babylon (confusion) as exiles, they had to *restep* in order to return home. And every step a man takes downward into a pit must be reclaimed with effort by climbing uphill to get out of it. It takes *effort* and *desire* to get out of a pit.

A certain woman went to her pastor for counsel on several occasions. The lady said to the pastor, “Pastor, I would like to have counselling sessions with you for one hour every week.” The godly pastor looked at her and replied, “No sister.” “But why not, Pastor?” responded the perplexed woman. “Because you will only repeat the same issues to me, and I will give you the same answers.” This is what most counselling sessions come to. Then he exhorted the woman, saying, “Unless you get a hold of God yourself, nothing is going to change.” This is the point—We cannot expect the minister or evangelist to get us out of all our bondages. We have to take steps of our own toward freedom, or we will remain in our prison.

To receive freedom from our bondages requires much effort, prayer, and many steps of obedience. To help illustrate the point, it is like a set of scales or balances. On one side is a heavy bondage, and we are on the light side. Each time we pray and obey what God is telling us to do, we are putting a little more weight on the light side. Often it will seem like absolutely nothing is happening, but each time we are adding a little more weight to our side. As we continue to faithfully seek God and not give up, there will come a day when the balance will fall to our side. We will have the mastery over the bondage. So, don't give up! (cf. Luke 18:1-8). Paul commands us to “*Fight* the good fight of faith” (1 Tim. 6:12, 2 Tim. 4:7). If we just sit there and do nothing, we will die in our bondages. Fight, fight, fight, and don't give up!

**“Shake thyself from the dust; arise, and sit down, O  
Jerusalem: loose thyself from the bands of thy neck,  
O captive daughter of Zion.”**

**(Isaiah 52:2).**

## ***THE NEED FOR GRACE AND THE SPIRIT OF REPENTANCE***

### **CONCLUSION**

In the preceding pages, our subject has been the gaining of deliverance from the self-centered life and freedom from bondages and habits. We have stressed the importance of a renewed mind, reversing wrong life-styles and response patterns, knowing the Word of God, having the right confessions, and much, much more. But in order to have the victory, all of these, though absolutely necessary, *are not enough!*

Claiming it by faith, or taking authority over the Devil are often not enough. Trying to follow all the right steps, practicing all the right procedures and formulas, and exerting all the will power a man or woman can muster up are not enough. Even having the best teachings from the Word of God will never transform an individual or release him from his bondage unless God sovereignly gives His grace. I want to repeat this! No one can ever change from the person he is or be delivered from his prisons, routines, ruts, appetites, mind-sets or bondages—unless he receives *grace* from God. And God only gives grace to the humble.

*Will power* is not enough either! Deliverance from a problem or transformation from the person that we are can *only* come from a divine impartation of grace from God Himself. There can be no growth, no change, no progress or going on with God unless He touches us and sovereignly gives us His grace. Paul said the only thing that changed him was the grace of God. He said, “By the grace of God I am what I am” (1 Cor.15:10, 1 Tim.1:13-14).

“*Let us go on*” (Heb. 6:1). Paul commanded us to be established in the elementary principles of doctrine, but then he said, “Let us *go on* to perfection.” However, in 6:3 he adds, “*This will we do if God permit.*” (i. e. Only if God gives us His grace.) Therefore, our part is to humble ourselves and plead with God to give us His favor, asking Him to sovereignly impart His grace unto us. This truth cannot be overemphasized. Nothing will ever change unless we receive new grace from God. Grace comes from God as we humble ourselves before Him (Jas. 4:6, 1 Pet. 5:5-6). Let us ask God daily for His mercy and grace.

### **The Spirit of Repentance**

*Repentance* literally means “a change of mind” which causes one then to change his ways. Repentance is a gift of God. It cannot be put on or worked up. If God does not give the spirit of repentance and grace, a person *cannot* soften or change. It is only *the goodness of God* that leads a man to repentance (Rom. 2:4). However, man has to yield to this goodness.

No man can come to God unless God is drawing him and softening him. A person cannot say, “I will live my life and when I am ready, or when I am elderly and I am on my deathbed, then I will repent.” No! Unless God draws, man cannot come. There are *seasons* when God knocks at a man’s heart. If man ignores God or refuses to open the door, then God may not come back again for awhile. It takes a miracle of divine grace and the spirit of repentance for a man to be softened and opened to receive the gift of salvation or any other of God’s blessings of deliverance (Rev. 3:20).

**“Seek the Lord while he may be found, call upon Him while he is near.” (Isaiah 55:6)**

**“No man can come to me, except the Father which sent me, draw him.” (John 6:44, 65)**

## **A Life of Brokenness and Repentance**

We need a life of brokenness and repentance! We need that ability to break, to change our minds, to be soft and yielding, and to be able to say—“I am wrong, I am sorry!” This ability is called the spirit of repentance. It is an *anointing*, a grace from God. King David had this anointing. You can see it coming out in the Psalms.

### **An Example of the Spirit of Repentance**

An example of the spirit of repentance is found in Zechariah 12:10 and Jeremiah 31:18. It is a softening, a breaking, an attitude of—“What have I done? How foolish I have been! Lord, I am so sorry for hurting You and others.” God would have us live *daily* with the spirit of repentance, and constantly rely upon Him for His enabling grace.

(Job 27:1-5). Job said that he was right, that God had taken away his justice, and that he would not change his mind even if he died. It is utterly amazing how people can be broken in health *but not broken in spirit*. Job had become hardened during his trial and was now accusing God of irresponsibility. Job needed a soft, repentant spirit. I have personally talked with Christians who had serious bondages (and some who were dying), who refused to be open or change their minds about their ways or ideas. They needed a spirit of repentance, grace, and brokenness.

Deliverance *cannot* come until a man humbles himself, and receives grace from God to change. Some have dug themselves in so deeply that they don't even *desire* to change anymore. . . but God is able even to restore desire! If you need a miracle in your life, ask God to show you what you *must* put right in your life in order to be *prepared* to receive your miracle. God longs to visit you and set you free!

**Here is our conclusion — Seek God earnestly for His grace and a spirit of repentance.**

