

# TO SET THE CAPTIVES FREE



BY DAN ROLFE

**Nine of the most common areas where Christians struggle to be free**

## Broken Dreams

As children bring their broken toys  
With tears for us to mend,  
I brought my broken dreams to God  
Because He was my Friend.

But then instead of leaving Him  
In peace to work alone,  
I hung around and tried to help  
With ways that were my own.

At last I snatched them back and cried,  
"How can You be so slow?"  
"My child," He said "what could I do?  
You never did let go."

**Author unknown**

## OUTLINE

	page
Acknowledgements	2
Introduction	4
Preface: The Most Important Thing	7

### *Section I*

#### CONCERNING THINGS THAT HAVE BEEN DONE TO ME

Chapter 1 Forgiveness	18
Chapter 2 Ungodly Soul-ties	26
Chapter 3 Rejection	33

### *Section II*

#### CONCERNING MY RESPONSE TO THINGS DONE TO ME

Chapter 4 Inner Vows	40
Chapter 5 Judgments and Expectancies	45
Chapter 6 Ungodly Belief Systems	50

### *Section III*

#### CONCERNING THINGS I HAVE DONE

Chapter 7 Sexual Sins	58
Chapter 8 Exposure to the Occult	67

### *Section IV*

#### CONCERNING THINGS I HAVE INHERITED

Chapter 9 Generational Sins and Curses	76
Appendix Continuing in Freedom	85

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

The accumulation of material for this project did not start, and neither will it end, with me. I can in no way claim sole credit for the material in these pages. The development of this work began long before I even knew about it. Very little of it is original in conception. Although I have tried not to quote any source word for word, some ideas, concepts and illustrations have been borrowed from other authors and speakers for the purpose of better explaining the material being presented. My hope is that these teachings are biblical and glorify the Author of all truth, and are therefore not the sole possession of anyone. They belong to all who want to live free in Jesus Christ.

This book began with the research and development of material designed to help people pray through common, binding issues in Christians' lives. That work was begun by a group of dedicated leaders at Heartbeat Ministries here in Halifax, Nova Scotia. They believed that they had to practice these things on themselves before they could approve them for teaching to others. Consequently, after many hours of accumulating teaching and practicing on each other, the Heartbeat leaders began holding seminars where they would take new people through a weekend series of teachings with one-on-one practical training. The format for these seminars was based on the Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship's model of their Encounter Weekends. The goal was not to just impart information, but to raise up more people who could do the same, thus multiplying the effect of healing in the body of Christ. I came into contact with the material through one such seminar. From there, I became one of those who was raised up and also became one of their teachers in the seminars.

Although I am absolutely sure that they would not want the recognition, I want to thank the people of Heartbeat Ministries for their willingness to pursue these teachings in their own lives and then unselfishly share them with others in this local area. These people, using themselves as guinea pigs, were the impetus

behind developing these seminars. It is my sole desire that with these articles I can make available the root truths imparted in these seminars. This is not, however, a substitute for the invaluable one-on-one experience of praying through our past hurts with another brother or sister. These articles are to be used as an aid to inform and prepare the reader to go farther.

The neat thing about being free to broadly seek what God is doing in this area of healing His church, is that we have been able to gather information from many different sources. Because it is God's work, He is speaking these things to many of His children in many different ministries all over the world. We have collected not only what we feel is the simplest but, more importantly, what has worked for us. This freedom also allows us to continue learning and collecting. The most prominent sources of the material we use right now are Toronto Airport Christian Fellowship's Encounter Weekend (as mentioned before), Neil Anderson's Seven Steps to Freedom, Jack Frost's teachings on the Father's Heart (Shiloh Place Ministries), John and Paula Sanford's teachings on restoration (Elijah House International), John and Carol Arnett's teachings on forgiveness (TACF), and Ed M. Smith's Theophostic Counseling. This is not an exhaustive list, as you can imagine, but for the material in this booklet it is more than sufficient.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the few dear souls who carefully, and with their own areas of expertise, read over the previous versions and made editorial suggestions (I am terrible with comas). Thank you to Sarah-Lee Richardson, Sheila Strolz and Marilyn Havill. Their kind input have made my "style" of teaching actually legible.



## INTRODUCTION

There are many bible verses that tell us of our perfect redemption in Christ. We are complete in Him and there is nothing more we need to live the life He has given us to live. The power of the blood of Jesus Christ to wash us clean from our sins is indisputable. This is our spiritual reality in the heavenly places in Christ and this will be our physical reality when we are in His presence, glorified with Him. But for now, we live in a sin-marred world where we still experience sadness, hurt, disappointment and failure. We, even as Christians, sin. Others sin against us and we have to deal with that too. All in all, we do not always find ourselves living in the glorious work of redemption that Christ has supplied for us.

But this is not any different than the Christians of the New Testament. Much of the Old Testament shows our mothers and fathers of the faith as sinners who failed regularly as they served God. The New Testament shows the same, with most of the epistles being full of instructions on how to deal with problems among Christians. Therefore, we must face the fact that, even in Christ, we are not perfect, but being perfected as we apply the work of Christ to every area of our lives.

Nowhere is this more evident than in our relationships with others and with God. However, it has been my experience that 90% of the time when someone angers me, it is not actually that person who has made me mad, but rather they have reminded me of someone or something that made me mad in my past. Because I had not dealt with that past situation according to Christ, the effects of it remain with me and are triggered by present events. This can be true of many ungodly responses to things that have happened to us before. Abuse, rejection, injustice, broken trust, broken dreams and more are all common occurrences in our fallen world. None of us have escaped their marks. But this is why Jesus came to die. He came to deliver us from these marks and their effects. He knows what we go through. Only His truth can bring us the freedom we need.

Unfortunately, most of our attempts at freedom are aimed at the present reactions themselves. We often counsel people on how to manage their negative emotions, aptly applying Scripture to show how their behaviour is not pleasing to God. Then we give them biblical advice on what obedience in this area should look like. Depending on their strength and will, they receive varying degrees of success, but most often they embark on a cycle of sincere victories and failures. It's like pulling up a weed and leaving the root. We need to deal with the true reason why we react negatively in the present, and that is often found in our past. If we don't, then it is just a matter of time before something or someone else will set it off again.

These wounds in our inner being cause us to develop ways of looking at the world around us. The earlier the wounds take place, the more insidious their effects are upon our lives. They cause us to assume things like, "if this person hurt me this way, then all people will hurt me this way." If we truly believe this, then we will miss many good people in our lives and even misinterpret acts of kindness. It's not real, except to us. Unfortunately, the practical truth is that our perception is often stronger than our reality. Others can help, but only God can help us get to the root of the problem and weed it out. He must renew our thinking and show us the truth. It will set us free to live in the present and to love as He wants us to love.

I like to illustrate it this way. Think of it as each of us is given an empty emotional bag when we are conceived. As we are disappointed, or receive a hurt that is left uncomforted, or believe a lie, or harbour unforgiveness, etc., a rock goes in our emotional bag. It may be a pebble or it may be a boulder or maybe something in between, but they all begin to add up as we live our lives. Before long, we are carrying a heavy load of wounds and ungodly beliefs that we learn to live with. Though the weight is burdensome, we endure and even become accustomed to doing things while holding this awkward bag.

Consequently, when God begins to deal with these wounds, and as each one is submitted to the ways of Christ, He removes it from the bag. Often when a boulder-sized issue is dealt with, we notice the difference immediately and feel like we can stand

up straighter than ever before. Don't be discouraged if all your problems are not solved that day. It is a process. In the same way, God may deal with a pebble and you may notice no difference, but many pebbles will add up to more freedom! Don't get me wrong. I have seen God remove many things miraculously and sovereignly from a person's life just by a single touch of His Holy Spirit; but, in most cases, it is the daily walking out of our salvation that brings freedom.

I must warn you. This is not a quick fix, self-help book. We didn't get this way overnight, and so it takes God's timing to root out the sources. Like layers of an onion, our hurts have accumulated over a long period of time. This is not just some *Shrek* anthropology. Only God knows in what order they need to be removed. What I am saying is that this is not an instant solution to all of our problems. These are principles to *live* by. This is the Christian life: to commit ourselves to becoming more and more like Jesus in our actions and attitudes, bringing every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

Therefore, these articles are designed to help Christians in practicing biblical principles within their relationships with God and others. They are not designed to make Christians dwell in the past. Don't dwell in the past – deal with it and move on! If the past is affecting your present, apply the work of Christ to it and move forward. My hope is that these chapters will help you to do as Hebrews 12:1 says:

*“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.”*

Yes, this is my hope.

## PREFACE

### THE MOST IMPORTANT THING

#### *To Know The Love of God*

Any time we look at God's revelation to us in the Scriptures, we must allow our vision to pass through the lens of God's ultimate desire: He wants to express His undying love to His creation generally and to His children specifically. There is no more compelling doctrine in the whole of the Bible than the truth that God is love. From His first work of creation to His selfless act of sending His only Son Jesus to die on our behalf, God has shown that He has only one all-consuming intention and that is to have a loving, intimate relationship with us.

This truth is found over and over again within the pages of the Bible. Throughout the Old Testament, God's overtures toward the nation of Israel as a whole, toward individual Jews and even toward many Gentiles have shown that His agenda is to reach out and initiate caring relationships with people. Our personal prejudices and cultural biases, however, have often kept us from seeing this. In the New Testament, God took on human flesh in Jesus and exploded onto the scene with explicit acts of love and compassion toward many kinds of people. With the backdrop of such amazing acts of rescue, Jesus says, "If you've seen Me, you've seen the Father."

Jesus blasted those ideas about working for God, and made everything a matter of the heart. Everything was about relationship to Him. He rebuked the religious leaders while spending most of His time loving street people, hookers and social outcasts. He loved everyone who came to Him, and they were changed dramatically if they came with a heart that was open to be loved and to love. Jesus was stern with the proud, hoping to guide them out of their self-deception, but He was gentle with the humble, knowing that they were ready to be loved.

When Jesus was asked point-blank what was the most important thing in the Law of God, He summed it all up like this in Matthew 22:37-40:

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbour as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.”*

Remember, He said that if we have seen Him, then we have seen the Father in heaven. Therefore, if Jesus emphasized love that flows from God to us and back to God again, and consequently from us to others, then we can safely say that this is the most important thing to God the Father as well. Even the apostle Paul’s prayer for the church in Ephesians 3:16-19 was:

*“I pray that out of His glorious riches He may strengthen you with power through His Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.”*

To experience the love of the Father as revealed in Jesus Christ, through His Holy Spirit, is our destiny. It is our treasure in this life. It is our inheritance in the life to come. It has been God’s heart since the beginning of time.

### ***God’s Ultimate Purpose***

Brennan Manning, in his astounding book *Abba’s Child*, relates a story that brings into focus the fundamental importance of knowing the love of God for us. He writes:

*THE STORY IS TOLD OF A VERY JEWISH COUPLE. They had married with great love, and the love never died. Their greatest hope was to have a child so their love could walk the earth with joy.*

*Yet there were difficulties. And since they were very pious, they prayed and prayed and prayed. Along with considerable other efforts, lo and behold, the wife conceived. When she conceived, she laughed louder than Sarah laughed when she conceived Isaac. And the child leapt in her womb more joyously than John leapt in the womb of Elizabeth when Mary visited her. And nine months later a delightful little boy came rumbling into the world.*

*They named him Mordecai. He was rambunctious, zestful, gulping down the days and dreaming through the nights. The sun and the moon were his toys. He grew in age and wisdom and grace, until it was time to go to the synagogue and learn the Word of God.*

*The night before his studies were to begin, his parents sat Mordecai down and told him how important the Word of God was. They stressed that without the Word of God Mordecai would be an autumn leaf in the winter's wind. He listened wide-eyed. Yet the next day he never arrived at the synagogue. Instead he found himself in the woods, swimming in the lake and climbing the trees.*

*When he came home that night, the news had spread throughout the small village. Everyone knew of his shame. His parents were beside themselves. They did not know what to do. So they called in the behavior modificationists to modify Mordecai's behavior, until there was no behavior of Mordecai that was not modified. Nevertheless, the next day he found himself in the woods, swimming in the lake and climbing the trees.*

*So they called in the psychoanalysts, who unblocked Mordecai's blockages, so there were no more blocks for Mordecai to be blocked by. Nevertheless, he found himself the next day, swimming in the lake and climbing the trees.*

*His parents grieved for their beloved son. There seemed to be no hope.*

*At this same time the Great Rabbi visited the village. And the parents said, "Ah! Perhaps the Rabbi." So they took Mordecai to the Rabbi and told him their tale of woe. The Rabbi bellowed, "Leave the boy with me, and I will have a talking with him."*

*It was bad enough that Mordecai would not go to the synagogue. But to leave their beloved son alone with this lion of a man was terrifying. However, they had come this far, and so they left him.*

*Now Mordecai stood in the hallway, and the Great Rabbi stood in his parlor. He beckoned, "Boy, come here." Trembling, Mordecai came forward*

*And then the Great Rabbi picked him up and held him silently against his heart.*

*His parents came to get Mordecai, and they took him home. The next day he went to the synagogue to learn the Word of God. And when he was done, he went to the woods. And the Word of God became one with words of the woods, which became one with the words of Mordecai. And he swam in the lake. And the Word of God became one with words of the lake, which became one with the words of Mordecai. And he climbed the trees. And the Word of God became one with the words of the trees, which became one with the words of Mordecai.*

*And Mordecai himself grew up to become a great man. People who were seized with panic came to him and found peace. People who were without anybody came to him and found communion. People with no exits came to him and found a way out. And when they came to him he said, "I first learned the Word of God when the Great Rabbi held me silently against his heart."<sup>1</sup>*

The foundational importance of being recipients of God's love cannot be over-stressed. It is the Great Rabbi's good news! It is what gives life meaning and brings wisdom and understanding to the world around us. It brings us profound peace and purpose. It is the pearl of great price for which, once we have found it, we will buy, sell, invest, risk everything to

have it always with us. From the beginning, our need for love has been programmed into us to find its fulfillment in the love that God has for us.

Everyone needs love. It is the most basic of human needs. We eat, drink, and work in order to chase after that sense of belonging somewhere. But that longing was put there to find its ultimate rest in the love of the Father. God is the only destination that brings peace to our longing hearts.

The depth of this love relationship that God intends to share with us is found in the names He has given by which we are to view Him. He is our Father. He is the perfect Father who is always there for us, nurturing and caring for our deepest needs. He picks us up when we fall down and carries us when our legs get too tired. He lovingly disciplines and corrects us when we are making mistakes that are not good for us. He is all of the things that our earthly father could not be for us (Matthew 7:11). He has adopted us into His family to be fellow-heirs of His inheritance in Jesus Christ (Romans 8:15-17). We can go so far as to call Him our Daddy (the word *Abba* is an endearing term for a father). We are not servants in the house, but sons and daughters with equal access to our Father's riches.

He is our Lover (Song of Solomon 8:5-7). He is the bridegroom and we are the bride. He is pursuing us and trying to woo us into a romantic courtship that will culminate in our becoming one at the marriage supper of the Lamb. He will not be satisfied until He presents us to His Father as His pure, spotless bride.

He is our Friend (John 15:12-15). He is our best Friend. He shares everything with us. Remember, we are not servants in the house. We are His friends and confidants. He trusts us with the very mysteries of heaven and loves sharing the work that He is doing with us. He is happy to encourage our participation. Do you get the idea? We have a very special place in God's heart. He wants to be intimate with us and meet our every need.

It is crucial for every Christian to understand the true heart of God. He is not a rigid dictator who requires our exact obedience or else He will cast us out of His presence. He is not a pragmatic schoolmaster who is going to teach us all we need to

know to survive on our own one day. He is not a detached, absent provider who takes care of us from a distance, but doesn't want to know us. Rather, He is a gracious, loving Father who wants so much just to spend time with us. He is actively wanting to walk through our lives with us, bringing comfort and peace as we intimately share with Him.

## ***Loving Your Neighbour***

But, what about loving our neighbours? How do human relationships connect with this vital purpose of God loving us? The Bible describes the Christian in a way that will help us to understand this. In 2 Corinthians 4:7, we are called vessels or containers, jars of clay. The picture is that of us being able to "hold" things and be able to carry them around. This is very true of God's love. As we receive the love that God has for us, we become vessels of His love and carry it with us wherever we go. It affects every part of our lives and we are able to love others so much more easily. As vessels, we are able to become so full of God's love that it can slosh over the top and onto those around us. This is an amusing picture, but it really comes short of God's complete plan for us.

As vessels, however, we are not to just hold God's love, but be channels of it directed to others. The emphasis in being channels is that the love we receive from God is not for us ever to keep solely to ourselves. As we receive it, we must allow God to use us to give it away to others. We must allow ourselves to be poured out, not just let the excess slosh over the top. When the love of the Father has filled us, giving it away is not hard. It is a natural thing to want to share it. Have you ever been in love? Could you hide it from those you knew? Did you find that you wanted to tell them? It is just as easy to give God's love away. We're in love!

Since being a vessel involves giving God's love away, there is a need to be constantly receiving from God a fresh supply. We must never forget our source. Sometimes we can get so caught up in the giving away that we forget we are getting empty. This leads us to trying to love people in our own strength after a

while, and we wonder why it has become so hard. God's purpose is that we be a vessel or channel of HIS love to the world – not our own. It is the best thing for us and for those we love.

To fulfill God's purpose then, we must receive from the Source of all pure love and give it away to others. In Ezekiel 47, there is a vision that is recorded that reveals some principles about this. In the vision, Ezekiel is shown the River of God flowing from the throne out of the Temple. Everywhere the water runs it brings life. The Dead Sea is revived, the banks are lined with fishermen, and trees grow strong with an abundance of fruit. But then verse 11 catches the eye:

*“But the swamps and the marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt.”*

Never forget that the River of God only brings life wherever it *flows*. Swamps and marshes are stagnant wetlands. If we do not allow the love of God to flow from us, we will become stagnant in His purpose. Salt preserves, but we must stay active, alive, taking risks while giving God's love away. As I heard one person rightly say, “The new wine of God's love is not a private supply.”

## ***Roadblocks***

Is it surprising that if this is God's ultimate purpose for us, then Satan's agenda is to hinder and destroy that flow? Our enemy hates loving, healthy relationships. From the beginning, when he first approached Adam and Eve, he purposed to put doubt and unbelief into the relationship between them and God. The effects of sin, the flesh and Satan have been at work ever since.

Consider the scene again in that beautiful garden God had made for them. The relationship that God had with them was pure, open and intimate. They were innocent in their understanding of things and nothing hindered them from believing that God loved them. After all, He had provided all that they could possibly need. They only had one limitation: to

avoid eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. “If you eat of it,” God said, “you shall surely die” (Genesis 2:16-17). Everything else was theirs for the taking.

God knew what was best for them. He knew that they could live in innocence and intimacy, if they left the knowledge of good and evil to God. But they were tempted and they ate and suddenly, “their eyes were opened.” They did not die physically. Perhaps that would have been more lenient. Instead, they died to their original purpose of living unhindered in God’s presence. They received knowledge, but they lost innocence. They gained enlightenment, but they lost intimacy. They gained sight, but suddenly they realized that they were naked, covered themselves and hid. Oh, glorious knowledge that robs us of our destiny in Christ! Satan achieved his goal of severing the intimacy we had with God.

From that day forward, those same blocks have hindered us from our relationship with our loving Father in heaven. Our knowledge of the contrasts between good and evil in this world, and our own interpretations of them, are what keep us from God. We need to reverse the effects of that day in the garden, for Christ has made the way possible. We need to eat from the tree of life, letting God show us the right way to see things in this life, setting us free from our hurts and misconceptions about the world and people around us. Those wounds will remain unhealed as long as we choose to look at them solely from our own understanding.

As channels, the flow of love from God to us and then to others can be hindered, even blocked, by the unhealed wounds we have experienced in this fallen world. Like logs in the stream, our unforgiveness, anger, insecurity, pride, fear, etc. can limit the flow of love that God wants us to have. Behind the logs is a limitless supply, but all we experience is a trickle. As vessels, our unhealed wounds are like rocks that take up volume in our souls. God fills us to overflowing, but we are too full of our own hurts to hold much of Him. But this is not God’s plan for us. This is the result of sin in our lives, lies we have believed, and the curse from the fall. Jesus has redeemed us, though! He has the continued remedy for our situation.

Now that we are vessels and channels, we need to take the redeeming truths in Jesus Christ and His cross and begin applying them to our lives. The power of the cross can wipe away the effects of years of uncomforted pain and hurt. One by one, He can remove those rocks from you so that you can hold more of God's love. One by one, He can remove the logs from the jam to allow an abundant flow of His love to rush into and through your life. Jesus is the answer. The Father's love is the source. The Holy Spirit is your guide. The flow of God's love to you, and then to others, is your destiny.

The profound presence of God's love in your life shall set you free. Will you invite God, like the psalmist, to search you and try you and see if there is any wicked way in you (Psalm 139:23-24)? He wants to lead you in the way that is everlasting. Will you, as Carol Arnott so gently puts it, "give God permission to dig in the garden of your heart?" It will be hard at times, even excruciating, but it is better than the bondage now robbing you. I encourage you to be free, indeed.

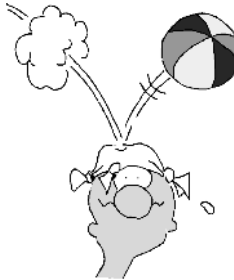


# *Section I*

**CONCERNING THE THINGS**

**THAT HAVE BEEN DONE**

**TO ME**



## CHAPTER ONE

### **FORGIVENESS**

Have you ever had someone do something or say something to you that hurt your feelings or made you mad? Even long after the physical effects of the person's actions were gone, you still couldn't look them in the eye. After a while, you were okay when they weren't around, but as soon as you saw them it would all come back to you again. Have you ever had that happen? We all have.

After love, the one thing that is to characterize Christians in their relationships with others is the practice of forgiveness. Forgiveness is at the heart of what God has done for us through the blood of Jesus Christ on the cross. As the Bible says in 1 John 4:19, "We love Him because He first loved us," even so we are to forgive others because He first forgave us. Ephesians 4:32 says:

*"And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you."*

Let's look at the important elements of forgiveness: what the opposite of forgiveness is, what forgiveness is, what forgiveness is not and who we need to forgive.

#### ***What is the opposite of forgiveness? Bitterness***

The opposite of forgiveness, is to hold on to the "right" for justice. This clinging to retribution builds up anger, resentment and discontentment. These things are all components of bitterness. Bitterness is the opposite of forgiveness. We require that the person pay for their sin against us and not be allowed to "get away with it." We want them punished. We want them to beg us for mercy while we righteously stand over them in

judgment. But aren't we glad that God didn't act that way toward us?

Bitterness is born out of wanting to do things according to the law. The law is good, especially for helping others to know how to behave around us. But the law is just and treats everyone the same. What is true for others in the law is also equally true for me. "An eye for an eye!" The law exacts justice with no mercy. That's only fair, because the law is an impartial judge. The law is truly fair. But do we really want fair? Don't we want mercy when it comes to us?

The bitterness we harbour is like a plant that always has its roots in unforgiveness. Bitterness is never a personal problem. It always affects the people around us, even those that have never wronged us. It is usually best seen in our primary relationships (parents, children, siblings and spouses).

Hebrews 12:14-15 says: *"Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled."*

Have you ever lost your temper with an innocent person because you were angry about what someone else had done? If you have, then a root of bitterness was springing up in you, causing trouble and defiling more than just those involved in the original situation. All of this happens when we fall short of the example of God's grace in our lives, when we hold back extending forgiveness to someone. We are told to be careful to not let this happen because its effects go out to everyone around us.

### ***What is forgiveness?***

Forgiveness is a gift that we give to a guilty party because it is within our power to do so. As long as we do not forgive someone, we are under the power of their sin against us. It may cause sleeplessness, or take up our thoughts during the day, or

give us emotional and physical discomfort, such as stress, indigestion and anger.

You might say, "But why should I let them off the hook for what they have done?" They are not on the hook. More often than not, they are living their lives without any thought of the thing they have done against you.

So who is really on the hook? You are the one on "the hook!" By forgiving them, you let yourself off the hook of this past wrong. Know, however, that they will never be off of God's "hook." Trust Him to deal with this person in the best way, and then you can go on living in the grace He has given you. Forgiveness is not for them, but for you so that you may be free.

Perhaps you know of something that someone has done to you and you know it hurt you, but you can justify their behaviour. "After all," you might say, "they were having a bad day" or "They had a bad home life, too." These circumstances may be very true, but that does not set you free from the pain that was caused by their actions. You are not trying to "kick them when they are down." Remember, forgiveness is not for them, but for you. Face the pain and deal with the bitterness. Then you can let it go.

Forgiveness is God's way. God wants us to live a new life in Christ. He wants us to put off the old ways which were from the effects of sin and Satan in our lives. We once lived under the law, but now we are under grace. We once lived in bondage and the condemnation of sin, but now we live in God's forgiveness and the freedom to love others. Remember, when we did not know Christ, we lived by the law. We were as guilty as everyone else on that equal, legalistic level. But when Jesus saved us, we were elevated above the law to live in grace and the freedom to love others.

Let's say someone puts my eye out. I could require justice and step back down into the level of the law. This is the level I lived on before I knew Christ. On this level, I get to put their eye out and it is completely fair. But that won't bring my eye back and now they are also without an eye. What's more, there is less chance of us ever having any meaningful relationship after such justice has been served.

Instead, if I chose, in Christ, to forgive the person for putting my eye out, then I stay up on Christ's level. Then they get to keep their eye and maybe they would even help me to see when I need help! Christ's way does not make a bad situation worse and even promotes relationship.

James 2:13 says: *"For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment."*

This is where Christ wants us to dwell - like Him – with Him. Guess where Satan wants us to dwell? When we step back down, we give Satan more opportunity to do his work in our lives and in the lives of others. Jesus made it possible for us to live above the law. Let us not waste His salvation by living the old way.

### ***What is not forgiveness?***

First of all, forgiveness is not a reward. It is a gift. We are never to wait until the person has done something to show that they are worthy of our forgiveness. God made our forgiveness possible by His own work on our behalf when we were still sinners in His sight (Romans 5:8). His example is clear. We are to be empowered in the situation to actively pursue forgiving them. Remember, forgiveness is not for them. It is for you to be free from the past.

Secondly, forgiveness is not saying that the person never did anything wrong. On the contrary, to truly forgive someone we must clearly acknowledge the wrong done to us. Forgiveness is not sweeping the sin under the rug, but cleansing it from our hearts so that we can live in God's grace. Jesus did not ignore our sins. He acknowledged our wrongs and took them upon Himself. He bore our sins to the cross, so that they could be removed altogether (2 Corinthians 5:21). Our goal in forgiving someone is not to hide the sin, but to remove it altogether.

Thirdly, forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgiveness is saying that I will not hold this against this person anymore, but it does

not require that we forget it. God did not forget our sins. He is God and He cannot forget. The Bible says in Jeremiah 31:34, "For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more." God does not forget our sins, but chooses not to remember them. It is His decision to not bring up our sins against us after we are forgiven in Christ. So we must not think that forgetting the sin is the only way we can forgive. We must choose, like Christ, to no longer hold it against the person. However, if we truly forgive someone, we may find that in time we do forget the offence. Without the thoughts of justice, it will often slip from our minds.

An important point to remember is that we do not forgive people. We need to focus our forgiveness on specific acts people have done. It is not enough to say, "I forgive my roommate." The roommate is not the problem – what the person did is the cause of the bitterness. That is why, when the disciples in Matthew 18:21-22 asked Jesus how often they should forgive someone when they sin against them, He answered, "Up to seventy times seven." If the person keeps sinning against us, we are to forgive him each time for every offence. This is important because many people forgive the person and then are confused when they are still feeling bitterness toward him. They say, "I don't understand. I thought I had already forgiven him." We may forgive the person for one particular offence, but if God brings to our hearts another one, then we must forgive the person for that one as well. The bitterness is attached to the offence, not the person.

Finally, we need to realize that forgiveness is not reconciliation. Forgiveness, by itself, cannot reconcile two parties. It is the first step toward reconciliation, but it is not reconciliation in and of itself. I can forgive someone and be free from that past wrong, yet never have an opportunity to have a relationship with that person again. Reconciliation requires confession and repentance on the part of the other person. Our forgiveness will open the door and revive the desire to be reconciled to the other person, but if they do not acknowledge their wrong-doing it may hinder any trusting relationship to grow in the future. Jesus Christ bore our sins on the cross and is

now free from our sins against Him in His resurrection, but it is our acknowledging and repenting of those sins that causes justification, reconciliation and relationship with Him. And how willing He is to be reconciled to us! (1 John 1:9) Therefore, a restored relationship is not necessarily the proof of your forgiveness, but it can be (and hopefully will be) a result of your freedom from that past wrong.

### ***Who do I need to forgive?***

First and foremost, we need forgiveness from God for our sins. We need to know Jesus Christ as our gracious, loving Saviour. We need to know that we have been forgiven and that He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins as we confess them to Him. This is the source of any true forgiveness on our part. Have you experienced God's forgiveness through Jesus Christ? If you haven't, take that step right now. It is crucial to living in relationship with God and others in the way He intended.

Once we know we are forgiven in Christ, we need to forgive others who have wronged us. As has been discussed in detail, this is important to our being free from those wrongs done to us. It lets us be free to walk in the grace that God has shown to us and be like Christ in His example of forgiving those who sinned against Him.

Another person we need to forgive is God. This may sound strange because God never does anything wrong, so how could He need to be forgiven for anything? Though God has done nothing wrong, nevertheless, we often blame Him for the things that happen to us. We might ask, "Why didn't He stop that or Why did He allow this to happen?" This perception, though in error, can still create bitterness in us toward God. We need to release Him and repent of that misconception. Once again, forgiving God is for us, not for Him.

Finally, we need to forgive ourselves. For many, this proves to be the most difficult person to forgive. We forgive others, and even forgive God, but we could never forgive ourselves for being so stupid, or short-sighted, or sinful! As the Scriptures say, "If

God is for us, then who can be against us?” The answer is often, “We are!” We need to let ourselves off the hook for past events. The same principle applies, in that we cannot change the past, but we can continue to allow the past to affect our present and future. Forgive yourself – God does.

At this point, take time to ask God to bring to your mind people who you need to forgive. Most likely, as you were reading this, some names have come to you already. Make a list of those names that are most obvious. Let God guide you in this so that you are sure to deal with the most important ones first. Next to each name, list the offence or why you need to forgive them. Be as detailed as you can. When you have finished the list, be sure to add your name at the end (or “myself”) and God if it is applicable. This list represents those whom God wants you to forgive first. Others will come in time, as you go on with your Christian life. As soon as they do, keep the list short by praying to forgive them as well. This is to be a lifestyle, not just a one-time exercise. Step by step, you will enjoy the freedom of Christ’s ways of forgiveness.

## ***Conclusion***

I would like to share a story with you. Well, it’s a monkey story actually. This monkey was being stalked by a clever hunter. The hunter decided to use a hollow log to catch his prey. In the side of this log was a hole. The hole was just big enough for the monkey to get his hand into. The hunter placed food inside the log to lure the monkey. When the monkey reached inside the hole to grab the food, he found the hole too small to pull his fist full of food out. Suddenly, he heard the hunter coming through the bushes. The monkey had to decide whether to release the food and get away, or hold onto the food and be caught by the hunter.

Will you follow Christ and release your grip on your bitterness, or will you hold on to your right to justice and be ensnared by the enemy? The way has been made clear by

Christ's example. It is up to you to walk in the freedom a loving, heavenly Father has provided.

**A suggested forgiveness prayer:**

Dear heavenly Father, I acknowledge that I have unforgiveness toward (*name the person*), and I know that it is wrong. I also acknowledge that (*the person*) (*name the offence in as much detail as you can*), and that it made me feel (*express how you felt/feel in as much detail as possible*). But, I choose now to give (*the person*) a gift of my forgiveness – not because they deserve it, but because I have the power to do so in Jesus Christ. I choose to release my judgments toward (*the person*) and to show mercy. I repent of my unforgiveness and judgments and ask that You would cancel any authority of the enemy that may have been gained by my sin. I ask that You would bless (*the person*) and give them all that You have for them. Thank You for Your grace toward me, Lord. In Jesus name, amen.

## CHAPTER TWO

### UNGODLY SOUL-TIES

Have you ever felt like someone was able to control you with just a look? Have you ever felt unexplainable anxiety when talking to a person on the phone who once scared you long ago? Have you ever surprised your friends by how you change your whole attitude when you are around a certain individual? When that individual is not there you say one thing, but when they are present you find yourself saying something different, and often your actions even surprise yourself.

These invisible “powers” that others seem to have on us, that exhibit negative reactions in us, may be the result of ungodly soul-ties between us and the other person. This connection is not a positive one, but is the result of sin that creates bondage and control. That is not the way God wants us to live in Christ, as Romans 8:15 says:

*“For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by Him we cry out, ‘Abba, Father.’”*

Let’s look at what ungodly soul-ties are, where they are most often established and how we can sever them.

#### ***What are ungodly soul-ties?***

As human beings, God made us to live in positive, healthy relationship with Him and with each other. These relationships are experienced on all three levels of body, soul and spirit. The body level is, of course, the physical contact we have with others through our senses: seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and touching. The body often forms our first impressions of each other.

The next level is the soul where we experience emotion and identity with the other person. The soul is the area that often

carries the relationship to any meaningful level beyond the first impression. It is here that we feel our passions, our needs, our wants, our hopes and our fears.

Finally, there is the spiritual level where we engage that supernatural part of our being to be influenced by God or other spiritual powers. In the Hebrew concept, this was considered the heart of a person.

All of these levels are active in our relationships with others. They cannot be separated from each other either. For example, if in my relationship with God, my spirit is moved by His Holy Spirit to sense a deeper understanding of His love for me, I cannot help but have that spiritual knowledge affect my emotions, feeling His love in my soul, which in turn will invoke a physical response in my body of perhaps warmth or tears. So though these three levels are identifiable, they are nevertheless inseparable. This is why the greatest commandment includes them all as quoted in Mark 12:30:

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.”*

All three make up who we are and all three are engaged to one extent or another in our relationships with God and others. This is the way God made us.

Our physical connections to people are obvious. Whether it is holding hands or having sexual intercourse, physical contact is unmistakable between two people. Spiritual connections, on the other hand, are reserved for our relationship with God and the spirit world. Whether a person is a born again Christian or a demonized victim, their spiritual connections are often evident in their behaviour and general lifestyle patterns.

In the same way, the soul-type connections we make with others are noticeable in our feelings of love, trust, security, hatred, anxiety and fear in association with those people. God made our souls to be able to connect with one another in meaningful ways to strengthen our commitment to one another. Because the soul is this “middle ground” between the body and the spirit, we can also make these connections in our souls with

members of the spirit world and God. When these soul-type connections in our relationships are healthy and strengthen the positive qualities of our influences on one another, then these soul-ties are godly and serve the purposes for which they were intended. This is what happened between David and Jonathan in their relationship (1 Samuel 18:1). It says that Jonathan loved David as he did himself. This is what makes it possible for us to keep the second greatest commandment from Mark 12:31:

*“The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”*

God made us to be in relationship with Him and others. It is wrapped up in the two, top instructions according to Jesus. Our ability to connect with our souls to God and others is an important part of that purpose.

Soul-ties, however, have not escaped the effects of this sin-covered world we live in. Often, our relationships with others are far from healthy. In these relationships, we can establish soulish connections that bring negative influences into our lives, such as fear, distrust, anger, or control. Sometimes we, or others, will use the ability to connect with the soul to manipulate someone to do what we want. These kinds of soul-ties are ungodly and are not how God intended for our relationships to be used. These ungodly soul-ties can remain years after we have ceased a relationship with someone. This is evidenced by how all of the old, negative feelings can come right to the surface again whenever we see them, talk to them or even hear their name mentioned. Ungodly soul-ties can have powerful and devastating effects upon how we view other relationships in our lives. If our soul is connected to someone in an unhealthy way, then it is a hindrance to our soul establishing healthy connections to others.

### ***Where are ungodly soul-ties most often established?***

Because all soul-ties are designed to strengthen our relationships, the place where they are established are in times

of interaction with other people. Unfortunately, when this interaction is of an ungodly nature, then ungodly soul-ties can be established. One of the most common ways that this happens is through some kind of abusive relationship. It can come from the abuse suffered by another as a child or an adult, whether it be sexual, emotional, physical or psychological abuse. They are often manifested in ways such as uncontrollable fears, depression, guilt and a need to control others. Whether you were the abused or the abuser, these ungodly soul-ties need to be addressed.

Another common area where ungodly soul-ties are established is between parents and children. Because of the vulnerability of a child's soul to link easily with its parent, parents can create ungodly soul-ties with their children as they make mistakes in raising them. All parents make mistakes in raising their children, although most of them do the best they can with what they have. Nevertheless, those failures can establish ungodly soul-ties that can hinder that child in relationships as they grow up. Even from the most godly parent-child relationship, the need for the child to please the parent can continue right into their adult and married life. The unhealthy dependence of an adult to need their parent's approval over even their spouse's can cause many marital problems. This could be evidence of an ungodly soul-tie.

Husbands and wives can often have ungodly soul-ties between each other. These, again, are characterized by negative and ungodly effects that they have on each other. A healthy marriage will be established upon godly soul-ties, but ungodly practices of control or manipulation can cause ungodly soul-ties to develop. Even the use of sex in marriage in improper ways can establish ungodly soul-ties. Forcing a spouse to do things sexually against their conscience or withholding sex to get their way in the marriage are common ungodly practices. Soul-ties are a must in any healthy marriage because two human beings have become one flesh in every way; all the more reason to make sure that those soul-ties are godly ones.

One other area where ungodly soul-ties are commonly established is when having sex with someone who is not your

spouse (please see the article on sexual sins). The uniting of two people in sexual intercourse is meant to bring a husband and wife into a close physical, emotional and spiritual bond. If two people are not married, sex still creates those bonds; however these bonds are ungodly and need to be broken.

Ungodly soul-ties can also be formed between a person of authority and their subordinate. This can happen at work, at play or even in church settings. Spiritual abuse by church authority is a common problem for Christians who have had a bad church experience.

Finally, ungodly soul-ties can be created by someone knowingly or unknowingly using occult practices to exercise control over others. These practices may also establish soul-ties between you and demons, which can cause you to become dependent on them. In all of these cases, the improper connection between us and others needs to be severed in order to allow godly connections to grow.

### ***How do I sever ungodly soul-ties?***

Because ungodly soul-ties are often connections with people who have had a negative influence on us, forgiveness is a major part of severing them. If we do not forgive the person who has wronged us, then the connections in our soul will continue to be there. Forgiveness is the first step (please see the article on forgiveness). As we forgive the person, we deal with the ungodly act that established the connection. This will remove any future power of that soul-tie.

Once the original offence has been dealt with, we can turn our attention to the present and past effects of that ungodly soul-tie. In Jesus Christ, we have the power and authority to cancel the effects of our sinful past and redeem the time that we have lost. We can cancel the power that the other person may have been exerting over us and begin to let God have His way in that area of our lives. We can remove the emotional ropes that pull us in every direction and serve God with freedom and love. We can begin to establish godly soul-ties with loved ones and friends so that we may influence one another for good, building one

another up in the ways of Christ. God wants us to have healthy, strong relationships with Him and others. In Jesus Christ, this is more than possible. He is the source.

## ***Conclusion***

The ability to make a connection with someone soul to soul is a crucial part of how God designed us to have healthy relationships. It is one of three ways that we experience relationships as humans. We are each a whole person made up of body, soul and spirit. The establishment of a soul-tie makes it possible for us to relate to the other person and love them as we do ourselves. Unfortunately, in this sinful world, this ability to make soul-type connections can also come from negative influences that others may have on us. These negative influences are not how God intended it to be and, therefore, they create ungodly soul-ties. These ungodly soul-ties can bring us into bondage and hinder our ability to establish godly soul-ties with others and with God. When these ungodly soul-ties are exposed, they need to be severed. Often, forgiveness must be exercised toward the person involved and then freedom can come as we walk in God's purpose for healthy emotional connections in relationships. This is what we were made for.

**A suggested prayer for the severing of ungodly soul-ties (it is recommended that this be prayed for every person individually with whom you have ungodly soul-ties):**

Dear heavenly Father, I thank you that you made me body, soul and spirit to experience the fullness of life as I live in godly relationships with others and You. In the name of Jesus Christ, I now take the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, and sever any ungodly soul-ties that I have with (*name the person*). I ask that You would send back to him/her what rightfully belongs to him/her and only leave with me what rightfully belongs to me. I ask that You would set up the cross of Christ between me and

him/her so that any relationship we might have from here on would be to the glory of Christ in each of our lives. I ask that you would take control of this area of my life that was controlled by that ungodly soul-tie. Thank You for Your love for me. In Jesus' name, amen.

## CHAPTER THREE

### REJECTION

Have you ever suffered from a lack of basic trust in relationships? No matter what others do, you are sure that they will eventually betray your trust? Because of this you find your behaviour in the relationship to be very self-protective or even destructive to the relationship itself. You can't seem to help it. No matter how much the person assures you that they accept you, you still don't really believe that they are sincere. You think, "It's only a matter of time before they turn on me." If this is true of you, then you may be reacting out of rejection that you have experienced from one or more of your primary relationships.

To feel accepted is a basic human need. It is how we are made, because unconditional acceptance is the root of a healthy relationship with God. God has designed us to need love and to be at peace when we know that we are accepted by those who are closest to us. We are meant to live in unbroken, loving relationships with one another. When we do not feel accepted in our most basic relationships (ie. God, parents, siblings, or other significant authority figures), it causes us to suffer from basic insecurities in every aspect of our lives. Our heavenly Father does not want us to suffer from rejection. That is why Ephesians 1:5-6 says:

*"He predestined us to be adopted as His sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with His pleasure and will – to the praise of His glorious grace, which He has freely given us in the One He loves."*

Let's look at what rejection is, where rejection most significantly takes place in our lives and how we can be free from it.

## ***What is rejection?***

Rejection comes from a denial of love and acceptance. Often, rejection is not clearly stated, but is only sensed or felt by the recipient. Rarely will you hear someone say, “I reject you!” Instead, the rejection is usually perceived by the actions of the other, or even by a lack of actions. Words may never come into play. Remember, our perception is often stronger than the reality of our situation. When we sense that we have not received love and acceptance from someone from whom we expect it, we feel a lack of personal worth or value. Our view of this person as someone by whom we need to be loved (whether it is a proper or improper expectation, doesn’t really matter) causes us to put great value on their opinion of us. When that love is not given, we interpret their actions as a reflection of our worthiness to be loved. Consequently, the rejection leads us to believe that we are not worthy, since their opinion of us carries so much weight. The more important the person is to us, the more profound the belief that we are truly worthless.

Feeling loved and accepted is foundational to our spiritual, mental and even physical health as individuals. We are not designed to live apart from others. We were created to give and receive love as our primary purpose in life. This flow of love is hindered and sometimes completely blocked when we cannot find love within ourselves to give away. We often hear it said that, “if you don’t love yourself, then how can you love others?” In some sense, this is true. The love that we show to others is a reflection of our own personal supply of love. If we do not feel loved, then we find it almost impossible to give significant love away to others. The key, however, is to realize where our ultimate source of love is meant to come from. It is not to be supplied out of an autonomous love for ourselves. It is supposed to be supplied by the love we receive from the primary relationships in our lives (especially our relationship with God). When we feel rejected in those primary relationships, it negatively impacts our view of ourselves and, consequently, the

expectations we have for future relationships with others. Rejection is lethal to our interactions in life.

### ***Where does rejection most significantly take place?***

The profoundness of the rejection and its effects on our lives depends on how foundational the relationship is in which it takes place. Because of this, the most insidious rejection takes its deepest root during childhood. But rejection is not limited to childhood. As children, however, we are more emotionally dependent on others to help us in forming a view of ourselves, as well as our world-view. Let's look at some serious areas where someone can experience profound rejection.

Because rejection is a product of our sinful world, its spiritual impact can be felt at any point after conception. It has been proven that an unborn child is able to feel, think, see, hear, taste and even learn on a very basic level. It should not be surprising then, that an unborn child also has an active soul. These elements of perception have been shown to play a part in shaping a child's initial perceptions about itself and its world. Because of these facts, rejection can be experienced before birth. Some possible sources of feeling rejected in the womb could include unwanted pregnancies, illegitimacy, financial problems in the home, the mother being afraid of giving birth, attempted abortions, conception through rape or incest, separation or divorce during pregnancy, or even being conceived after a miscarriage. These and other traumatic events during pregnancy could cause a child to feel rejection in the womb.

The next time that rejection could be experienced is, of course, at birth. Birth is a fairly traumatic event in itself for both mother and child, but other circumstances could lead to feelings of rejection by the child. These circumstances could include a very long birth, a traumatic birth (such as breach, caesarean or the use of forceps), not allowed to bond with a parent after birth, mother dies in childbirth, given up for adoption, feeding problems, child is the wrong sex, child has unexpected physical or mental challenges, or a child is not given a name for a long time. These and other circumstances could

cause the child to perceive a lack of love and acceptance from the most primary relationships in their new life: their parents.

The rest of a child's life, from birth to adulthood, can be filled with opportunities to feel rejected. The most extreme cases can include abandonment, infidelity in parents, incest, rape and abuse (emotional, mental, physical and sexual). Even in a loving home, however, there can be preferential treatment of one child over another, sudden or premature death of a parent, separation or divorce, siblings or peers who bully or make fun of or label a child. There can be pressures put on a child to succeed both by parents or other authority figures. There can be religious pressures to measure up to a standard in order to please God. If failure in one of these areas brings criticism, the child can feel rejected and unworthy of the authority figure's love, including God's!

Finally, there are uncontrollable events that take place around a child that can cause them to experience feelings of rejection. These kinds of circumstances could include generational rejection passed down from family patterns, financial disaster in the family, ethnic or cultural rejection as a member of a certain group, or even evacuation from their homeland due to war or famine. Though these are things that no one can necessarily prevent, they nevertheless can invoke feelings of rejection.

### ***How can I be free from rejection?***

As has already been stated, rejection comes from a denial of love and acceptance by those we feel we need it from the most; the more primary the relationship, the more profound the feelings of rejection. In a perfect world, before we know God, our parents are supposed to provide that love and acceptance we need in order to develop a proper trust in authority and to provide a healthy framework for our other relationships to grow. That vital sense of love and proper trust is then meant to be passed to God when we begin our relationship with Him, through faith in the work of Jesus Christ on the cross. That is when the true fullness of our acceptance is realized as we

become cognizant of the relationship that preceded our parents: our relationship with our Creator. He made us to fellowship with Him in complete love and acceptance. Everything He has designed and provided culminates in this purpose. His pure love for you, His special creation, is completely available through Christ.

But, unfortunately, we do not live in a perfect world where our parents are able to create an atmosphere of pure love and acceptance for us as impressionable children. However, we can still experience God's love and acceptance when we come to know Him. The difficulty is not found in God giving His love to us, but in our receiving His love in light of our past rejections.

We need to remember that those times that we felt rejected caused us to believe we were unworthy to be loved or that those in authority could not be trusted. These responses to those events are not from God. We need to repent of those wrong responses and renounce those lies that they created in our thinking. We need to forgive those who were involved in our feeling rejected and release them of any judgments we may have toward them.

Finally, we need to believe God when He says that He loves and accepts us totally because of the work of Jesus Christ. His death, burial and resurrection has paid the price for all of our sins. There is no reason for God not to accept us now (Romans 8:31-39). We need to open ourselves up and receive the love that God has for us. We need to know in our spirits that we are accepted by Him. It is in that place of unconditional love and acceptance where we reach the pinnacle of peace and every fear drains away (1 John 4:17-19). Always remember that this is what you were really made for: to live in His love.

## ***Conclusion***

Rejection is one of the most common and most destructive wounds that we bear as human beings. God designed us to live in a healthy flow of giving and receiving love. However, past events have caused us to feel rejected, leading us to believe that we are not worthy of love and that those from whom we would

seek love cannot be trusted. These misconceptions are more pervasive in our lives according to how primary a relationship it was in which the rejection was felt. The only remedy for our feelings of rejection is to find acceptance and love in the ultimate relationship: in our relationship with God. It is here that we will find the peace we seek. It is here that we will find the ability to trust again. It is here that we will find an abundant supply of love to give away to others, because it is only here that we can know we are truly loved.

### **A suggested prayer for rejection:**

Dear heavenly Father, I thank you that You love me. However, I know that I have not always felt that way in my life. I repent of my sinful response to when (*name the time you felt rejected*). I no longer want to live according to my sinful perceptions of that event. I renounce the lie that (*name the lie*, ie. “I am unworthy of love,” “I can’t trust authority,” etc. – be specific). I know now that (*state the truth God has shown you to replace the lie*, ie. “I am worthy, etc.). I choose to forgive (*name person(s) involved in you feeling rejected*) and choose to release my judgments toward them. I ask that you would bless them. Thank you for Your acceptance and help me to always live in Your love. In Jesus’ name, amen.

# *Section II*

## **CONCERNING MY RESPONSE**

## **TO THINGS DONE TO ME**



## CHAPTER FOUR

### INNER VOWS

Have you ever felt so badly that you swore you would never let yourself go through that pain again? Have you ever watched someone do something to you or to another person that made you determine that there was no way you would ever allow yourself to be like them? Have you ever made a promise to do something that was impossible for you to fulfill which only led to guilt and frustration in your life? These are what the Bible calls vows or oaths and they are more powerful than we could ever imagine.

We are warned as to the power of vows in the Scriptures, but we dismiss the seriousness of these warnings. Jesus warns us in Matthew 5:33-37, and James summed it up in James 5:12:

*“Above all, my brothers, do not swear – not by heaven or by earth or by anything else. Let your ‘Yes’ be yes, and your ‘No’ be no, or you will be condemned.”*

Let’s look at what an inner vow is, how powerful a vow is, and how we can cancel the ungodly vows we have made.

#### ***What is an inner vow?***

An inner vow is a determination made by the mind and the heart that declares control around an area in our lives. We are calling them inner vows, because they do not have to be spoken to be effective. The heart can make a vow that the mouth never actually verbalizes. Vows can be godly or ungodly, however, by far most vows are ungodly.

Godly vows are vows or oaths that the Scriptures allow us to make. These vows are the marriage vows that we make to our spouses and the vow we make to Christ to follow Him with His help at the moment of salvation.

But the majority of the vows we make are ungodly efforts by us to set up protective determination around areas of our lives. 'I will not grow up!' 'I will never trust a man again!' 'I will never have children!' 'I'll get her back for doing that to me!' When we do this, we are saying, "God, I will take care of this area of my life, thank you. I can't trust anyone but myself for this." At that point, we open ourselves up to the enemy's devices and, believe me, we are no match for him. With God no longer allowed to be in charge of that area, Satan will take every opportunity to cause trouble.

Ungodly vows can be positive and they can be negative. As you can see, a vow can be either 'I will never...' or 'I will.....' But either way, it is determining to do or not do something apart from God's desires for our lives. If I determine to never put myself in a position to be hurt again, then I may never know all that God has for me. He may need me to be in a place of possibly getting hurt again in order to learn to trust Him and His provision for me. Jesus constantly put Himself in places of danger so that God's power could shine forth in His ministry. Therefore, ungodly vows can cause us to become vulnerable to Satan's destructive work as well as hinder God's constructive work in our lives.

### ***How powerful is a vow?***

Vows are very powerful. Jesus said that we all will have to give an account for every idle word we have spoken (Matthew 12:34-37). Why? Because every word has power in both the physical world and the spiritual world. In the physical world, we have the power to bless or curse with our mouths. We can build someone up or tear someone down just by a spoken word. But the spoken word is merely a reflection of the hidden heart. That is why every vow has strong ramifications in the spiritual world. For example, consider the godly vows we have mentioned. The wedding vow is binding to God and sets off spiritual dynamics that are respected by all spirits. You now are considered one flesh with another human being and that bond is honored in heaven (1 Peter 3:7) and attacked by the demons. Our vow to

Christ also clearly sets off spiritual dynamics in that we change ownership from our slavery under sin to adoption into the family of Christ. This too is honored in heaven and attacked by the demons.

Ungodly vows are just as powerful, but you could say that they are honored by the demons while in opposition to heaven. Satan loves it when we take areas of our lives back into our own control. Apart from the grace of God in our lives, we cannot prevail against Satan's tactics. As was mentioned earlier:

Matthew 5:37 says, "*But let your 'Yes' be yes and your 'No,' no. For whatever is more than these is from the evil one.*"

Do not under-estimate the power of the vows you make. Your enemy does not. And yet, there is a way that God has given us to deal with them.

### ***How can I cancel the ungodly vows I have made?***

Vows are taught about extensively in the Old Testament law and prophets. The Mosaic Law contains many spiritual principles that are woven into the societal fabric of expected Jewish behavior. The instruction on vows is very enlightening in this way.

In Numbers 30, there is detailed instruction about how if a young woman makes a rash vow and binds herself to an agreement, when her father hears about it, he can cancel the vow and release her from her responsibility. Likewise, if a wife makes a rash vow, when her husband hears about it, he also has the power to cancel it and release her from her responsibility to the vow.

Today, in this church age, who is our Father? Who is our Husband? The spiritual truth here is that we now can come to our heavenly Father and/or our husband, Jesus, confess our rash, ungodly vow and He will see it for what it is – rash and ungodly – and cancel it on our behalf. Gladly too, I might add!

When we realize that we have made an inner vow, we need to confess it as wrong and renounce it before God. He will

graciously cancel that vow and declare that we are released from it to all the spirit world. Let us remember that God wants to be in charge of every area of our lives. It is His plan for us to be safe from Satan's attacks, safe in His arms. He wants us to know that His love for us is so great that we can trust Him to take us where He wants us to go. We do not have to try to protect ourselves. It will only expose us more. Take your ungodly vows to Him and let Him be your strong tower of protection. Be assured that He loves you and then allow that love to cast out all of your fear.

## ***Conclusion***

An inner vow is a determination to take control in an area of our lives away from God, because of a need to protect ourselves from repeating an event. These vows are powerful and binding in the spiritual realm, which makes them effective in the physical realm. The vow can be broken when we step back under the authority of our heavenly Father and/or our loving husband, Jesus Christ, and ask Him to cancel the vow as being rash and ungodly. These vows are an illusion of protection. They really make us more vulnerable and hinder God's work in our lives. We are only, truly safe under the shadow of His wing.

### **A suggested prayer for the breaking of inner vows:**

Dear heavenly Father, I confess that I have made a vow that (*state the vow*). I ask that you would forgive me. I now renounce this vow as wrong and ask that you would cancel it for me. By the power of the name of Jesus Christ, I ask that you would also cancel any rights or authority that Satan may have gained by this vow in my life, and I now give those areas back to You and Your control. I choose right now to forgive myself for lost time under this vow, and begin to live from now on in the freedom You give me. Thank you for Your grace and mercy in my life. In Jesus name, amen.

*You may need to also pray to forgive those involved in the making of that vow as the Lord leads you, since vows are often made during times of trauma.*

## CHAPTER FIVE

### JUDGMENTS AND EXPECTANCIES

Have you ever noticed a pattern in your life where you seem to attract certain kinds of people? No matter what you do, these people seem to find you and want to be around you. What's worse is that they are the kind of people you dislike the most! Perhaps you hate controlling women, yet it seems that no matter what you do, controlling women want to be involved in your life. Perhaps you despise men who are abusive, but you always seem to get involved with abusive men. Perhaps you hate it when people don't listen to you, but it seems that everywhere you go, no one takes you seriously. These patterns can be an indication that you have made judgments or have expectancies that need to be dealt with. Jesus tells us in Matthew 7:1-2 that:

*“Do not judge or you will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*

Let's look at what judgments are, what the Law of Sowing and Reaping is and what expectancies are.

#### ***What are judgments?***

Judgments are powerful, critical conclusions we come to about others that cause us to despise them for one reason or another. Judgments are closely connected to unforgiveness in our lives, because our negative conclusions about a person re-enforces our sense of right to seek justice for the wrongs they have done.

A simple way to define a judgment is when I have said about another person's behavior, “If it had been me, I would have done it better.” By this, I am saying that I am superior to this person in my own conduct and therefore I am qualified to make

such a determination about them. But James says that this is very dangerous ground to be standing on.

James 4:11-12 says: *“Brothers, do not slander one another. Anyone who speaks against his brother, or judges him, speaks against the law and judges it. When you judge the law, you are not keeping it, but sitting in judgment on it. There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the one who is able to save and destroy. But you – who are you to judge your neighbor?”*

When we set ourselves up as qualified to judge others, we then put ourselves in the place of God (Romans 14:4). This is not a good thing. The fact is we could not have done it better than this other person. Given the same circumstances and the same hurts and wounds of that person, we would not have done any better. We probably would have done worse, or at least have made our own unique set of mistakes. We are not qualified, as fellow sinners, to pass judgment on another person.

This is not to be confused with our responsibility to help one another to be restored when we sin. As brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to watch out for each other and be accountable to each other as to whether we are straying from the things of Christ. But even in these circumstances, we are to allow God to set the standard through His word as to what is right and wrong. Our attitude is to be one of humility, knowing that we, too, fall short sometimes (Galatians 6:1). We can judge someone’s actions according to the word of God, but we are never allowed to judge the person as to whether they are worthy of our approval. That is for God to do, and only He can do it justly, according to Jesus Christ.

Because judgments are determinations about a person’s very character, they can badly affect our opinions of others, but the real damage comes in the spiritual realm. The patterns we mentioned before seem to be feeding off unseen dynamics around us. Well, these unseen dynamics are the results of the spiritual Law of Sowing and Reaping at work in our lives. Like all laws, we cannot avoid it, so we would do well to understand it.

## ***The Law of Sowing and Reaping***

Just as there are laws God has established in the physical universe, so there are laws God has established in the spiritual world. One of these laws is the Law of Sowing and Reaping. Galatians 6:7 says it this way:

*“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows.”*

This truth is as reasonable as if you plant a corn seed, you will grow a corn plant. In the spiritual realm, if we sow judgment, we will reap judgment in kind. How does this play itself out in our physical world? If I have judged a woman in my past as being too domineering (this is often a parent or another authority figure), I will find that I am regularly having trouble with domineering women in my life. If I break off that judgment toward that woman in my past, then the law also stops operating. Consequently, those present, domineering women will either no longer be drawn to me as a target (this is often a case of familiar spirits being drawn to one another) or they will stop finding the unhealthy need to dominate me when they are around me.

This law is always at work. We would be wise to heed its place in God’s universe. It also works in the positive things we do as Jesus said in Matthew 5:7, “Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.” Whatever we choose to give out in this life is what we will eventually receive back again, both in quality and quantity

2 Corinthians 9:6 says: *“Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.”*

Either way, the Law of Sowing and Reaping cannot be ignored.

## ***What are expectancies?***

Expectancies are judgments we have made about ourselves. This is often connected with our need to forgive ourselves for past failures or even for what others wrongly said was our fault, and we believed them. The thing about expectancies is that they re-enforce themselves with the behavior they produce.

If I were told that I was stupid when I was little, and I eventually believed it, then I would judge myself to be stupid. This judgment would then create an expectancy on my part that I cannot do anything which requires intelligence. This would be re-enforced by the fact that every time I am asked to do something which requires intelligence, I expect to fail so I do not try hard or am too overwhelmed by fear to try at all. Therefore, I do fail the task and thereby re-enforce the idea that I am stupid. Eventually, I begin projecting “Hello, I am stupid” everywhere I go. This causes others to assume that I am stupid and so they treat me accordingly. Their behavior then also re-enforces my idea that I am stupid, and the feelings deepen. You can see then how powerfully expectancies control our lives.

We must realize that it is as wrong to judge ourselves as it is to judge others. We are no more qualified to judge ourselves than we are to judge the people around us. Only God has the qualifications to judge us, and He has judged us worthy to receive all that is His in Jesus Christ. He says that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13). He says that if we lack wisdom, ask Him and He will give it to us (James 1:5). Let God show you what expectancies you have and how you have wrongly judged yourself. Forgive yourself and break off the judgments you have about yourself. Believe what God says to be true about you. Live in the power and freedom of Christ’s ability in you, and not in your own.

## ***Conclusion***

Judgments and expectancies are closely tied to forgiveness. Often our unforgiveness is born out of a judgment we made about someone. If the unforgiveness is toward ourselves, then often we have an expectancy about how our lives should take shape. This expectancy then becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy in our lives, re-enforcing its perceived reality to us. All of these judgments and expectancies set the Law of Sowing and Reaping in motion causing many of the results to become recurring patterns in our lives. Only the breaking off of the judgments and forgiving others or ourselves will stop the cycles of negative behavior in us and others. Christ has made the way and given us the example. The life of Christ is found in grace and mercy.

### **A suggested prayer for breaking judgments:**

Dear heavenly Father, I confess that I have judged (*name the person or yourself*) to be (*name what you have judged the person to be from their actions*) and that I am not qualified to do so. I choose to break off that judgment right now and release (*name the person or yourself*). (*He, she, I*) is not responsible to me for (*his, her, my*) actions, but I leave the judging to You. I know that You desire mercy and that You will be just in what You decide. Instead, I ask that You would bless (*name the person or yourself*) with all spiritual blessings in Jesus Christ. Thank you for Your grace and mercy in my life. In Jesus' name, amen.

*You may need to also pray to forgive those involved in the making of the judgment as the Lord leads you, since judgments are so closely linked to unforgiveness..*

## CHAPTER SIX

### UNGODLY BELIEF SYSTEMS

Have you ever met someone with an eating disorder such as bulimia or anorexia? No matter how skinny they become, they are convinced that they are fat and need to lose more weight. They can hold this view right up to the moment they die of malnutrition.

Have you ever met a Christian who never felt they were doing enough for God, even though they were one of the most dedicated, active Christians you had ever met? Nevertheless, they are sure that in the Day of Judgment they will be found unfaithful and be cast into Hell.

The biggest frustration with these kinds of situations is that no matter how much you tell them the truth or even prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that they are wrong, they still believe the same about themselves. It is as if to them, their belief is stronger than their reality. Though these may be extreme examples, that last statement is true of all of us.

All of us live by what we believe, no matter whether it is based upon lies or upon truth. The truth creates the basis for godly belief systems in our thinking. Consequently, lies are the foundation of ungodly belief systems in our thinking. Either way, the power of what we believe is directly seen in our actions. Lies will bind us to a false reality while Jesus says in John 8:31-32:

*“If you abide in my word, you are my disciples indeed. And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free.”*

Let’s look at what ungodly belief systems are, where they come from and how they can be replaced.

## ***What are ungodly belief systems?***

As human beings, we have been designed to be able to determine what we deem true or not. We have been given the ability to think, reason and make decisions about our world around us. This ability is closely connected to our capacity to exhibit faith in our decisions. We are creatures of faith. We all place faith in many things everyday. Every time you drive a car, you place faith in the other drivers that they will obey the rules and laws, and stay on the other side of the line as they come at you at 90 kph. If you didn't, then it would affect how you drive, or if you'd drive at all! Every time you eat in a restaurant, you exercise faith that the cooks and servers are giving you food that will not make you sick or kill you. If you didn't, you would not eat there. We exercise faith in every area of our lives and it directly influences our personal and world views. God made us that way. This is why it is so important for us to base our faith upon truth and not lies – upon God's word and not on our own understanding. This is why it says in Romans 12:2:

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”*

A belief is a conviction, or persuasion that develops over a period of time as we see the world from our own unique perspective. A belief is not necessarily based on facts, but on what we learned and experienced. It is an assumption that certain things are true and real, and that certain things are not true and real. They become like a set of lenses through which we view and interpret life.

Because we are creatures of faith, whether we know God or not, the issue is not whether we operate by belief systems, but on what our belief systems are based.

Unfortunately, many of our belief systems are based on lies. These are ungodly belief systems that lead us to ungodly and often destructive behaviour. Proverbs 23:7 says, “As a man

believes in his heart, so he is,” so what we believe to be true will eventually be evident in what we are on the outside. Our beliefs create our reality either directly or indirectly. Therefore, when based upon lies, our beliefs cause us to misinterpret the actions of others, undermine our trust in God, and we become insecure about our circumstances. In the words of Henry Ford, “If you think you can or you think you can’t, you’re right!” Our ungodly beliefs cause us to conclude things that agree with the Devil, who is the Father of lies. He wants to rob, kill and destroy, and lies are his number one tool of accomplishing those goals in our lives. The only defense we have is the truth found in Christ.

### ***Where do ungodly belief systems come from?***

Ever since we were conceived, we have been developing beliefs about ourselves, the people around us, the world around us and God. Since we live in a world marred by sin, we often build belief systems upon information that is not in agreement with what God has said. That is why, as Christians, we must constantly allow God and His word to identify those foundations that are not according to truth and upon which we have built our beliefs. Identifying some areas where these lies come in, can help in God showing us which ones are built on lies.

The first area is through life’s experiences. Whenever we receive a trauma, are betrayed, are wounded, or have any negative experience, it can cause us to assume certain things to be true primarily about ourselves, but also about that event and all areas of life related to it. If we are betrayed by an authority figure, then we may conclude that we are not worthy of their loving care and therefore all authority figures will betray us. The earlier in our lives this happens, the more substantially the assumption will affect the rest of our lives. The earlier it takes place, the more belief system can be built upon it. Also if it happens after a few good experiences with authority figures, we may be less likely to conclude that they are all untrustworthy. So you can see how the earlier the negative experiences take place, the more damaging they can be. These experiences which create beliefs, then cause us to expect certain things to happen,

which affects our behaviour toward others, which may cause them to act in a negative way, which may reinforce our old ungodly belief system or even form new ones. This cycle of belief and behaviour is always going on in our lives.

The second place we can develop ungodly beliefs is from our family. Our family's views about life, politics, religion, education, relationships, etc. molds the way we think about these things before we are able to make our own determinations. Often we are taught to be prejudiced, or sarcastic, or aggressive. These beliefs might be directly and indirectly taught by our families, or they may come as a result of the influence of a generational spirit. These two factors may also work in concert to effect our lives.

The third area is similar to the second, in that we can develop ungodly beliefs from the world around us. Our culture, our peers, the media, modern trends, etc. can all influence us to make determinations about what we believe. The world tells us constantly what is acceptable and not acceptable. It tells us how to get along and to fit in. Great pressure is exerted on us to meet standards that are set by people who do not know God or His word. How can we escape?

### ***How do I replace ungodly belief systems?***

The battle we are talking about here is in the mind. Our enemy knows that if he can convince us of a lie, then he can manipulate our behaviour to go against God and His best for us. The Scriptures describe the Christian life as being a process of changing our behaviour from the way we used to be without Christ to becoming more and more like His image. Ephesians 4:20-24 describes this process as the taking off of the old man (who we were before Christ) and the putting on of the new man (who we are in Christ). But these are only step 1 and 3 of the process. Step 2 is crucial because it is the step that involves us submitting to God and His word as He renews our minds and our thinking. It is the only step that has a passive verb in it, which means we do not renew our own minds, but we submit ourselves to an outside source to renew our minds. This puts the emphasis

on God to be the One who teaches us. We can identify the old, destructive ways and we can be the ones to actively practice right behaviour, but if we do not let God re-teach us the truth then it is not the internal change that He is really talking about here.

Notice the next verses (25-32) as examples of what kind of change God is talking about. Let us look at verse 28 for instance. The command is for thieves to stop stealing, but does that mean they are automatically reformed? When is a thief no longer a thief, to God? When is he no longer stealing? No, he might just be in between jobs. God says that a thief is no longer a thief when he stops stealing (the old man), realizes that there are those with needs (renewing of the mind), and works to make money to give to the poor (the new man). Do you see then how God wants the outward change to represent a change in thinking, a change in perspective, a change of heart? An alteration in outward behaviour alone is not enough and usually doesn't last. When we submit ourselves to the truth as God has revealed it, and allow it to change our understanding about something, then our outward behaviour will reflect that understanding as a new belief system. Only the word of God can make us more and more like Christ as we follow Him (John 17:17).

These changes do not occur as we set out on our own to be what the bible describes as a good Christian. These changes come from the Holy Spirit and through spiritual means to invoke spiritual change in our very souls. As we experience intimacy and vulnerability with Jesus Christ through a deeper relationship with Him, we will then willingly submit to His word because we know we are loved unconditionally. It is only then that we are transformed instead of just conforming to a set of rules (Romans 12:2). God is not interested in our behaviour as much as He is interested in our hearts. He knows that a change of heart will bring about a change in behaviour. And the battle for that real change is in the mind. This is why Paul said in 2 Corinthians 10:5-6:

*“For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.”*

Therefore, our ungodly belief systems must be identified by God through His revealed word. It is then up to us to allow the truth to replace the lie we have believed.

After this has happened, however, the old way of thinking will often want to return. By the power of the Holy Spirit and in the name of Jesus Christ, we must be diligent to cast down that which wants to exalt itself against the knowledge of God in our lives. We must give ourselves to the truth as much as we gave ourselves to the lie. In time, the truth will take root and the life of Christ will produce the fruit of righteousness in us. Give yourself to the loving hand of God and trust His truth over your own understanding. It will make you free.

## ***Conclusion***

Everything we do is based upon some kind of belief system. These beliefs about ourselves, the world around us and even God, play a vital role in how we act and respond in life. These beliefs are so powerful that they are often more real to us than reality itself. If these beliefs are based upon lies, then the behaviour they produce in us will often be negative and destructive. If these beliefs are based upon truth, then they often produce love, peace and joy in our lives. The earlier these beliefs are formed, the more foundational they are to our thinking. But God has given us the power to change even the deepest set of beliefs. We can see real change in our lives as we let God’s word affect us on the inside. It is in our hearts that He wants to have full reign. The body will follow the heart. The battle, however, is in the mind. As we ask God daily for His Truth to be our teacher and we allow Him to show us where we have believed lies, we will find more and more freedom to soar in the ways of Christ.

### **A suggested prayer for replacing ungodly belief systems:**

Dear heavenly Father, I confess my sin of believing the lie that (*state the lie, be specific*). I thank you that you have shown me that (*state the truth that God has revealed to you*) and that this is the truth I can live by now. I choose to forgive (*name those who contributed to the forming of the ungodly belief system*) and ask that You would now bless them. I ask You, Lord, to forgive me for receiving this ungodly belief, for living my life based on it, and for anyway I have judged others because of it. I receive Your forgiveness. I also choose to forgive myself for any wasted years while living according to this ungodly belief. Thank You for being the Way, the Truth and the Life. In Jesus' name, amen.

# *Section III*

## **CONCERNING THINGS**

### **I HAVE DONE**



## CHAPTER SEVEN

### SEXUAL SINS

Have you noticed that our culture is constantly telling us that sex is something that everyone does with anyone consenting and that it is a natural part of casual relations in our society? Have you noticed how the act of sex is often separated from any association with a meaningful relationship? This is what the culture today wants us to think. But the truth is that God meant sex to be the ultimate act of expressed unity between a man and a woman.

The misuse of the sexual act brings about consequences that are often unknown, but seldom unseen. Feelings of being dirty or cheap, feelings of being disjointed or adrift, longings for deeper relationships than sex, depression and even torment from within, can all be results of having sex outside of God's plan. Sexual sins are placed in a different category than other sins. That is because the sexual act is not just a physical and emotional act, but God designed it to be a spiritual act, as well, created for a holy purpose. That is why the Scriptures say in 1 Corinthians 6:18,

*“Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.”*

Let's take a look at what God says about sex, what the effects are of committing sexual sins, what are wrong uses of sex, and what we can do to be free from the effects of past sexual sins.

#### ***What is God's purpose for sex?***

God created sex. He intended it to be a healthy part of the relationship between a man and a woman in the marriage commitment. Sex is designed to be used in marriage as an

intimate act of selfless, mutual giving to each other of minds, souls and spirits.

On a physical level, sex is to procreate the human race. But sexual reproduction is common in most animal species. Humans are different in God's plan. And there are some who cannot have children, so is sex not necessary for them? No, for humans sex is intended for much more than just reproduction. On a much deeper level, it is meant to unite the two partners as one flesh in an act of physical, emotional and spiritual intimacy. In God's design, sex is to unite a husband and wife into one person (Matthew 19:4-6). Surely, any two people can share emotional intimacy and even spiritual intimacy without sex, but the physical act is clearly reserved for a man and woman so that the bond between them can be consummated by a literal physical union. Sex represents the ultimate act of two people becoming one. It is the giving of what is most personal to me and sharing it with another.

Sex is a place of profound vulnerability, where we open ourselves up to the other person's needs and wants. Since the garden of Eden, Satan has been trying to destroy the openness and transparency we are to have with each other in our relationships. In the beginning, Adam and Eve had no clothes on and were totally fine with seeing things as God saw them. But when they sinned, the first thing that was covered up was their genitals.

Satan's work could now be seen in the barriers which were in place between the husband and wife and their natural intimacy. Satan has not stopped trying to destroy true intimacy between people. He does not want people to enjoy the freedom of human relationships in the purity of God's plan. And if he can't destroy the relationships altogether, then he will try to muddy the waters. This is why Satan hates godly sex. He hates unity, and oneness. He hates intimacy, worship and devotion to anyone other than himself. Sexual sin brings glory to Satan and is related closely to idolatry, as in Colossians 3:5:

*“Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.”*

Sex is really about knowing someone very intimately. Knowing someone suggests the idea of perceiving, understanding, and holding knowledge about that person. This takes on a much deeper meaning than just committing a primal physical act with someone. This is how the Bible describes the true purpose of sex. It is knowing someone in every way. It is intimacy that goes right to the heart. That is why marriage and godly sex are used as an example of God’s relationship with His people. Genesis 4:1 says that “Adam knew Eve his wife and she conceived and bore Cain.” This is important because the parallel with sex and knowing is all about intimacy. The same Hebrew word in Genesis 4:1 is used in Jeremiah 16:21 where it says, “and they shall *know* that My name is the Lord.” God wants to be intimate with His people. He wants us to know Him more than just with mental assent or emotional feeling. He wants us to be so close to Him that we share the deepest of connections in our body, soul, and spirit. Isaiah 62:5 puts it this way:

*“For as a young man marries a virgin, so shall your sons marry you; and as the bridegroom rejoices over the bride, so shall your God rejoice over you.”*

So godly sex between a husband and wife is designed to be a picture of the intimacy God wants to have with His people.

### ***What are the effects of committing sexual sins?***

Because sex is designed to be a physical, emotional and spiritual union between a husband and wife, these aspects of sex are still at work anytime we engage in sexual behaviours, whether we are married to our partner or not. God did not intend for us to have sex with anyone other than our marriage partner. Sexual relationships should take place only after two people are married.

Our culture, however, has turned that around. Our culture declares that if two people have consenting sexual intercourse, then they are only enjoying each other's company. They are not married just because they had sex. It is true that sex alone does not make two people married. But it still makes them joined. That is why it says in 1 Corinthians 6:15-16:

*“Or do you not know that he who is joined to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, ‘the two shall become one flesh.’”*

They do still become one in body, soul and spirit. This is clear from the enduring results of such a union. The physical effects are still evident, with the ability to produce a child or catch a sexually transmitted disease, whether married or not. So the emotional and spiritual effects are also still evident.

When we have had sex with anyone, we have given our emotions to the act. We have opened up our very souls to the passions of another along with the desires of their soul. Because of this, sex can be a way for people to exert different levels of control over others. It is an act of the soul where there can be an establishment of dominance and sometimes fear.

Pimps will often have sex with the prostitutes under them before sending them out to work. This is done in order to establish their position of authority in the women's lives. In more common cases, once sex has been introduced into a relationship, it can be used as a “bargaining chip” to control another's behaviour. This is more than just a mental state of affairs. Because these partners have joined themselves in a sexual relationship, their souls are now connected. This is one example of a soul-tie (please see the article on ungodly soul-ties). To be connected in the soul to your spouse can bring unity and oneness in emotion and desire, but having an ungodly soul-tie to one or more sex partners can create bondage, guilt, confusion and even ongoing sexual difficulties.

Anytime we have sex with someone, a spiritual connection is made. The description of our bodies as the temple of the Holy Spirit conveys the spiritual effects of how we use our bodies. Therefore, becoming one flesh with someone through sex has

spiritual consequences (1 Corinthians 6:18-20). In casual sex there can be a transference of demonic spirits. Though this is not always the case, it is a possibility and can create spiritual bondage in the believer and even demonization in the unbeliever. In Satanic ritual, sex is commonly used to intentionally transfer demons from one person to another. Therefore, the spiritual possibilities in sex need to be taken seriously. It is a part of what God intended for godly sexual relations. But outside of God's original purpose, it is an open door for the enemy to attack.

### ***What are wrong uses of sex?***

As has been explained already, sex is designed by God to be experienced between a husband and wife in the pure context of their marriage relationship. Any use of it outside of those God-given parameters can open us up to Satan's bondage and attacks. In marriage, the different ways in which a husband and wife can experience each other sexually is given sanctity by God. Hebrews 13:4 says:

*“Marriage is honourable among all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”*

Many acceptable sexual practices have been made “dirty” by their misuse in unacceptable, ungodly situations. But remember, God made sex first. Satan only perverted what God meant for good. Therefore, we must re-examine what God considers healthy sexual behaviour when used in the marriage context.

First of all, it must not be prohibited in the Scriptures, such as multiple partners or homosexuality. Secondly, it must be mutually consensual by both husband and wife. One partner should never impose their will over another's in any sexual matter. Even in marriage, this can create unhealthy connections between spouses and make room for the enemy to work. The goal should always be for sex to be a shared, loving experience

resulting in continued purity of both spouses' bodies, souls and spirits.

The use of sex outside of marriage is wide and varied. There is no use of sex outside of marriage that God considers acceptable. This includes sexual fantasy, pornography, masturbation, premarital sex, extra-marital sex, bestiality, incest, rape, etc.

Sexual fantasy can cause us to create ideals in sex that can never be found in reality. This can cause us to never be satisfied with what God has provided for us. Pornography causes us to devalue human beings. We end up separating the actual person from what they can provide for us sexually. They become sexual objects with no needs, personalities or spirits. We do not consider the reality of them being persons who have hopes and dreams that do not include our sexual use of their images. This is one of the leading causes of the mistreatment of women by men.

Masturbation inevitably involves the imagining of sex with someone. If that someone is not your spouse, then it is the committing of sexual sin in your mind. Jesus said that this is just as bad as committing the act in reality (Matthew 5:27-28). The impact is the same on us before God. Like all sin, it starts in the heart before the body ever gets a chance. Sex is for a husband and wife to experience intimacy on every level, so as to strengthen their bonds with one another. Any other use of sex outside of that is sexual sin.

### ***How can I be free from the effects of past sexual sins?***

God places sexual sins in a category by themselves due to the important purpose that sex is suppose to play in a healthy marriage. They are, nevertheless, sins and God will forgive them through Jesus Christ. Ask God to reveal where you have sinned sexually. Like most people, you have probably realized there are sexual sins you have committed before and during the

reading of this. The realization of having committed sexual sins is important to being free from their effects.

Confessing that we have committed sexual sins and then renouncing them as wrong will begin to break the power of the sin over our lives. Confessing these things to a loving, trustworthy person who can then help you to be accountable in the future, is very helpful. For a married person, your spouse is the best choice for this, but in some cases that may not be the first step. If you can't share it with your spouse at this point in time, make sure that you share it with someone of the same sex as you who can give you godly advice (even if you're confessing homosexuality). Confessing our hidden sins to another brings them out of the darkness where Satan holds them and into the light where God can work (James 5:16). It breaks the power of Satan to control you out of fear that "someone might find out your secret."

Because of the bonding nature of sex, it is important to break ungodly soul-ties you may have with any, and all, past sexual partners. This may also include your spouse, if you realize that you have not always brought purity to the marriage bed. Don't be in a hurry. Take time to name each person that you remember and break off ungodly soul-ties with each one individually (see the chapter explaining what ungodly soul-ties are).

These soul-ties may be exerting control over you of which you are not aware. Often, people are not sure whether to follow through and break off these ungodly soul-ties. We have already seen how sex makes a connection. Why not be safe and break off any possible connection in Jesus' name?

Finally, it is important to realize that Satan will accuse you and try to bring you back under the bondage of your sin. Because sexual sins are so insidious to our spirits, the guilt is often overwhelming. Know that God has forgiven you in Christ. Satan will want to convince you that you are a hypocrite and that you know you will just do it again. Do not listen to him! Do not sacrifice the present truth of your forgiveness for an unclear future that only God knows. At this moment, if you desire not to fall into this sin again and wish to live by God's truth, then that

is what is important. You might fall again, and there is forgiveness again, but right now you are clean and the power is yours in Christ to live in His light. Walk in it with joy and hope.

## ***Conclusion***

The Scriptures put sexual sins in a category of their own. Other sins are said to be outside the body where sexual sins are against our own body, which is a body belonging to Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. Sex is designed by God to be enjoyed between a husband and a wife to create an intimate bond of the body, soul and spirit. If sex is engaged in outside of marriage, it does not mean that the two people are married, however the bonds are still effective. These improper connections can cause severe emotional, mental and spiritual problems for a person.

To become free from the results of sexual sins in our past, we need to acknowledge our sin and admit that they are wrong. We need to sever any ungodly connections that we might have with past sexual partners and then walk in the forgiveness that God has granted us in Jesus Christ. His desire is that we be free from our past mistakes and live in the light of His grace. God desires that we enjoy sex in the right context of a loving, caring, committed marriage, which is a picture of the loving relationship He has with His church.

## **A suggested prayer for renouncing past sexual sins:**

Dear heavenly Father, I thank You that You created sex. I confess that I have not used sex in the way You intended it, though. I confess that I have (*state the sexual sin, be specific*). I renounce it as a wrong use of the sexual experience. Please forgive me and wash me clean, body, soul and spirit, by the blood of Jesus Christ. I now commit my body to You to be used as You intended. Thank You, Father, for Your grace toward me, in Jesus' name, amen.

**A suggested prayer for breaking ungodly soul-ties created from sexual sins (it is recommended that this prayer be prayed for each person individually):**

Dear heavenly Father, I confess that I had ungodly sex with (*name each person individually*). I renounce it as sin and ask that You would sever any ungodly soul-ties between (*name the person*) and me, by the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God. I ask that You would send back to him/her what rightfully belongs him/her and leave me only with what rightfully belongs to me. I ask that You would set up the cross of Christ between me and him/her, so that any relationship we might have from here on would only be to the edification of one another in Christ. I ask that You would go to him/her and bless him/her right now in Jesus' name, amen.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

### EXPOSURE TO THE OCCULT

Have you ever ignorantly played with a ouija board before? Have you ever had your palm read or had your fortune told? Have you ever sought a psychic to give you direction in your life for today or for the future? Perhaps you did these things before you became a Christian, or perhaps after?

Either way, it is important to know that all of these things are directly connected to occult activities and they are expressly forbidden to be practiced by God's people. When we expose ourselves to the occult in ways that can make us vulnerable to its spiritual effects, then we unnecessarily risk being hindered by the enemy in our spiritual lives with Christ. God wants His people to find all of the power they need in Him. Everything else is just borrowed power and sometimes even counterfeit. God is our source for all that we need. He knows the danger and confusion that can come to us if we seek powers that are outside of Him directly. So it says in Isaiah 8:19-20:

*“When men tell you to consult mediums and spiritists, who whisper and mutter, should not a people inquire of their God? Why consult the dead on behalf of the living? Go to the law and to the testimony! If they do not speak according to this word, they have no light of dawn.”*

Let's take a moment to look at what is the occult, what are occult sins, and how to get free from occult influences.

#### ***What is the occult?***

The occult is often thought to be exclusively the religion of Satan worship. This is an over-simplification of the truth, to say the least. Although Satanic ritual is certainly a major part of what can be termed occult practices, it is not the limit of it. Occult is defined as any practice that claims to receive its

supernatural power from any source other than the Lord Jesus Christ. The word *occult* means that which is beyond the range or scope of ordinary knowledge, shrouded in secrecy and mystery. Therefore, occult practices are those things that are mysterious and hidden as to the source of their power; their practice is designed to instill fear and apprehension around the nature of their origins. The person or vehicle of the occult power often receives more attention than from where the power might be coming. This adds to the mystery of the source and therefore the vehicle relies on flashy appearances or outward gimmicks to invoke more awe in themselves.

Occult, in every way, is the opposite of the way God does things. When God displays His power, He always does it openly and with the intent to make Himself known as the source. God does not want people to be confused by His power, but clearer in their understanding of His love. When God displays supernatural power, it is always to get people's attention and to show them who He is directly. Those whom God uses to display His power are instructed to not take credit for anything, but to point the attention squarely back to Him so that there is no confusion about its source. That is why we find, after having healed a lame man right in front of everyone in front of the Temple, the apostles Peter and John speak to the crowd in Acts 3:12-13:

*“When Peter saw this, he said to them: ‘Men of Israel, why does this surprise you? Why do you stare at us as if by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk? The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of our fathers, has glorified his servant Jesus.’”*

God reveals Himself through His power. There is supposed to be no confusion generated by the exhibition or through the vehicle. God does things to make His Son, Jesus, known to all.

The main point to remember here is that there is no power except God's. Every creature, both physical and spiritual, only has the power that God has given them. It all comes from God originally. Because of this, any person or thing which claims any

power for themselves is either lying or is a counterfeit. This does not mean that they don't have power, but they cannot claim it to be their own.

This is true even of Satan himself. Satan is a created being, an angel of the highest order, but his power has all been given to him originally by God. The last thing Satan wants anyone to think is that he is subservient to God in the end. Therefore, Satan does everything he can to draw attention away from that fact and onto himself. He does this through mystery, lies, fear and intimidation. God does not want us to have to rely on any inferior substitutions. Through Jesus Christ, we can come directly to the source of all power: God our Father.

This is why occult practices are forbidden by God. He knows that they are cheap imitations with borrowed power that draw us away from the fullness of knowing Him directly. What's more, these other 'sources' can expose us to the spiritual forces that are the enemies of God and His people. We need to carefully consider how much, knowingly or unknowingly, we have been influenced by the occult.

### ***What are occult sins?***

God is very direct about His people not being involved in occult practices. Many times He has commanded His people to not consult mediums or practice magic in any form (eg. Deuteronomy 18:10-14, Ezekiel 13:20-21). God's desire is that His people be examples of human beings living in loving relationship with Him as the personal God that He is. He never intended for us to live by fear and superstitions. Yet, even in our modern society, many occult practices are still very popular. Horoscopes (astrology) can be found at most checkout counters, the psychic network is viewed by millions, and there is a growing acceptance of witchcraft, hypnotism, and fortune telling.

Engaging in any practices that substitute for God's ways of giving direction to His people, can give Satan opportunity to mislead us in the most subtle of ways. Occult practices will open us up to demonic activity as we turn from the Holy Spirit's guidance to other sources of spiritual encounters. Remember

that the Scriptures say Satan (and his demons) can fake the appearance of an angel of light (2 Corinthians 11:14). The key to where they are really from is found in the fruit of their work. An occult practice will eventually bring bondage, fear and death, and cause attention to be drawn to the vehicle of the practice instead of Christ.

There is no doubt that we have an enemy who hates us and wants to destroy our relationship with our heavenly Father, but it is very important to not become obsessed with “looking for demons under every rock.” If we fall prey to this extreme, it will cause us to give more attention to the occult than to God. Therefore, I caution us to keep our attention on Christ and what He reveals to us as being damaging to us and deal with it in His way. For example, for some people heavy metal rock music has been a vehicle to expose them to the occult. In this case, such individuals need to renounce their involvement in that music and let Christ set them free. For others though, heavy metal rock music never influenced them that way.

Each person must allow God to show them what has caused occult exposure and then honestly and humbly respond to Him to be set free from any spiritual bondage that may have resulted. We must hold to the truth that God is the ultimate power and we can live above the power of occult exposures as we live for Christ, even though they may be all around us. But we must be honest about whether there are any previous areas of influence that need to be addressed. After all, what do we have to lose by being careful to pray to remove any possible occult influence in our lives from our past? As the apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 6:12:

*“Everything is permissible for me, but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible for me, but I will not be mastered by anything.”*

Remember this as you read through the following list of suggested, possible occult exposures, and if God causes one to catch your attention, then pray about it. If God brings to mind

something that is not on the list, write it down and pray about it. This list is hardly exhaustive.

Apparitions	Halloween	Psychic healing
Acupuncture	Handwriting analysis	Pyramidology
Astral travel	Harry Potter	Rebirthing
Amulets	Heavy metal rock music	Reincarnation
Astrology	Hex signs	Satanism
Birth signs	Homeopathy	Seances
Black magic	Horoscopes	Secret orders
Black mass	Horror movies	Self-hypnosis
Blood brothers	Hypnosis	Sorcery
Blood oaths	Iridiology	Spells
Chain letters	Levitation	Superstitions
Clairvoyance	Martial arts	Table tipping
Covens	Mediums	Tarot cards
Crystal ball gazing	Mental telepathy	Tea leaf reading
Déjà vu experiences	Mind control	Telekineses
Demon worship	Mind reading	Transcendental med.
Divining rods	Necromancy	Trances
Dungeons and dragons	Occultic games	UFO fixation
Eastern meditation	Omens	White magic
ESP	Ouija boards	Wicka
Feng Shui	Pagan rites	Witchcraft
Fortune telling	Palmistry	Yoga
Ghost stories	Parakineses	Zodiac signs
Good luck charms	Pendulum diagnosis	
Gypsy curses		

### ***How do I get free from occult influences?***

Because of the nature of occult sins being founded in darkness, mystery and secrecy, the first step to being free from them is to expose them. We must acknowledge our involvement in such practices, even if before now we were ignorant of our involvement. Knowingly or unknowingly, the established spiritual effects may still be there. Whether we were a willing participant, a by-stander or a victim, our involvement is still the point in which negative spiritual influence may have been

initiated. Realizing that this involvement was wrong, we need to confess it to God and repent of it. By repenting, we are saying that we are changing our thinking and practice concerning this sin. We are saying that we were wrong about this occult practice and that we now want to see it the way God sees it.

We need to say, out loud, that we renounce our involvement and no longer agree with the messages, lies, interpretations or teachings we received or believed in from this occult practice. We need to declare that we are no longer in agreement with the occult in any way. It is very important to say these things out loud. Though God knows your thoughts, the demons do not. It is not enough to just say these things in your head. The spirit world needs to hear your declaration of renouncing these ungodly practices and their teachings. Your verbal renouncement in Jesus' name breaks the legal power that may have been established by your participation. Once you have done that, then you need to command the spirit that is involved to leave and never return.

If we have any objects that are related to the occult practice in our possession, then we need to consider destroying those objects and removing them from our life. Objects which have been cursed or have had demons assigned to them, can continue to provide a source of trouble. However, because God is the Creator of all physical things, including from whatever material these objects are made, we do have the power in Jesus' name to break the power of any curse or assignment upon that object. It is up to us to decide if the possession of that object will continue to remind us of the occult practice that we have renounced. Even after praying over the object, it may still be best to get rid of it. Finally, we need to seek God for the right way to live in relationship with Him and how to properly interact with the spirit world. It is very important to focus on God at this point and not on the occult practices. He will lead you safely into all truth.

## ***Conclusion***

Occult practices are those things that are wrapped in mystery and secrecy, and draw attention away from Christ as the only true God. They often engender fear and superstition in the participants. They provide guidance and power apart from God and therefore, are channels for people to be deceived and demonized. There are many different ways available today for us to be influenced by the occult. But we must not live in fear of being overcome by the enemy. We must stay focused on Jesus and the things that He teaches us. Only then will we recognize an occult practice when we see it. It is the same as when bank tellers are being trained to spot counterfeit bills. They do not study several different examples of phony money. There are too many possibilities. Instead, they are given a real bill and told to become so familiar with it that they would notice if something were out of place. We need to become so familiar with God's love, grace, peace and light that we would immediately know when something is out of place. Only then can we be protected from the counterfeit.

### **A suggested prayer for getting free from occult influences (It is important that you say this prayer out loud):**

Dear heavenly Father, I confess my involvement in (*name the occult practice*). I repent of this involvement and ask that you would forgive me. I renounce all messages, lies, interpretations and teachings that I received and believed from (*name the occult practice*). In Jesus' name, I cancel and nullify any curses that have come upon me due to my involvement in (*name the occult practice*). In Jesus' name, I also cancel and nullify any demonic assignment that has been placed upon me due to my involvement in (*name the occult practice*) and command any

unclean spirits to leave my life. I choose to forgive (*name those responsible for getting you involved in the occult practice*). I ask that You would go to them and bless them with an understanding of your love for them. I thank You that You are the only power in my life and that You love me. In Jesus' name, amen.

# *Section IV*

## **CONCERNING THINGS I HAVE**

### **INHERITED**



## CHAPTER NINE

### GENERATIONAL SINS

Have you ever noticed the ways that you are like your parents? Not only do you have certain physical characteristics that you share (Mom's eyes, Dad's chin, Grandpa's ears), but you can even see behavioural similarities. The science of genetics has clearly explained why we look like our parents with random combinations of their DNA as the basis for our own. Genetics has even explained why we share some of our behavioural characteristics with our parents.

But what about predispositions and spiritual propensities? Can genetics completely explain why certain catastrophes can be traced through family lines? Is it possible that there are more things at work than just the arranging of chromosomes? Could the mistakes of our parents, grandparents and even great grandparents become issues for us to deal with in our life times? Are we linked to our family line spiritually? The Scripture says it this way in Exodus 20:5-6:

*“for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.”*

Let's take a look at how God views our generational lines, what generational sins and curses are, and how to be free from them.

#### ***How does God view our generational lines?***

In our western society today, the idea of extended family has been eroded away by more self-centered lifestyles and a higher frequency of changing where we live. Because our focus is more on our immediate responsibilities and pleasures, and

greater geographical distance often is necessary between parents and their grown children due to work or travel, we have adjusted our views on how we relate to our extended relatives. Often we do not know details about our family tree or cannot find out due to broken marriages or relatives who won't talk about it. Consequently, we have learned to live without the information or have deemed it not important. This lack of knowledge about our generational lines, however, can keep us from knowing of patterns or family traumas that could shed light on things we wrestle with today. Just because we have learned to do without our extended families and their histories, does not mean that the spiritual principles in God's plan for our families stops functioning. We still are connected to them in very important ways.

God is eternal and timeless. He does not get caught up in a moment of time and miss the big picture of past, present and future. Every present moment is a part of a vast whole to God. It is the same way with Him when dealing with our family lines. God is very interested in the flow of things from one generation to another. He considers the generational lines of a family to be integrally linked. We often think of ourselves as the beginning of God's plan for us, but the fact is God has planned our existence even before we were born.

For example, the lineage of Jesus Christ can be traced back to Abraham two thousand years before His birth (Genesis 15:4). Though His line goes back to Adam, it was at this promise given to Abraham that we see how God provided for the line of Christ through Isaac, Jacob, Judah, eventually David and so on. These provisions were crucial to God's plan that Jesus be born into the family that would fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament Messiah. The generational line is important to God.

At birth, many things about who we are have already been put into place by our parents, grandparents and even great grandparents. What's more, our lives and the decisions we make can directly influence the lives of our children, their children,

and their grand children. These influences can be either positive or negative. Perhaps our parents or grandparents decided to emigrate from their home country to another. This decision will affect their family for generations. Now their descendents will be citizens of that new country with a heritage from the old country.

God uses such decisions to prepare us before we are born to serve His plan for us. The apostle Paul was groomed to be the apostle to the Gentiles long before he was born, much less a Christian (Galatians 1:15-16). He was born a Jew in a Gentile city, raised in Jerusalem being taught by moderates in the Mosaic and Rabbinic laws (Acts 22:1-21), and was well versed in Jewish and Gentile writings, alike. The eternal God has made such provisions for all of us before we were born. Our heritage is not by mistake. As we submit our lives to the ways of Christ, He will use our heritage in His plan for us, redeeming the bad things into strengths for the work He has called us to. God sees us as integrally connected to our generational lines, both past and future.

### ***What are generational sins and curses?***

As we have seen, we are a part of a long line of people who lived before us. Our ancestors and their actions have played a role in who we are. The things that they have passed on to us are more than just our physical, cultural and emotional heritage. We also inherit our generational line's spiritual heritage. This is again made clear in Numbers 14:18, which says:

*“The Lord is slow to anger, abounding in love and forgiving sin and rebellion. Yet He does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generations.”*

These sins have physical manifestations that we may tend to focus on, but the root of the problem is in the spirit. That is where we need to deal with the sin. Have you ever noticed how someone seems to “get away with” some sin. The truth is the consequences for that sin may not show up until the next generation or beyond. That is because the spiritual ramifications are unavoidable, though the physical results may not be clear. The potential of the consequences of our sins to be inherited by our children and beyond is not to be ignored.

Generational sins that we have inherited can manifest themselves in many ways. Some of these ways can be obvious and some can be under the surface. We may see their effects in a pattern of occurrences in our ancestors and ourselves, such as divorce, financial ruin, untimely deaths, unexplained health problems, depression, fear, feelings of isolation or abandonment, etc. More subtle manifestations may be prejudice toward a certain group, independence, hopelessness, unbelief, indecision, stubbornness, etc. We may not have any known memory as to why these things exist in our lives. It may be that we inherited these things from our ancestors. You might say, “But they aren’t mine!” However, we have seen how God considers you a part of your lineage, and with that comes responsibility. The sins of our foremothers and forefathers are ours in the same way that our sins will be for our descendents to deal with.

Something else we inherit from our ancestors are curses that were placed upon them by a third party. In some cases, there are others who sin against our family by placing a curse upon them. If the curse was made over the family line, it can have a lasting effect which can be passed on. Curses can also be self-inflicted. We can, through ritual or self-hatred, speak curses over ourselves and our descendents. Many secret societies in their initiation ceremonies have curses where the initiates speak curses over themselves should they reveal the secrets of the society. These curses are usually passed on. The power of our words is not to be taken for granted (see teaching on vows), and

curses can be strong pronouncements with spiritual effects. These, too, need to be considered.

### ***How do I get free from generational sins and curses?***

Our discussion of generational sins and curses may have left you feeling like a helpless victim. But that is just the opposite of the truth! The truth is, now that you have owned the sins of your ancestors, in Jesus Christ you have the power to break the cycles so that they do not have to be passed on to your children. Now that these sins are exposed, you no longer have to live under their influences. You can take your place as a child of God in your lineage and make a difference for generations to come. In Jesus Christ, we have the power to deal with the sins of our foremothers and forefathers the way they should have been dealt with the first time. We can confess and repent of those sins on behalf of our family and apply the forgiveness of Christ to our generational lines. Nehemiah had not sinned to bring the ruins of Jerusalem upon Israel, yet his confession and repentance in Nehemiah 1:4-11 includes these words in verse 6:

*“Please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open to hear the prayer Your servant is praying before You day and night for Your servants, the people of Israel. I confess the sins we Israelites, including myself and my father’s house, have committed against You.”*

The sense of being a part of the whole, but as one with authority to effect change through Christ, is our privilege. In the same way, we can break the curses of the enemy upon our family by the blood of Jesus. He became a curse for us on the cross (Galatians 3:13-14), therefore no curse can stand against us in Him.

To help facilitate the exposing of any generational sins or curses, make a family tree going back at least four generations, including yourself. Make sure to include brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles, as well as stepparents and siblings. If you have children, include them in the tree as your descendents. Make a space underneath each member of the tree to write any of the possible manifestations of generational sins in their lives. Use the list below to help get started, and write the things that are true about the person under their name. You may have to do some research on these family members, if you don't know. Once again, it is always good to find out about your family line, both the good and the bad things. Consider this list, but if the Lord reveals to you something that is not on the list, include it:

Occult	Sickness and disease	Bitterness
Witchcraft	Allergies	Suicide
Addictions	Obesity	Poverty
Alcoholism	Migraines	Irrational fears
Mental illness	Cancer	Unbelief
Senility/Alzheimers	Barren womb	Untimely death
Sexual sins	Emotional disorders	Stillbirths
Incest	Rejection	Eating disorders
Religious strictness	Depression	Prejudice

Remember that you are looking for patterns that run through the tree, not individual sins of your ancestors. For example, grandpa may have divorced grandma, but that is the only broken marriage in all the line. That is not likely a generational sin, but a sin that only grandpa has to own. But, if after the tree is done, you see a thread of divorce running through parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles, brothers and sisters, then you need to take authority over any generational sin of divorce that might be plaguing your family line. It can stop right here by the power of Christ. Of course, that will not guarantee that family members won't get divorced for other

reasons, but you can eliminate any negative spiritual effects of inherited generational sins that could be unduly influencing you today.

After you are finished looking for possible generational sins, do another tree looking for what good characteristics your lineage possesses. Identify the positive qualities that are evident in a pattern and bless them. Not only do you have the authority in Jesus Christ to break off the power of inherited sins, but you also have the power to bless that which God has established in your family as godly strengths. Use the list below to get an idea of what to look for. Again, if God shows you something that is not on the list, add it:

Honesty	Humility	Missions/preaching
Integrity	Wisdom	Bold witness
Marital fidelity	Intelligence	Martyrdom
Good parents	Compassion	Gifts of the Spirit
Creativity	Generosity	Sexual purity

## ***Conclusion***

We are integrally connected to our generational lines. Not only do we share physical characteristics with our families through genetics, but we also share spiritual connections with the sins and curses that we may have inherited from them. God sees our lives as a part of a larger whole, in which we represent a long line of people and their actions. In Christ, we have the privilege of breaking negative cycles and canceling curses in our generational lines.

You can be the turning point for your family to begin to pass on a positive, godly heritage to your descendents from this time forth. When you see the place God has given you in your generational line, you will realize that you are a powerful and positive part of the whole. You can influence your children and your children's children for Christ as you follow His ways. Satan knows the connection that you have to your lineage and, like

everything that God has created for your good, he wants to use it against you. Jesus has given you power to break the negative cycles in your family history now and to bless the godly ones. Take your place in your family for Christ.

### **A suggested prayer for breaking off generational sins:**

Dear heavenly Father, I thank you for my family line. I accept my ancestors with all of their successes and failures and acknowledge that they are a part of me. I thank you that now in Jesus Christ, I have the power and authority to redeem my generational heritage and serve you with it. I confess that my (*name the relative*) committed the sin of (*name the sin in as much detail as you know*) and that the effects of that sin have been evident in our family since. I repent on behalf of my family line for this sin. Please forgive me and my (*name the relative(s) who were involved*) and wash my lineage clean of this sin in Jesus name. I ask that, by the blood of Jesus Christ, You would stop any effects of this sin from going any farther in my generational line. Thank You, Lord, that You want to give me and my children a great spiritual inheritance. I accept it now in Jesus' name, amen.

### **A suggested prayer for breaking off ungodly generational patterns:**

Dear heavenly Father, I thank you for my family line. I accept my ancestors with all of their successes and failures and acknowledge that they are a part of me. I thank you that now in Jesus Christ, I have the power and authority to redeem my generational heritage and serve you with it. I confess that (*name the pattern from the family tree*) exists in my family. I repent of it now on behalf of myself and my whole family line and ask that you would cancel its effects upon me and my relatives. I ask that, by the blood of Jesus Christ, You would

stop (*name the pattern*) from going any farther in my generational line. Please restore what the enemy has stolen. Thank You in Jesus' name, amen.

**A suggested prayer for canceling generational curses:**

Dear heavenly Father, I thank you for my family line. I accept my ancestors with all of their successes and failures and acknowledge that they are a part of me. I thank you that now in Jesus Christ, I have the power and authority to redeem my generational heritage and serve you with it. In the name and authority given to me by Jesus Christ, I cancel every curse that has been placed upon my generational line. I declare that Jesus became a curse for me and, therefore, no curse has any power over me or my relatives. I thank You, Lord, that I now have been blessed by You and I choose to speak blessing upon my family, in Jesus' name, amen.

## APPENDIX

### CONTINUING IN FREEDOM

#### *Walking in the truth*

Hunger and desperation are the driving forces for those of us who seek healing from the wounds of our pasts. We never find a need to place ourselves in such vulnerable positions until we have personally reached some level of distress about our own condition. We don't know what we need or what it will take; we only know that we cannot go on like this anymore. In these dire straits, we find our loving heavenly Father waiting with arms open wide. "Behold!" He cries, "My child has come home to regain his place in my house!" Unlike us, there is no hesitation on His part to meet us at our need and begin to tenderly show us the areas of our lives that keep us in bondage. What must we do, though?

The areas of blockage in our lives are always circumstances that we have created, apart from God, to help us survive the pains of life. They are usually very efficient behaviours that provide us with relief from the stress of being exposed to life's brutality. They are like old friends in the company of whom we have become very comfortable. In many cases, we cannot imagine life without them. We can't even imagine what we would be like without them. Many of them have a prominent place in our definition of who we are as a person. But the harsh reality is that they are not the way God intended us to be. They do not represent God's best for us. So with desperation, and fear

and trembling, we come to the Father and say, "Have Your own way, Lord."

In His expert and gentle way, God reveals the areas of our bondage, one at a time. We are often stunned by the ease and compassion that God demonstrates in bringing us to face the ungodly, destructive behaviours and attitudes in our lives. The lie has been exposed and the truth has been revealed that is to replace the lie. And we go away rejoicing over the tremendous love of our Father to deliver us from such an insidious disease. But sometimes we become confused when we notice the same negative emotions and attitudes slipping back into our lives. What is going on? Didn't God take care of that blockage? How can it come back?

The problem is not with God, nor is it with the truth, nor really is it with us. The problem is with our walk! There are times when God will supernaturally remove a sinful pattern from our lives and we cannot explain it other than to say that it was God. Praise Him! Often, however, it is for us to willfully submit to the truth that has been revealed and actively replace the lie by which we have lived for so long (Ephesians 4:20-24). The lie has been in place for a long time, and there are many reactions and behaviours that have been built around it. We need to identify the lie when it raises its ugly head and actively say no to it. We need to speak out, "No, that is not true. God has shown me that this is the truth and I will believe Him." But this takes time and worthwhile effort on our parts.

When I was a little boy, my brothers and I used to slog a couple of miles to go to the nearest cornerstore. It required us hiking down long hillsides and through rugged ravines until we reached a small river. We then would wade across the river to the other shore where there was a steep ten-foot dirt face rising above the bank. We would then climb that bank where a thin line of old hardwood trees would give way to a large open field of tall grass. In the distance, on the other side of the field was the

cornerstore where we could buy candy, soda and firecrackers. It was always worth the trek.

In the middle of that field was a lone, stubby tree. That tree would make it necessary for us to choose a path around it through the field to get to the store. At the beginning of every summer, we would choose a side to go around and stick to it. As the grass in the field grew taller, it was always easier to take the path we had already established. This kept us from getting our pants torn on thorns, cut down on the number of 'hitchhikers' we would pick up on our clothes, helped us to avoid ticks, and generally was just easier walking.

The established path was always easy to find when we came up the rise from the river. Like lights on a landing strip at night, it would funnel us into the field toward our goal. If we didn't think about it, it was easy to just follow it to the store. But every now and then, we would get adventurous and decide to go 'trail-blazing!' With the imagination and courage of young boys, we would decide to make a new path! Go around the other side of the tree! Adventure beckoned! Summers were long and sometimes boring.

The first time was always the worst. The grass was tall and would drag on us as we pushed through. We would often have to walk with our arms up just to get above the grass and thorns. Once we got into the field a ways, we always wondered if maybe we should go back and take the other way. But we would persevere, knowing that the prize was worth it: firecrackers!

The second time through, a couple days later, that new path was usually still awkward, but not as bad as at first. And the next time it was a little better as the grass now began to remain laying down. Soon the grass was worn away, broken off by our trampling steps. But another process was at work simultaneously: the old path was beginning to grow over. The more we continued to use the new path, the less noticeable the old one became. Before long, we would ascend that rise and see only the new path leading us to endless childhood pleasures.

This is how we must view our continued freedom. The old path of the lie is well used and easy to follow. The new path of the truth is hard at first, but our motivation to reach the healthy lifestyle on the other side spurs us on to keep going. The craving to be free, to go deeper with God, drives us to cling to the truth at whatever cost. Don't worry. The more we respond according to the divinely, revealed truth in our lives, the less comfortable we will be with the old way of doing things. It will grow over in time! Hold to the truth no matter how it feels. As Elizabeth Elliot said, "Do not doubt in the dark what God has said in the light." I believe this is what is meant in Philippians 2:12-13:

*"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure."*

But do not think from this that it is for us to *do* the truth. No, it is for us to submit to the truth that God has revealed and walk with Him in it. In the end, though, we are only participating in the work God is doing, which is changing us.

## ***God is Light***

The goal of this book has been to help us identify and remove blockages to enjoying intimacy with our loving Father God. The cross of Christ is the source of our healing as we submit all areas of our lives to His tender care. God is love. He loves us unconditionally. He is more committed to our healing and freedom than we could ever be. Yes, God is love. He is the very embodiment of all compassion and acceptance. But God is also light (1 John 1:5). He is, in His loving character, also the Exposer of all that is not pure and loving. Like the mid-day sun that warms us and gives us health and life, God also makes clear every blemish that can only be hidden if covered from the light.

One day, my six year-old son limped to me and said that he thought he might have a splinter in his foot. "Can you get it out Daddy?" he asked with child-like confidence. He sat up on the bed and held his foot up to my face. Instinctively, I turned him around so that the bottom of his foot was facing toward the sunlight streaming in through the window. With the brightness of the sun, I could better evaluate what my precious child's problem was. With some complaint and a few tears, the splinter was removed, a hug was administered and he jogged away with a big, "Thanks Daddy!" Mission accomplished.

As Jesus was the embodiment of the Father's glory, full of grace and truth (John 1:14), so the love of God goes inseparably with the light of God. As Sheila Strolz said to me once, "Grace is free, but it comes with truth and truth will cost you everything. But it will set you free." Although the love of God is unconditional and abundant, it shines the light of God's character onto our lives and exposes those things that need to leave in order to go deeper. Like a moth drawn to a flame, the love of God mesmerizes our spirits and pulls us in, only to burn up the impurities that hinder us from knowing more.

Jack Frost says that the love of God is like the carrot in front of a donkey. The carrot is not for the donkey to eat, but to get the donkey moving. As we experience the ecstasy of God's pure love, we become addicted to His presence and will soon be willing to pay any price to have more. Suddenly, we understand the parables of the hidden treasure and the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:44-46). We would insanely sell everything we have to know more of His unconditional love. The value of those things that stand between us and the deeper revelation of His love pale in comparison. This divine madness has been the basis of many hymns and songs over the centuries. An insatiable desire to express this all-consuming need of making Jesus the center of our lives is the theme of such well-known hymns as *Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus* and *Be Thou My Vision*, just to name two.

The love of God makes us feel safe so that we can let Him heal the things that keep us from our destiny. But without the light, the love of God is not enough. It is only part of God's ultimate desire for us. As Brennan Manning has said, "God does not love us when we change, He loves us so that we can change." Never become deceived into thinking that the unconditional love of God is never suppose to change you. Yes, God loves you as you are, but that does not mean that He has no plans for renovation. In fact, to really know the love of God is to be so utterly and profoundly changed that you don't even recognize yourself anymore - and it's totally okay with you.

However, it is just as dangerous to be overly consumed with the light of God and forget that His love is the motivating factor. Then the light becomes a source of constant introspection that brings disillusionment and eventually condemnation. Eternal naval gazing is not God's idea of abundant life in Christ. It is only when we have the two working in tandem in our lives that we experience the freedom that comes from acknowledging, "I am a sinner under re-construction and God is in love with me anyway!"

### ***Walking in the Light***

If walking in the truth is how we deal with specific, revealed truths as they replace lies we have believed, then walking in the light characterizes our entire Christian life. Individual truths that God shows us will deal with specific areas of bondage in our lives, but the light shines on us as a catalyst to those revelations.

The light reveals things. That stain on my shirt, the spot on the carpet, the crouching cat in the bushes: all are made clear by the light. Shadows and hiding are characteristics of the darkness. If God is light, then God is openness and honesty. There is no darkness in Him at all (1 John 1:5). If we want to be

comfortable with God, then we must learn to be comfortable with openness and honesty. In 1 John 1:6-7, it goes on to say:

*“If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*

Notice that if we walk in darkness (hiding), we do not have a flowing relationship with God who is light. But if we walk in the light (openness and honesty) then we are walking alongside the God who is light, and only then can we have true fellowship with the children of light, our brothers and sisters in Christ. Our practices of deception, cover-up, and façade are not only a hindrance to our flowing in God’s presence, but also to the true fellowship God wants us to have with the Body of Christ.

The false identity that we project to others is the wall we erect to keep them from seeing who we really are. That wall casts deliberate shadows over areas of our lives where we fear rejection. Even though we know that God knows our hearts, we will sometimes maintain the wall even when in His presence. He may accept us as we are, but we cannot. This is bondage of the worst kind, because it is self-perpetuating. Our walls keep the areas of bondage hidden, which in turn keeps them from being able to be healed. Only when we allow God’s love to convince us that we are safe to let the walls down, can we receive the healing that will set us free. Then we are walking in the light, just as 1 John 1:8-9 continues:

*“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”*

Our cleansing comes from confessing not from hiding. It comes through openness and honesty, not by lurking in shadows and darkness of fear.

This walk is not a one-time thing. As our lives go on, we must learn to live in the light. The more comfortable we become with God's presence, the more we love the light. The more we realize that God loves us even with our sin (not just in spite of it), the more we can come to accept ourselves as not perfect. The more we can accept ourselves with our own imperfections (although becoming more like Christ, everyday), the more we don't mind letting others see us that way. The more transparent we become with others, the more people can begin to respond to us in truth. Now we are able to clearly see when their negative responses to us are from their own hurts or whether they are actually being caused by something we did. It is in this fellowship of light that we become loving instruments in each other's healing, instead of just perpetuating more confusion, hurt and blame.

Our loving Father is there in the light and He will gently and lovingly reveal our stains over time. He will not point at them and laugh or condemn us for our foolishness. He will use the light to help Him get to all of the stain by the cleansing power of the blood of Jesus. Make a lifestyle of walking in the light, being loved by your Father. The alternative is hiding from the One who loves you most. Selah.

**If you would like to contact us or help with the cost of printing these booklets, please contact us at:**

**Real Life Community Church  
2556 Philip St.  
Halifax, NS B3L 3H2  
Canada**

**[www.reallifeondal.com](http://www.reallifeondal.com)**