

‘God’s Cure For Emotional Pain’

FOREWORD

This series of lessons is not for everyone. Jesus once said, **“I have come that they may have life and have it more abundantly.”** A Christian’s life should be a life where your mind and heart are at peace, contented, loving and joyful. For some this is rarely experienced.

Instead their lives have been filled with such things as anxiety, phobias, depression, worthlessness, obsessions, insecurity, rejection, guilt, bitterness, and feeling unloved. If you suffer from any of these then this series is for you. God has a cure for your emotional pain. It is yours for the taking. In fact we can guarantee you that if you will submit to the cure provided by God you can soon divest yourself of painful emotions.

Unfortunately many people who go through the trauma of emotional pain are not willing to do anything about it. Instead of seeking professional help they choose to continue in their pain. Most of these feel ashamed to talk with anyone about their feelings.

Often men are too macho and women are too embarrassed to say anything for fear someone will think they are mentally unbalanced. Of course this is not true. The emotional pain mentioned above has no connection with a person being **“crazy.”** Some feel that they can work through it or **“snap out of it.”** Others are afraid they will reveal family secrets that could be very embarrassing. No doubt some refuse professional help because of the expense involved. As one who has experienced depression the author knows how difficult it is to open up to other about one’s emotional pain.

In view of the refusal of many to talk with a professional counsellor about their emotional problems I have tried to do the next best thing. You can allow this series of studies to become your personal counsellor. Already over the past 10 years many have been using these therapy chapters with considerable success. You too can derive healing if you are willing to work at it.

HOW DOES GOD’S CURE WORK? #1

In one of his sermons Jesus said, **“I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).** It is clear that Jesus is saying he can offer us a more abundant way of living than what we have been experiencing. God’s intention is that Christians have a good life that is free, abundant, overflowing, adventurous and exciting beyond any other kind of existence. He wants to provide us with love, peace, joy and security.

Unfortunately many people fail to experience these attributes in their daily lives. Jesus said, **“My peace I give you”** yet instead of peace many have fears and phobias. The apostle Paul exhorts us to **“Rejoice and again I say rejoice,”** but some of us are very unhappy, even experiencing depression.

Jesus promises security. He said, **“I am with you always, even to the end of the age,”** still we can feel very insecure. The Bible assures us that the love of God can be **“poured out in our hearts,”** however we can feel very unloved and unwanted.

Why do we have all these negative emotions? Can it be that God’s word does not apply to certain people under certain conditions? Most certainly not! All of us will have certain negative emotions at various times but we have been able to deal with them without interrupting our emotional stability. Others because of their emotional make up have great difficulty in dealing with their negative emotions. For example fear can become very paralyzing. The insecurity associated with fear can leave one an emotional casualty.

People suffer daily from such negative emotions as rejection, guilt, anger, grief, depression, worry, low self esteem, insecurity, being a failure, phobias and panic attacks. **Is there any hope for those who find themselves incapacitated by such feelings?** There certainly is!

First of all you will learn the reason why you have your particular negative emotions. You will also discover the origin for these emotions, once you understand why you have these feelings and their origin you will have already won half the battle. You will come to recognize that negative thoughts and behaviour are **choices you have made.**

You may not realize it now but we choose to be obsessed with our particular negative emotions rather than to think them out in a rational way. You can and will learn to choose differently from what you have been doing.

Secondly, it is our contention that the Bible can empower you to recognize and change your negative thoughts and behaviors. Paul tells us that **“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”** (2 Timothy 1:7).

Therefore you are going to depend on, trust in and lean on God’s wisdom to help you overcome your emotional pain. Thus you can be completely victorious in your battle to overcome your emotional pain. Jesus said, **“And you shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free”** (John 8:32). **Do you believe God can provide you with the truth, which can set you free from your emotional pain?**

Paul says in 3 Timothy 3:16, 17; **“All scripture is given by inspiration of God and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”**

God’s word is a corrector. His word can correct the deficiencies in your emotional make up if you will allow it to do so. If you have fears, worries, insecurities or depression these can be replaced with love, joy, peace and security. This is how powerful God’s word is.

This series you are about to embark on is designed to use God’s word in helping you to be a **“complete”** person. However it is going to require sincere, diligent and dedicated daily effort on your part to accomplish the goal of a healthy emotional state of mind. If you will give the necessary time and effort we promise that you will be rewarded with an abundant life.

These studies will focus on three things. **First**, you will learn how to experience the love that God has especially for you. This is very important if you are to have an abundant life.

Second, you will focus on overcoming negative emotions which can be so destructive and paralyzing. You will become aware of the origin of your emotional flaws. Understanding their origin will help you understand why you have so much emotional pain. Through the application of God’s word you will begin to replace these old negative fixed concepts with new positive concepts from God’s word.

Third, you will discover how peace of mind is achieved even when you live under severe or stressful circumstances.

Read carefully now what Paul writes in **Philippians 4:6, 7**; **“Let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasseth all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”** Here is assurance that you can have peace of mind, a peace that is completely beyond human understanding.

Notice also that it will guard your heart and mind. **Guard you from what?** It guards you from such things as fear, anxiety, phobias, depression, feelings of rejection and loneliness, etc. **Do you believe this?**

You will also begin to learn how to use a great tool often overlooked in Bible study --- **meditation**. I can recall that in growing up and even later in college most of my Bible study was learning facts. Certainly facts are important for us to learn but we are missing the entire purpose of Bible study if we do not learn to apply what we read.

In using meditation you think about the passage, not just read it. You reflect on its meaning and see its application in your own life. Meditation is not just reading scripture but thinking it through – seeing how it applies to your personal everyday life. It then becomes very meaningful and powerful in your life. David in **Psalms 1:2** speaks of delighting in God’s law and **meditating** on it day and night. Again in **Psalms 119:97** he says, **“O how I love your law! It is my meditation all the day.”**

If you are presently in depression your doctor may have you on a medication for depression. This is nothing to be afraid or ashamed of even if it is over a long period of time. It has been proven that with some people there is a definite relationship between depression and chemical imbalances that often occur in the brain. This is something you cannot help.

The medications used today are not addictive or harmful. Look upon your medication as you would a vitamin. It is putting into your brain chemicals that are needed to restore things back to normal.

If you are severely depressed and not on medication, we recommend that you see a medical doctor about the possibility of going on a medication that will help restore a chemical balance in your brain. He can determine if you need to do this.

We ask that you take only one chapter per week. At the close of each chapter there will be certain Scriptures you will be asked to read and reread several times during the week. The power you will receive from these exercises will not be just reading scriptures over and over again but in believing them. You must bring yourself to **strongly believe** what you read. You need to understand that this means not only to believe but to feel. There is a vast difference in having knowledge about something and feeling deeply about it.

The problem with old emotional flaws is that they have become deeply ingrained over a long period of time thus you have come to feel deeply about them. You must now replace all these old feelings with new healthy feelings. This will not happen overnight. It will take time. Most of the time these negative emotional feelings have developed over a long period of time thus they do not go away immediately.

If you have the patience, change will begin to take place. You must bring yourself to believe **strongly** in what you will be reading. Your feelings will play a very significant part in attaining peace of mind. Repetitious reading and meditation on certain scriptures will help you to reinforce your feelings. The apostle Paul writes something very interesting in his letter to the **Philippians**.

He says, "**Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you have learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you**" (4:8, 9).

What we see in these verses is pure and simple **thought control**. You can change your thoughts – what you think about. You can change from negative thoughts to positive thoughts. You can change from incapacitating thoughts to healthy thoughts. When you are willing to make the effort God will be with you and help you to make these changes.

Just think, all those old hurtful thoughts can be exchanged for new thoughts that are uplifting and have positive value. But again it is going to take time and diligent work. We witness many extremes in religion today. One of these extremes is emotionalism. While such extremes can be harmful we must recognize that there is a definite place for emotions in our lives. In fact a lack of emotion in our lives can be very detrimental. Healthy emotions are never wrong.

One thing you will learn in these therapy sessions is to distinguish between harmful emotions and healthy emotions. Emotions are never wrong when based on the truths of the Bible. There is a place for healthy emotions in your life. You need to **feel deeply** about certain things. Never be afraid or be embarrassed to have deep emotions and feelings about things that are based on God's word.

For these therapy chapters to be the most effective, you need to find a quiet place where you can be alone for at least an hour each day. Don't put yourself where a telephone call will interrupt you. Don't be within the sound of TV. It is important that you be able to have a quiet time with absolutely no interruptions or disturbances.

It just will not work if you do not arrange to do it this way. You have to pay a price for recovery. That price is finding a place where you can have a quiet time to yourself. Make this a daily priority. This will be the most difficult part of these studies – **finding the time**. The fast pace of life that we live today makes it difficult for us to stop everything we are doing and have some quiet time for ourselves.

However it seems we do find time to watch television, go shopping, go to ball games, engage in social activities, etc. The question is **do you really want to overcome your emotional pain?** Finding the time will answer this question for you. Read each chapter slowly and carefully comprehending each sentence as you read. Don't get in a hurry. After reading a chapter, go back and read the scriptures at the end of the chapter slowly and with conviction. You might like to read them aloud to yourself. Memorize them if you wish.

Meditate on them word by word getting their full meaning and impact. Fix them in your mind.

Think how they apply to your particular problems. As a starter read the scriptures below very slowly several times. Again don't be in a hurry. Meditate on and digest each word you read.

“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me” (Philippians 4:13).

“Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen” (Ephesians 4:20, 21).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort we ourselves are comforted by God” (2 Corinthians 1:33, 4).

“God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1)

“Cast your burden on the Lord and He shall sustain you; He shall never permit the righteous to be moved” (Psalm 55:22).

“I will love you, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock, and my fortress and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; My shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold” (Psalm 18:1, 2).

It is also very important that you have some prayer time each day. After reviewing each chapter and meditating on the scriptures that are provided, you need to take some time to talk to God about your problems. Just express in your own words how you feel and what is happening in your life.

The apostle Peter admonishes us to cast “all your care upon Him, for He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7). God wants you to tell him about your problems. He wants to know how you feel. Prayer may be difficult for you at this point but even if you can only say a few words then say what you can. Just remember; “He cares for you.” The Lord wants you to tell him about your emotional pain.

Here is a suggested prayer to begin with. “O Lord, how wonderful you are. Thank you for caring about me. Thank you for loving me. Thank you for letting me bring all my problems before you. My biggest problem(s) now is _____. Please help me to overcome this burden that I carry around with me because I cannot do it alone. I put my trust in you Lord for I know that all things are possible with you and I know you will help me to do what is best for me and others also. In Jesus name, Amen.”

In one of David's prayers he said, “My eyes are ever toward the Lord. For He shall pluck my feet out of the net. Turn Yourself to me, and have mercy on me, For I am desolate and afflicted. The troubles of my heart have enlarged; Oh, bring me out of my distresses! Look on my affliction and my pain, And forgive all my sins.” (Psalm 25:15-18).

One of the things that made David so great was his ability to take his troubles to God and put his trust in God to deliver him from his anguish and troubles. You can do the same. So now you know how the plan works. It's not a difficult procedure is it! It does require commitment, diligence and daily discipline. But you can do it. You don't have to stay mired down in your emotional pain. There is hope.

The rewards will be worth every effort you have to make. You now have the opportunity to bring peace of mind into your life. So make up your mind that for the next few weeks you are going to really give it a try. There is everything to be gained and nothing to lose.

Write out in your own words what you consider to be your main problems at this time and then write out what you plan to do about them. In order to maintain privacy you may want to keep these notes in a private place so no one will be reading them.

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LOVE # 2

Someone once asked the famous theologian Carl Barth, “What is the most profound thought in the universe?” He replied, “Jesus loves me, this I know.” This simple song expresses a profound thought. God’s love and concern for humanity is indeed profound. In fact it is so profound it is difficult for us to grasp the full impact of how great it is and what all it includes.

In **Ephesians 3:17-19** Paul prays “that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Notice that Paul even concludes that God’s love is so great it cannot be fully understood and appreciated. John tells us that “God is love” (**John 4:8**). He is the personification of love. In other words His love is perfect. It is impossible then for our finite minds to grasp how great and powerful God’s love is for us.

All we know is imperfect love thus we cannot fully comprehend perfect love. Yet by faith we accept this fact and praise God for manifesting His perfect love toward us. Consider the following passages. “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God” (**1 John 3:1**). “And we have known and believed the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God and God in him.” (**1 John 4:16**).

The greatest proof and example of God’s perfect love is seen in the death of His Son upon the cross. We remember the words of **John 3:16**. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” The apostle John tells us, “In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (**1 John 4:9, 10**).

In **Romans 5:5** Christians are assured that “the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.” While you have this wonderful assurance it may be difficult for you to feel it. You may intellectually acknowledge God’s love, but it is difficult for you to feel it. It is easy to say, “Jesus loves me” but difficult to feel “this I know.” You can accept something intellectually but you do not always accept it emotionally. In other words the problem lies in feeling loved.

When we do not feel loved sometimes it is because we think we are not worthy of love, we think that somehow we are different and don’t deserve God’s love. “Would God love me the way I am?” Maybe you are constantly criticizing and blaming yourself for past mistakes and errors feeling that God could never really love you. This is a false and destructive emotion you need to rid yourself of.

Sometimes our feelings can be traced to childhood, how our parents felt about us and how we felt about them. For example if our fathers were too busy to pay attention to us then we tend to project this feeling toward our Heavenly Father. If your earthly father put you down then you may feel that God puts you down also. If your parents never outwardly showed you love and affection it may be hard to feel God’s love. If you could never trust in your parents it could be hard to trust in God. If one had no earthly father or was abused by a father then the problem is compounded even more.

It seems that our concepts of God are based to some extent on our relationship with our earthly fathers. This no doubt is one reason why the Bible places so much responsibility for the spiritual development of children upon the father rather than on the mother. **Ephesians 6:4** “And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord.”

It seems that in our society any spiritual training in the home comes primarily from the mother. Yet the father image is so important in a family for a proper God image. This is not to say a home will fail without a male spiritual leader. We know that many children are brought up in homes where there is no father to give them spiritual training or else if there is a father he fails to give them any spiritual training.

Yet these children have turned out successful as Christians. The Bible even furnishes us an example of this.

Timothy received his spiritual training from his mother Eunice and grandmother Lois. A godly mother can compensate in many ways but the presence of a male role model enhances a child's feeling he or she is loved by God. Also keep in mind your father may not have received love in his family and it may have been difficult for him to show his love toward you.

The same holds true for a mother in a family. We do not want to get in the blaming business and lay all our problems at the feet of our parents. They probably did the best they could. If you come from a family that showed a great amount of love be thankful you could grow up having that experience.

Sometimes we allow hardships, tragedies and traumas to cause us to question God and His love for us. It may be the death of a child, the sudden discovery of a tumour, a serious accident or some other event. We often react with questions like, "Why me?" or "Why would God let this happen?" Especially we wonder, "Why does God let bad things happen to good people?"

We often conclude that God must not like us or that he is punishing us and does not love us. Nothing could further from the truth. We must realize that since the fall of man with the tree of life being removed from man, life on earth will never be perfect. We all have to die. Because of sin Life will have its ups and downs. Sometimes it may be our own fault that brings on tragedies. However, this never removes the fact that God loves us.

We might also consider the apostle Paul. He writes of his tribulations as follows. "From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was stoned; three times I was shipwrecked; a night and a day I have been in the deep" In spite of all his sufferings Paul never for one moment doubted God's love for him.

Just remember this, **GOD LOVES YOU. DO NOT LET ANYONE TAKE THIS AWAY FROM YOU.** Paul encourages us with these words: "For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:38-39).

Dwelling on this one passage alone for the next month can have a great impact on your feeling loved by God. We need to remember that God allowed his Son to die on a cross. The agony and pain that he suffered is indescribable. This did not mean that God did not love His Son. However he loved us so much that he was willing to stand aside and watch his son be tortured on the cross. This was the only way that we could be saved and have hope of eternal life.

John tells us that "God is love." This is his nature. He cannot be any other way. He loved his Son but at the same time he loved us. Sometimes God has to stand aside when bad things happen to us but that does not mean he does not love us. Again don't let anyone or any event take away from you the fact of His love for you. **If you can't feel God's love now, when and how can you begin to feel it?** The apostle John wrote, "We love him because He first loved us" (1 John 4:19). Love was initiated by God.

When you consider the cross and what transpired there you realize that because of the cross you can, (1) be cleansed of all sin, (2) become a child of God and (3) live in hope of being with God in heaven for eternity. To put it another way count your many blessings, name them one by one, just as the song says. Just these three things alone can cause us to feel God's love. Therefore you need to do a lot of meditation on the cross.

Read the accounts given in the Gospels of the death, burial and resurrection of Christ. Read them slowly and carefully. Then read them over and over again. You will begin to find yourself responding to God's love. These accounts can be found in **Matthew 27:27-50, Mark 15:16-37, Luke 23:26-46 and John 19:16-30.** **Why not read a different account each day during your quiet time this week?**

There is another principle that will help you to feel loved. This is found in 1 John 3:20. "For if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things." The apostle seems to be saying that sometimes faithful Christians with good hearts (consciences) seem to dwell on their guilt and they end up condemning themselves. He goes ahead to say that God is greater than the feelings we may have. So don't go by your present feelings, go by what Almighty God says.

It is difficult for some Christians to feel they are saved. They will express doubt with such expressions as; **“If I should die I don’t know if God would save me or not.”** John has assured us that if we have been living in fellowship with God we have the assurance of our sins being cleansed. **“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”** (1 John 1:7).

This is proof we are in a saved condition. However, if this does not change your feelings, John says to believe it anyway. Then in time you will begin to have genuine feelings that you are saved. John says God is greater than the inaccurate feelings you may have now. Go by what God says not what your feelings to say.

In other words, **GOD MEANS WHAT HE SAYS** in spite of what your feelings may be telling you. One translation renders this as follows; **“And in His sight we shall reassure our hearts, whatever our heart may accuse us of, because God is greater.”**

The conclusion is, **START BELIEVING IT EVEN IF YOU DON’T PRESENTLY FEEL IT.** Now a very interesting thing will begin to happen. If you will keep on believing in spite of your feelings soon you will find yourself feeling what you believe.

At this point we need to pause and ask, **why is it so important that you feel loved by God? What is the point of all of this? What is being accomplished?** The answer is this. **THE GREATEST ENEMY OF YOUR FEARS, INSECURITIES, ETC. IS – LOVE.**

For example you are assured by the apostle John that love will drive away such negative emotions. **“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love”** (1 John 4:18).

It is also very important at this point to recognize that love is a two way street. Not only does God love us but we too must love. We must love God and our neighbour. Jesus said in **Mark 12:30-31**, **“And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.”** This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: **You shall love your neighbour as yourself. There is no other commandment greater than these.”**

This is putting things pretty strong. It calls for an all out effort to love God and others. When we read the accounts listed above of the death, burial and the resurrection of Jesus it can cause us to respond with love. Jesus says it should be with all our being. No doubt this is something we have to work on. It is easy to allow our love to be misplaced on things that are not important. To strengthen your love give more time to meditating on the great sacrifice Jesus made for you.

Partaking of the Lord’s Supper each Sunday will also strengthen your love for the Lord. Making the cross central in your life is the key to your love for God. In the command to love, Jesus said we must also love our neighbour. Loving people sometimes is easy and yet sometimes it can be very difficult. There are some people who are not very appealing. There are others who are very unlovable. Loving one who is not very lovable can be a real test.

Our love must even extend beyond the unlovable but also to our enemies. **“You have heard that it was said, You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you”** (Matthew 5:43, 44).

How can this ever be possible? When Jesus used the word **“love”** it was the Greek word **“agape.”** This is the kind of love God has expressed toward us. It is grounded in the will and not in feelings or emotions. It is a commitment to love in spite of and regardless of the situation or any set of circumstances. Agape is unconditional, unreserved love.

It is doing what is best for the other person. It puts that person ahead of self and seeks his or her good before seeking your own good. Paul expresses it as an attitude in **Philippians 2:3, 4** **“But in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interest, but also for the interests of others.”**

This kind of love does not require affection or close friendship although we usually relate love to such relationships. Rather than revenge or resentment one will seek to do good whenever the opportunity presents itself. This sounds difficult but the Lord would not ask us to do something that is beyond our ability.

In **Ephesians 3:16-19** Paul expresses a prayer which aptly applies to any Christian today. “That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.”

Meditate for a while on the many things Christ has done for you. Count your many blessings. Go back to the scenes that took place on the cross. Experience God’s love as deeply as you can. Read and reread the scriptures in this lesson. Now pray to your loving Father. Thank him for loving you even in spite of your failures and shortcomings. Tell him you are going to accept His love even if you don’t feel you deserve it. Tell him of you love for him. Pour out your love for him and ask him to help you to feel deeply his love for you. Soon you will **feel** it. To truly feel God love is a supreme blessing. Don’t deny yourself of His infinite love. Accept it – feel it.

Finally sing with feeling and conviction (**either out loud or to yourself**) the following wonderful little song.

Jesus loves me this I know,
For the Bible tells me so;
Little ones to Him belong;
They are weak but He is strong.
Yes Jesus loves me, Yes Jesus loves me;
Yes, Jesus loves me; The Bible tells me so.

NOTES

Write out in your own words how you feel about God’s love for you.

YOUR SELF IMAGE #3

For the past week you have been reading and meditating on God’s personal love for you. **How is it going? Can you begin to say, “This I know?”** Remember the more you put this thought into your mind the more it will become a part of you. But it is all up to you. God has given you a wonderful gift. He has built into you the freedom of choice or as we sometimes say, “**you are a free moral agent.**”

With this power of choice you can choose your thoughts. You can replace old thoughts with new uplifting energizing and empowering thoughts. Keep on keeping on with your meditation about God’s love for you. In time you will really begin to feel it. Once you reach this stage you will find fear, anxiety and many other negative emotions will begin to disappear from your life.

What do you think about yourself as a person? How do you view yourself? Who you think you are is related to a great extent to your childhood, especially in your parent-child relationships. You cannot cut yourself off from your childhood history. Although we may not remember all the details of our childhood, the child you once were is still very much alive in you today and affects everything you do, for good or for bad.

Whether you realize it or not you are often letting that little child still tell you that you have very little worth. The good news is that you don’t have to let this inner child dominate your present life any more. You can break this power and render it inoperative. **Have you ever heard any of the following expressions?** Perhaps you have even voiced some of them yourself at various times. Some of these may cause you to recall some of your past.

“Your nothing but a big cry baby.”
“Shame on you!”
“It’s all your fault. What’s wrong with you?”
“Any dummy can do that?”
“Dad says I can’t do anything right.”
“I wish you had never been born.”
“You embarrassed me to death.”
“My mother says I’m hopeless.”
“Your sister was always an A student.”
“God doesn’t like you when you do that.”
“My husband says I embarrass him all the time.”
“I’m so awful, I could never be a Christian.”

It seems that countless men and women today live in an environment, which screams to them daily, "you aren't worth much." Many times a negative scolding is prefaced by, "If I've told you once I've told you a thousand times." We hear so much from the people we trust and depend on, that we believe what they say about us. We end up internalizing their comments into our very being and this is what we become.

Parents who are from dysfunctional families may not have had their needs met as infants and children thus they often pass on their problems to their children. The result is shame and hurt feelings that come from the negative messages, affirmations, beliefs and rules that we hear as we grow up. We hear these messages not only from our parents but also from teachers, authority figures, even from preachers. These messages basically tell us that we are somehow defective and are not what we ought to be.

In this third chapter we are going to think about your self image, the mental picture you carry around of yourself which you may not even be aware of. However it is there, complete down to the last detail. This self image is your own personal concept of what kind of person you think you are. Growing up in a dysfunctional family is nearly always associated with shame and low self esteem. Shame can be defined as an uncomfortable or painful feeling that we experience when we think that a part of us is defective, bad, incomplete, inadequate, or a failure.

Some of our negative feelings can be related to experiences in later life. If the person you are married to, your friends and associates encourage you and build you up, and if you achieve a degree of success in your work, then your self-esteem is enhanced. If however you have lived with constant criticism, disappointment, and failure, your ego may have become deflated, maybe completely crushed.

Once a negative idea of self goes into the overall picture of self it becomes true. You do not question its validity but proceed to act upon it as if it were true. The unfortunate thing is that many of these ideas are false. You just think they are true. Once the image is formed you will "act like" the sort of person you conceive yourself to be.

In fact you are unable to act otherwise. For example if you feel you are a failure ("I just can't do anything right") you will act as a failure. If you feel you are a nobody, then you will be a nobody. A student who says, "I'm dumb when it comes to math." will find his grades will bear him out. Why? One literally cannot act other than the way he conceives himself to be. The way you feel about yourself is the way you will act for you will act out your feelings. "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Proverbs 23:7).

For you to have a life of joy, contentment, peace of mind and security you must have an adequate and realistic self image that you can live with comfortably. You need a wholesome self-esteem. You need to feel good about yourself, who you are, what you can do and what you can be. This is not saying you should become arrogant. It is saying you need to know what your real worth is. There is no better place to begin than to see what God thinks of you.

God created you. He above all others has the correct image of who you are and what you are worth. So consider for a few moments how God looks at you. You may be surprised to find out that God's image of you is quite different than the one you presently have of yourself.

First, you were made in the image of God. "Then God said, 'Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness'....So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female He created them" (Genesis 1:26, 27). As you can easily see you are very much like God. You bear his image. What a lofty concept.

Second, you were made a little lower than the angels in heaven. "For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor" (Psalms 8:5). We usually think of angels ranking very high, in the very presence of God. Just think. You are just a little lower in rank than the angels.

Third, you are of such value that God has sent his son to die on the cross for you. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). Don't ever be guilty of saying you are not worth anything.

Fourth, you are unique. No two persons on this earth are exactly the same. We are all different just like every snowflake is different. The truth about yourself is this: you are not inferior, you are not superior, you are yourself. God has not created a standard person and said, "this is it."

You have your own unique personality. So you don't have to fit into some special mould, just be yourself. Why not accept Paul's assessment of himself; **"By the grace of God I am what I am"** (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Fifth, the prayer of Jesus to His Father in **John 17:23** cannot but help convince you that God continually cherishes the soul of every person no matter how bad he or she may feel about themselves. Jesus prayed, **"that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me."** What a deep sense of self esteem this should give you! Just think, God loves you with the same identical love He had when He gave His Son to die on the cross. **Romans 5:8** reaffirms the fact that **"while we were still sinners, Christ died for us."** This is how valuable the Lord thinks you are.

Sixth, God in contrast to man is perfect. He came in the flesh and we have his example to imitate. If you want to, you can be like Him. Not in the sense you can ever be perfect but you can imitate his ways. The life of Jesus on this earth is a perfect example of how to live. However, he is the only man to ever live a perfect life. And while you cannot be perfect yet you can be like Him. You can imitate his life to a great degree.

Jesus selected twelve men to be apostles. Every one of them had some very rough edges that needed to be smoothed out. He said to them, **"follow me."** They did and soon they became men who were completely changed. Each retained his own personality but in their outlook on self and others they adopted a way of thinking that was radically different than the way they had previously conceived themselves as being. This proves you can change.

Instead of being a failure you can be like him. Instead of being a nobody you can be like Christ. The important thing is to recognize your self image can be changed. Replacing the old negative images with new positive images that are given to you by the Lord does this. Peter tells us that we can be **"partakers of the divine nature"** (2 Peter 1:4).

What greater self-image can one have? Yes, you can change. You can be like Jesus. You can partake of His very nature. **Do you believe this? Do you believe God means what He says?** Then start believing it and soon your belief will become an emotional feeling.

The concepts you have of yourself probably developed over many years. They came about in a slow and gradual way. Thus they may be well entrenched in your thinking. But even with bad stuff in your past, you have choices. Everyone must overcome something. This is life. Within each of us is the power to change and move on. Satan would certainly like to convince you that you are worthless so as to discourage you from even trying to change. He is the originator of the inferiority complex and pessimism.

Remember you are what you think you are. When you have a low self-esteem you will never accomplish what you were created to do. Earthly accomplishments are futile when you approach life with a negative disposition. If you feel you cannot do something you have already set up enough roadblocks to guarantee failure. The apostle Paul had the perfect formula for success: **"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"** (Philippians 4:13).

There are six billion people on the earth now. God has made you one of a kind and that in itself makes you important. Once you get on this track you can never fail. **What greater peace of mind can you have than to know that the creator of his vast universe knows you personally?** Jesus said, **"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and loose his own soul."**

Just think! You are more valuable to God than the entire world and its accumulated wealth. Start now by making up your mind you are not going to degrade yourself as of no importance. To do this is to deny the truth God has revealed about you and your importance to Him. Shameful and hurt feelings need to be expressed in a healthy way. You need to talk them out with someone you feel comfortable with and can trust to keep everything in confidence. This of course is difficult for most of us to do.

We seem to think, **"If I were to tell you, you will be ashamed of me."** You may think I am bad and I don't want you to feel this way toward me. As a result we often hide our feelings. But you need to get them out in the open. It has been said that we only show our true self about 15 minutes a day, thus the rest of the time we are manifesting a false self. We begin to feel that this false self is our natural self.

We think that this is **"the way we should be."** It is actually a cover up.

Even though you may do a good job of acting out your shame and hurt you give yourself away when you hang your head, slump down, avoid eye contact or apologize for having needs or rights. Your shame will not go away until you learn what it is, express it and share it with a safe and supportive person. We cannot over stress how important this is. For the past two weeks you have been engaging in daily exercises of reading, meditating and praying - even singing. These exercises are designed to develop within you a feeling that God loves you. You were asked to visualize certain scriptures - to use your imagination and see yourself as the one addressed in the scriptures you read.

Continue to review these each week so that you are going to not only know them intellectually but feel them emotionally. It is recommended that you continue to re-enforce these feelings during the coming week by being as positive about yourself and others as you can. Make up your mind you are going to be kind to yourself. You are going to think of yourself the way that God thinks of you. Make these truths as vivid in your life as you possibly can. Following are some scriptures you can add to the ones you already have.

“When I consider Your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars, which You have ordained. What is man that you are mindful of him, and the Son of man that You visit him? For You have made him a little lower than the angels, and You have crowned him with glory and honor” (Psalm 8:3-5).

“I will praise You, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. How precious also are Your thoughts to me, O God! How great is the sum of them! If I should count them, they would be more in number than the sand. When I awake, I am still with you.” (Psalms 139:14, 17, 18).

Paul writing to Christians said, “Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God” (1 John 3:1).

Peter encourages all Christians to cast “all your care upon him: for he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).

No one has ever had more in his past to overcome than the apostle Paul. Steeped in the human traditions and the religion of the Pharisees, he became the greatest persecutor of Christians in his day. Then suddenly one day he came to the shocking realization that he had been wrong in his deep seated beliefs. Without hesitation he changed and became a Christian.

The terrible things he had done to Christians seemed to have haunted him later on. Certainly there had to be a great amount of shame over his past actions. However this was something that was in the past and he could not change what he had done. So he had to put everything in the past.

In **Philippians 3:12 - 14** he wrote the following. “Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”

Paul could have dwelt on the past. No doubt some of us could spend our entire time dwelling on the past if we have had a great amount of negative things to happen in the past. Paul chose the wise thing. Since he could not change the past he went forward to make the best of the present and the future.

There is a very beautiful song entitled “**Does Jesus Care.**” You may know it. If so sing it out aloud. If not read it. “Does Jesus care when my heart is pained too deeply for mirth or song. As the burdens press, and the cares distress and the way grows weary and long? O yes he cares, I know he cares, His heart is touched with my grief. When the days are weary, the long nights dreary, I know my Saviour cares.”

Now go to your Heavenly Father in prayer. Thank Him for creating you a person of great worth. Don’t ever let anyone take away this precious truth from you.

NOTES

Write down some things that have happened in the past that you feel may have caused you to feel of little worth. Since these are things you cannot do anything about now, draw a big X through them putting them to rest forever. Now write down what you consider to be your good points. Don’t allow yourself to be critical as you write. No more negative baggage about how awful or bad you imagine you are. From now on it’s what God thinks you are.

TRUST #4

On four different occasions Jesus said to his disciples, **“Oh you of little faith.”** These disciples had been with him almost every day over a long period of time. They had witnessed his miracles, heard him speak and listened when he prayed to the Father. Yet they had their moments of doubt. Even John the Baptist, one of the greatest men who has ever lived seemed to have had doubts while he was in prison (**Matthew 11:2-5**).

Jesus often marvelled at the lack of faith among his disciples. We too, like the disciples often have our doubts. Thus we constantly need to work on building up our faith and eliminating our doubts. It seems that our doubts have a way of taking over and controlling us at times. It isn't that we do not believe the Bible, Jesus or God. The problem is we just don't trust them enough.

We read the Bible believing it is God's word but end up saying, **“It's hard sometimes for me to believe that”** or **“It won't work for me.”** It seems we often pray without expecting an answer to our petitions. We often fail in some good work because we doubt it can be done. We have our failures, frustrations, discouragement and our faith always seems to suffer.

Oh for the ability to explicitly trust in the Lord, never doubting him for one moment. **Do you remember the story of Peter who wanted to walk on the Sea of Galilee to meet the Lord who was walking on the water (Matthew 14:25-31)?** He started out fine but as he took his eyes off Jesus and began to notice that the wind was stirring up the sea, fear overcame him and he started to sink. Peter cried out for help. He said, **“Lord, save me.”** How quickly doubt took over. Jesus reached out to him to pull him from the water and said, **“O you of little faith, why did you doubt?”**

We are so much like Peter. Because we do not start out with complete trust we end up in like Peter afraid and in complete doubt. Solomon has instructed us to, **“Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding” (Proverbs 3:5).**

“With all your heart” is the real key to a conquering faith. There are three stories in the New Testament that impress us about having faith. One is the Centurion in **Matthew 8:8-10**. This man is the last person on earth we would expect to find faith in. He was not a Jew. He was a Roman. A commander of Roman soldiers. Yet he explicitly trusted in Christ. He did not feel it was necessary for the Lord to be present to heal his servant. All the Lord had to do was just speak the word as far as he was concerned. Jesus commended this man's faith, saying, **“I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel.”**

Then there is the woman with an issue of blood mentioned in **Matthew 9:20-22**. There was no doubt in her mind that if she could just touch the Lord's garment she would be healed. She did not even speak to him asking for his healing power. She just wanted to touch him - that would be enough.

Last, there is the woman of **Matthew 15:22-28** who is an example of complete trust in the Lord. She made a request of the Lord and it appeared he would not grant it. However, she would not give up. There was absolutely no doubt in her mind that he could relieve her daughter of her suffering. Jesus granted her request. Her persistence impressed the Lord. He commended her faith. He said, **“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire.”**

The one element that seems to stand out in each of these examples is that there was never any doubt. They all had complete absolute trust in the Lord. It is doubt that weakens faith. Doubt is the great enemy of faith. Our faith will be in proportion to the amount of doubt we have.

Certainly no one has ever had perfect faith. Most of us are at times filled with some doubt. Yet we must determine which we are going to be ruled by. Satan is active and is determined to fill our minds with as many doubts as he can. He started doing this in the Garden of Eden and has continued to do so until now and will continue to cast doubt in our minds.

Notice the contrast the Lord makes between faith and doubt in **Matthew 21:20-22**. **“Now when the disciples saw it, they marveled, saying, “How did the fig tree wither away so soon?”** So Jesus answered and said to them, **“Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, ‘be removed and be cast into the sea’ it will be done. And all things, whatever you ask in prayer, believing you will receive.”**

Our success in spiritual matters depends upon our ability to eliminate doubt. Our ability to control doubt is the key to successful faith. Doubt always sends our faith spiralling downward. Doubt destroys and weakens faith. Don't allow doubts to rise and take over. Give yourself in complete, absolute trust to God and his will. Feed your faith and starve your doubts.

We can learn to **“walk by faith”** just as Abraham did. Faith, instead of doubt can become the ruling factor in our daily lives. Phillip's translation of **Hebrews 11:1** reads as follows. **“Now faith means putting our full confidence in the things we hope for; it means being certain of things we cannot see.”** Purposely start exercising your faith. Simply refuse to even think doubt. Practice overcoming doubt.

True, we live in a world that is filled with doubt, suspicion, frustration, fears and uncertainty. We are surrounded by negative thinking. However, we do not have to be a part of the doubting crowd. We can choose to be among those who explicitly trust.

Abraham of the Old Testament has been called the father of the faithful. He is set forth in the Bible as an example of faith - one that we should imitate. In other words Abraham is a model of faith. He is our example. He had tremendous faith and exercised it repeatedly throughout his lifetime.

In **Genesis 12** we learn that God called Abraham to leave his country and kindred and go to a strange land he had never seen before. He was given no explanation for this change in location. Abraham did not question God about the matter. He did not raise questions as to why God wanted him to move.

Later when he was called upon to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice he did not hesitate to obey God. He did not seek a reason for God's directions. We marvel at his absolute trust in God never questioning God's purpose or reason. Paul writes the following in **Romans 4:20, 21** about Abraham's faith. **“He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. And being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform.”**

Yet we know from reading about his life he had weak moments too, just like us. There were times when he had doubts and these doubts weakened his faith. This should encourage us. It makes us realize that none of us are perfect in our faith. Thus we should not feel guilt because doubts enter in and weaken our faith.

At the same time we realize that doubt can be minimized and that an active faith can be the ruling factor in our lives most of the time. For the most part doubt can be eliminated. Maybe not 100% but at least a major portion of it can be eliminated.

The apostle Paul says, **“We walk by faith and not by sight” (2 Corinthians 5:7)**. Herein lays to a great extent the problem of doubt. We are impressed with what we can see rather than what we cannot see. We see and feel many things that are negative and destructive, causing us to doubt.

For example you may be suffering from depression. You ask **how can I endure this any longer?** It's hard to pray, to read the Bible, to worship. **Why has this happened to me?** Etc. One thing that can help is that we can accept our suffering knowing that God deals with us as his children. What God may allow to happen to us (**not directly sent**) is for our good. He loves us enough to allow things to happen that will do us good. Even Jesus, God's only begotten Son, **“learned obedience by the things which He suffered” (Hebrews 5:8)**.

Suffering does not mean that God has ceased to care for us. It may be he is training us for something far greater than we can imagine. God has chosen not to remove pain from his people. If he did, we might serve him for the wrong reasons. Neither has he left us to fear that our suffering is useless.

Also, He has demonstrated through Jesus that we too can finish our course. There is a remarkable passage in **Hebrews 12:5, 6**. **“My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves, He chastens, and scourges every son whom he receives.”** This is a quotation from **Proverbs 3:11, 12**.

The writer seems to be saying that these Hebrew Christians should not have been surprised at what they had been suffering.

All the suffering allowed to come upon God's people has a benevolent purpose to strengthen and correct his people. The writer goes ahead to say they should consider hardships as God treating them as sons. In **verses 10** he refers to the correction fathers give to their children and then adds, **"For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.** In **verse 11** he says that later on **"it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who been trained by it."**

Chastisement may come in a verity of troubles and sorrows. Usually these are in the sense that God **allows** such things to befall his children. There is an eternal purpose of God in allowing hardships that we cannot always understand. We are assured however they are designed to test our hearts, correct us and strengthen us. They correct our faults, strengthen our faith and promote our eternal welfare.

It is not God's will that his children should have everything they desire in this life. Riches and luxuries may cause pride to flourish in our hearts; success in life's various projects may cause men to trust in themselves; and even true righteousness may lead to despising others. Trials have a way of bringing us down to reality and making us realize our need for God's strength.

Paul in **Romans 8:28** gives us something to think about when we have been subjected to any kind of suffering as a Christian. He says, **"And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose."** **The natural reaction to this is how could this work for my good? Why me? Why so much?**

We can never second guess God for his reasons. However, faith requires us to accept his chastening without resentment, realizing that he has something great in store for you. In **2 Corinthians 12:7-10** Paul discusses his sufferings and their effect on him. He says, **"And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure. Concerning this thing I pleaded with the Lord three times that it might depart from me. And He said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness."** Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."

The conclusion Paul reached was **"I accept this."** He considered it a blessing. He felt he gained strength because in his situation he had to totally depend on God. He could not trust in his own strength. He had to turn to God. **"It is good for me that I have been afflicted, that I may learn Your statutes"** (Psalm 119:71). Control is perhaps the most dominant issue in our lives.

We feel we must be in control but the more we try the more out of control we feel. We find out that life cannot always be controlled. There are so many things we cannot change, that are completely out of our hands. It does not matter who you know, what you know, how much money you have, or how intelligent you are, there are some things you cannot do anything about.

The way out is to surrender and allow God's will to prevail in our lives. One of the most powerful and healing acts is giving up our need to always be in control. Turn it over to God and let him take control. The bottom line is to just let go.

What about your physical and emotional problems? What can you do? You continue to strengthen your faith by reading and meditating on God's word. The passages assigned over the past three chapters as well as the ones in this chapter should be read and meditated on every day. Fix them firmly in your mind.

Also add: **Psalm 33:20-22**, **"Our soul waits for the Lord; He is our help and our shield. For our heart shall rejoice in Him, because we have trusted in His holy name. Let Your mercy, O Lord, be upon us, just as we hope in You."**

Psalm 56:3, 4, 11 **"Whenever I am afraid, I will trust in You. In God (I will praise His word). In God I have put my trust; I will not fear. What can flesh do to me?.....In God I have put my trust; I will not be afraid. What can man do to me?"**

"For we do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, of our trouble which came to us in Asia: that we were burdened beyond measure, above strength, so that we despaired even of life. Yes, we had the sentence of death in ourselves,

that we should not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and does deliver us; in whom we trust that He will still deliver us, you also helping together in prayer for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for the gift granted to us through many.” (2 Corinthians 1:8-11).

Remember that Jesus travelled the way you are traveling. He too experienced the same kinds of emotional pain you are experiencing. He demonstrated that it is possible to overcome. We must keep our eyes on Jesus. He is our example. You can be victorious.

Not only read these scriptures but do a lot of meditating on them. Then go to God in prayer and let him know about your pain. Ask him to give you the strength to bear up under your pain, to give you victory over your hurting. Remember that **“Likewise the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered”** (Romans 8:26).

Begin now and make a fresh start with your faith. Start feeding your faith and at the same time start starving your doubts. Jesus told Thomas, **“Be not faithless, but believing.”** It seems like Thomas needed to start all over with his faith. We do too sometimes. Don’t forget your prayer time. Put your faith to work in prayer letting God know you depend and lean on him for the strength to get you through the trials of life.

NOTES

Write down the doubts you are going to start starving. Next write out a plan that will get you working toward feeding your faith, so that it will grow and grow.

FEAR #5

In these first four chapters you have been dealing with positive subjects which can result in bringing good emotions and feelings. Armed with these feelings you can conquer the negative emotions that fill your life. In the next few chapters you are going to be dealing with many of the things that cause emotional pain in your life. You will explore them as to their origin and how you can overcome them so that you can have the abundant life that Christ has promised.

Volumes could be written about the things men have feared. While some fear is good for you yet inordinate (**excessive**) fears can be very disabling and can cause much unhappiness. It seems we are living in an **“Age of Fear.”** Science has worked hard to conquer certain things which have brought fear to the hearts of men over the ages.

However, it seems that as science conquers one fear it invents a new one. Very few of us go through life without struggling with some fears. It is often a very painful experience and robs us of happiness and peace of mind. **Where does fear come from? First**, it is well to recognize that a certain amount of fear is good for you.

God has put within us a capacity for fear so that you respond properly to threatening situations as a means of keeping you from being harmed. **But what about those abnormal fears that disturb and upset your peace of mind?** Fear is learned! Often parents tell children scary stories to manipulate them into some kind of behaviour pattern they desire them to have. Not too many years ago it was common to hear parents tell their children **“the booger man will get you if you do that.”**

If you grew up in a family situation where there was constant fear and very little feeling of security then this insecurity was probably passed on to you. Because of the example set before you, you grew up learning to feel afraid and insecure. But what can be learned can be unlearned although it is difficult to unlearn something that has become a habit. In other words fear becomes a habit and habits are hard to break.

One of the great blessings of Christianity is that it can remove inordinate fears from your life. Paul writes: **“For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind”** (2 Timothy 1:7). Notice the apostle gives three things that make it possible for us to overcome our fears. **First**, God gives us **power**.

This is the strength that Paul speaks of in **Philippians 4:13** where he writes: **“I can do all things through Christ, which strengthens me.”** Paul gives us an example of how he received strength when he faced threatening situations. **“But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that the message might be preached fully through me, and that all the Gentiles might hear, and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion”** (2 Timothy 4:17).

Paul did not feel alone. He knew the Lord was there with him to encourage, bless, comfort and strengthen him. The final words of Jesus to his disciples before ascending into heaven were, **“I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:20)**. While you may already know this it still goes back to our previous lesson. You must trust in God with all your heart. Never doubt for one moment that God is with you and will never desert you for one moment.

Second, we are provided with Love. **“Perfect (mature) love casts out fear” (1 John 4:18)**. Surrounded with the knowledge that God loves and cares very much for you makes fear vanish. You may recall that in the first chapter we discussed feelings. You can know something intellectually but it is far more important to really feel what you know.

This is why we have emphasized the need for reading over and over again these scriptures and meditating upon them so that you not only know what they say but you also begin to feel what they say. You need to feel God’s love for you. Surrounded with the knowledge that God loves and cares very much for you makes fear vanish. Paul writes, **“And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God” (Romans 8:28)**.

Third, Paul says that God gives us a sound mind. Here we have one of those Greek words that is difficult to give a direct translation. It means self control in the face of panic. The Christian learns to control himself in the face of danger.

This is what Moses told Israel at the Red Sea when they were about to panic as they saw the Egyptian army following them and no place to flee as the Red Sea was before them. Moses told them, **“Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today.”**

We are not implying you will never have fear. You will because fear is a natural emotion. However, God provides you with the power to deal with your fears and most of the time they will only be a temporary experience. This does not mean that you can engage in reckless abandon disregarding dangers. It simply means that fears do not have to control your life so that you are unproductive and your peace of mind is destroyed.

In **Philippians 4:7** Paul speaks of a peace of mind which **“surpasses all understanding.”** Fear is an enemy of peace of mind. It can completely destroy it. But thanks be to God he makes it possible for you to deal with fear. Many times the disciples of the Lord would become afraid. Jesus would often respond by saying, **“be not afraid.”** He says the same thing to you today. **Do you believe this? Can you actually feel this way?**

The **eighth chapter of Romans** is filled with passages that will give you assurance and confidence. Let us notice just a few of them.

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (v. 1).

“For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace” (v. 6).

“But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you” (v. 11).

“What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us who can be against us?” (v. 31).

“Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?.....Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us” (vv. 35, 37).

When these passages are carefully read and meditated upon they will instil within you courage and peace of mind. The more you allow them to become a part of your thinking, the more fear will dissipate from your life. **What are your fears?** Some common fears are about health (**sickness**), failure, rejection by others, people (**inferiority complex**), growing old, death and various phobias, etc. Over the next seven days you need to concentrate on eliminating any inordinate fears from your life by letting the word of God drive fear from your heart.

As in the previous mental exercises this will require that you find a quiet place where you will be free from distractions or interruptions. We recommend the following three steps.

First, read slowly and carefully the following two passages. “God hath not given us the spirits of fear but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanks giving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6, 7).

Second, pray to your Father thanking him for providing you the means of overcoming your fears. Tell him you are going to let him help you overcome. Tell him you believe his word and that you want to be victorious over your fears but need his strength. Tell him specifically what it is you fear and then ask him to help you overcome your fears.

Third, select a fear or phobia that really gives you trouble. Keeping this fear in mind get into a comfortable position. Takes some deep breaths inhaling and exhaling slowly. Relax every muscle in your body. When relaxed close your eyes and visualize your worse fear. See yourself in complete control knowing that God loves you and is with you.

Review in your mind the many scriptures you have read in this lesson including those you have previously read in other chapters which are applicable. Do a lot of meditating on these scriptures. Apply them to your worst fears. Using this kind of daily meditation along with God’s word and prayer, you can begin to over-come your fears.

Get rid of the debilitating habit of fear and replace it with the feeling of God’s protection - “I am with you always, even unto the end of the age.” At the same time remember that, “The fear (respect) of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge” (Proverbs 1:7), thus, “The angel of the Lord encamps all around those who fear him, and delivers them” (Psalm 34:7).

“If I say, “My foot slips,” Your mercy, O Lord, will hold me up. In the multitude of my anxieties within me, Your comforts delight my soul” (Psalm 94:18-19). “Be still, (cease striving,) and know that I am God” (Psalm 46:10).

Just remember who our God is. He can deliver us. The children of Israel reached the Red Sea the Egyptian army was behind them. They were ready to panic. Moses speaks. Again listen to what he told them. “Do not be afraid. Stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will accomplish for you today.....The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace” (Exodus 14:12, 14).

You know the rest of the story. Moses extended his rod over the sea and the sea was parted so the people could pass over to the other side. As the Egyptian army tried to follow they were swallowed up by the sea. What a wonderful story of God’s protection, care and concern for His people. **Does he not still watch over us today?** While the days of miracles has ceased His providence still presides over his people.

NOTES

Write out the things you fear the most and then write out what steps you are going to take to rid yourself of them.

REJECTION #6

One of the most devastating things you can experience is to be rejected. **Did you ever experience rejection as a child growing up?** It can be a very brutal experience. Very few survive without suffering a great amount of emotional pain - sometimes for a lifetime. We live in a very hostile environment that includes a great amount of rejection. It happens every day and comes from many sources. It can be very subtle or very open and aggressive.

In a dysfunctional home rejection is very common. When a child comes into the world he or she can almost immediately sense acceptance or rejection. A mother or father by just their facial expressions often convey acceptance or rejection. Even the tone of voice will do this. Screaming at a child says, “I reject you.” Punishment often shows rejection rather than correction. Ignoring a child is another form of rejection. Sadly thousands of children are abandoned every year.

Following are some common statements of rejection often heard by children.

“I can’t stand you. Go away, leave me alone.”

“You are driving me crazy.”

“If you do that one more time I’ll scream.”

“I wish you had never been born.”

“We really wanted a boy but we got her.”

“You are always causing us trouble.”

“See what you caused.”

“You’re just one more mouth to feed.”

“You’ll never amount to anything.”

To a small child such experiences described above translate into the feeling, **“I am not worth anything. I only cause trouble and hurt others. I’m a burden to my parents. I’m not likable. I must be an awful person. Nobody can like me.”** Such rejection can devastate a child for life. Not all rejection comes from the home. Many times the source is from outside the home. A teacher can show rejection toward a student in the class room. Sometimes it may be very subtle on his or her part. A child’s peers, even his friends can be very cruel. Children can ostracize another child in the classroom and in the neighbourhood.

Often rejection comes later in life. Divorce is nothing more than rejection. It is a terrible blow to one’s ego to be divorced. Divorce says, **“You are not good enough for me.”** A person’s dignity and worth is suddenly lost. Divorce recovery is difficult. The grieving process may take some time before one can recover from the pain.

In a marriage one or both of the mates can be very abusive in a verbal or physical way. After so long this will translate into a feeling of worthlessness and low self esteem. This can happen in your work place where persons above you or even those who work beside you can make such remarks that will lower your self-esteem.

POST TRAUMA EFFECTS

1. Rejection destroys self-esteem. The child will not feel his or her worth.
2. Rejection causes a deep hurt and hostility toward others. A child feeling threatened sometimes strikes back or else acts out a form of hostility.
3. Suspicion is another fruit of rejection. A child will be suspect of good things. It is difficult for a rejected child to accept love and to share love with others. He is afraid he might be rejected and hurt all over again. He never feels he is worthy of complements.
4. Fear of abandonment. This goes back to early childhood. When rejection is experienced children counter this fear with mistrust and shut down their feelings so they will not feel the hurt. Another way of handling this is not to get too close to people by abandoning them before they can be abandon again. There is a tendency toward self isolation. Feeling unwanted a child will withdraw from others to keep from being rejected and hurt again.
5. It is often hard to trust God **(as in prayer)** because as a child you could not trust anyone else. **Why would God love and help me if I am not worthy of love?**
6. Such abused people have a tremendous feeling of shame. Feeling they have failed to be what they should have been, they feel guilty of not being someone of value.

A destructive process is now in progress. There is a law of physics that says, **“A body in motion continues to remain in motion unless acted upon by an outside force.”** This law applies to human behaviour. A personality in the process of deterioration tends to continue in that process unless acted upon by an outside force. Forces of deterioration inherent in seeing ourselves as **“bad”** have been at work and will continue an ongoing degenerative process unless acted upon to force a halt. So much of what we are is rooted in the early developmental years of our lives. But we can be delivered from the scars, damages and lies of the past. God’s re-programming grace can dissolve the compulsions of our wrongly computerized past.

HOW THEN DO YOU OVERCOME THESE FEELINGS OF REJECTION?

First, recognize the source. Parents who will abuse a child in this way are messed up in their own emotional system. They were probably abused in the same way you have been. It is obvious they have an emotional problem which they have passed on to you.

As painful as it may be, get in touch with those feelings of rejection and recognize they have come from someone with emotional problems. Realize there is no factual basis for anything they said or did that proves you should have been rejected.

Second, reject the rejection. **Why?** Because what your parents said or did is not true of you. **Genesis 1:26, 27** reads “Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our Likeness;So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Now just think about it. You were created in the image of God. That means you are a person of great value. According to **Psalms 8:5** we were all made “a little lower than the angels.” You are so important that God allowed his son to die on the cross for you. “**For God so loved the world, that He gave his only begotten Son**” (**John 3:16**). This means you are of tremendous value. Instead of accepting your parent’s value system accept God’s evaluation of your worth. Discover how important you really are.

Third, you can partake of the divine nature of God according to **2 Peter 1:4**. “**By which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature.**” In other words you can be like him. This is not for just a few people but for anyone who wants to partake of that divine nature. John writing to Christians said, “**Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!**” (**1 John 3:1, 2**).

While your parents may have rejected you God will never reject you. Jesus said, “**Come to Me, all you who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.**” (**Matthew 11:28-30**).

The writer of **Hebrews** said, “**For He Himself has said, “I will never leave you nor forsake you.” So we may boldly say: “The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?”**” (**Hebrews 13:5, 6**).

He gladly receives those who are willing to come to him. Furthermore you can have many Christian brothers and sisters who will love you as you are and will not reject you. During the coming week read this chapter over once each day. Review the scriptures you have been meditating on for the past five weeks. Meditate on them word by word. David said, “**Your servant meditates on Your statutes. Your testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.**” (**Psalms 119:23, 24**).

Meditation is a major key to overcoming emotional pain in your life. In meditation you are reinforcing your attempt to replace old false negative concepts with new positive healthy emotions. Consider how these truths of God’s word contradict the false concepts that you are of no value. Don’t allow yourself henceforth to ever think of yourself as of no value or importance.

God considers you a person of great worth. If such false thoughts enter your mind then recall these great scriptures which contradict your negative thoughts. Now spend some time in prayer thanking God for making you in his own image and making you a little lower than the angels. “**To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He has made us accepted in the beloved**” (**Ephesians 1:6**).

At this stage of your studies it would be well if you would begin to find someone (**a good friend if possible**) that you can share your feelings with. Most of us do not want to let others know about our inner secrets and feelings. Yet to be able to verbalize them to someone else is very important.

If you can’t feel comfortable speaking to a close friend then find someone else you can talk with. Of course you want someone you know you can trust, who will keep confidential what you talk about. Talking it out to someone else is a great healer. So start thinking. **Who can you share your emotional pain with?**

When deep negative emotions have been repressed inside a person for years they remind us of steam in a boiler with no outlet. In time the boiler will blow up. This is what happens to bad negative feelings that are stuffed and never vented. In time they catch up with you and blow up resulting in depression, low self esteem, insecurity, false guilt, etc., etc.

Verbalizing them to someone is like letting highly compressed steam escape from a boiler. Once you can begin to verbalize your inner emotions you will be surprised how much relief you will experience. At first it is always difficult to do this but once you get started you will find it much easier to do the more you do it the more relief you will begin to experience. Verbalization is a great healer. Don’t be afraid to use it.

NOTES

Write down and list incidents you may recall that were very hurtful to you and who it was that was responsible. Go back in time as far as you can. Then write out how you reacted to your hurtful experiences.

When you have completed writing down this information you then need to verbalize it to someone (**a friend, confidant, counsellor, etc.**). You probably have stuffed some of these things for years. Verbalizing can bring relief. Get them out in the open.

WORRY #7

Worry is something that very few of us escape. With some worry may be mild and short lived. With others worry is an unceasing everyday way of life that consumes their energy and time. Worry can be very overpowering and a very painful experience.

It might surprise you to know that most of us worry because we have been trained to worry. Not that someone deliberately taught us to worry. We learn worry by observing others who worry. If our parents were people who worried then in all likelihood we will worry too. Worry is actually a habit – a learned habit. While we were learning how to worry we were never taught how to rid ourselves of worry.

How do we overcome worry? Any habit is difficult to overcome but it can be done if we are willing to put forth the effort. If a Christian says, **“I can’t help it”** he is really saying, **“I don’t won’t to do anything about worry.”** This simply means he is unwilling to put forth the effort to overcome his habit. Worry like any other habit can be altered by the will. God’s word can help us here. By substituting God’s will for our will we can overcome worry. Like so many of the negative emotions we have already studied, worry is a choice. You can choose a better way - God’s way.

Listen to the apostle Paul. **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6, 7).** These two verses alone are really all you need to overcome worry. They teach several things.

First, a Christian is commanded not to worry. God does not want his children to worry. As his child He wants you to be a joyful and happy.

Second, we are to let God know about our problems and cares. Peter instructs us; **“Casting all your care upon Him, for he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7).** God cares so much that he says you can turn the cares and worries of life over to him and he will take care of them for you. **What more can you ask for than this?**

Third, having turned the matter over to God we can have peace of mind. Your worry is lifted from you and placed in the hands of God who is in complete control. This is most assuring and can provide you with peace of mind.

Overcoming the habit of worry then is a matter of will power - that you will no longer worry because you have One you can turn everything over to, Your Father in heaven loves you very much and He has assured you that **“all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.....What shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?.....For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:28, 31, 38, 39).**

Can you believe these verses? Will you believe them? This is the whole issue - letting God take over and be in control. It may not come easy at first but each time you are tempted to worry you can recall these scriptures and learn to replace your old habit of worry with a new habit of turning things over to God in complete trust and complete confidence in God.

Here are some further suggestions that can help you overcome worry. Before beginning to worry analyse the situation you are worried about. **Is it really worth worrying over?** Many times you may worry over minor things which really have no effect on your happiness or future.

A study made of human worries concluded that 40% of them will never happen, 30% are concerned with how other people feel about us (their criticism of us), 12% involved old decisions which cannot be changed and 10% are related to health problems which may or may not exist. Someone has observed: **“Worrying really works! I’ve noticed that the things I worry the most about never came to pass.”**

Jesus said that worry will not make one hair black or white. When you analyse the things you are worried over you will find that in most cases it is wasted energy and time. Obviously worry does not help solve most of your problems thus it is really useless.

Another suggestion which can be helpful is to limit the amount of time you spend each day in worrying. Many individuals who worry so much will set aside a definite period of time (15 minutes) each day to worry about their problems. Then anytime during the day when the problem crosses your mind you can say to yourself, **“I can’t think about this issue right now. I will consider it at the next designated 15 minute period that I have set aside to worry.”**

Also one way of dealing with a problem that causes you worry is acceptance. In fact acceptance may be the best answer. If action and prayer cannot change what you are worried about then acceptance may be the solution.

There are some things you simply cannot change therefore you have to accept the situation. We all have our limitations. Acceptance often hurts and is hard but the sooner you can do this the sooner your worries will begin to vanish.

In the garden the night before his trial and crucifixion the Lord prayed to the Father to remove his approaching sufferings. But then he added: **“O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from Me, unless I drink it, Your will be done”** (Matthew 26:42). Even though it was not possible for him to be relieved of his sufferings we are told in Luke 22:43 **“Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him.”**

You too can receive strength from the Lord in bearing heavy burdens. The apostle Paul had some sort of physical affliction and prayed to God three times that it might be removed. God responded by saying, **“My grace is sufficient for thee.”**

Paul’s response was **“Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong”** (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10).

It would be helpful if you could remember that 98% of the things you worry about will never happen. Don’t waste time and energy worrying over that possible 2% chance! Jesus said, **“Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble”** (Matthew 6:34). Learn to take it one day at a time.

According to one study a large percentage of our anxieties relate to material things. In his sermon on the mount in Matthew 6:25-33 Jesus says you are not to worry over material things. He further promises that if you will put the kingdom first, all these **“things”** will be given to us. Paul said, **“I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, to be content”** (Philippians 4:11).

If you can learn contentment you can eliminate many of your worries. Also, you have the assurance of the Lord that your material necessities will be supplied. You may not have all the luxuries that others have but you will have a sufficient amount to sustain your life.

If you allow yourself to be worried over whether or not you will have certain luxuries then you are placing emphasis on the wrong things. Worrying about material things is completely out of place. Earlier in this chapter we looked at Philippians 4:6. **“By prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”** Did you notice the word **“thanksgiving”**? No doubt many of our worries would melt away if we had more of the spirit of thanksgiving. A thankful heart is so filled with an awareness of God’s goodness that it finds little to worry about.

We have so many blessings to count that there are very few negative things to occupy our minds with. Every Christian is a very rich person. He has access to all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus. If you are caught up in these spiritual blessings you have little time to contemplate the negative and thus have very little to worry about.

As a rule children do not worry. If they do it is usually momentarily. Once they are assured by their parents, their concerns vanish away. Jesus said, **“Unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 18:3).

The word **“convert”** means to change. When we become Christians our entire outlook on life should be changed. We all need to become like little children and quit worrying. Trust in your heavenly Father and let your worries vanish. Your mental exercise for this week calls for you to read this chapter once each day meditating on all the scriptures. Determine you are not going to worry. When you pray to your Father ask him to help you overcome worry. Begin turning everything over to Him.

Have you given serious thought as to someone you can talk out your feelings with as suggested in the last chapter?

By now you should have the name of someone you can approach about this. It may be you can find someone who has also had emotional pain. This person knows what it is like and can understand your feelings better than someone who has not had to deal with emotional trauma and pain. Think about it and begin making plans to approach that certain person you will feel free to talk with.

NOTES

The following questions may help you cope with your worry. Write down the answers to each one.

1. Ask yourself what the problems are?
2. What is the cause of the problem?
3. What are the possible solutions to your problems?
4. Which solutions do I accept?
5. When and how do I plan to put my solution into action?

ANGER #8

Anger is a natural emotion we were born with. We began to express it as early as infancy. Anything that frustrates or irritates us will usually provoke the emotion of anger. Generally speaking anger has been considered as something bad and should not be expressed. The truth is, anger is a natural emotion and it is right to express it provided we keep it under proper control.

In **Ephesians 4:26** Paul commands **“Be angry, and do not sin”: do not let the sun go down upon your wrath.** Even Jesus expressed anger. The important thing about anger is that we express it in such a way that we **“do not sin.”** You can verbalize your anger without losing control, saying or doing something inappropriate. Also, anger should not be allowed to be retained for a long period of time.

If your family rules said it was wrong to express anger, that you would be punished if you did, then you may have learned faulty ways of handling anger. You probably ended up doing one of two things. Either you **repressed** or **suppressed** it. If you repress anger you stuff it and refuse to feel it. If you suppress anger you feel it but never express it. Either of these can produce problems in later years. While it may be temporarily blocked out of the memory it remains very active within the subconscious causing pain, especially in adult years.

Many studies have been made of the ill effects of anger and hate upon the human body. It has been found to be very destructive to the body. Blood pressure may rise to a dangerous point. The heart is effected which in turn effects various physiological functions. The nervous system is also affected. One psychologist has gone so far as to say that pent up anger causes more deaths than any other cause.

This is because of the harmful effects anger and hate has on the vital organs of the body. Anger which is improperly handled often leads to depression. As stress builds it results in anxiety that is not dealt with. Biochemical changes then begin to take place in the brain which can lower vital chemical that serve as neurotransmitters in the brain. As it decreases depression can result. It is a known fact that depression has its roots in anger and chemical imbalances in the brain.

Anger is experienced in endless ways. Children often experience anger against a loved one who dies. They feel deserted. Since it is unacceptable to express anger toward one you loved who is now dead, anger is then turned on self and some year's later depression may be the result. This also happens to children in a divorced home.

Many children blame themselves for the divorce, suppress their anger and then later it will come out in something to cover the pain such as an addiction.

Divorced people also can internalize anger. They often feel rejected thus a blow has been delivered to their self image. The anger is repressed and sometimes comes out as rage over various things or people. Perfectionists or legalist are very hard on themselves. They become very critical and negative about themselves. They are likely to have false guilt over not being able to do more or be perfect. Thus they turn on themselves.

Professional people also follow in this pattern. All of these are easy victims for emotional disorders. It is not uncommon for a woman to become severely depressed after the birth of her baby. She has repressed her mixed feelings about having the baby.

If these feelings about having the baby are unacceptable to the mother she internalizes her anger and becomes depressed. This can easily happen after a second or third child especially when the child was not wanted. Couples who constantly quarrel using verbal abuse, one or both are likely to internalize their anger.

At this point we need to give some attention to spiritual abuse. This is something that can be found among Christians. Parents sometime will use God as a way to frighten and threaten their children. They may say something like, “**God doesn’t like you when you do that.**” Or they might say, “**God will punish you if you are a bad boy.**”

Parents may infer that a child is having problems because he or she is not right with God. The result is that God becomes a symbol of punishment to a child. The implication is that God is harsh, punitive and critical. Fear of God’s punishment causes a Child to be fearful of God. This sort of abuse can be detrimental to a child’s spiritual development.

It will produce an internalized anger either against the parents or even God, sometimes both. Children should see in their parent’s persons who rely on a God who is a loving Father and cares deeply about His children. They should see in parents that God is one whom you can talk to at anytime through prayer and that he wants us to communicate with him. They must also see that God is a forgiving God.

Setting rules that are difficult to follow is abuse. A functional family provides rules that are clear and are possible to follow. Children should see that their parents not only require certain rules of their children but observe them themselves. These rules eventually become the foundation of a child’s value system.

A dysfunctional family provides children with no rules or such vague and contradictory rules that life is chaotic. Often no attempt is made to follow the rules. “**Do as I say and not as I do.**” With such vague kind of rules children are continually trying to achieve something that cannot be achieved thus constantly failing and getting shamed. They come to believe God expects them to live up to rules they can never follow thus they are not good enough for God to love them.

Demanding perfection is another abuse. To teach children that being perfect is normal is dysfunctional. In a family where perfection is expected children learn to lie (**to avoid the pain of shame**) or to repress the fact they are imperfect. Also, expecting children to be adult like is dysfunctional because their nature is childlike. This very likely will lead to internalized anger.

Any serious abuse such as physical, sexual, screaming, ridiculing, abandoning will taint a child’s trust in God. A child will wonder why a loving God would allow them to suffer such abuse. This can result in anger toward God. It will be difficult for a child to grasp the concept of a loving God who wants to be lovingly involved in a child’s life. It may be possible that sometime in the past you have been subjected to some kind of abuse. If so you need to use the coming week in a productive way to overcome your internalized anger. Get in touch with the past when you had anger.

Did you repress, suppress, vent it appropriately or inappropriately? What are your feelings now from your past anger?
As you begin to discover the sources of your anger write down your feelings.

Focus on four things:

- (1) what happened,
- (2) how you felt about it,

(3) how it has impacted your life,

(4) what you choose to do about it now. You will be surprised that as you begin to externalize your anger you will begin to find relief from your emotional pain. If the person(s) are living who caused your anger it is sometimes appropriate to tell them how their abuse has caused you such deep pain.

However this may not always be possible or wise due to circumstances, but verbalizing your anger can be a great healer of your emotional pain. In uncovering the source of your emotional pain you are not blaming father, mother or anyone else for everything. You are simply identifying the source of your pain and why you have it.

The reason we try to discover origin of damages in the past is not to blame someone else. Rather, it is to clarify our insights and outline the real issues, so that we can direct our prayers and efforts in the right directions. At this point it is very important for you to see the importance of forgiving the one(s) who have caused your pain. Forgiving is a choice. It may take some time to work through the emotions that are involved. To forgive is not to charge the offense to someone's account.

You can forgive even if someone does not deserve to be forgiven. You need to forgive for your own personal well being if for no other reason. This may seem difficult or even impossible but it is better than suffering the agony of deep emotional pain such as depression. The pain will not go away until you are willing to forgive. It may help to keep in mind that the one who caused the abuse may have come from a dysfunctional home where he or she experienced abuse.

Thus they have passed on to you how they were treated. They are to be pitied. Spend much time in prayer. Ask God to help you to forgive. He will. Now read the following scriptures and meditate on them for several days.

“And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.....For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:12, 14, 15).

“Then Peter came to Him and said, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive Him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven” (18:21, 22).

“And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:25, 26).

“Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned, Forgive, and you will be forgiven” (Luke 6:36, 37).

“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32).

“Therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another, even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do” (Colossians 3:12, 13).

The above are all hard sayings but the sooner you can make them a part of your mind set, the sooner you will get rid of your emotional pain -- even such physical afflictions as described in paragraph three of this lesson. You need to verbalize your anger. You can verbalize your anger out loud to yourself, you can write it out if you want to, but these are not near as effective as verbalizing them to someone else. You probably have stuffed your anger for years without knowing it. It needs to come out. Not in a violent way but expressed in a plain, straightforward, truthful way.

It may be you want to do this to the person (source) of your anger as already suggested. This requires a lot of courage. It may not be possible for you to do this at this time. But you can express it to someone else - that special person you have in mind that you can open up to that can trust to keep everything confidential.

NOTES

Now is a good time to write down your feelings of anger. Make the words just as strong as you feel.

It would be good to verbalize these to that good friend you have picked out to talk with. Remember, **“A friend loves at all times” (Proverbs 17:17).**

FORGIVENESS #9

This week’s lesson will be a continuation of the last lesson. We were dealing with the very destructive emotion of anger. In this lesson we want to cover some areas we did not cover in the last lesson. To begin with let’s consider some additional sources which can bring us emotional pain.

EXAMPLES

1. There are Judas’s who pretend to be your friend, but when they turn their backs they will sell out for minor considerations. This can hurt deeply. Think how Jesus must have felt when Judas betrayed him. Here was a man who had been with the Lord for over three years. One of the select twelve. He was trusted with keeping the expense money for their trips. Now he betrays the Lord. It must have hurt deeply. After all Jesus had emotions and feelings just like we do. **What do you do with a person like this?**

Sometimes there is very little you can do. The main thing to remember is that this person has a real problem. He is really to be pitied. People like this need to be rescued from themselves even though what they have done hurts deeply.

2. There are unfaithful friends who will desert you at a critical time. The disciples forsook Jesus and fled at his trial but he saw them after the resurrection and dealt kindly with them. You know it hurt deeply to see them run away. They were very weak, much weaker than they realized. They needed help and Jesus was able to restore them. We see them later on as much stronger men willing to suffer for the Lord. Jesus’ patience with them paid off.

3. There are those who like Peter are too weak to acknowledge you. Peter denied the Lord. He said, **“I know not this man.”** After Jesus was raised he sought out Peter and restored him. Often friends are loyal under fair skies but will deny you in the hour of trial.

It seems from the many examples we have of Jesus in the Gospels he was more willing to forgive and to forget than to condemn. He was not cruel, harsh, stern, exacting, unrelenting in his dealings with sinful man. If you and I are to follow Jesus we too must be forgiving toward others. This does not mean you deny the pain. Sure it hurts. But seek them out, don’t hate them.

Try to restore your friendship. Don’t take their actions so much as an affront toward you but see that the real problem is with them and not with you. Actually they need help. Try to restore your friendship.

4. Then there are those like Pilate who are too cowardly to defend your innocence. This always hurts. However Jesus did not deal harshly with the Governor. He knew Pilate for what he was and that under the circumstances Pilate acted like a typical politician in that day. He knew Pilate was a crowd pleaser who had no real convictions. Pilate was to be pitied not hated.

5. Also there are those who like the executioners who will nail you to a cross of shame. There is always someone who may smear your good name. It hurts. You don’t deserve this. **Why would they do such a thing? What good can it do them?** Some people are just hard to figure out. The kind of person who would do this has a real problem as the other types we have discussed. Again he is to be pitied.

You will help him if you can. Jesus set an example for us. He prayed, **“Father forgive them; for they know not what they do” (Luke 23:34).** When Jesus uttered this cry his hands and feet were fastened to the cross by large Roman nails driven by the very ones for whom he prayed. They also placed a crown of thorns upon his head, lashed his body with a whip and laughingly mocked him.

Isn’t it amazing that his first words are not in complaint, nor a plea of his innocence nor even a cry for vengeance? Instead it was a prayer for their forgiveness. The verb is imperfect, thus literally, **“he kept on saying, Father forgive them, they know not what they do.”** We are left with the impression that with each indignity the Lord repeated his prayer on behalf of his tormentors. Surely I can bring myself to forgive things of a lesser nature if my Lord could forgive his executioners.

6. There are those who have fallen into some immorality. This not only hurts but disappoints us. But don't be indignant thinking you would never do such a shameful thing. We are all capable of doing immoral things. Have a forgiving spirit. Go to the person and encourage him to leave his sin. Jesus ate with sinners and as a result many followed him into his kingdom.

One of the most difficult scriptures in the Bible for Christians to obey is found in **Matthew 5:44**. It says, **“But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”** The reason this passage is so difficult to obey is because it is very difficult for many of us to forgive.

The natural tendency is to get back at the person who has injured you. Even when we say we forgive many times we are not willing to forget and thus we harbour ill feelings inside of us for years. This is wrong and we only hurt ourselves. Seemingly the only motive for retaining anger is the motive of vengeance. Obviously this is a very vain motive. The Bible gives us some good advice about vengeance.

“If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink; for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:18-21).

We must leave all vengeance to God. It is his prerogative not ours. We need to stay out of God's business. It is unfortunate that we humans spend so much of our time trying to play God in various ways. An unforgiving spirit makes us unlovely and leads to a spirit of bitterness, resentment and anger. They don't usually stay hidden. They boil over at times and tend to ruin our disposition. It robs us of peace of mind.

Even a small hurt, left un-forgiven can develop into a terrible spiritual cancer eating away at us until our lives are bitter and ruined. The unwillingness to forgive poisons memories, strains relationships with others, even blocks our communication with God. On the other hand forgiveness indicates the touch and reign of Jesus in our hearts. It sets Christianity apart from the rest of the world's religions.

Just stop and think for a moment. There is really nothing you can ever do which would enable you to pay back the debt which you owe for God's Son dying on the cross for your sins. God could in perfect justice strike every person dead and condemn us to an eternal hell for all our sins. It is only because he is merciful, loving and longsuffering that he forgives.

Read **John 3:16** and as you read meditate on the force of what it is saying to you. **“For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten son.”** God loved a sinful and destitute world so much that he let His Son bear our guilt and pay for our debt, although we are the ones who should have hung on that cross. **Surely if God could be so forgiving of so much we can forgive things that are small in comparison to what God has had to forgive us of?**

Many will say that you cannot forgive another person until he first repents and asks you for forgiveness. This argument will not hold up. When the Lord prayed, **“Father forgive them for they know not what they do”** they had not yet repented. It is evident that Christ in his human state forgave even though they did not deserve forgiveness. God may not choose to forgive until there is repentance but that is God's business.

We are to forgive, even pray for our enemies. Consider how our Lord treated Peter. There is no indication that Peter sought out the Lord to ask for forgiveness yet Christ was forgiving and dealt very gently with his sin. **Have you ever had anyone who has done you a wrong come to you asking for forgiveness?** It probably would be a rare situation with most of us.

How many times have our children wronged us but never repented or asked forgiveness? Did we refuse to forgive them? How many times have we wronged others but never confessed our wrong and asked for forgiveness? Human pride is overpoweringly strong. It is hard to face up to all our faults.

We want others to be forgiving toward us even if we have not asked for it. We should be willing to do the same for them. We must forgive even if the one being forgiven does not deserve it. **“And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you”** (Ephesians 4:32).

Now do some serious meditating on the verses in this lesson for a while. **“Till I come, give attendance to reading.....Meditate upon these things; give thyself wholly to them; that thy profiting may appear to all”** (1 Timothy 4:13, 15).

In your prayer time ask God to help you to be forgiving. He will. By now we assume you are doing some talking with someone as suggested in the previous chapters. It is very important that you do this. Don't put it off any longer. **“There is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother”** (Proverbs 18:24).

NOTES

Write down now any grudges old or new you may have and have failed to work through them with prayer and forgiveness. After writing them down begin to mark them off one by one as you free yourself from the unnecessary emotion pain they have caused you.

GUILT #10

Closely associated with the emotional pain of anger is the pain of guilt. The feeling of guilt can be very beneficial as a deterrent to sin. However an overworked or unrealistic guilt can be very harmful. In fact it can be devastating. It is said that guilt is at the bottom of every unresolved emotional problem.

When we violate our internal code of life we can become haunted, weakened, angered, depressed, sickened and finally destroyed by it. In a dysfunctional home a child from birth until grown will record thousands of negative messages in his or her subconscious mind. Rarely do they receive commendation and approval. Even friends can be cruel. Children give labels such as **“shorty”, “fatso”,** etc. They often ostracize another child.

All these experiences translate into a feeling, **“I'm inferior, I can't do anything right, I am not what I ought to be.”** Children often feel guilt when parents die or when a divorce takes place. **“If it were not for me this would not have happened. So I must be bad for them. I'm no good.”** While all of this is unrealistic guilt, nevertheless it is guilt.

OUR BURIED MEMORIES

When filled with guilt whether realistic or unrealistic a destructive process often sets in. It is a universal law that violation of law demands punishment. We also learned from our parents that wrongdoing deserves punishment. There is the implication that since God does not seem to be punishing me then I must take matters into my own hands by punishing myself. Sometimes the punishment is for the sake of receiving forgiveness. Again there may be the subconscious feeling that I do not deserve forgiveness therefore punishment becomes a continuous process.

These lost submerged feelings of guilt that cannot be remembered often pollute the physical body. Psychosomatic disorders most likely will emerge. Anything that has the power to distress the mind has the power to distress the body. One can become ill over an extended period of time as an organ becomes either overactive or underactive.

Though we may no longer remember the experience that produced guilt nevertheless the feelings are ongoing keeping the body in a mild state of stress. This stress can cause a chemical imbalance making the body more susceptible to germs and viruses. It is estimated that half the beds in hospitals in the U.S. are filled with patients who are ill from emotionally oriented sources. **What then is the solution to the pain of guilt?**

Love is the greatest healing power on the face of the earth. Forgiveness is one of the great gifts of God's love which he offers to every person. It is in his nature to forgive. Love expressed as forgiveness, has the power to set one free from all his or her guilt. Forgiveness says, **“You are free. There is no resentment felt toward you. You are absolved from indebtedness. Your penalty is lifted. You are pardoned.”**

Your response must be, **“I know I am pardoned, not let off on good behavior but truly pardoned.”** Not only must you believe it but you must come to feel it. The heart of the gospel of Christ is forgiveness. This is why it is **good news**. Thus you are free from the curse you have placed on yourself. You are no longer condemned by the little god you have made of yourself with full authority to condemn and punish.

A child grows emotionally in a healthy way within a climate of love. Loved, he or she learns to love others. Feeling loved by parents he or she will begin to feel loved by God and then will feel worthy of loving self. Parental attitudes toward children will usually determine the attitude they feel they deserve to hold toward themselves.

If you came from a dysfunctional home then you were probably not brought up in a climate of love but were surrounded by all kinds of negative messages which translated into a false concept about yourself. When a Christian has realistic guilt where the sin is obvious and known then he or she should repent and make the wrong right as much as is possible.

As Christians we all sin, for none of us is perfect. The apostle John reminds us of this in **1 John 1:8** when he writes, **“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.”** He goes on in **verse 9** to tell us what we should do. **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”**

How wonderful to have this assurance. Most Christians know and feel this and thus do what John instructs them to do. The problem lies with the Christian who has unrealistic guilt. It is often difficult for some Christians to forgive themselves even though God may have already forgiven them. It will be very helpful at this point for us to see what the apostle John says. **“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” (1 John 1:7).**

Most sincere Christians walk in the light (**God’s righteousness - His law - His will**). Certainly not in a perfect way but overall their lives are lived in conformity with God’s will. Such action results in fellowship with the Lord. The comforting thing is that as long as we keep on walking in that **“light”** the blood of Christ will literally keep on cleansing us of our imperfections. This should be a very comforting scripture to those who have unrealistic guilt.

You should not only believe this passage but you should feel this truth in your daily life. Feeling this is very important in recovery from emotional scars that come from dysfunctional homes. However, even after reading the above scriptures you may still have some difficulty feeling it. **What are you to do?**

John says, **“For if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things” (1 John 3:20).** If our hearts have difficulty feeling forgiven then just remember that God’s word is greater than what our feelings tell us. Thus make yourself believe what God has said rather than what you feel. There are other positive affirmations written to faithful Christians.

Read slowly and carefully the following.

“If a man love Me, he will keep My words: and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him” (John 14:23).

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again unto a lively hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time” (1 Peter 1:3-5).

“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now are we the Children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is” (1 John 3:1, 2).

“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:16, 17).

“There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit” (Romans 8:1).

“Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness—by whose stripes you were healed” (1 Peter 2:23).

After reading these scriptures stop and think. **Do these verses apply to you? Do you strive overall to keep God’s commands although you cannot always keep them perfectly?** If you are a faithful Christian certainly you are serious about obeying the Lord.

Obviously you want to do what is right. You desire to walk in the light thus God promises you salvation. Read and reread all these verses in this week's chapter. Do this every day and meditate on each one. Do what Isaiah advises, "Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool" (Isaiah 1:18).

God wants to do for you that which you cannot do for yourself. He asks that you let him justify you. It is your responsibility to trust God that he will do this. We have no right to deny him of bestowing his grace. When I see that I am loved just as I am, something clicks inside, something happens, something seems to die - **MY SELF HATRED**.

If you are loved by your Creator then **why should you hate yourself and refuse to forgive yourself?** You no longer need to punish yourself. With His love God has destroyed your need to destroy yourself. Ask God to help you believe and to **feel** this truths.

But what if you are not a Christian and you realize the above blessings are for Christians only? You too can become a Christian. The New Testament teaches that you must believe in Jesus Christ, repent of your sins, and confess Christ. Then be baptized for the remission of your sins. Immersion symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ; the death of self and sin, your burial of the old man, and your resurrection to a new life.

Now read the following verses.

Romans 10:9, 10 "If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation."

Acts 2:38 "Then Peter said to them, Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit."

You too can be free from all guilt. **Why not now?**

NOTES

If you are a Christian you need to sort out unrealistic guilt from real guilt. Make two lists below. In one write down all the unrealistic guilt you have felt. You can now be free from them forever. Next write out a list of real guilt. If you have a list of real guilt that has not been taken care of then follow the instruction of **1 John 1:8, 9** (see above), and lay aside once and for all your guilt.

DEPRESSION #11

More people suffer from depression than all other emotional problems. A large number of Americans will suffer from clinical depression sometime during their life time. Conservative estimates say that 8% of the population will suffer from severe depression in their lifetime It is one of the most painful experiences one can go through. It is often said that physical pain is easier to endure than the mental pain of depression.

Depression is the leading cause of suicide. It is estimated that 15% of those depressed will eventually commit suicide. There are 24,000 deaths each year from suicide and the biggest percentage of these are teens. Of those who attempt suicide only about one out of ten are successful in taking their lives. Depression then is not to be lightly regarded but is a serious matter. Depression is more than a bout of the "blues"---a limited dip in mood that lifts within a few days, and which everyone experiences from time to time.

The following are signs of depression.

1. Frequent crying.
2. Feeling sad and blue.
3. A feeling of hopelessness.
4. No motivation.
5. Life does not seem worth living.
6. A change in sleep patterns.
7. Irritability.
8. Anxious.
9. Less energy.
10. Morning worst part of day.

11. Given to introspection.
12. Low self-concept.
13. Worry about the past.
14. Loss of interest in things once enjoyed.
15. Physical symptoms such as loss of appetite, headaches, upset stomach, rapid pulse, etc.

We all experience grief from time to time. This should not be confused with depression. However if grief does not soon pass it can develop and turn into depression. Most of the time we recover from grief. It is usually not long lasting.

In contrast depression can last indefinitely if not treated. The importance of grief will be treated in the next lesson as it is something that should not be ignored.

THE CAUSES OF DEPRESSION

Psychiatrists are now sure that biochemical disruptions in the brain are linked to depression. In particular, neurotransmitters---chemical messengers that relay impulses from one nerve cell to another-- -are believed to be off balance. To date, three neurotransmitters have been shown to be altered in depression: serotonin, norepinephrine, and dopamine. An insufficient amount of one or more of these chemicals is thought to lead to depression.

Talking to a good therapist can be very effective in milder forms of depression but in cases of severe depression medication with one of the antidepressants is advised. They seem to work by restoring the proper balance of neurotransmitters in the brain. These are not habit forming drugs as some seem to have a misconception of. It is nothing to be ashamed of. You treat this just as you would treat high blood pressure, a heart condition, etc.

Until recently depression was more or less isolated from other emotional problems and treated as a distinct disease. While chemical imbalances in the brain have a direct relationship to depression yet it is recognized now that depression can be just one of many addictive processes which we use to cover up our emotional pain from the past.

As pointed out in previous lessons it has been known for some time that anger can be at the bottom of depression. This is why we placed the lesson on anger before discussing depression. Anger most of the time is internalized and it is either directed toward ourselves, others or even toward God. Sometimes it may be a combination of two or even all three of them. Until one can verbalize their anger, analyze and resolve it they will continue to be depressed.

From early childhood we have been taught to stuff our anger and never show it. There are appropriate and inappropriate ways of showing anger but because we showed it inappropriately we were punished which reinforced the idea of never expressing it. In fact we may have been taught that anger is a sin and when anger is expressed one has done an awful thing. As a result grudges and feelings of anger were stuffed thus buried deep in the subconscious mind. You reach the point where you are not even aware of your hidden anger that has been buried deep inside of you.

It is very important that you understand that your anger is at the subconscious level. This is why you are not aware of it. Yet it is always there in your subconscious. Not only is it there but it is directed toward someone. As we noticed in the chapter on anger you have to go back over your past life and try and recall those incidents that at the time were oppressive and humiliating to you. This is not a pleasant thing to do but once you can get at the source then you can begin to heal.

Anger is always produced by something. It usually locks into such things as fear, threat, rejection, betrayal, failure, being ignored, etc. So it is not enough just to recognize your anger and verbalize it but you need to go deeper and find its cause. Once the cause has been recognized and validated then you can deal with it realistically and finally neutralize it

ANGER TOWARD SELF

Parents who are overly strict can cause low self esteem to be developed in their children. The child assumes his parents are correct and blames himself for failing to be what they want him to be. As he grows older this false guilt grows until he becomes angry at himself. He often feels inferior to others which can add to his anger. All the time this anger is internalized below the conscious level.

The perfectionist also falls into this classification. This is the dedicated person who is a workaholic. In later life he can become overwhelmed with anger toward himself for not being perfect. Many professionals fall into this category. Only when a person recognizes his pent up anger can he solve his depression. He needs to verbalize it, analyse it and forgive himself for not being perfect and then quit holding grudges against self. No one has a right to condemn himself.

Only God has that right. We need to leave judging and condemning to God alone. Just forgive yourself for not being perfect - for not reaching the demands and expectations of your parents when you were growing up.

ANGER TOWARD OTHERS

We often have pent up anger toward others. Because of our feelings of inferiority we often resent others. There are times when we are wronged by others. Sometimes we only imagine we have been wronged.

A study of **Matthew 5:23-24** tells us what to do with anger against others. **“Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.”**

Another passage that needs to be considered is **James 5:16**. **“Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much.”** You need to verbalize your anger and hurt to the person you have anger toward. You attempt to reconcile the differences.

This involves forgiveness even if you do not feel that the person deserves forgiveness. One may have pent up anger against a marriage mate. This should be resolved. Often in later life we may discover we have pent up anger toward our parents or others we have been associated with in the past. You must forgive them. Only then can depression be relieved.

This is true even if they are dead and completely out of your life. Revealing your anger and hurt to a person is what is called confrontation. In confrontation you simply let the other person know what has happened and how it has hurt you. It is not an attempt to get even or to give a bawling out to someone for what they have done. It is being honest about your feelings and how they have hurt your relationships with that person.

ANGER TOWARD GOD

It may seem strange that anyone would ever be angry toward God but it often happens. You may or may not even be aware of it. When there has been a tragedy, sickness or death we often blame God. **“After all he is God, and he could have prevented or corrected the situation if he had wanted to.”** Anger toward God happens frequently to the legalist who feels God requires too much of him.

Ministers often unconsciously have anger toward God because they can't be all they think God requires of them. We need to confess our anger to God and ask him to forgive us and help us to resolve it. We do not forgive God for anything for God has done nothing wrong. Instead we are thankful to God for understanding our feelings and teaching us to love and forgive.

The above material may seem like an over simplification of what causes depression. How-ever, if you will discover your anger, who it is directed toward, then forgive, you will be surprised how your depression will subside. In **1 John 4:20, 21** we have some very strong language about this whole matter of forgiveness. It may jar you a little but read and reread it and then do what it says. **“If someone says, “I love God,” and hates his brother, he is a liar, for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love God whom he has not seen?”**

This is what the Greeks called **“agape”** love. It is unconditional love. It is giving love without any strings attached. This verse does not imply we suddenly become affectionate toward someone but it means we would do what is best for that person and one of the best things you can do is forgive.

Reread this chapter daily this week and do a lot of meditating and praying. This is a choice you and you alone can make. It may not seem easy for many but it is the wise choice and a choice that will pay big dividends.

Here are two more verse for you to meditate on. “Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ also forgave you.” (Ephesians 4:31, 32).

“Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.” (Colossians 3:13).

We have reached a critical point in these studies. Depression is the one disorder that hurts so much. If you have been diligently reading these chapters and following the instructions in all probability you are experiencing depression. Therefore it requires that you put forth your best efforts and follow the instructions you are given.

You have been taking a step one week at a time. Now you are ready to confront your depression. This is a big step. You may want to spend more than a week working on it. Read, meditate, pray, recall the past, verbalize it, and be forgiving.

Confide in that friend you feel comfortable in talking with, that you trust, who is a good listener and who will keep your conversations confidential. Happiness and peace of mind is a choice. It is your choice. Here is your chance for victory over emotional pain.

Science now knows that emotional illnesses can have a physical (**biological**) cause behind them as well as severe trauma at some point in one’s life. In almost every major category of emotional illness there is at least some biological basis for the disease. Thus, the possibility of chemical imbalances should not be ignored. Get help from a professional who works in the field of mental health. Even your personal physician can be of great help to you. Counselling is essential but counselling alone will not cure this disease.

NOTES

Try and discover who your anger is directed toward. Write it out. **What is it you are angry about? Who is it directed toward?**

GRIEF #12

Having studied depression it is appropriate that we now consider the subject of grief. This is because grief has in it so many of the same element that you feel in depression. Grief and sadness in response to the deaths of family members and friends is sometimes confused with depression. Normal grief is not depression. A normal grief reaction lasts for two to six months and generally improves without treatment of any kind.

While difficult to endure, grief does not usually cause prolonged impairment at work or hinder a person’s ability to accomplish daily tasks. In some cases however, grieving is complicated by depression which may already be present. If normal functioning is impaired for more than two months after a loss, a person should be evaluated for a depressive disorder.

Grief is a normal and natural response to any loss. When you are deprived of or have to go without something you had, needed, wanted or expected you have suffered loss. We grieve for the loss of all relationships that are significant. Loss can involve many things such as death, divorce, leaving home, retirement, changing schools, loss of a job, abandonment, rejection.

When these things happen we begin a grieving process. It often comes in the form of shock, traumatizing our emotional system. One can be left completely unable to function in a normal way as a result of loss. It robs you of any happiness you may have. A loss may be sudden, gradual or prolonged. Grieving is over in a brief period of time for some. With others it takes a longer period of time. Still others may have a problem with it for years. Even after many years there are small reminders during the day that start the pain all over again. Usually the bigger the loss, the longer it takes to work through it.

However, this does not hold true in every situation. Some are able to cope with loss better than others. Recovery is feeling better, finding new meaning for living, going on with life, setting new goals without the fear of future abandonment. From childhood we have been taught that it is not appropriate to show our emotions. Often we are encouraged not to show grief. This is because few people know how to handle other people’s grief.

Have you ever heard or said any of the following expressions when someone attempted to express their grief? “Don’t feel bad.” “Don’t cry, everything will be all right.”

“In a few days you will feel better.”

“You have to be strong for the children”

“You can’t fall apart now, get hold of yourself. “

“I know just how you feel” (he or she doesn’t).

“Life must go on.”

“She had a full life.”

“It was God’s will that he go on.”

“Be glad you have your children for support.”

All the above statements are in effect saying “don’t be sad, don’t grieve.” Death and reactions to death are the most off-limits topics for discussion in our society because few people know how to handle other people’s grief. Eighty percent of all comment tell us to behave in a certain way---anyway but showing your emotions. By following this behaviour pattern you are better accepted. You don’t need rejection at such a traumatic time in your life. Most of the things people say although they do not realize it are an attempt to keep you from expressing your emotions. Thus you stuff your feelings.

The worst thing you can do is to put on a smile and act as if everything is all right. Often your performance can be so good you even convince yourself as well as others that you really are all right but you’re not. The longer a person bottles up his or her feelings caused by loss, the closer he or she comes to serious emotional consequences. Over a period of time unresolved grief becomes cumulative. Often prolonged stuffing will result in a wide range of manifestations such as chronic anxiety, tension resentment, confusion, guilt, emptiness, aches, pains and other somatic disorders.

We pay a price when we do not grieve in a healthy way. So don’t keep the feelings in. Sharing your feelings is how you get relief from much of the inward pain you feel. If you stuff your feelings you will experience more isolation and more pain. Keeping grief inside is the cause of the majority of pain you constantly feel. When you have an emotional reaction let it be - it’s ok.

You are allowing yourself to experience the feelings you have been hiding so long. It’s right to feel bad! And it is right to talk about your feelings. You need to acknowledge you have sad feelings. You have to initiate your recovery. It is up to you. Your recovery will begin when you begin admitting your sad feelings.

Grief over divorce can be very devastating. Most of the time you don’t want to talk about it. You feel embarrassed, even humiliated. There are always feelings of guilt. “Did I do the best I could to prevent this divorce?” Again, as in a death we stuff our feelings. Some say that divorce can actually be more traumatic than death. You have every right to grieve!

Divorce is closely associated with rejection. If you are recovering from divorce you may want to review the lessons on Rejection and Forgiveness. Retirement in particular can be devastating when it causes people to lose their sense of purpose. Retired people spend the first few months having a great time and then they can’t find anything to do.

To be successful in your recovery you also need a friend you can freely communicate with. This friend may be someone you feel very close to and feel at ease to talk to. It might even be wise to find someone who has suffered loss in the past like you. This friend needs to be someone you can feel free to talk to - a good listener who will be non-judgmental and will keep in absolute confidence whatever you discuss.

It is almost impossible to recover from your grief alone. If you have someone you can share your grief with your recovery will be much more complete. We cannot over stress the importance of sharing your grief. As we have already noted some won’t let you do this. But there are others who will. You need to find this person.

Jesus did not hesitate to show his grief openly. In **John Chapter 11** we have the story of the death of Lazarus of Bethany who was a friend of Jesus. Lazarus became very sick and his two sisters sent word to Jesus of his sickness. When Jesus arrived at Bethany Lazarus was already dead and had been in the tomb for four days. Upon his arrival at their home he saw the grief the sisters were experiencing. He was deeply touched by the whole affair. It is said that “**Jesus wept.**” Later it is said that “**Jesus groaning in himself cometh to the grave.**”

Here we see that Jesus did not hesitate to show and express his emotions of sorrow and grief. Even though Jesus knew he would raise Lazarus from the grave it did not take away his pity and sorrow for the deep anguish the sisters were experiencing.

Later on Jesus made his way into the city of Jerusalem. Knowing the destiny of the city - how it would later be destroyed by the Romans we are told, **“And when he was come near, he beheld the city, and wept over it” (Luke 19:41)**. Jesus was never afraid to show his emotions. Neither should we. Much of the grieving we have is a result of the things we were never able to say or resolve with the person we have lost. It’s the undelivered communications that is the cause for many not being able to recover from their grief. We regret the past that we did not do something different or better or else we feel we should have done more.

You may look back and wish that you had said certain things you never got around to saying. Things like **“I love you.” “I’m sorry for the way I treated you that time when.....”** There may have been some issue of great contention that was never resolved between you. You now regret you never attempted to settle the issue. You may have done something wrong but never did ask for forgiveness.

You look back on these past episodes and begin to have deep regret. This makes the grief more intense. Looking back you become critical of what you did or did not do. This usually leads to an inaccurate appraisal of yourself and an inaccurate appraisal of your loved one.

If you remember a loved one as you wished they had been, not as they truly were it is impossible to be objective in what actually happened in the past. This is why it is so painful to you now. Some of the things you remember may have been real issues that existed and some may not have been serious at all. No one is perfect in their relationship with others.

In most cases you did the best you could under the circumstances. The other person probably did the best they could. But now it seems bigger than it was at the time. Thus you may have a false sense of guilt about the relationship. Since you can’t go back and do anything about what occurred, you feel it is too late to correct things now.

There are about three areas where you feel you were incomplete before the death of a loved one.

- (1) Things that you are sorry for having said or done, or not having said or done.
- (2) Extending you forgiveness—things you need to forgive others for, either real or imagined.
- (3) Expressing significant emotional statements you never got around to saying that you feel should have been expressed

So what do you do about the unresolved past? You can get rid of any guilt of wrong you may have been responsible for by asking God’s forgiveness. **1 John 1:9** says, **“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”** Many of those who cried out, **“crucify him, crucify him,”** were in the audience on the day of Pentecost when Peter preached to them.

Realizing what a terrible thing they had done they cried out to the apostles, **“Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins” (Acts 2:37, 38)**. While those who were living did not have an opportunity to seek out Jesus and ask for his forgiveness nevertheless they were forgiven because of a penitent heart.

The same is true today. Both the Christian and the non-Christian can have forgiveness if they do what God commands. You need to forgive yourself. Forgive not for the deceased sake, but for yourself. Sometimes even though we know God has forgiven us we are not willing to forgive our self. We want to hold on but God wants you to let go. Forgiving the person you lost needs to be done also.

Much has been written in this book about forgiveness so you might want to review chapter nine especially the scriptures found in this chapter. You can overcome your grief with the help of a good friend and your Lord who understands your grief and intercedes for you. **“Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25)**.

We have mentioned that it is almost impossible to recover from grief without sharing your grief with a friend but it is also impossible to fully recover without sharing your grief with the Lord. Seek his help. He will help you.

NOTES

You might want to write down the things you feel were never settled and then take these to God in prayer.

SECURITY #13

One of our deepest psychological needs is security. Security can be defined as a feeling of being safe, sure or certain. It is also feeling free from fear, doubt and danger. However, the world at its very best is an insecure place. We are threatened on every side by many dangers such as disease, war, terrorism, crime, accidents, destructive forces of nature, etc.

How is it possible in a world of insecurity for one to feel secure? There are approximately 350 passages in the Bible that instruct God's people to "fear not." Furthermore God's word stresses that we should put our trust in Him and let Him be in charge of our lives. **Proverbs 3:5, 6** admonishes us to "Trust in the Lord with all thine heart and lean not unto thine own understanding."

James 4:14-15 "Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."

It should be obvious we certainly can't place our confidence in self. The only place we can place our trust is in the Lord. Many seem to feel that security is found in material things. At least this is where so much emphasis is placed. We are led to believe things such as money, houses, cars, etc., can give us security. Yet these have failed.

History shows that some of the most insecure people in the world have been those who have had an abundance of material things. Some feel that insurance, social and welfare programs can bring security. However, these things have not worked either.

It simply comes down to the fact that all of those things which man has devised for security are incapable of producing the peace of mind that we seek for. Our only real security is in God who is all wise, all powerful and knows what is best for us.

Just before ascending back to heaven Christ promised his disciples and those who would come after them, "Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age." (Matthew 28:20) When we assure our hearts that we are never alone, that the Lord himself goes with us wherever we go each day, that he is our companion for the rest of our lives, we can then feel perfectly secure. "If God be for us, who can be against us?" (Romans 8:31)

When we turn to God for our strength then we have unlimited power at our disposal. Note what Paul says in **Ephesians 3:20**, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think according to the power that worketh in us." **With a God as described by Paul how can we feel anything but secure?** As a young shepherd boy David knew of this security when he penned the words of the well known and beloved **23rd Psalm**.

Please read it slowly now and mediate on the full meaning of each phrase. "The Lord is my shepherd: I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul; he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever."

A Christian learns to do the best he can under the circumstances he is faced with. He puts his full trust in God knowing that; "All things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).

Armed with so many assurances from God's word the Christian can face the future unafraid. No one of course knows what tomorrow will bring but one thing is for certain. God is in control of this world in which we live. Through his divine providence he accomplishes his purposes. Therefore you can always feel secure in his great love.

Jesus had much to say about security in His sermon on the mount. Read the following verses very slowly and meditate on their meaning in your own life. Consider them as though the Lord is speaking them directly to you.

“Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing. Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature? So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin; and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you. O you of little faith? Therefore do not worry, saying ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble” (Matthew 6:25-34).

If you have noticed closely the key to security is to “Seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness.” This simply teaches that we must put God’s kingdom (the church) above everything else. (See Matthew 16:18, 19.) It was established fifty days after the crucifixion of Christ, on the day of Pentecost.

We can read of its beginning in Acts 2:37, 38. “Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, repent, and be baptized everyone of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.” Then at the conclusion of the chapter in the last verse we read, “And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved.”

Once you become a Christian you are subject to be a recipient of all the blessings and promises that are mentioned in the scriptures that you have been meditating on thus far in this chapter. Here are two more promises made to those who are Christian.

“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!” (1 John 3:1). “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5).

For good measure here is another one. “For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul says, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (Galatians 3:27).

If you are in Christ then you have nothing to fear. Note what the Apostle Paul has to say in Romans 8:1. “There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” Here is the grace of God pure and simple. Grace is the unmerited, undeserved, non-repayable love of God. Can you imagine anyone standing before God demanding this great gift of salvation because he deserves it? Jesus has brought to us something that we can never earn or deserve.

Once we realize that we have to depend completely on Jesus and that we can’t earn eternal life, then our good deeds can be acts of love, not acts of desperately trying to score points with God. The good news frees us to serve God out of gratitude, not from compulsion or fear of being condemned. Then we’re free to truly love God, with all our hearts, souls, and minds. To be free of the feeling that we must constantly strive to establish our own worth is a freedom that truly gives us a peace that “passeth all understanding.”

The grace of God is truly beyond the grasp of the human mind. But even though we may not understand it we can accept it simply because God wants us to accept it. God can take frail insufficient human beings and make them fit for heaven. This amazing grace of God causes us to be grateful and as a result we want to do God’s will regardless of any personal cost or sacrifice.

True faith involves giving, not just lip service, but also giving our hearts and lives to Him. The good news frees us to serve Him out of gratitude, not from compulsion. It becomes a joy and pleasure to serve the Lord. Never is it a burden or drudgery.

The natural result of all this is security. We have a relationship where we can talk to Him, not just about Him. In other words it gives us a personal relationship with the Lord.

Note the joy that results for our security as expressed by the apostle Peter. “Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory. Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.” (1 Peter 1:8.)

Read and meditate on the above scriptures this week. Read them very slowly and carefully, meditating on each word. Tell God you accept his grace and spend much time in thanksgiving for all he has done for you. Now you can discard all your inordinate fears and really begin to feel secure.

NOTES

You might want to write our some affirmations you have about God and the promises found in his word. Express in your own words why you feel secure.

PEACE OF MIND #14

The purpose of these studies has been to learn about God’s cure for our emotional pain. We have examined many of those things which bring emotional pain into our lives (guilt, low self-esteem, insecurity, fears, worry and depression) thus robbing us of happiness and peace of mind. We have discovered how to eliminate these causes of our emotional pain.

We hope that by now you have been able to discover those specific things which may have been taking away your peace of mind and that you now know that God has a cure. As we come to this final lesson we want to examine how we can attain peace of mind on a permanent basis.

Happiness is a choice. It really is. Abraham Lincoln who it seems suffered from depression once said, “A man is about as happy as he wants to be.” So happiness is up to you. It’s your decision. You are the one who makes the final decision.

Following are some suggestions that will help you attain peace of mind and happiness for the remaining part of your life. Most of these are things we have already considered in previous lessons. This is really a summation of what we have hopefully learned in these studies.

FIRST, develop a close personal relationship with your Father in heaven. You do this by talking frequently with him and then listen as he talks to you. You talk to Him in prayer. You call him “Father.” This is exactly how you should look upon him - as your father. You form then a father - son- -daughter relationship. You listen to Him by reading and meditating on his word.

Paul says: “Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom” (Colossians 3:16). As you imbibe his word you program your mind to think properly and these results in happy actions. Bad programming from the past has been responsible for much of the emotional pain you have felt in later years. Good programming produces such things as love, joy, security and peace of mind.

Peter admonishes: “Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, that through these you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust” (2 Peter 1:2-4).

Please reread this passage and meditate on it carefully. What beautiful and assuring words. Just think! We can partake of the Divine nature. What can offer greater security than this one thought? This close relationship can change our lives. So start forming this relationship with your Father by prayer and meditation on the Word.

SECOND, commit yourself daily to bring glory to God. The whole purpose of our existence is to glorify God. “Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him” (Isaiah 43:7). We bring glory to God by being an example to others. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 5:16).

Notice also John 15:8 “Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.” As you go through the day constantly remind yourself you have committed the day to the Lord. “This is the day the Lord hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it” (Psalm 118:24).

THIRD, get rid of grudges daily. “Be ye angry, and sin not. Let not the sun go down upon your wrath” (Ephesians 4:26). Harboring grudges, anger and hate can only destroy one’s happiness. It is a major cause of depression. It’s not worth it. So get rid of your grudges daily.

FOURTH, do something nice for someone each day. This kind of deed can be something physical such as helping with a chore. It can be sending a card, making a visit, etc. It can be spiritual in nature such as having a study of God’s word with someone. Ask God to help you find a way to help someone every day.

We all vary in talents and abilities. You have some special talent(s) God has blessed you with. Pull it out, dust it off and put it to use to help someone else. Talk about “feeling good,” well this is where much of that “good feeling” comes from. This should be true in reference to your own family and relatives as well as others.

Helping others is good for us as it gets us away from self, thus eliminating selfishness. A self centred person can never be a very happy person. Being a servant and serving others is the only way to true happiness. Ministering to others is a fundamental principle of Christianity.

FIFTH, change the way you think and talk about yourself. All of us go through the day carrying on a kind of dialogue with ourselves. We talk either in a positive tone or in a negative critical tone. If we constantly criticize ourselves we will hold grudges against ourselves. Quit condemning yourself. Look at the positives in your life. Get off your back and look at your accomplishments instead of dwelling on past failures.

SIXTH, learn to think on good things rather than on those things that are all negative, bad or evil. Paul admonishes: “Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things” (Philippians 4:8).

Thought control is clearly what Paul enjoins here. It proves you can control your thoughts if you want to. It is within your power to completely change your thinking if you want to. Also did you notice the word “meditate”? You need to spend your time thinking of those qualities which possess positive value.

Thinking of such things will lead to speaking and acting in harmony with these lofty principles. There is so much negative and evil that one can fill his or her mind with. How much better to fill one’s mind with good things? Make a determined effort to dwell on things that are good, righteous and uplifting. It will make a tremendous difference in your mental state.

SEVENTH, it’s time to let go. You have held on long enough, so let go. Make up your mind to cut yourself free from such things as fear, worry, guilt, etc. Let God take control. Life is too short to waste your time in such negative ways. The Lord wants us to enjoy a full and abundant life. “I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

Paul admonishes “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say rejoice” (Philippians 4:4). God wants his children to be joyful people but he leaves the decision to you. It is up to you. You have the ability to choose happiness. On the other hand you can choose to worry, feel guilty, unworthy, fearful, depressed, etc. The choice is yours.

The Hebrew writer says, “It is appointed unto men once to die” (Hebrews 9:27). All of us have an appointment with death. James writes, “For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away” (James 4:14). You can go to your grave as a happy Christian or you can go as a miserable Christian.

Why not spend what time the Lord has left for you here in this world being a happy Christian with peace of mind? It is such a waste to spend your days in the flesh being miserable. So cut yourself loose and be free to be happy.

EIGHTH, learn to laugh at yourself. Don’t take yourself so serious you can’t ever smile or laugh about yourself. Tell things on yourself so that others can laugh and laugh with them. Sometimes the things we can be so serious about are really things you can laugh about.

We are not saying to laugh about sin in your life, certainly not. But often the things we get so uptight about and becomes so serious about are not things that involve any sin.

Proverbs 17:22 says, “A merry heart doeth good like a medicine.” Again remember that your goal is PEACE OF MIND. Let’s go to scriptures once more and see what it has to say about this goal. Philippians 4:6, 7 “Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”

So there it is, in black and white. Meditate on it, and then keep on meditating. Yes it is true. And it can be yours just for the taking. Hopefully you have now completed all fourteen chapters in this book doing each chapter as you were directed to do. It is our hope that you have been patient and deliberate in these studies doing everything as instructed. If you did not follow the instructions as directed but rushed through or gave up before you finished then don’t expect much in the way of results.

If this is the case then you may want to start all over again being patient and deliberate in doing one chapter per week in the specific way you are directed in each chapter. We believe firmly that God’s cure will work if you will allow it to.

As you know you can accumulate many false concepts that make us have bad habits of thinking. If you have been piling up bad habits of thinking over many years, then once a habit of doing or thinking something is once established, we continue to use that habit unconsciously.

So from time to time you may feel some of the old pains coming back. If so you may need to review some of the chapters in this book to re-establish your new patterns of thinking. Our prayer is that this book has been a blessing to you and has helped you become free from emotional pain. May God bless you with peace of mind.

NOTES

At this time it would be good for you to write out an assessment of where you feel you are now that you have finished this series on emotional pain. Do you feel you have made significant progress? Are there areas you still need to work on? If so you can review and work on those areas you feel you are still weak in. Try to be as objective as you can in writing out your personal assessment.