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# *Restored* Chapter 1

Welcome and Worship

**Welcome:** Share about a gift, experience, or occasion you have enjoyed giving to some else.

**Worship:** “The purpose of this book is to establish you alive and free in Christ through genuine repentance and faith in God.” (Restored, page 12) In this first chapter, we want to come to a fuller understanding of the Gospel, the good news of God so that we might say afresh and anew, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift.” 1 Corinthians 9:15

Those who don’t learn much from history are doomed to repeat the same failures repeatedly. “History is His story of unfolding grace and love for all humanity” (Anderson, Restored, page 13). His love was demonstrated in the creation of Adam and Eve. They were created to have dominion over the rest of creation. ‘They were physically alive, which means their souls were in union with their bodies. They were spiritually alive; therefore, their souls were in union with God.” (Anderson, Restored, page 14) There were no conflicting emotions, no guilt, or shame and no power struggles over decisions. They were safe, secure, and significant.

Then came the tempter. “All temptation is an attempt to get us to live our lives independently of God.” Neil Anderson

The consequences of sin and rebellion were immediate. Their souls were no longer in union with God. They remained physically alive but now they were left to make a name for themselves and to find their purpose and meaning in life independent of their heavenly Father. Their survival skills were not only physical but also spiritual in nature. The evidence of the fall effected not only creation and their role in it but their emotions with fear entering the scene accompanied by shame and blame.

God immediately began a plan of rescue and restoration by instituting a sacrificial system to show them that there needed to be a payment for the penalty of sin. And then came the Law through Moses to again show them their desperate need for the promised Messiah. The kings all pointed to the King of Kings! The prophets foretold His birth, His life His death and resurrection.

And in God’s perfect time, He came! He came for three primary reasons. (Restored, pages 17-24)

Why He Came

* He came to show us how a spiritually alive person could live a righteous life through dependence on the Heavenly Father. (John 8:42 John 14:10, John 17:7)
* He came to give us life. He restored our union with God. (John 10:10, John 14:6, John 6:48) Through our union with Christ, He has supplied all our needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19) “For every verse in the Bible that talks about Christ being in God’s children, there are ten verses that talk about God’s children being “in Christ”.” (Restored, page 22). This new life gives us our identity as children of God and restores our acceptance, security, and significance. (Restored, pages 20-22) Let’s read aloud to one another the magnificent truths concerning these things on page 20-22 of Restored.
* He came to undo the works of Satan. (Colossians 2:15) In Christ we can be “strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.” Ephesians 6:10 Because of our union with God, we have the authority and the power to do God’s will. (Matthew 28:18-20)

**Think about it:** What happens if only believe a third of the gospel, i.e., our sins are forgiven but don’t really know who we are in Christ along with the understanding we are new creations in Christ?

What are the consequences of trying to make a name for ourselves, and meeting our own needs without Christ?

What are the personal and practical implications for knowing the Christ came to undo the works of Satan?

Read James 4:7-8. What must we do first if we are to undo the works of the devil?

Several years ago, Warren and I were privileged to see a miracle take place. It was the miracle of seeing a couple whose lives were disconnected from each other re-connect spiritually and emotionally as they each submitted to God. As we got a front-row seat in our role that week as prayer partners, an interesting statement by the counselor caught our attention. The statement Daryl shared was this, “Many times we bring so many things into our marriage relationships that we never get to experience that which attracted us in the first place.”

Think of a construction site that’s also been used as a garbage dump. When the house is ready, the garbage is cleared and put in sacks in the backyard. It is forgotten about in the business of other preparations and the smell is even gotten used to until the first time the neighbors come over to visit. They barely make their way through the front door when they are overcome by the odor. The house becomes defined not by the beauty the owners intended but by the trash in the backyard. It’s like the news story we heard this summer about the homeowners who were complaining to the city council about the dead, decaying animal in the park next to their homes. The smell of death was defining their lives.

I once had an acquaintance confide in me; “My marriage is like a dead animal. It is time to take it to the trash heap.” That was the enemy’s deception. It was not the marriage that needed to go to the trash heap, but the garbage in their lives. The homes around the park did not need to be destroyed, but the rotting dog needed to be disposed of.

Through this class, we want to allow God to identify and gather up the trash, take it to the trash heap, and haul it far away.

What Keeps Us from a Life of Submission to God

*To resolve these patterns of sin, we must understand four important truths:*

1. People rarely recognize their problems.
2. They cannot identify the cause of their problems. They don’t know what lies they believe that are driving their behavior.
3. They cannot free themselves from their problems.
4. They do not know victory is possible through the application of Scripture and the enabling of the Holy Spirit.

*There are four ways we typically respond to our sin patterns.*

1. Denial – People deny they have a problem though it is probably obvious to everyone around them.
2. Blame – People blame others and don’t take responsibility for their own actions.
3. Excuses – People justify their behavior through false claims or reasoning, seeking to escape responsibility.
4. Covering – To escape the guilt, shame and pain of their sins and failures, people seek to escape with alcohol, drugs, sports, computers, relationships, hard work, anger, etc.

*King Saul was a master at these.* Let’s open our Bibles to 1 Samuel 15:9-30. Saul had been commanded by the prophet Samuel to destroy everything that belonged to Amalek because of the harm he did to God’s people. Yet verse 9 records that Saul and his soldiers only destroyed those things that were worthless and spared the best for themselves. He began with outright *denial,* even covering his disobedience with religious language. There was one little problem; Samuel heard the bleating of the sheep Saul was supposed to destroy.

*He then tried blaming others and sought to excuse their disobedience by claiming the spared animals were for a sacrifice for God*. Samuel rebuked and reminded Saul that to obey is better than sacrifice.

*Saul ended his conversation with Samuel in 1 Samuel 15:30 not desiring to humble himself before the people he misled but seeking to cover his sin by asking Samuel to honor him before the people* "I have sinned. But please honor me before the elders of my people and before Israel; come back with me, so that I may worship the LORD your God."

The warning to us is the record of Saul’s life. These kinds of tactics don’t fool God. Saul ended up a jealous, angry madman more concerned about his position and honor than his relationship with God and his honesty before the people. Because of his desire for position, Saul even tried to kill his own son Jonathan.

**Think about it:** Read Genesis 3:7-14. How did Adam and Eve respond to their sin in the same way as Saul? (Denial, covering, excuses, and blame)

Read Luke 26:19-20. As Paul shared his life-long message, what did he say was involved in repentance?

How did David in Psalm 51:1-8 and the prodigal son in Luke 15:28-29 model true confession for us?

If we are going to gather up the garbage in our lives and take it out to the trash heap for burning, we first must be able to identify the trash. In other words, before we can acknowledge our sin and repent, we must be able to identify our generational sins, strongholds, and blind spots. This tool “Restored” will help us to do that.

If we had a new home that was being defined by the trash left inside and its odor, so that we were not able to enjoy its beauty I believe we would be eager to remove the trash. Let’s pray for that same eagerness as we respond to the Lord.

**Assignment:** Read Ephesians 1. What do you observe about the character of God? What are the blessings for the believer of being “in Him” or “in Christ” from this chapter?

# *Restored* Chapter 2

Welcome and Worship

**Welcome:** Share about a time you blew it but received grace.

**Worship:** In this chapter, we begin the process of repentance. The best news is that we are not “sinners in the hands of an angry God” but God’s children in the hands of a loving Father. God’s invitation is always to repent and return so that times of refreshment can come from the Lord. (Acts 3:19)

*Repentance often begins with desperation for God.* When we are desperate for God, we know God is the only way to find acceptance, security, and significance, and that He alone brings true freedom.

**What Repentance Looks Like in the Life of a Believer**

Josiah had a desperate desire for God when he became king at the age of 8. His story is found in 2 Kings 23 and 2 Chronicles 34.

He’d seen enough evil to know that it was not the path he wanted to go down. His father Amon, the king, had forsaken God. Amon was an idol worshipper. He sacrificed to his gods and served them. (2 Chron. 33:21-25) The Scripture records he did not humble himself before the Lord. Finally, his own servants put him to death at the age of 24. I wonder if Josiah was in the house. And so, at the age of 8, Josiah was crowned king, the youngest king named in the Old Testament. God was his only hope. 2 Chronicles 34:3 says that Josiah began to seek the Lord while he was still a youth.

*Josiah, unlike his father, was a humble man. He took responsibility for sin, walking in the ways of his father David and not turning aside to the right or the left. (2 Chronicles 34:2)*

*Repentance involves thorough cleansing of everything that is stealing our hearts away from God.* At the age of 16 Josiah began to cleanse the land of idolatry. 2 Kings details the people’s acts of worship and sacrifice to other gods. Let’s delve into the who, what, when, where, and why.

**Think about it**: How has the desperation Josiah experienced played a part in your own spiritual journey and motivated change in your own life?

Read 2 Kings 23:4-15 Who had been involved in idolatry? Where was idolatry practiced?

What was involved in idolatrous practices described in this passage?

How did Josiah deal with the practice of idol worship (Look for the action words)?

There is tremendous evil behind idolatry, but Josiah trusted God to protect him in the middle of an evil and idolatrous generation. He was vicious against everything that was not of God. He removed everything that was stealing the people’s heart from God.

The words that describe Josiah’s actions are strong words. The Bible encourages us to take such strong action by using the word “renounce” regarding our sins that are hidden because of shame. Read 2 Corinthians 4:2. When we confess, have a change of mind concerning our sin, and renounce our sins that we are ashamed of, we declare aloud and in our heart to the unseen world our desire to have nothing to do with the sins we have named.

We renounce our secret sins that are surely not secret to God. It is important to do this verbally before the Lord. Scripture teaches that important spiritual decisions should flow from our hearts and be confessed with our mouths. (Romans 10:9-10)

A New Testament example of breaking counterfeit religious ties with the past is found in Acts 19:18-20. The city of Ephesus was known for its false worship of Artemis conducted at the temple. Paul was drug before the city authorities for turning many away from the false god and the profits that came from its worship. Luke writes in Acts 19:18-20, “Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing, and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of everyone; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver.” What a wonderful example of “performing deeds appropriate to repentance.” (Acts 26:20)

Paul warns us what we can expect in these latter days, “But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons.” 1 Timothy 4:1 Jesus exhorts, “For false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders, so as to mislead, if possible, even the elect.” (Matthew 24:24)

How Occult Involvement Begins

Occult involvement can begin in several different ways.

1. You may have sought secret knowledge or involved yourself in secret practices or ceremonies that you saw leading to wisdom, power, or healing. These practices can be used to attempt to find significance, security, and acceptance. Each one needs to be confessed and renounced. (Restored, page 41) You may have trusted in your experiences rather than God. Pharaoh’s court magicians made frogs come up over the land of Egypt just as Moses and Aaron did but they did it “with their secret arts”. Their practices brought destruction to them, where the practices of God’s servants brought life to those who trusted in the true and living God.
2. Or you may have gotten involved in occult practices unknowingly and believed they were just for fun. You may have even passively participated by curiously watching others participate. Many of our sinful acts are like the sin of Adam and Eve committed in the garden. They look good to the eyes, they may seem useful to us at the time, and we may mistakenly be deceived into thinking they will make us wise. But just like someone might have wandered into the North Vietnam during the Vietnam War, we are in a war and our actions have consequences. The enemy doesn’t take them as being just for fun or for a dare. He wants to set up a base of operation in our life, a foothold, that we may have unknowingly given him to do his business of killing, stealing, and destroying. (John 10:9)

Recognizing Cults and the Occult

What are some ways for us to recognize counterfeit cults or occult practices? (Restored, pages 30-31)

1. *A person or group should be able to say that Jesus Christ is the Son of God, the King of kings, and the great I AM. They should be able to confess that Jesus is their Lord, not only Jesus is Lord.* (Restored, page 30)

By a spirit of divination used in fortune telling, a slave girl identified Paul and his disciples as bondservants of the Most High God but Paul instead of calling her into the company of disciples addressed the spirit behind her words knowing that Jesus was not her God. (Acts 16:16-18) I remember a book that my mom owned by a famous astrologer had a special note at the end to the clergy, trying to put herself in league with them.

1. *Cults and false religions offer “salvation or enlightenment through something other than faith in the finished work of Christ.”* (Restored, page 30) The enemy blinds the minds of people to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Instead, proponents of false religions and cults say, “we are a God and only need to be enlightened.” Often other books or texts are elevated to the level of or above the Bible.
2. *Practitioners of false religions promise a special quality of life, knowledge, or power that is available only by connecting with “cosmic energy sources, secret rituals, ceremonies, or covenants.”*(Restored, page 31) Occult means hidden, concealed, or secret, which is in total contrast to the nature of God, who does everything in the light. “But if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son purifies us from all sin.”

**Think about it**: How can the three points above help you to identify false guidance and false religions?

What is involved in repentance?

Read Romans 10:9-10, 2 Corinthians 4:2 and Luke 4:4. Why are Christians called to make a verbal stand?

What is the value of specifically renouncing a lie?

Today we want to remove any barriers between us and intimacy with our Heavenly Father. We want to confess and renounce every counterfeit religious practice (past or present). If you grew up in another culture, these may include cultural non- Christian religious practices (e.g., telling fortunes with tea leaves, etc.) or trusting in superstitions (e.g., owls in Mexico, etc.). As with the church of Ephesus, there may be books or objects associated with these beliefs that need to be removed and destroyed as a follow up. The church of Ephesus destroyed articles worth about 50,000 days ‘wages! (Restored, page 44)

As you go through this Step, you may realize that specific events have had a dramatic effect on your life. If you know of family members (past or present) who were involved in cult or occult practices, you may pray a prayer like this from your heart: I renounce, break and loose myself and my family from all demonic subjection to any human being who has in the past or is now controlling my family in any way contrary to the Word and will of God.

Experiences with cults and the occult like these can create a lot of fear and anxiety. It is good to ask the Lord to reveal any lies you may have believed. Anderson shares a story about a woman who went to a fortune teller who said to her, “Honey, you have a beautiful face and body. That will help you make it through life.” She was led to renounce that false prophet and the lies that she should use her appearance and body to make it through life. Then she was encouraged to announce the truth that her body is a temple of the Holy Spirit and that God would supply all her needs.” (Restored, page 44 and 45)

You may feel weak toward choosing what you know is right and true. Especially if you have suffered significant emotional or mental pain, you may feel helpless. You, like Josiah can choose to confess and renounce every cult or occult practice. Alaine Pakkala in her book, Taking Every Thought Captive, includes this affirmation to be spoken aloud when you are feeling weak toward making right choices. “I loose the enemy’s hold on my will. I throw off any way he may have bound me, brought confusion, or paralysis to my will. I choose to exercise my will in agreement with the truth of the Word of God. I can decide and I choose to decide in line with God’s perfect will for my life. I am not powerless. I am one who overwhelmingly conquers through Christ. (Romans 8:37) “You can choose to believe the truth, or you can choose to believe a lie.” (Neil Anderson, Restored page 42)

This exercise is not something to be dreaded but something to look forward to as we allow the Lord to bring everything into the light. “Josiah removed all the abominations from all the lands belonging to the sons of Israel and made all who were present in Israel to serve the Lord their God.” 2 Chronicles 34:33 The children of Israel celebrated the Passover unlike any of the past 400 years, from the time of Samuel the prophet (2 Chron. 35:18). Throughout Josiah’s lifetime, the people did not turn from following the Lord God of their fathers. The thorough cleansing of their lives led to a joy in worship not known for 400 years and the continuation of a nation through Josiah’s lifetime.

Let’s turn together to page 4 (Step 1) in the Steps to Freedom in Christ or page 33 in Restored and pray the opening prayer and opening declaration there together aloud. Proceed now to page 37 in Restored or page 5 in the Steps and ask God to guide you as you process this step by praying the prayer aloud. Prayerfully consider the non-Christian Spiritual Experience Checklist and the additional questions praying at the end of the exercise a prayer of confession and renunciation on pages 5-6 of Step one or pages 38-42 of Restored.

Assignment: Ask the Lord to reveal any repeated negative thoughts you are having. These could be in terms of agreements you have made. Agreements are often made in times of pain when we allow the enemy to speak lies about our circumstances. A few examples might be “I will never belong”, “I’m always forgotten”, “God is working in other people’s lives but not mine”. It is these agreements that can fuel sub-conscious vows about how I will make life work on my own. Choose to confess and renounce (break) these agreements. Ask the Lord to give you His truth in response to your circumstance.

# *Restored* Chapter 3

Welcome and Worship!

**Welcome**: Have you ever been affected by blind spots? (e.g., in a car, when shopping, or with a purchase, etc.)?

**Worship**: Let’s worship God in praise for His restoring power in our lives! Read Joel 2:25, Psalm 19:7, Psalm 23:3, and Job 19:25

Blind spots are a fact of life.Blind spots are why drivers don’t rely solely on the rearview mirrors when driving as they need to see the road from more than one angle. Blind spots are why when women go shopping, they ask a trusted friend how it looks. It helps to get a second opinion from another view.

In our spiritual lives, blind spots are our predisposition to see everyone’s faults but our own. *Blind spots are why we blame our problems on something or someone else*. They are why Jesus said, “Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log in your own eye?” Or, instead of identifying our spiritual conflicts as sin, we say, “That’s just the way I am.” We can be blinded to the consequences of our sin as Adam and Eve in the Garden when Satan told them, “You surely won’t die.”

Blind spots are why David cried out after his adultery with Bathsheba, “Surely you desire truth in the inner parts; you teach me wisdom in the inmost place.” (Ps. 51:6)

Liberating Power of Truth

How can we recognize our blind spots if we are blinded to them? To recognize counterfeit bills, those trained begin by studying the real bills not the counterfeit. The web site uscurrency.gov states, “The more you know, the less likely you are to accept counterfeit notes. “

It’s not just intellectual assent. We must trust on a heart level what we know. “As a man thinks in his heart, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7a)

We must know as the first chapter of Restored shared who Christ is, why Jesus came and all He has done for us through His finished work on the cross.

“We are not called to dispel the darkness but to turn on the light.” (Neil Anderson, Restored, page 52) Jesus prayed for His children in His final hour that they would be kept from the evil one. His prayer revealed how they would be kept from the evil one. “Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth.” (John 17:17)

**Think about it:** Read Philemon 1:6, Ephesians 1:18-20, Colossians 1:12 How do these verses stress the importance of knowing what God has done for us?

Read Ephesians 2:10, 4:1-3, 5:1-2, 6:10 What God has worked in us; we are called to walk out. He shares with us how life was meant to work according to His grand design. How do the above verses affirm the truth that we are to work out what He has worked in us?

A word that best expresses this life of trust in who Jesus is, what He has done, and His Word is abiding. The word abiding means “stay, dwell, tarry, or remain”. I love this old song of the faith about abiding. “Jesus, I am resting, resting in the joy of what Thou art; I am finding out the greatness of Thy loving heart. Thou hast bid me gaze upon Thee and Thy beauty fills my soul, for, by Thy transforming power Thou has made me whole.”

*Abiding in Him leads to a transformed life*. “Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.” (John 15:9) What is a greater mark on a disciples’ life than the mark of love which is greater than any spiritual gifting?! In John 8:31-32 Jesus taught the Jews who believed in Him, “If you abide in my Word, then you are truly my disciples of Mine; and you shall now the truth and the truth shall make you free.”

*Abiding in Christ also leads to a fruitful life.* “He who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” John 15:5

“So, if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36) *Truth, which is embodied in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, is always a liberating friend.*  (Restored, page 49)

King David wrote, “For you have delivered me from death and my feet from stumbling, that I may walk before God in the light of life” (Psalm 56:13). When we walk in the light, we are honest before God and others. David sought to cover his sin with Bathsheba and suffered greatly. The generations to come also suffered. What David did in the dark, future generations did in the light. His son slept with his concubines in broad daylight.

David found freedom by acknowledging the truth and He prayed to God that He might continue to live his life in the light. “Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me, O God and know my anxious thoughts and see if there be any way of pain in me and lead me in the everlasting way.” (Psalm 139:23-24)

David also confessed his sin to Nathan who confronted him about it. (2 Samuel 12:13) James encourages this transparency before God and man and gives a powerful promise. “Confess your sins one to another, that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man accomplishes much.” (James 5:16)

David learned a valuable but painful lesson we must all learn. “How blessed is the man … in whose spirit there is no deceit.” (Psalms 32:2)

Standing Against Deception

The power of Satan is in the lie, and the battle is for the mind.” Jesus described the enemy as the father of lies. “Whenever he speaks a lie he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar and the father of lies.” John 8:44 “Many Christians honestly desire to live righteous lives but have distorted concepts of God and are ignorant of their position and identity in Christ.” Restored, page 50

How do we fight such a crafty opponent? We must ask God like David and then trust the God, who knows our heart and desires truth in the inmost place, to reveal any place where we are being deceived.

God’s weapons according to 2 Corinthian 10:5 can demolish strongholds! Man’s weapons and wisdom do not. It is God’s truth that has the power to “demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God. And it His truth that can capture our thoughts and make them obedient to Christ.

Anderson writes, “*Freedom doesn’t come from swatting flies, it comes from taking out the garbage.”* Some years ago, my mom had a rare tumor which was not being detected. Because it was causing a blockage, it was throwing off blood clots into her legs which were also undetected. Instead, she was sent home with compression bandages to reduce the swelling in her legs. It was not until she was accepted as a patient at a world-famous hospital, that several doctors found the fibrosis and it was surgically removed. What are some ways we can try to deal with symptoms (swat at flies), instead of going to root causes? What were some of the ways from lesson one that Saul tried to deny the truth? (If needed, re-read 1 Samuel 15:13-26)

I love the story Neil Anderson tells about the woman who so desired her freedom that she had cards printed with the following questions, “Where did that thought come from? A loving God?” Restored, page 52

**Think about it:**

“Truth is never the enemy; it is always a liberating friend.” (Restored, page 49) Read 1 John 1:6-7. Why are we called to walk in the light, and speak the truth in love?

Read Genesis 3:1,4-5, and Judges 21:25. How does Satan use the lie?

Can you think of a time in your own life that you fell prey to deception? How did you recognize it and what helped you get out of it?

*In this step, we will allow the Holy Spirit to search us so we can confess and renounce ways we may have been deceived by the world, deceive ourselves, and wrongly defend ourselves. The good news as believers is all our sins have been forgiven- past, present, and future. God knows it all “the thoughts and intentions of our heart” so why not be honest and obey His command to confess our sins. Because we need God to reveal these things, let’s go first to the prayer on the bottom of page 53 of Restored or page 6 of the Steps to Freedom in Christ. Then prayerfully consider the lists in the three exercises ending on page 57 in Restored and on pages 8-9 of the Steps booklet to confess any way you may have given into deception. The prayers are at the end of each of the three sections.*

As you complete this step, it’s good to be aware that the ways we use to defend or protect ourselves can be deeply ingrained. I’m thinking of my first driving lessons in the pasture. The deep ruts where our car had traveled to drive and see the cattle were as hard as concrete making for less than a smooth ride. But trying to get out of the ruts was another story!

Our mind needs to be renewed. We do that by dwelling richly in the light of God’s word. Each day as we choose to believe the truth, we begin to fill in the ruts for a smooth roadway where the grace and glory of God can navigate! As Anderson states, “You may (and probably will!) need additional discipling or counseling to learn how to allow Christ to be your rock, fortress, deliverer, and refuge. As you get to know how loving, powerful, and protective God is, the more you will trust Him. When you know How complete His is acceptance is of you in Christ, the more you will be able to be honest and vulnerable in a healthy way before God and others.”

*Let’s start the process of renewing our mind with God’s truth today. “Believing something doesn’t make it true; its already true, therefore we choose to believe it.” (Restored, page58) The statements of doctrine (Restored, page 59-61or page 10 Steps to Freedom in Christ) are a great place to deepen your faith and trust in our great God! Let’s read them aloud together as we close this time together*.

**Assignment:** “For two thousand years Christians have known the importance of verbally and publicly declaring truth. (Restored, page58) Through this week, read, meditate on the Scriptural references, and declare the statements of truth. (Restored, page 59-61) Which statements were most meaningful to you?

# *Restored* Chapter 4

Welcome and Worship

**Welcome:** Who do you know (past or present) that has been a model of forgiving others?

**Worship:** Thank God for his complete forgiveness expressed in the following verses: Micah 7:19, Isaiah 1:18, and Romans 8:1

A young missionary had returned home from the field and was soon to be married. She would soon after her marriage be moving into a new position of ministry within a church. She contacted me through the Freedom in Christ website.

Our first meeting was very businesslike bordering on me wondering why in the world did she contact me? She asked me mid-point about exactly what I hoped our time together would accomplish.

She started to open up more as we continued in our study of “Victory Over the Darkness”. And little stories came to light about her Father wound from her dad, a successful executive, who had been very businesslike with her from her earliest recollection. One story she shared was about shopping for toys as a child and how he always had to know exactly what she was going to buy before they stepped foot in the store. This was just the tip of iceberg.

I encouraged her to go through the Steps to Freedom in Christ and she was willing but hesitant. On our next call a few weeks later, I could tell something had radically changed. She said the best thing that happened was that she had forgiven her dad and when they saw each other before her wedding their relationship took on a whole new tone and was greatly improved.

Her experience mirrors that of all of us as we live in a fallen world with fallen people. When we don’t get what we expect, we are disappointed. As the writer of Proverbs said, “Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but desire fulfilled is the tree of life.” And when we are heart sick, you and I are faced with an opportunity to become bitter.

Taking Root: Opportunities for Bitterness

1. *Unmet expectations are probably the leading cause of bitterness. God’s word acknowledges we have needs and, God uses others to meet our needs. We each have a need for significance, security, and acceptance.*

Doctors have also found in the brain a joy center. God, the magnificent designer, said of the relationship between the Father and the Son- “In your presence is fullness of joy!” Psalm 16:11 When children have enough experiences where people are glad to be with them filling their need for significance, security, and acceptance this joy center is developed. This joy center later in life regulates emotions, pain control, and immunity. Good news- this part of your brain can continue to grow. (Dr. Jim Wilder)

*To avoid personal relationships because Jesus is all I need is to fall into serious error.* We are members of the same body, the body of Christ. We do need each other. God tells us that the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you.”

At the same time, In Christ alone, I am eternally and faithfully loved, abundantly provided for, and genuinely significant. In Phil. 4:19, Paul wrote, “And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

When we expect others to meet our needs, we will become frustrated and possibly bitter.

1. *Comparisons with others can cause bitterness***.** Matthew 20:9-11

We can be bitter because of God’s mercies shown to others.

Matthew tells the story of the laborers in the vineyard who grumbled because they received the same wage as those who were hired later.

Especially in family life, we compare ourselves to each other. Sometimes it seems, in our minds at least, that God has a favorite.

I remember once when the kids were little, and my husband was in the French city, Quebec, over a holiday. In my mind, “He’s in Quebec eating French cuisine; I’m at home eating peanut butter and jelly for the fourth day in a row.”

At the same time, Warren was thinking, “I am alone without a car. On the public transportation, I don’t understand the names of any of the streets. I am not sleeping well in a strange bed.”

1. *Another source of bitterness is offended pride****.***

Often the offended pride starts when some authority figure or other attempts to speak truth lovingly into their life. Or it can be something as simple as a miscommunication.

A former neighbor was angry and bitter with the doctor when he attempted to tell her she had a drinking problem. She did not want to admit it. Her pride was offended. The Pharisees were offended with Jesus because He sought to correct them. (Matthew 15:10-12)

1. *Bitterness is due to a belief that the Father is unjust.* (Luke 15:29) A bitter person fails to receive the grace of God for their situation believing instead that God has given me the short end of the stick.

**Think about it**: How have you seen each of the four things named above- unmet expectations, comparisons with others, offended pride, and a belief that the Father is unjust lead to bitterness?

Symptoms of Bitterness

Read Luke 15:28-30 How did the elder brother show a bitter attitude?

* *Insensitivity to others and an unwillingness to extend kindness is a symptom of bitterness*. (Luke 15:28, Ephesians 4:31-32) Not everyone was happy when the younger brother returned home. At the time when the younger brother needed acceptance most, the older brother was caught in the snare of bitterness and was a no-show for the welcome home party.
* *Anger is a symptom of bitterness.* (Luke 15:28), Romans 3:14-15 states, “Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood.” An angry person is a prime target for bitterness.
* *The older brother recounted his own righteousness.* **(**Luke 15:29*)* In his pride, he recounted his righteous deeds**.** *Self-righteousness always keeps us from forgiveness because we forget God’s mercies extended to us***.**

* *Bitterness due to comparisons shows itself in jealousy and strife.* (Luke 15:29)James 3:14 says, “But if you harbor bitter jealousy and strife in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.” The older brother was angry and bitter with the great mercies of the father. God is always ready to throw a party for a prodigal come home.

* *While God removes our sin as far as the east is from the west, a bitter person tells others of past misdeeds.* (Luke 15:30, Psalm 103:12) The older brother wanted to make sure that the Father knew the younger had been with prostitutes. Despite the older brother’s faithful service for his father, his heart was far from God.
* *A critical, complaining attitude can be a symptom of bitterness*. (Luke 15:30) Job said in chapter 10:1, “I loathe my own life; I will give full vent to my complaint; I will speak in the bitterness of my soul.” Bitterness is what happens when we don’t allow God to meet us in our pain.

* *He put up walls toward the brother.* (Luke 15:30). He may have genuinely wanted to extend love, but the wall of bitterness paralyzed him. It’s impossible to love someone you have in your debtor’s prison. He was unwilling to even call him his brother, referring to him instead as “this son of yours.” Bitterness keeps us from trust and closeness. The father instead ran toward, embraced, and kissed the prodigal.
* *Bitterness can lead to thoughts of death.* Jonah begged God to take his life because of his displeasure with God showing his mercy to the people of Nineveh. (Jonah 4:3)

**Think about it:** How does a person’s unresolved bitterness affect one’s family, friends, and church?

Why do some people resist forgiveness?

1.Some people see forgiveness as another form of victimization, a sign of weakness.  
The truth is that forgiveness takes tremendous courage. You will never be more like Christ than when you forgive.  
  
2. Forgiveness is not tolerating sin. God is on the side of the oppressed. “God forgives, but He doesn’t tolerate sin; Scriptural boundaries must be set up to prevent further abuse.” (Restored, page 68) “Reconciliation my come, but only if the abuser(s) will own up to their abusive ways and honestly seek forgiveness. The freedom of the abused is never contingent upon whether the abuser will own up to it.” (Restored, page 92) ***Forgiveness can always be extended, even if fellowship can’t.*** Forgiveness is something you do for your sake.   
  
3. Some don't want to forgive because they want revenge. It puts you the level of the one who wronged you. “Seeking revenge is letting the devil set the agenda.” (Restored, page 68) It also usurps God’s role of exacting justice. “Vengeance is mine saith the Lord.”  
  
4. I'll forgive them when they come and ask me to forgive them. “Sadly, many of the victimizers will never come back and ask for forgiveness. They won’t even acknowledge they did anything wrong.” (Restored, page 69) Jesus did not wait for those who were crucifying Him to ask forgiveness. He prayed, "Father forgive them for they don't know what they're doing."  
  
5. You don't know how bad they hurt me. Until you and I let go of our bitterness and hatred, this person is still hurting you. “Bitterness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die." (Restored, page 84) Hebrews warns that by the root of bitterness many are defiled. The word “defile” means in Greek to stain or to dye. It's a weed that spreads and can even cause illness.

5. Eventually I'll just forget about it. People who want to forget all that was done to them will find they cannot do it. I remember a younger friend telling me, “Because the offender is dead, I don’t need to forgive.” When God says He will not remember our sins it’s not saying He forgot them (his omniscience); it’s saying He won’t hold our sins against us. Don’t put off forgiving, hoping the pain will go away. “Trying to cover it up doesn’t fool anyone, least of all ourselves, because ‘the heart knows its own bitterness’ Proverbs 14:10.” (Restored, page 68)

6. I’m not ready to forgive. Will you ever feel like forgiving? A woman I was meeting with knew it was bad counsel when her secular counselor told her, “Write down the worst things that happened to you. Keep reading it until you are numb toward it.”. The implication was that numbness equated healing and would help her forgive. The opposite is true; we forgive in order to truly heal. “The other error is more common in the church - you shouldn't feel that way; you just need to forgive.” (Restored, page 81). *God’s forgiveness of us is far greater than the degree we will ever have to forgive others.*

Forgiving from the Heart

***How do we forgive from the heart as that is what the Scripture requires?***  Let’s turn to one of the clearest calls to forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-35

* *Repayment is impossible.* Forgiveness is laying down the “you owe me.” It’s letting God be the debt collector instead of placing them in our debtor’s prison. The king experienced real consequences from the unpaid debt of his servant but felt compassion and forgave and released the slave from his debt. (Matthew 18: 28-31) It may not be the consequences of an unpaid debt, but we are all living with the consequences of someone’s sin. Jesus is our ultimate example. He experienced the physical, mental, and emotional pain of our sin. Each of us had a huge debt we owed with no means to repay. Instead of giving us justice He gave us mercy. Forgiveness is costly; it cost God the death of his sinless son. That’s grace. “Forgiving others would be moral outrage without the cross.” (Restored, page 77) The Cross is what makes forgiveness not only right but possible. *The choice we have is whether we live with the consequences of other’s sin in the bondage of bitterness or the freedom of forgiveness.*
* *We are to forgive from our hearts or suffer the consequences of being tormented like the unforgiving slave in the story in Matt. 18.* The word tormenter here signifies “those who had authority to examine and extort confessions by torture.” Bitterness locks its prisoners in a prison of torment. “Not only continued captivity is here intended, but the tortures to be endured in it.” Matthew Henry (Matthew 18:34-35). Paul shares he forgave “in order that no advantage be taken of him by Satan”, the ultimate tormenter. (2 Corinthians 2:10-11)

*By releasing the offender from the debt they owe, I am set free from the chains of bitterness and the torment.**(Matthew 18:34)*I am no longer chained to my offender. One man described it as releasing them from my hook and putting them on God’s as the offender is God’s responsibility and not mine.

* Because Jesus’ compassion lives in us through the Holy Spirit, we can choose **not** to give people what they deserve, and instead choose to give them what they don't deserve. (Matthew 18: 33)

Do you have anyone in your debtors’ prison-anyone if you had them face to face you would like to say, “You owe me.” *Let’s begin by praying that God will reveal all those I need to forgive. The prayer is on page 70 of Restored and in the bolded print at the top of page 11 in the Steps booklet.*

On your list of people, you may need to forgive, you may need your name. Forgiving yourself is accepting God’s forgiveness. “Otherwise, we believe the subtle deception that we must atone for our own sins.” (Restored, page 72) If we say we can’t forgive ourselves, we are living in pride because we are putting our thought above God’s thoughts.

God may also need to be on the list. Technically we cannot forgive God because He has done nothing wrong. We may need to renounce our expectations and wrong thoughts about God and agree to release our anger toward God. This is what the prophet Jeremiah did in Lamentations 3 after accusing God in the first 18 verses! And his conclusion was, “This I recall to my mind, Therefore I have hope. The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease, For His compassions never fail. They are new every morning.” Lam. 3:21-22

*Forgiveness is a choice of our will but if we are to forgive from our heart, we will allow God to surface the offender and the memories of the offense, and the emotion attached to it. Ask the Holy Spirit to search our hearts as Proverbs 14:10 says the heart knows its own bitterness.*

*After we have made our list, the first step in forgiveness is recognizing your feelings of pain the offense caused and expressing them to God. (Psalm 73, 55, 13) Forgiveness is not saying, “It really didn’t matter.” Or “I probably deserved part of it anyway.” Forgiveness recognizes that what happened was wrong; forgiveness is not forgetting what happened.*

Covering our pain with activity will not help us to forgive; neither will denying the pain. “It’s all good. It’s no big deal.” Don’t rationalize or try to explain the other person’s behavior.

What feeling did you experience at the time? Perhaps none- except shock and numbness, disbelief or even a desire first and foremost to cover the shame of the incident. Maybe the feelings came sometime later? How has the offense affected you today? The list of feelings chart at the end of this lesson may be helpful in naming your feelings. “You can’t be right with God and not be real.” (Restored, page 88)

*The choice to forgive is not between the offender and me; it is between God and me.**And because the forgiving God lives in us, we can make the choice to forgive. My choices are expressed before God in prayer. Remember the warning in the book of Hebrews against bitterness: “See to it that no one misses the grace of God.”*

*If you are ready to forgive the people on your list, turn to the prayer on page 85 of Restored or page12 of the Steps booklet. After you have forgiven every person for every painful memory, then pray the closing prayer on page 93 of Restored or the bottom of page 12 in the Steps booklet.*

*Will you today receive the grace of God to forgive?*

**This week’s assignment: Make an identity list as described on pages 89-91 of Restored.**

Table

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# *Restored* Chapter 5

Welcome and Worship

**Welcome**: How have you seen a choice to submit to authority bring a blessing?

**Worship:** What blessings did Mary praise that came from her submission to the Lord? Praise God together after reading Luke 1:46-55.

God in His perfect sovereignty has me writing today on the day after the break in of the U. S. capitol. Throughout recent history we have seen the macrocosm of rebellion that begins on a much smaller level, the human heart of every individual.

Who would you say is in control of your life right now? Do you think you are? God never designed your soul to function as master. (Restored, page 96) The poet may write, “I am the master of my fate and the captain of my soul.” and vocalists may sing in pride “I Did It My Way”, but our Creator created us to be in dependence upon Him. In Psalm 119:73 the created calls out to the Creator as He only understands how we are to live, “Your hands have made and fashioned me; give me understanding that I may learn your commandments.”

“Self-seeking, self-justifying, self-glorifying, and self-centered living are in actuality serving the world, the flesh, and the devil.” (Restored, page 96) God has given us the path of life which involves taking our place as being crucified with Christ. “I have been crucified with Christ and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself up for me.” (Galatians 2:20) The promises of God tell us this life, that comes from living as being crucified with Christ bring instead a resurrection power that allows us to live the life we truly desire of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and self-control. “Denying self-rule is the magnificent defeat.” (Restored, page 97)

Those who seek to control people or situations in the hope that their needs will be met end up in frustration and constant turmoil, bitterness, and rebellion. The only real control we have is deciding who we will worship and serve. “Paradoxically, only when we surrender completely to God do we have self- control.” (Restored, page 98)

Living Under Authority

God does not mince words about rebellion, but instead calls rebellion to be equal to the sin of divination (looking to outside sources for information about the future instead of to God in hopes that security, significance, and acceptance can be found there) and insubordination as iniquity and idolatry (1 Samuel 15:23).

The world tells us we are nothing and thus we need to strive using whatever means at our disposal to get ahead because appearance, performance, and status equals significance. The Scriptural commands to submit to one another, to authorities, and for wives to submit to their husband can be fulfilled because the significance question has already been fulfilled. “You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God’s own possession that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness and into His marvelous light; for you once were not a people, but now you are a people of God; you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.” (1 Peter 2:9-10) We have the best position in the universe as believers as “seated with Christ in the heavenly places.” Eph. 2:6 It is not what we do that determines who we are; it is who we are that determines what we do. (Restored, page 108)

Because of our significance in Christ, husbands are free to be the servant leaders of their home. Wives are free to respond to and respect their husband. Leaders in the workplace can be subject to the needs of those who serve under them. Those under the authority of governments can submit and pray for the governing authorities “that we might lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity” (1 Timothy 2:1-2) knowing that “there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God”. (Romans 13:1-2) Members of churches are “free to obey their leaders and submit to them for they are keeping watch over our souls, as those who will have to give an account.” Hebrews 13:17

These are not issues primarily between authority figures and those who are called to submit (which is everyone on some level). Our primary submission is to God knowing He ultimately controls all who are in authority. “King’s hearts are like channels of waters in the Lord’s hands.” Prov. 21:1

**Think about it:** How does knowing your security, significance, and acceptance in Christ change your perspective about submission?

How is knowing that God ultimately controls all who in authority a comfort to you?

Submitting to God Rather than Man

Scripture does teach that there are times when we must obey God rather than man. Peter and the Apostles continued to preach the name of Jesus despite the threats of governing authorities. (Acts 5:29) The Hebrew midwives rescued a baby named Moses and spared many newborn baby boys from infanticide commanded by the Egyptian king. Daniel continued his prayers to the one true and living God despite commands from the Babylonian leader to bow down to his image alone.

Anderson gives two important guidelines to help us to recognize when to “obey God rather than man”. (Restored, page 100)

* “When governing authorities require us to something that God commands us not to do or try to prevent us from doing something God requires us to do, then we must obey God rather than man.”
* We also have no obligation to obey people who try to exercise authority outside their own jurisdictions. For example, an employer or school teacher doesn’t have the right to dictate what you do in your own home.

Because we live in a fallen world with fallen people suffering may part of the consequences to “obeying God rather than man.” Peter in a book about suffering tells the believer, “Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.” (1 Peter 4:19) God stands with those who suffer while doing right and He is their keeper as He kept Stephen, one of the early martyrs for the faith, who suffered stoning at the hands of religious leaders. “But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God. (Acts 7:55)

Turning abusers into authorities is not an act of rebellion. God’s heart goes out to the oppressed, the weak and defenseless. Anderson makes two important points about situations like this. (Restored, page 105)

* Abusive leaders have obviously abdicated their role to provide for and protect those whom they were charged by God to watch over. The abused suffers in two ways, from the abuse, and from being left defenseless.
* “You’ll never help abusers or rebels by allowing them to continue in their abuse or rebellion.” Although they may rail against you, action demonstrates care for the abusers. Psalm 107 speaks of those who had rebelled against the Word of God and describes how they came to freedom. “They stumbled and there was none to help. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble; He saved them out of their distresses. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and broken their band apart. (Psalm 107:12b-14) The place of hurt can become the place of help!

Sadly, many will spend their lives “accommodating their abusers, hoping someday they will finally live up to their expectations and receive the acceptance and affirmation they believe they must have in order to be worthwhile people.” Others make fleshly vows never to be pushed around again by anyone, and they become rebellious. (Restored, page 95 and 96)

*“Determining when to reject man’s authority requires discernment and a deeper inner conviction based on truth that cannot be compromised regardless of the consequences. You are acting rebelliously if you refuse to submit because you’d prefer to do it your way.”* (Restored, page 106)

**Think about it:** How are the two guidelines on the previous page about when to “obey God rather than men” helpful in your understanding of submission?

Read the Father’s response to the prodigal in Luke 15:12-14. What did the Father choose to do in response to the runaway? How have you seen this response of choosing not to rescue end up in helping those who are in rebellion?

Making an Appeal

Many times, those in authority are moved through appeals. Because Daniel was neither defiant or disrespectful, he received permission from the authorities to eat as God required and not to defile himself with the king’s choice food. Esther appealed to King Ahasuerus saving her uncle Mordecai and the Jewish people. Paul wrote the book of Philemon as an appeal to Philemon on behalf of the slave Onesimus. The ultimate appeal is our own prayers to our heavenly Father. Anderson makes five points (Restored, pages 100-104) with the model appeal in mind. (Matthew 6:9-13).

* We must approach the authority with respect. “Our Father who are in heaven, hallowed by thy name.” (Matthew 6:9) “If there are unresolved personal issues between yourself and one you wish to make an appeal to you better get them resolved first. If a teenager has been disrespectful and disobedient to his father, he should get that straightened out before he asks for the keys to the car.” (Restored, page 101)
* “Second, we should be committed to the success of those who are in authority and willing to do their will as long as it doesn’t violate who we are in Christ. ‘Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.’ (Matt. 6:10) Most leaders will listen to our appeals if they know we are concerned for their responsibilities and their reputation.”
* “Third, our appeals must be based on legitimate needs. ‘Give us this day our daily bread.’ (Matt. 6:11) Few things can turn off a parent more than an ungrateful child who demands more than what is needed.”
* “Fourth, our appeals must come from hearts that are free from bitterness. This principle is reflected in the phrase, ‘And forgive us our debts, as also have forgiven our debtors’.” (Matt. 6:12) When Simon wanted the spiritual authority of the apostles Peter refused him citing that he was in the “gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity.” (Acts 8:19-23)
* Fifth, our appeals should be for direction in life in accord with God’s character and ways.

This is reflected in the prayer ‘And do not lead us into temptation but deliver us from evil.’ (Matt. 6:13)

“It is an act of faith to trust God to work in our lives through leaders who are something less than perfect, but that is what God is asking us to do.” Neil Anderson “Men may spurn our appeals, reject our message, oppose our arguments, despise our persons, but they are helpless against our prayers.” J. Sidlow Baxter

*Let’s begin this step with a prayer of commitment to forsake rebellion and choose a submissive spirit. This prayer is on page 111 of Restored and page 14 of the Steps booklet.*

*From the list below on those pages, allow God to show you any ways you have been rebellious and use the prayer that follows to confess those sins He brings to mind.*

***Assignment: Read one of the appeals in Scripture from Daniel 1:1-16, Philemon, or Esther 7:1-6. What are your observations from these passages about a successful appeal?***

# *Restored* Chapter 6

Welcome and Worship

**Welcome**: Who do you know that has humbled themselves under God’s hand even if it involved suffering?

**Worship**: Read Exodus 1:15-21 How did the midwives in Moses’ day receive a blessing by humbling themselves and putting God above man?

Pride 101

*Pride was the original sin in God’s universe.* Before Adam and Eve were created and placed in the Garden of Eden, the angel Lucifer, who stood in the very presence of God, allowed pride to lead him into foolish rebellion and the making of unholy vows. He said in his heart, the place where all pride starts, “I will make myself like the Most High.”

Lucifer wanted control over God himself. *We, too, can believe the lie that something will be better if I am in control.* We believe the lie the serpent told Adam and Eve; God has withheld something good. And if we buy into that lie it goes on from there, we believe that we can stand against God’s word and his authority and get away with it. The lie is we can be successful apart from God’s blessing and direction. It is the lie that we have no need for God or others. One author put it this way, “Pride is when we are more concerned about controlling others than in developing self-control.” *If I believe the lie that things will be better if I am in control, I will never be able to love God or another.*

*It’s our focus on our knowledge.* Paul said, “Knowledge puffs up, love edifies.” (1 Cor. 8:1) *It’s our focus on our experience*. One of the hardest things in speaking to a family member about her occult sins is the lie she believed, “You just haven’t experienced what I’ve experienced.” Our experience can become our god. Pharaoh’s court magicians also had their supernatural experiences, but they were not from God and led them into destruction.

*It is the focus on our abilities and achievements and not on the grace of God*. Jesus concluded the story of the Pharisee and the tax collector by saying, “I tell you that this man (tax collector), rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 18:10-14) *Pride keeps us focused on our own righteousness.* Humility keeps us focused on God’s mercies.

*In pride, we desire self-advancement*. The humble looks out for the interest of others. At his funeral, a leader from another Christian ministry said of Dr. Bill Bright, the founder and past president of Campus Crusade for Christ, “He always asked, ‘How can I make you successful’?”

The Psalmist wrote in Psalm 10:4, “The wicked in the haughtiness of his countenance does not seek Him.” *Pride is building my life around my will instead of God’s will as expressed in God’s Word.*

Proceeding according to their own will, Eve took the fruit from the serpent and her husband Adam ate with her. Abraham tried to pass off his wife as his sister and incurred the wrath of the king. Saul offered the sacrifice instead of waiting on Samuel and lost his position as king. The 10 spies refused to proceed by faith into the Promised Land and instead died in the wilderness. Their families and even their nations suffered because of their pride.

It’s when we refuse to let God work things out in His way, in His time. It’s the attitude, if they don’t do something about this, I will. Lucifer sought to advance himself instead of seeking first the kingdom of God. Is it any wonder that the one who became Satan would use pride as one of his most effective weapons?

Pride and Relationships

*Pride keeps us from knowing God, and God is love. 1 Jn 4:7-8*

Anne Graham Lotz, the daughter of the famous evangelist, Billy Graham, one day asked God how she could fix her relationship with Danny, her husband. God shared with her the truths of 1 John 4:7-8. “Dear friends, let us love one another, because love is from God; and everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God. The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” First, He reminded her that love comes from God. Romans 5:5 says, “The love of God has been **poured** out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit.” Second, John makes a separation between the one who is born of God and the one who knows God. We can be born of God and still not know God. The key Anne found was not to focus on the relationship, but to focus on knowing God. Knowing God enables us to love because we know the God, who bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endured all things!

*A prideful person is unwilling to submit his will to another’s goals, ideas, or desires.* Many people go into relationships thinking that they will not have to change very much, or maybe only along the lines of what they can control. I can roll up the tooth paste instead of squeezing it in the middle. But God’s goal is the crushing of human pride so love can be spilt out. We like to think of ourselves as our own boss. Letting go of control does not come easy. It is the surrendering of our will. We are called to make sacrifices for the sake of another person, and our constant mental question is, “Why should I? Isn’t my say-so just as important as theirs?” “Though the immediate evidence of price is self-centeredness, the root of pride is self–exaltation.” (Restored, page 120)

It may mean suffering. Even though family, including the family of God, is an incredibly good thing, suffering comes with it because we live in a fallen world with fallen people. Peter continually reminds us throughout the book that Christ is our example in relationships. Just as Christ suffered in relationships with sinful men and women, so will we. He teaches us how not to waste our sorrows through retaliation or threats, but to follow Christ’s example in suffering by entrusting ourselves to God, who judges righteously. (1 Peter 2:21-25)

**Think about it:** Read Psalm 10:1-6. Describe the thoughts and behavior of the proud man. In contrast, read Psalm 10:17-18 and record God’s promise to the humble.

Read James 4:6,7 and 1 Peter 5:5-9 What is source of the battle for humility?

“By acknowledging pride, we are declaring what Satan refused to declare - that we are dependent on God.” (Restored, page122) What kind of suffering has pride caused in my life?

Two Types of Pride

*Obvious pride is a focus on one’s might, riches, knowledge, or beauty*. Outward pride somehow believes that I am responsible for the gifts God has given.

*If we are trapped in hidden pride, we pity our position in life and fail to believe what God says is true about us.* God says that we are His special treasure, so valued that He sent His only son to die for us. God wants us to reach our highest potential in Christ!

The Bible speaks of obvious pride and hidden pride in Philippians 2:3 where it says to do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit. Selfishness is a focus on one’s inner pain and feelings of rejection. It develops into self-pity and a desire to protect oneself vs. letting God protect you. Hidden pride keeps us from being able to respond or care for others’ needs. The opposite side is the warning in the same verse against empty conceit or outward pride. The answer God says is to be humble minded by believing what God says is true about us and by regarding one another as more important than ourselves. (Phil 2:3)

**Think about it:** Ahab had a desire to advance himself and control others (obvious pride). Read what happened when Ahab’s desire for Naboth’s vineyard was thwarted in 1 Kings 21:4. How did Ahab’s response to Naboth show hidden pride (devoting attention to his own pain)? Continue reading verses 7-11 in the same chapter. How did his wife’s response to Naboth show obvious pride?

Read 1 Kings 21:17-19, 23. How did God respond to the pride of Ahab and Jezebel? Read 1 Kings 21:27-29. Did either Ahab or Jezebel humble themselves and repent? How did God respond to the repentance?

Both obvious pride and hidden pride keep us from being full of the Holy Spirit as we cannot be full of the Holy Spirit when we are full of ourselves.

How Does God Deal with Pride?

*The book of Proverbs has a lot to say about the consequences of pride.*

* Proverbs 11: 2: “When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.” Pride keeps us from wisdom and honor.
* Proverbs 13:10: “Pride only breeds quarrels, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.” Pride keeps us from unity in the body and from seeking good counsel.
* Proverbs 16:5: “The LORD detests all the proud of heart. Be sure of this: They will not go unpunished.” Pride keeps us from experiencing God’s favor.

*God is not opposed to using pain to deal with the heart of the proud.* Nebuchadnezzar in his pride declared in Daniel 4:30, “Is not this the great Babylon I have built as the royal residence, by my mighty power and for the glory of my majesty?” When he was driven from mankind for 7 years, when he began eating grass like a cow, when he was drenched in sweat, and when his nails were like bird claws, he raised his eyes toward heaven and his reason returned to him.

God is not afraid to use aloneness. God is not afraid to use financial reversals. God is not afraid to strip away appearances to deal with our pride.

“Self–sufficiency has a price,” writes Neil Anderson**.** When the disciples were relying on their own strength in the storm and straining under the weight of it. The Lord intended to pass by. “Go ahead and row against the storms of life. He will let you until your arms fall off, but those who call upon the name of the Lord will be saved.”(Restored, page 115)

True Humility

*The opposite of pride is not low-self-esteem, but humility.* God has a lot to say about the benefits of humility:

* James 4:6 says God gives grace to the humble.
* Psalm 138:6 says He will regard the lowly
* Psalm 40:4 says He will bless those who do not turn to the proud.
* 1 Peter 3:8-9 says that the humble in spirit, who give a blessing, will inherit a blessing.
* Zephaniah 3:12 says a humble people will take refuge in the name of the Lord.
* James 5:16 tells us to confess our sins to one another and pray for one another so we might be healed.

*Jesus demonstrated humility by making God the final authority in His life.* At the beginning of His earthly ministry, Jesus said in John 4:34, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to finish His work. And at the end of His time here on earth, Jesus said in Mark 14:36, “Abba, Father, everything is possible for You. Take this cup from Me. Yet not what I will, but what You will.” Jesus invites us to take His yoke and learn from Him as He is gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your soul! (Matthew 11:29)

Humility is confidence properly placed in God. “That is why we must come to terms with our pride - so we can be established in Christ.” (Restored, page 118) I am not the great I AM, but “by God’s grace I am what I am”! 1 Corinthians 15:10

*Throughout His word, God gives us a picture of His using humble, broken people.* Gideon’s clay pitchers were broken before the light could be released to give us a picture of our lives when they are broken of pride. Mary broke the alabaster box to release the fragrance of her love for Jesus. Jesus’ body was broken so that we might be forgiven, have a rich inheritance, and a home in heaven.

Pride keeps us from the sacrifices and the joys of love relationships with the Lord and one another. If we are going to love others, we must die daily. We must bring the wretched monster of pride to the cross of Christ.

*“By exposing and confessing pride, we are acknowledging our desire to be free from a self-centered and self-sufficient life. (Restored, page 122) We will then be free to begin living by the grace of God, deriving our strength from the great resources in Christ. Let’s begin by praying the prayer on page 122 of Restored found also at the top of page 15 in the Steps booklet.*

*Then pray through the list below on page 123 of Restored or page 15 of the Steps booklet and use the prayer following the list to confess any sins of pride the Lord reveals.*

**Assignment:**

“The one who does not love does not know God, because God is love.” I John 4:8 Let’s get to know God better this week by meditating on the character of God from Psalms such as 23, 25, 91, 103, and 145 this week. Praise Him for His attributes. Ask Him to remind you of how He is displaying His character in your life each day.

# *Restored* Chapter 7

Welcome and Worship

**Welcome*:***Have you ever had a man-made shelter from natural disasters? What are the good and bad points of such a shelter?

**Worship:**Read these verses together and praise God for being your only true stronghold. (Psalm 31:2-3, 91:2-4, and 144:2)

Anatomy of a Stronghold

*A stronghold is whatever has a stronger hold on you than God.* Their goal is to identify the life of the believer apart from God. Strongholds can be my way of handling problems, my salve for my wound, my will for my life and they can have the outward appearance of good. Strongholds are always contrary to the will of God and places where the word of God is impossible to fulfill.

One author used the acronym BEEPS, behaviors, events, experiences, people, or substances to define the nature of the strongholds in the lives of believers. “BEEPS are the things we crave when joy is missing.” Chris Coursey

*The foundation of a stronghold begins with a foothold—a place where the enemy’s flag is planted in our lives. (Eph. 4:26-27)* Satan is never content with a foothold. Imagine a brother and sister sharing a seat together with an imaginary line drawn down the middle by the parents. If it’s like our families, your brother or sister was never content just to have a big toe over the line; they wanted domination.

**Think about it:** Read I Peter 5:5-9, Eph. 4:26-27, 2 Corinthians 2:10-11 Why is the believer told to 'resist' or 'not give place' to Satan? What are some of the strongholds listed in the context of these verses which invite the enemy to gain a foothold with the goal of destruction? What places can anger, anxiety, and bitterness lead?

Since strongholds can be my ointment for my wound, why do people bury or seek to cover the emotional pain from the past instead of taking their pain to God? Remember, many times the pain is a result of our own sin or others sin against us, and sin brings shame.

The Bible also calls strongholds fortresses in 2 Corinthians 10:5. A stronghold is a fortress built one brick at a time**.***Fortresses are where people run in times of fear or hopelessness. Fortresses in the Old Testament were built on the high place but also in the valleys. (Jeremiah 7:31)* Fortresses are where we run when we are pressed. People don’t just build walls toward God or others for fun or beauty. Strongholds in the valleys are usually built as a response to pain, failures, or worldly pressures. Strongholds are where we turn for momentary comfort and offer a counterfeit security. It’s our way of trying to defend or provide for ourselves rather than allowing God to defend and provide.

*Fortresses are also built on the high places. (Amos 7:9)* 2 Corinthians 10 verse 5 says they are speculations and lofty things raised up against the knowledge of God. One Bible teacher put it this way, “Pride stands at the entrance to every prison cell.” When we refuse in pride to believe the truth of who God is, His word, His ways or who we are the enemy has gained a foothold and has the shovel in his hand to begin digging the foundation.

*Fortresses are defended from within and without.* From without they were strengthened with towers, gates, and bulwarks (outer walls as a double means of protection as used in Isaiah 26:1). Nahum 3:8 describes the waters of the Nile which served the same purpose of strengthening the fortress from without. We can defend our strongholds through practicing our justifications with friends and finding others with whom to indulge them. Strongholds can be defended through anger, blame, and accusation when others get close to them.

2 Chronicles 11:11 describes the inner fortification, “He also strengthened the fortresses, and put officers in them and stores of food, oil, and wine.” On a light note, my mom put chocolate in her tornado shelter. Our spiritual fortresses are strengthened inwardly through deception and the lies we believe.

*Strongholds put unhealthy barriers between us. We think they are safe places, but our strongholds can become a prison and our identity*. The Greek word for stronghold is also used for a prison in antiquity. We heard the story of a family who have bars over the windows of their home. No one can get in; no one can get out either. Strongholds keep God and others from our heart. They isolate us and bring us hopelessness instead of life because we accept as unchangeable something that is contrary to the will of God. Read Psalm 74:3-11. Strongholds steal the beauty and the glory from the life of the believer.

Let’s look at a few examples.

* A child is repeatedly shamed through words and actions. They feel they are worthless. To try and diminish their feelings of shame, they begin to indulge in alcohol as a temporary comfort.
* A young adult spoke her opinion in a thorny situation which was met harshly and cruelly. She began to believe the lie that dilemmas bring disaster. She avoids conflict and accept peace at any price.
* A young boy was bullied at school and when he began to cry was made fun of further. He believed the lie that emotions are dangerous. He shut down emotionally to protect himself.
* A young girl was sexually abused. She believes lies about her sexuality, either fearing and freezing or embracing it as a place where power can be gained over others.

Believers caught in strongholds “are subjected to some of the cruelest harassment of the enemy.” (Restored, page 130) First, he tempts them to sin then he mercilessly condemns them for sinning, and then he attacks their sense of worth. Satan uses other believers who don’t know the grace and compassion of God and who become ministers of condemnation. “Adding guilt and shame does not enhance mental health.” The entrapped person is driven into despair.

Our True Stronghold

*There is only one stronghold that will make us stronger.* “Under the image of a fortress inaccessible to any common foot, where there is perfect safety from enemies and persecutors, the Psalmist delights to express his confidence in God.” (https://biblehub.com/topical/f/fortress.htm)

**Think about it**: Read the following Psalms. ([Psalm 9:9](https://biblehub.com/psalms/9-9.htm), [Psalm 18:1, 2](https://biblehub.com/psalms/18-1.htm), [Psalm 46:7](https://biblehub.com/psalms/46-7.htm), 59:16- 17) Thirteen times in the Psalms God is called a stronghold. What words does the Psalmist use to describe God, His stronghold?

Who is God a stronghold for? And when is He a stronghold?

God has a plan for our high places where strongholds are built! “Blessed are you, O Israel; Who is like you, a people saved by the Lord, who is the shield of your help and the sword of your majesty! So your enemies will cringe before you, and you will **tread upon their high places**.” (Deut. 33:29) In a passage talking about the people of God being God’s portion and inheritance, He describes their inheritance, “He made him **ride on the high places of the earth**, and he ate the produce of the field; And He made him suck honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock.” (Deuteronomy 32:13)

“For though we walk in the flesh, we do not wage battle according to the flesh, for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. *We are* destroying arguments and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.” 2 Corinthians 10:3-5

*The way back home begins with repentance.* Repentance is a gift from God. Ask for the gift of repentance. No one turns from sin and to God unless God is the initiator. “Confession is not saying, ‘I’m sorry’. It’s openly admitting, I did it.” (Restored, page 131)

Complete repentance means to submit to God and resist the devil but also close the door to future temptations. We are called as God’s children to abstain from every form of evil whether it be to a person we have an unhealthy emotional or physical bond with or by getting rid of pornography or substances in our homes. Through wounds in the past (perceived and real), lies have been believed leading to the bondage. The lies also need to be confessed and renounced and our minds renewed with the truth of God’s word.

The open door to the enemy’s plans to kill, steal and destroy our lives will be completely closed when all the bondages have been broken and all the mental strongholds have been torn down. (Restored, page 130)

Be encouraged that just as you delighted in a child’s first steps, God is proud of your baby steps. As we talked about earlier, the roots of many of these strongholds came from the wounded places in our hearts and we have God’s promise that He is near to the broken hearted. As He has promised, He will complete the good work that He has begun!

*Let’s begin by praying the prayer at the top of 132 in Restored or page 16 in the Steps booklet. The following list will get us started and it is also helpful to look at the sins of the flesh in Mark 7:20-23, Galatians 5:19-23, and Ephesians 4:25-31. For each one the Lord shows you, there is a prayer of confession following the list.*

In the next part of this step, we want to confess sin using our physical body. “Confession alone won’t resolve this.” (Restored, page 134) When we have sex, there is a bonding that takes place as Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 6:15-20. This is why sex is so powerful; it can be a holy bonding in marriage or an unholy bonding. The enemy doesn’t fight fair and so there is an unholy bond that takes place even in cases of incest or rape. It’s this unholy bond that can cause the victim to act out sexually or shut down sexually. Obviously, in the cases of rape and incest, this isn’t a sin to confess but it is important to renounce every experience and break these unholy bonds in prayers.

*Let’s find the freedom that comes from confessing and renouncing every willful sexual use of your body as an instrument of unrighteousness and ask God to break the bond with that person. We’ll conclude by committing our bodies to the Lord, as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13). You’ll begin with the prayer on page 136 of Restored and proceed through the prayer of commitment on the middle of page 137. In the Step booklet, you’ll use page 17.*

Following there are prayers of repentance for specific topics. “They are an excellent starting point. You will then need to work daily on renewing your mind. Don’t hesitate to seek godly counsel for additional help.” *Trust God for the resources for restoration and repair.*

**Assignment**

In the section below are some wonderful truths to renew your mind.

* *There is not only treatment for sin at the cross but power to live a new life.* Romans 6:5-7 says we are to know this, “Our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin; for he who has died is freed from sin.”

Have you ever trained a dog to “play dead” When the dog is playing dead, you can walk by with the dog’s favorite tempting food and it will not move. As Christians, we don’t have to just play dead. We are to count on the truth from God’s Word that at the cross, our flesh with its desire for sin was nailed to the cross and we can now live as those “alive to God” (Romans 6:11-14) “There is a law of sin and a law of death and those laws cannot be done away with. But they can be overcome by a greater law, which is the law of life in Christ Jesus.” (Restored page 133-34)

Just as the law of aerodynamics overcomes the law of gravity “so the law of the Spirit of life, in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death!” Romans 8:2

Make Galatians 2:20 part of your daily declaration. “I have been crucified with Christ.” It’s a done deal! I choose to live my life by faith as one alive from the dead!

* *The body of Christ is a tremendous resource in restoring and rebuilding* In the New Testament, Jesus brought Lazarus back from the dead, but God used his friends to help him take off the old grave clothes a little at a time so he could live his new life. Who can you meet with to follow God’s commands to “confess your sins one to another and pray for one another, so that you may be healed” (James 5:16) and “encourage one another in love and good deeds” (Hebrews 10:24)?
* *Take God at His word by praying back to God the promises in His word as they pertain to the fight against sin and the rebuilding of your life. Prayer is a tremendous resource in rebuilding.*

When does a gift or a promise become yours? God is just waiting for us to claim our spiritual inheritance through pleading His promises in His word. We claim God’s promises through praying God’s word back to Him in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ.

What are some promises you can persistently claim in rebuilding?

* Put your name in following blanks in 1 Cor. 10:13 and thank God for His promise: “No temptation has overtaken \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ but such as is common to man and God is faithful who will not allow \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ to be tempted beyond what \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ is able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ will be able to endure it.”

“Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: ‘Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.’ He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Christ Jesus, so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit.” Gal. 3:13-14

* Matthew 12:29 says, “How can anyone enter the strong man’s house and carry off his property, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.”

Matthew refers to the enemy of our souls as a strong man who robs us of our life as believers. He robs us of joy, love, peace, and self-control and creates fear, confusion, division, hatred, and devastation. To get back what belongs to us—our love, our joy, our peace, our life, and the lives of our children—God tells us to bind the strong man so we can get back from our enemy what is rightfully ours—our hope, our joy, our peace, self-control, our lives as believers. In other words, we can take back through prayer what God has given to us. What we take back is our plunder. It is our testimony of a transformed life.

* *Pray the prayers of the Psalms against your spiritual enemies* (Psalms 35-55) Psalm 74:4 says that God’s adversaries have roared in the midst of His meeting place. Pray that the enemies of your soul or that the enemies of God will be silenced. The second part of verse four says that God’s enemies have set up their own standard for signs. In other words, when we look at the life of someone who is defined by their strongholds, we no longer recognize them as belonging to the Lord. Pray that God will re-establish your identity as a believer and that the enemy will no longer be allowed to identify who you are. For example, one man believed a lie that he was in his family for laughs.
* *In the New Testament, Christians have the tremendous resource of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Rebuild by the power of the Spirit.* Galatians 5:16 says, “Walk by the Spirit and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.” And Romans 8:13 tells us, “If by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.”
* “BEEPS (behaviors, experiences, events, people, and substances) are things we crave when joy is missing.” (Chris Coursey) At the last supper, Jesus took the bread, gave thanks- “Eucharisteo”. The Greek word “Chara” joy is derived from “charis” grace. This word “charis” used of the Lord's favor. Joy is grace recognized. How is grace recognized? Through Thanksgiving. Thanksgiving is proof positive of trust; there is no joy without trust. This week look through your pictures and find several that remind you of God’s goodness and favor. Share a picture with someone close to you.

# *Restored* Chapter8

Welcome and Worship:

**Welcome**: Share about a good quality that has come through your family tree.

**Worship**: Read Ezekiel 36:25-27, 2 Corinthians 5:17, and Hosea 2:19-20 Let’s take some time to rejoice through thanksgiving in the fact that we are now a whole new creation and forever God’s beloved child.

“Like father, like son.” “The apple doesn’t fall far from the tree.” He’s just a chip of the old block.” We might say, “It runs in the family.” Or we talk about the family black sheep. The abused often become abusers. And those who vow in the flesh never to be like their family members fall prey to similar sins. Our secular culture has sayings that allude to generational sins.

Generational sins are the tendency we have to inherit the spiritual weak spots of our forefathers.

Here is a contrast of two different families: Jonathan Edwards, a famous preacher who called people to repentance, and Max Jukes, a common criminal.

In Jonathan Edwards case, we see the truth that some of our family traits can reflect Christ and bring blessing for generations to come. God’s promises remain to show “faithful love to a thousand generations of those who love Me and keep His commandments, (Exodus 20:6)

1,394 known descendants of Edwards included:

* 13 college presidents
* 65 college professors
* 30 judges
* 100 lawyers
* 60 physicians
* 75 military officers
* 100 pastors
* 60 well known authors
* 3 US Senators
* 80 public servants including ministers to other countries

The descendants of Edwards made contributions of worth that cannot be calculated.

(Researched by Benjamin Warfield, professor at Princeton University)

In contrast, Jukes was a Dutch immigrant who arrived in New York in the 1700’s. He was an alcoholic who couldn’t hold a job.

His 903 descendants included:

* 300 delinquents
* 145 drunkards
* 90 prostitutes
* Over 100 spent an average of 13 years in jail
* 7 convicted of murder

The Jukes family cost the taxpayers of New York over 1.2 million. (As researched by Richard Dugsdale, a sociologist)

Just as we inherit the physical weaknesses of our forefathers, so spiritually the weak spots are the same. The truth of generational sins and iniquities also explains why adoptive parents can have so many struggles.

Generational Sins in God’s Family

*The Old Testament writers understood the truth of generational sins.* Imbedded in the Ten Commandments, is this warning: “I, the Lord am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the 3rd and 4th generations of those who hate me.” David’s sins of immorality became the sins of his sons Absalom, Amnon, and Solomon. Abraham’s sin of deceit became his son Isaac’s sin and his grandson Jacob’s sin. “He walked in the way of his father” is a phrase repeated throughout the history of Israel’s kings.

The prophet, Jeremiah, who lived during the captivity of God’s people and walked the barren streets of Jerusalem, saw the results of a family history in which generations had increasingly turned their backs on God. He wrote this in Lamentations 5:5-7, “*Those who pursue us are at our heels; we are weary and find no rest. We submitted to Egypt and Assyria to get enough bread. Our fathers sinned and are no more, and we bear their punishment.”*

Listen to these words of Jesus as he condemned the Pharisees, whose hearts did not line up with their religious practices: “And you say, `If we had lived in the days of our forefathers, we would not have taken part with them in shedding the blood of the prophets.*’ So, you testify against yourselves that you are the descendants of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of the sin of your forefathers!” (*Matt. 23:29-32)

**Think about it**: Read 2 Samuel 11:1-4, 2 Samuel 12:11-12, and 2 Samuel 16:22. What were the circumstances surrounding David’s sin with Bathsheba? In contrast, what time of day did Absalom’s sin take place? What warning is there about generational sins from the story of David and his son Absalom?Read 1 Kings 11:1-3. How did Solomon multiply David’s sin?

Read the story of repeated sin in generations involving Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 20:2 and Genesis 26:9? What sin did Abraham commit that Isaac repeated?

Peter issues a call to holiness “Be holy as I am holy.” reminding his readers that “you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers.” 1 Peters 1:18 No matter how godly our family of origin futile ways of life (unprofitable ways of life) are part of our heritage.

Dr. Anderson gives three important points about the generational connection to our weaknesses and failings. (Restored, pages144-145)

1. We can genetically be predisposed to certain strengths and weaknesses. However, that doesn’t make us alcoholics, drug addicts, or gay. The choice is still ours. The enemy is like a lion and he likes to go after the weak spots of our family line. While the writer of Hebrews tells us that Jesus is “sympathetic with our weaknesses”, the enemy is not.
2. There are environmental factors including the parent(s) who raised us, the neighborhoods we were raised in, our school and church environment. The process of learning is more caught than taught. The actions of those in our generational line have spoken louder than their words. Jesus said, “A pupil is not above his teacher, but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher.” (Luke 6:40)

Our amazing Creator God designed us with mirror neurons in our brains. The data suggests that when we watch other people’s activities, the mirror neurons automatically make our own motor system active as if we are performing those activities. However, the mirror mechanism in the brain also suggests that we are automatically influenced by what we perceive, thus proposing a plausible neurobiological mechanism for contagion of violent behavior (and possibly empathy).” (2013, The Potential Role of Mirror Neurons in the Contagion of Violence, National Institute of Health, Marco Iacoboni, UCLA School of Medicine

1. The third contributor to our development is spiritual. God blesses those who are obedient to His word to the thousandth generation but the iniquity of the disobedient are passed on to the third and fourth generation. (Exodus 34:7)

**Think about it:** Daniel gives us a beautiful example of confessing the sins of his people. Read Daniel 9:3-15. What pronoun (I, we, they) did Daniel use throughout his prayer? What sins did Daniel confess?

Since we do what we see, can you identify any ways you have been you affected by the sins of your ancestors?

We can’t passively take our place in Christ. If there was gold buried in the back yard, we could still live as paupers if we didn’t claim it. So, we must actively choose to accept our new identity in Christ, free from the curse of the law and take our place in the family of God, receiving in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham. (Galatians 3:13)

Let’s end this lesson by confessing every sin of our generational line that the Holy Spirit brings to mind as Daniel did. These generational sins are anything that has had a strong hold on our family or defined us apart from Christ, both attitudes and actions. “Every family has a history of issues such as mental illnesses, sicknesses, divorce, sexual sins, anger, depression, fear, violence, and abuse.” (Restored, page 71)

We too stand in the promises of God as Daniel did knowing that with the Lord there is “compassion and forgiveness”.

*Let’s begin with the prayer on the bottom of page 145 in Restored working our way through the declaration and prayer on the bottom of page 146 and top of page 147 or on pages 21 and 22 in the Steps booklet.*

Once you’ve completed this process, sit silently for a minute or two. Is it quiet in your mind? Most will sense God’s peace and a clear mind. One woman described it as feeling lighter and lighter with each step and shared she had a peace beyond her imagination.

A small percentage of believers don’t and usually they know that is still some unfinished business with God. God can uncover what He wants you to know when He wants you to know it. When Jesus gave his followers the command to unwrap the grave clothes from Lazarus, who like us was raised from death to life, I’m sure some of the bandages came off in large pieces and others in small. So, it is with our lives as believers as the grave clothes of the old life come off. Some have described this process of becoming like Christian, our sanctification like the peeling of an onion. I encourage you to go through the Steps regularly like a seasonal house cleaning.

“Commit yourself to find out what is right about you, that is who you are in Christ.” “We are not called to dispel the darkness; we are called to turn on the light.” (Restored, page 148)

Let’s close this process of soul detox with what is true about you! Let’s read together aloud the amazing things that God has done for us on pages153-155 of Restored or page 23 of the Steps booklet.

**Assignment:** Let these truths renew your mind day by day, morning and evening. I love the songs of our identity, That’s Who I Am (parts one through four) under the menu entitled “Worship in Spirit and Truth” that are available through the Freedom in Christ app.

“I am not the great ‘I Am,’ but by the grace of God I am what I am.”