



Bitter Free

HOW TO FORGIVE ANYONE

RESOLVE CONFLICT AND OVERCOME ANGER

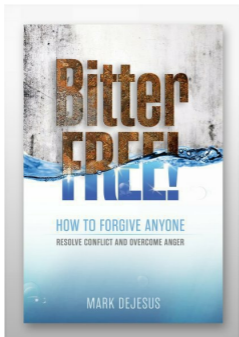
MARK DEJESUS



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*How to Forgive Anyone,
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Overcome Anger*

Mark DeJesus

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How to Forgive Anyone, Resolve Conflict and Overcome Anger

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

10 Reasons Why You Need This Book
vii

1 OFFENSE, UNFORGIVENESS & BITTERNESS

Sins We Often Overlook

2 RESENTMENT

The Record of Wrongs

3 RETALIATION

*Pay for What You
Did!*

4 ANGER, WRATH & RAGE

*A Passionate Flame or Fiery
Inferno?* 37

5 SHUT THE DOOR

***Exposing Open Doors & Triggers to
Anger*** 53

6 ENOUGH IS ENOUGH
***Confronting and Overcoming
Anger*** 65

7 HATRED
***I Withhold Love from
You***
73

8 VIOLENCE & MURDER
***Destroying Others Through Words &
Actions*** 87

9 HOW TO FORGIVE ANYONE
***Living the Bitter-Free
Lifestyle***
97

10 TALKING IT OUT
***Effective Conflict
Resolution***
107

11 LIVING IT OUT
Manifesting the Forgiving

Lifestyle

125

**APPENDIX
SECTION**

**FURTHER
INFORMATION**

DEDICATION

I want to specifically dedicate this book to all those who have been severely hurt and damaged by the words and actions of another human being. I pray the sweat and tears that went into writing this book would reap with your healing and joy.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I want to thank God that He loves us so much and offers forgiveness for us. I thank Him for His grace and patience throughout the journey of learning and growing in how to manifest His heart in our relationships.

I want to thank my family for being a place of safety and comfort. By loving you and being loved by you, I have become a better man. Melissa, I am in awe of your ability to walk with perseverance and unwavering determination. Max and Abby, you are both gifts to me

and I treasure teaching you the importance of forgiveness.

I am grateful to Scott and Martha Michaud for their ability to read through this script so meticulously; helping me to make sure my heart comes across on every page.

I am grateful to everyone who reads this book and applies it. You made this worth it all.

INTRODUCTION

10 Reasons Why You Need This Book

Let's get right to the point:

You need this book. You need everything this book addresses. If you don't think you need it, you are deceiving yourself.

We all have our own ways of choosing what books we will read. We often consider the book's topic and whether we feel it will benefit us or not. Unfortunately, many of us miss out on some jewels of life-giving truth, simply because we quickly assume, "I don't need help on that subject. I'm good." It is this kind of mindset that often leads us down some tough paths, where we pass by simple truths that we "know" in our head, but are not applying in our lives. So, I would rather just tell you at the start, *you need this book* .

For those of you that may need further convincing, let me tell you why addressing the subject of forgiveness, bitterness and anger is so critical to your everyday life—and why you *need* to keep reading.

1. We all deal with being hurt!

I am certain that all of us deal with being hurt and wounded in life. The only way you might be able to avoid this is by living in a cave, but even then a bug will bite you! If you have a pulse and breathe air, the chances are 100 percent that you will be offended or hurt by someone.

We have all been hurt and likely will be again in the near future. We have a decision to make in these situations: will we walk in forgiveness or carry the toxic poison of bitterness? It is a fact that the stronghold of bitterness will take on every human being on the planet in some form or fashion. It's an accurate observation. We can all nod our heads in one accord, knowing we all face situations

that provide opportunities for this bitter root to spring up. We will all be hurt. The question is, *what will you do with that hurt?*

2. Opportunities to Get Offended Will Increase.

Just when you thought maybe things will get easier around you, think again. As each day passes, people are becoming more easily offended, less forgiving and more volatile. Each of us has a choice: to run away and hide, thereby avoiding any chance to impact this generation for good, or to learn to carry a greater level of grace and forgiveness in our lives.

3. You Will Hurt Others from Your Unresolved Hurt.

The saying goes, “Hurt people hurt people.” I would clarify that statement by saying, “People with unhealed hurt, will hurt people.” All of us from time to time in our lives are confronted with painful experiences

and have hurtful interactions. Those who bury the pain or do not work through the process of forgiveness will inevitably spew their toxic wounds onto someone else.

I have seen this happen over and over again. For example, someone new comes into church and very soon starts projecting unhealed issues with the last pastor and leadership team into the new environment. With very little knowledge of people's true character, they create a lens that is very critical of those leading the church. Most of the time, it has absolutely nothing to do with the people being attacked. You are not really just mad at your current husband or wife, but are actually stirred up with unresolved issues from a past relationship that are now coming to the surface.

Toxic feelings towards another person rarely have anything to do with the current relationship, but rather the unresolved issues with a previous relationship that are now being projected onto the current one. If you don't

forgive people from your past, your past will follow you and will continue to wreak havoc on your relationships.

4. Without God's Help, It Can Be Impossible to Forgive.

In the 20 years I have spent helping people, the stories of pain I have witnessed have blown my mind. I honestly came close to giving some a “pass” on having to forgive, simply because, from a natural perspective, it seemed impossible. Even in my own life, I have interacted with hundreds of people that have done or said hurtful things to me. Many committed these actions unknowingly, while others seemed like they planned them out for years. I have been left wondering at times how people could commit such unloving acts.

I want to take a moment and connect to your pain. You are probably reading this book because there's some kind of pain or block preventing you from making progress in your life. I'll guarantee you have been through some

stuff. You may have seen and experienced things no human being should. You may have made up your mind that you don't want to forgive, or maybe you just don't feel like you can.

I want to bring you good news today. You actually *can* forgive. In fact, with proper help, you can learn to forgive almost anybody, especially if the Spirit of the Forgiver lives inside of you.

5. You Probably Have Not Been Taught *How* to Forgive

If you grew up in church, every once in a while you most likely heard that you should forgive people, but for the most part, this subject was often glazed over. When it was addressed, it was simply stated, "You're supposed to forgive, so make sure you do it." Yet, when it came to actually applying that forgiveness, no one walked you through the process of how to actually forgive those that have hurt you in your life.

If you did not go to church, your experience was probably much the same. Your role models were not always stellar. You heard people tell you to forgive, while you watched them hold grudges against everyone around them. You observed family members who no longer spoke to one another, or business startups that failed because two partners could not get along. Most likely, unforgiveness had a role in the millions of divorces that have occurred over the decades. It was a rarity if anyone ever sat down with you and helped you learn to process forgiveness regarding those who hurt you.

6. Your Health Depends on It.

No matter what has happened to you, please understand that your life depends on you being able to learn to forgive. Many people become sick and die because of the bitter entanglements left in their heart. Some stubbornly take bitterness to the grave, and quite often an early grave because of it.

Meanwhile, many others live in emotional and mental torment because of their unforgiving heart. Doctors and medical practitioners know that the power of forgiveness can increase chances of healing. Could it be that unresolved bitterness and unforgiveness are making and keeping you sick? This is your chance to take your health back.

7. Forgiveness Shows Us the Love of God.

One of the greatest ways we can experience the love of God is to personally understand that God sent His Son to come and die on the cross, so that we could have forgiveness of our sins. *“God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us”* (Romans 5:8). Those who receive the forgiveness of God, available in Christ Jesus, can experience a love that is unmatched in the entire world. To be forgiven is to be loved.

Remember the woman who washed Jesus’ feet? Through this interaction, our Lord

pointed out the relationship between love and forgiveness. He said, *“Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.”* (Luke 7:47). Jesus is connecting the relationship between forgiveness and love. When we experience a greater measure of forgiveness, we encounter a greater depth of love. Our dimension to receive forgiveness from God and give it out to others will also determine our ability to manifest the fullness of God’s love.

8. We are Commanded to Forgive.

Many people who teach about the forgiveness of God point out that it is free. It is . . . kind of. There is one catch. God’s forgiveness is free if you also give it out freely. The moment you make forgiveness towards others optional or conditional, God deals with you the same way.

It is mentioned in the Scriptures that if we do not forgive others, our heavenly Father

will not forgive us. [1] This is one of the most sobering statements in all of Scripture. While God pours out His forgiveness on *everyone* who will believe and receive, He is very concerned that we extend forgiveness to others, to the point that the power of His forgiveness towards us is at stake. Don't ask me exactly how this plays out eternally, but I don't want to find out. I got a free gift of forgiveness that had a command attached to it: *give this out to others freely.*

9. Your Progress in Life Depends on It.

There may be an area of your life where you seem to be going around the mountain with little fruit. You may have a block that is impeding you from making progress in life. Maybe you are financially stuck or continually have the same limitations in life. Your career or ministry might be at a plateau. This may be due to the fact that God wants you to deal with forgiving and releasing someone. This is preventing you from moving forward.

For example, I have watched people who have been treated unfairly at previous places of employment, and were struggling with their current job, too. When they were able to release heart-felt forgiveness, a better job with higher pay opened up for them. I have seen financial provision drop on people, seemingly out of nowhere, when they learned to forgive someone who financially used or cheated them.

We can complain about past dealings all we want, and feel justified with our position. But in the end, we will remain stuck if we do not learn to release the forgiveness and blessing of God on those who do not seem to deserve it.

10. As Christ's Return Draws Closer, You Must Become Equipped to Forgive.

Jesus warned us in Matthew 24 about the last days. It is then that false prophets will arise and many people will end up falling into deception. How could this happen? Because

bitterness can cloud our perception, opening us up to deception on many levels.

Through these warnings, He also describes some startling signs of the end times: many will be offended and people will betray and hate one another. In addition to that, the love inside of people will become cold. These will all be signs of bitterness and unforgiveness having its work in the land! Those who endure to the end and live as overcomers will be those who learn not to let hurt and betrayal take them out, but continue to release the love, grace and forgiveness of God to others.

I know I said ten, but I had to add one more:

11. Those Who Forgive Regularly Have the Best Relationships.

The best people to connect with are the ones who are the least “high maintenance.” Those who are on the higher maintenance list are often those who are easily offended and less prone to quickly forgive and move on.

Those who have developed their forgiveness muscles are great to interact with because they keep short accounts. They spend very little time mulling over the past wrong of others and as a result can spend more time focusing on future possibilities and opportunities.

People who are forgiving carry the grace of God in their lives and others love being around them. Why not become one of those people?

The Goals for this Book

For many, their lives and health are at stake in regard to this subject, so I want to be concise regarding the goals for this book. In it, I will walk you through discerning the work of bitterness and how to begin to walk out daily forgiveness and releasing of toxic thinking in your life. I will help you understand:

1. What bitterness is and how it works to defile you and those around you.
2. What makes up the root of bitterness

and how to become untangled from bitterness's root system.

3. How to better discern the work of offense and stay free from its trap.
4. Learn how to forgive absolutely anyone who has wronged you in any way.
5. Get to the root of your anger battles. Move beyond anger management and into overcoming anger!
6. Become a person who can forgive on a daily basis.
7. Release yourself from any ways of bitterness that may be hindering your health, wholeness, sanity and progress in life.

The Root of Bitterness

To understand this book, you will need to see that bitterness has a structure to it. There are friends of bitterness that keep its root system intact; underlings that reinforce the

work of Satan whose desire is to keep you from walking in the freeing power of love, grace and forgiveness. We will explore each of these tentacles in this book.

The Armor & Strategy of Bitterness



1

OFFENSE, UNFORGIVENESS & BITTERNESS

Sins We Commonly Overlook

Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you receive them, and you will have them. And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses.

Mark 11:24-26

Growing up, I heard this passage preached on all the time. People sought to raise their prayer life to a higher level by learning to speak to the obstacles in their life, commanding mountains to be moved. I rarely heard anyone teach on the second part of this passage, however, which is equally important for the moving of mountains .

Jesus tells us that while we are standing in a “mountain moving” position of prayer, we need to consider if we have anyone to forgive. The reason we are taught this is because not forgiving someone can give that mountain a legal right to keep its position and not budge an inch. In addition, withholding forgiveness from others will not only prevent your mountain moving abilities, it will also clog up your relationship with God. He says that even His forgiveness towards you will be withheld unless you give others what you have been freely given.

Here are some signs that you carry unforgiveness in your life:

1. There are certain people you absolutely cannot talk about.
2. There are people that when you think about them or see them, you get a pain in your gut.
3. You walk down a different hallway or aisle when you see a certain person. (And not just because they may take a lot of your time if they see you.)
4. You speak in passive aggressive ways or with constant negative sarcasm about someone continually.
5. You have very judgmental thoughts and speak judgmental words about other people.

Forgiveness is a gift from God that connects us to the power of His love and grace. The more we experience forgiveness, the more we truly understand God's love and His abounding grace. While forgiveness is a powerful weapon for good, unforgiveness is a deadly evil noose, ensnaring people in a trap of

offense and poisoning them with the toxicity of bitterness. If bitterness is allowed into our lives, its ways will infiltrate and defile every part of our being, poisoning our mind, our spiritual walk and even hindering physical health. Bitterness will destroy us and our relationships while distorting our vision with a lens that allows us to be easily offended.

The Trap of Offense

Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

Matthew 18:7

Jesus warned us that in the last days offenses would come. In other words, the opportunity to be offended will increase. In fact, the King James Version says “it must be that offenses come.” Jesus was not doing anything to try and stop it. God knows if an offense comes your way, it will reveal if there is any area in your heart where forgiveness is needed.

The truth is, what offends you, reveals you. There is no doubt that you will have many opportunities to become offended. Regardless of where you live, you will have many occasions to get mad at someone for something or look at them and ask, “What did you just say?!” The question is, “What will you do with that offense?”

Offense in Scripture

There are multiple references to the word *offense* in Scripture, but there are two that we need to be aware of as we learn how to avoid getting entangled in the trap of bitterness.

1. Becoming offended by the Word of God or the ministry of God. A big trend today is “political correctness” which is doing everything possible to make sure no one is offended. The list is growing larger and larger of things you cannot say, words you cannot use and sayings that cannot be said, because someone may be offended.

The problem is that the truth of God will often offend people, especially those who need to hear it. Jesus Himself constantly offended people with His teachings and actions. In Peter's writings to the church, Jesus is actually called a "Rock of offense" (1Peter 2:8) to those who are disobedient and unbelieving. The reality is that those who are most offended by God's Word are often those who need to hear it most. Their response to offense reveals their heart's condition whereby they actually have a resistance to truth. They may look spiritual, but they stumble in their ability to be corrected.

This is a day where pastors and teachers are often trained to avoid offending people in an effort not to lose their tithers and attenders. Our Lord was quite the opposite. Jesus would flunk most modern day ministry evaluations. He offended people constantly. In fact, it appears as though Jesus often went out of his way to offend people. In John 6, Jesus tells the crowd to *eat His flesh and drink His*

blood . After hearing this message, people started leaving and walking away. In response to this, Jesus did not take a poll or recant His words. He pushed it even further, looking at His disciples and asking, “Does this offend you? Do you want to leave too?” His message would sift the crowd to see who was really in it to win it.

In Matthew 15, Jesus insults a woman whose daughter had an evil spirit tormenting her. She comes begging for mercy and Jesus’ first response was to ignore her. That wouldn’t fly in about 95% of churches today! His disciples urged Jesus to address her need and He replies with further coldness, saying, “*I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*” (Matthew 15:24). Just when you think it was bad enough, the woman comes forward, begging for mercy and even worshipped Him. His response: “*It is not good to take the children's bread and throw it to the little dogs*” (Matthew 15:26).

How would you respond to this? “*This*

Son of God doesn't care for anyone! Do you think I am going to ever support His ministry? Don't think so. I am outta here!" That is probably what most would say.

Instead, the woman revealed her un-offendable heart in her response: *"Yes, Lord, yet even the little dogs eat the crumbs which fall from their masters' table."* Then Jesus answered and said to her, *"O woman, great is your faith! Let it be to you as you desire."* And her daughter was healed from that very hour" (Matthew 15:27-28).

His harsh statement was given to see if her heart was in the right place. *Was she able to walk through offense and still go after God, or would she be easily taken out, as many believers are today, losing their faith over petty issues?*

Be careful that you do not become easily offended by truth that comes to you. More often than not, God will bring a message to you in a package that is not exactly like you. The person may have imperfections that turn

you off or mannerisms that are much different than yours. God is looking to bring you to a new level and he may use someone that creates friction inside of you to bring you to a new place. It doesn't mean you need to become best friends with them, just be open to the vessels God may be sending your way.

Unfortunately, many will easily get taken out by the truth of God. It reveals they are not in it with God to follow Him to the end. They want comfort, convenience or ease, which is not what the Christian life is about. There are battles, disappointments, troubles and challenges. These all serve as opportunities to remove any places in our hearts where we are easily offended. This again brings to mind and further illustrates Matthew 24:

And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who

endures to the end shall be saved. Matthew
24:10-13

I love the cry of the psalmist, which describes well how we should pursue God in all things. *“Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.”*

Psalms 119:165 (KJV). Sadly, I have witnessed first hand people falling to the spiritual wayside, either because the Word of God brought a standard of change they didn't want to pursue, or the Christian life became too hard. God will not seek to please or medicate our every itch, complaint and discomfort. He is looking for people who know how to endure until the very end, which usually includes being able to handle tough times, where the Word of God confronts things in your heart that need change or you are challenged at the depth of your being. This is what separates the overcomers from the masses.

2. Being offended by someone else's hurtful, harmful actions or motives towards

us. For definition purposes, an offense is *the initial action, real or perceived, by someone that pierces your heart, upsets or hurts you* . It is a potential trap that the enemy lays in our hearts, which will ensnare us if not cast out, allowing the poison of bitterness to seep into our system. This happens countless times a day all around the world, where so many are very easily offended and pulled into deeper thought systems of bitterness.

We all have offensive actions presented against us. We have a choice to not give into the offense and forgive the person and move on; or we can begin to hold onto the pain or record of that act. This is where bitterness continues its deadly mission.

An offender who commits the offense is often someone who is perceived as doing something for their own benefit, protection or survival, all at your expense. It may be a betrayal, an act of abuse, a verbal wounding or even a lack of action that pierces your heart and wounds you. A spirit of offense usually

attacks you when someone who was supposed to love you, protect you and cover you, does not.

Don Colbert says “An offense is similar to a grudge. It is any circumstance or complaint that is perceived as unjust or hurtful.” [2] Offense often sets in through perceived betrayal. I say perceived because this could be an actual betrayal or something that we see as betrayal, but because we don’t have all the facts or don’t understand the other side, our reasons for feeling betrayed may be inaccurate. Either way, the sense of betrayal gives offense a breeding ground to fester.

The Scandalous Trap

We can hold a spirit of offense against God, ourselves or other people. The word offense in the Greek language is the word *skandalon* , which has a root like our modern day word, *scandal* . This word *skandalon* speaks of a trap or a snare, similar to the “old-school” traps they would set up for animals in

the woods. There would be some kind of bait put into the middle of the trap to lure the animal into the snare. Once the animal would take hold of the bait, the trap would spring and the sharp teeth would snap into the animal's body; keeping it held until the hunter could come and take hold of the animal.

What is true in the natural is also true in the spiritual. ***A spirit of offense is the trap that Satan uses to draw you into bitterness.*** The bait that lies in the trap is usually some kind of hurt or wound that is created through a relationship. Once the bait is taken and the trap is triggered, the sharp teeth bite into your spirituality, releasing a deadly poison into your system, allowing bitterness to take root. This poison allows an unforgiving mindset to take hold. Unforgiveness then says, "this person did something wrong and does not deserve forgiveness."

Those who struggle with deep rejection strongholds will become very prone to being offended easily, because they perceive all of

life through a negative lens, causing them to think people are always against them. This broken heartedness keeps them open to the voice of offense, bitterness and unforgiveness.

Many people, because of their fear of confrontation, never deal with their offender, so they end up internalizing the bitterness. This pattern becomes incredibly deadly, because after a period of time, the person no longer even remembers what they are mad about. They become critical, anger prone and emotionally cranky, because they have not learned to process conflict with other people.

We have to learn to kick out offense at the bud; otherwise the root system of bitterness gets out of control. Like the Proverb writer says, “*A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city*” (Proverbs 18:19). I have witnessed this to be true more times than I would like to admit. This is why Jesus said, “Woe!” regarding the person who gets offended.

Drinking Poison While Expecting the Other Person to Die

The Bible gives us a very stern warning about what bitterness will do in our lives. Hebrews 12:15 tells us when we let a root of bitterness spring up, we “*fall short of the grace of God.*” Most people see the phrase *fall short from grace* or *fall from grace* as meaning a big mess up in marriage or some kind of ethical mishandling. Although this can be true, the Bible speaks about falling from grace as someone who becomes bitter! We never hear that talked about.

Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled. Hebrews 12:15 (KJV)

Notice the Scriptures here say that bitterness troubles *you* ! We get all knotted up about the other person and how wrong they were. Meanwhile bitterness is giving *us* trouble. The word bitterness literally means *poison* and that is exactly what it does—

poisons us. When we allow bitterness into our lives, it is truly like we are drinking poison while waiting for the other person to be harmed.

Unresolved bitterness will give us a world of trouble. It will make us sick and keep us sick. It is often the number one block to healing and health. Millions of people all over the world die prematurely because of unresolved bitterness issues that remain in their life. Bitterness can open us up to all kinds of insanity, by defiling our view on how we see life. Bitter roots and unforgiveness will rob us of divine peace, opening the door for struggles with anxiety, panic attacks, oppressive thoughts, confusion and depression.

The body responds to our thoughts, so when bitterness takes root within our thinking, there is a negative effect that takes place in our biology. Thoughts that are spawned by bitterness, and its friend's unforgiveness and anger, to name just a few, can unleash a myriad of illnesses and diseases throughout the

body.

Healing ministries are arising that are discerning the connection that bitterness issues have with the body's health and healing. [3] Right now, and in the years to come, I believe there will be an awakening to how destructive thinking directly affects the body's ability to be whole. As a part of healing ministry, we must learn to take into consideration where toxic thinking has deeply affected us, with bitterness being at the top of the list.

Bitterness, unforgiveness and anger issues can deeply affect the body in a negative way, causing it to break down or lose its ability to fight off illness. Ministries such as *Be In Health*, based out of Thomaston, Georgia have observed, along with other ministries, the following issues that often have bitterness, unforgiveness and unresolved anger as a root cause. Our ministry work has also confirmed and validated these observations. [4]

- High Blood Pressure: if obesity is not a factor, it can often have chronic worry or

unresolved anger as a root issue.

- Chronic swelling and inflammation issues such as arthritis and inflammation in the joints can be caused by bitterness and anger towards others or even towards self.
- Degeneration issues such as osteoarthritis, where there can be possible issues of bitterness and anger towards self.
- Aneurysms can have deep bitterness and anger struggles, along with bitterness towards themselves.
- Bitterness and deep-seated anger can drive any manifestation of heart disease. Chronic fear can partner with bitterness, unforgiveness and anger in this area. Hope deferred can also be a key factor.
- Varicose veins, blood clots and hemorrhoids can potentially have resentment, anger and rage as root issues.
- High cholesterol (especially if obesity is not a factor) can be rooted in people who struggle with anger issues, especially

intense anger towards themselves.

- Cancer can have bitterness as a driving root cause. Unresolved bitterness in a key relationship, combined with relational disconnect out of deep hurt, where the person emotionally shuts down as a result of unresolved pain, can result in the immune system shutting down as well.
- Certain specific diseases, like breast cancer or ovarian cysts can have unresolved bitterness between two females as a driving root issue.
- Autoimmune diseases, where the body's immune system is attacking itself, can be the possible result of someone who is very hard on themselves and struggles with bitterness and anger towards self.
- Premature aging can come from unresolved bitterness issues, causing the cells in the body to become toxic.

With all this trouble that bitterness brings,

the destruction does not end with you. Its mission is that “*many be defiled.*” The poison wants to quickly spread into all your relationships, to as many people as possible. That is why when you get hurt, one of the first things bitterness trains you to do is get people on your side of what happened, so you feel justified in your position. You think you are just sharing and getting people to empathize. Meanwhile, bitterness is taking over by releasing defilement into every possible place.

There are three main avenues through which the poison of bitterness can be directed. First, you can have bitterness towards others. You can also carry bitterness towards God, which is a growing problem for those who have been given a wrong perspective of God’s nature. In addition, you can carry self-bitterness, where the work of bitterness teaches you to not allow yourself to be forgiven and you struggle to give yourself grace and love in your daily walk.

As we move through this book, you

will see that bitterness has some friends it works with. It first begins with the hook of offense and then moves its unforgiving mindset through a downward spiral of defilement. It brings in a spirit of resentment, which keeps a record of wrongs. Following that is a work of retaliation, which says, *“Something needs to be done about this wrong .”* Anger, wrath and rage come in to create hostility within the person. Then a spirit of hatred comes to cloud our ability to love. Soon after, violence and murder come to execute the vengeance that bitterness trains us in. These areas will each be addressed and this book will empower you to get free from its clutches and to stay free.

Questions for Consideration:

1. In your experience, what makes it easier for people to be offended in today’s world?
2. What makes it hard to let go of an offense issue?

3. In what ways have you seen people become destroyed by bitterness?

2

RESENTMENT

The Record of Wrongs

Your mind has an amazing ability to recall two kinds of experiences in life; the ones that you enjoyed the most and those that brought you the greatest pain. If I were to ask you to recall your wedding day or your first kiss, if it was a pleasant memory, you would be able to recall minute details and intricate particulars that you experienced. In the same way, you can often recall how you found out about the boyfriend that cheated on you—what happened and how it happened.

God created you with a magnificent ability to remember. The word remember tells us what it means: “re-mem-bering” or, *bringing back to our members* something that we need

to keep in mind. With healthy remembering, we can recall the goodness of God and bring to attention the nature of His faithfulness to remain steadfast in all chapters of our life.

The enemy wants to help you remember the pain and hurt of the past, where he can emphasize nothing but the pain and heartache you experienced, with continual playback. He wants to use your memory banks to keep you held in the toxic recollection of these past events. His desire is to train you to carry memories in bitterness, so that the very thought of an event or a certain person brings an ache to your heart. This is the work of *resentment* .

Resentment is the mental rolodex that is used to keep track of the harmful actions people have enacted against us. Resentment's specific assignment from the enemy is to tutor you in continually meditating on the offense and to focus on the hurt that it caused. The work of resentment causes you to focus on the pain so much that you don't remember any of

the good things. This attention to the negative causes your memory of the past to become tainted. You see life through a lens that shows only black and white. It was either all good or all bad, with it mostly leaning to all bad.

A spirit of resentment is what makes kicking bitterness out so challenging for many. They have allowed a record of wrong to become their way of living. The constant replay of wrongs against them becomes a normal way of life. Resentment trains people so that they don't know how to use their memory for anything other than recalling the bad news of the day or the past.

Most people can't take the pain of the "constant resentment recall," so they just stuff it down, thinking they have dealt with it and put the issue away. This is a major lie that people believe, because the resentment simply goes underground undetected. Down the road, when the person becomes a very bitter and critical person, they find they don't even know what the problem is or how they got there .

Resentment can be even more difficult for those with sensitive hearts. Created with a magnificent ability to relate and connect from the heart, their sensitivity is turned upside down, where they are tormented by past memories of hurt, pain and heart-ache. Without proper healing, they attempt to avoid resentment's torment by shoving all their pain down, hoping it will go away. This is why, over time, so many people become hard, dry and cynical about life. Resentment kept the poison of bitterness intact.

Locked in Pain

In his book 'In the Grip of Grace,' Max Lucado, a Christian pastor and author, tells Kevin Tunell's story [\[5\]](#) :

Each week Kevin Tunell was required to mail one dollar to a family he would rather forget. They sued him for 1.5 million but settled for \$936.00, to be paid a dollar at a time. The family expected the payment each Friday so that Tunell would not forget what happened on the first Friday of 1982. That's the day their daughter was killed. Tunell was convicted of manslaughter and drunk driving. He was

seventeen. She was 18. Tunell served a court sentence. He also spent seven years campaigning against drunk driving, six more than his sentence required, but he kept forgetting to send his dollar. The weekly restitution lasted until the year 2000. Eighteen years. Tunell made the check out to the victim, mailed it to her family, and the money was deposited into a scholarship fund.

The family took him to court four times, during the 18 years, for failure to pay. After the fourth appearance, Tunell spent 30 more days in jail. He insisted that he was not defying the court order but rather he was haunted by the girl's death and tormented by the weekly reminders. Along the way, he offered the family boxes of checks that would more than cover the amount he owed. The family refused. It's not money they sought but vengeance. The mother was quoted as saying, 'We want to receive the check every week on time. He must understand we are going to pursue this until [the end]. We will go back to court every month if we have to.'

As a father of two children, my heart aches when reading stories like this. Every parent can empathize with the pain of a parent who has lost a son or daughter. There is no greater pain than the experience of losing a child. I have sat down with many who have

lost children and walked through the deep valley of pain. It has been my observation that no matter how much healing they go through, there is always a heavy scar on a parent's heart that has experienced this kind of loss.

But resentment makes this kind of pain unmanageable and tormenting in the long run. In this story about Kevin Tunell, what happens when he mails in the last check? Will the family feel healed and resolved? Certainly not. In fact, isn't this scenario even more tormenting for the family? Every time they get a check in the mail, they have to relive their resentment and toil in their pain further. This is what resentment does—keeps us locked into a bitter recollection of the past without any room for healing.

Redeeming the Story

When we remove resentment from our lives, we give God room to take our painful past and heal it. We can see the power of God to take what the enemy meant for evil and use

it for our healing and the healing of others. The word redemption means *to be bought back* . When we forgive, we give God room to buy back our past and give it a healed perspective for the good of our future. When we remain in resentment, we keep a historical perspective on our past that is dim. This becomes projected onto our future.

There's an old joke that portrays resentment. One day a couple was in marriage counseling and the man began to complain to the therapist saying, "Every time we argue, my wife gets historical." The counselor responded, "Do you mean hysterical." The man replied, "That would be easy to deal with. I mean she becomes historical. She drags up everything I have ever done wrong." [6] Resentment causes a person to carry a heavy load of hurt into conversations or situations, where one conflict can unleash a vast amount of ammunition onto another person.

Myths that Keep People Locked in

Resentment

1. Time Heals. Time passing alone does not heal a thing. In fact, time passing can make things much worse! ***Time only heals wounds that have been confronted and healed.*** Wounds that have not been treated will fester, become infected and get inflamed. Many just shove it down, stating “the past is the past.” The past is not the past if you can never talk about it. That is a sign that bitterness is hiding below the surface. Some Christians like to justify their resentment and bitterness by saying, “It’s all under the blood.” Yet it is never under the blood if it has never been brought into the light of God and His forgiving power. Others move away, hoping they can escape the pain by changing geographic locations, unaware of all their toxic strongholds that go in the moving truck with them to their next location.

2. Justification: We often feel justified in not forgiving someone, saying, “I have a right to hold on to this.” We then create

standards to determine what is worthy of forgiveness and what is not. Instead of seeking to release forgiveness to ALL who have wronged us, resentment teaches us to walk through life using this grading scale. If we see the issues as extremely hurtful and unjust, we feel validated in our hearts to hold onto the issues against the person without giving forgiveness. When the issue involves a huge betrayal, financial dishonesty or an abusive experience, we tend to feel justified in our thoughts while holding resentment against that person. This is the mindset of a “grudge.”

The Grudge

Resentment allows a grudge to make a home in our hearts. The grudge causes us to hold something against someone that we have not forgiven or let go of. Those who operate with grudges feel extremely justified in their position. In fact, one author expressed his right to hold a grudge. Listen to his words, not unlike what many express, that fuel the work of resentment:

I may be outnumbered, but I still believe in the healing power of the grudge. I've deployed grudges with an equal-opportunity sense of fairness - against teachers and classmates, bosses and colleagues, family and friends. I've chosen to stop speaking to certain people permanently and occasionally even spoken ill of them - but more with incredulity than a sense of revenge. I'm neither proud nor ashamed. But I've discovered that nothing feels quite as satisfying as a grudge well nursed.

I had a boss who took a dislike to me from my first day on the job, even though she hired me. There were no complaints about my performance, but I later learned she'd lied to co-workers about me. Without explanation, she laid me off after only ten weeks, just before Thanksgiving. I had a family to support. Was I to forgive her? Should I now? Give me one good reason. My grudge against her balanced out that injustice, somehow righted the universe. It has kept me warm on many a cold night.

Under the new mandate of blanket absolution, should I forgive the cousin who invited us to dinner only to make an Amway pitch? Or the friend who sent me a public relations client and then harassed me for months for a 10 percent finder's fee ?

I'm not against forgiveness per se; I have forgiven people for rudeness as well as for deep misunderstandings and

have done so without holding on to hard feelings. What I deplore is the propaganda about forgiveness. No longer an option, forgiveness is an edict. Forgiving so democratically cheapens the very act. A long standing grudge suggests that we hold certain standards, that we respect ourselves enough to reject bad behavior. Failure to forgive can be just as righteous, just as honorable as forgiveness itself.

When someone apologizes, however, with sincerity, not calculation, it can make a difference. I had a close friend in high school who ditched me after college and has avoided me for all the decades since. At our 15th high school reunion, I had the chance to ask him why. He said that I had always made him feel inferior, as if he gave offense.

And he had a point: I'd made fun of him - I'd thought good-naturedly - until he withdrew. Face-to-face at our reunion, I apologized. He declined. I know how it feels to go unforgiven. And guess what? It feels deserved. [7]

A classic example of resentment gone wild is the infamous bitter feud between the Hatfield and McCoy families. What started as a seemingly small conflict escalated into revenge, violence and murder. This defiling escapade was fueled over and over by

unresolved resentment and grudge-focused thinking. In fact, this bitterness and resentment was passed down into the generations, to people who don't even really understand what the squabble was originally about.

There is actual research revealing that the ancestors of the Hatfield and McCoy families are experiencing the deadly effect of inherited bitterness. The associated press reported the following:

The most infamous feud in American folklore, the long-running battle between the Hatfields and McCoys, may be partly explained by a rare, inherited disease that can lead to hair-trigger rage and violent outbursts. Dozens of McCoy descendants apparently have the disease, which causes high blood pressure, racing hearts, severe headaches and too much adrenaline and other "fight or flight" stress hormones. [8]

As you can see, bitterness and anger can run in families, having the propensity to perpetuate resentment and unforgiveness throughout their lives. We must all realize we are carriers of unresolved bitter root issues that have been passed down through the

generations. If we do not choose to take responsibility and overcome, we can be doomed to make the same relational decisions that will result in the same destructive outcomes.

Passive Approach

No one likes to be known as a bitter person. As a result, many take a subtle or passive approach with their resentment. This often comes in the form of sarcasm, jokes and passive aggressive statements. They run rampant in today's society, especially because too few people ever face each other and have a healthy confrontation. Instead of talking to the person who has wounded them, I have watched too many take the cowardly route, which usually starts with telling everyone except the offender themselves.

We often use sarcasm as a “safe” way to communicate our irritation, without ever having an honest conversation where we can love a person into healing. Instead we throw

jabs as jokes or toss around coarse jesting as a way to tiptoe around the issue, hoping the person will get the hint and change. They never do.

When I was single, it always bothered me when couples would use sarcasm and jokes to point out their spouses' flaws. They would at times rank on the other person in public or rank on them when they were not around. This drove me nuts, especially because it came across as so dishonoring of their spouse! Yet, when I got married, I personally saw how little arguments or major disagreements, if not handled, can end up as content for future jokes and jabs. Although we can joke back and forth about our flaws and laugh about them together in our home, I have really worked hard to not allow these jokes to be the conduit for trying to bring a point across.

When dealing with the healing of disease and issues of the body, Dr. Caroline Leaf states that research has found that

couples that have especially sarcastic and argumentative discussions heal 40 percent slower than those who do not engage in those patterns. [9] Most marriages that fall apart usually have a pattern of resentment that has never been broken. They keep a record of the other person's flaws and annoying behaviors, without allowing proper forgiveness to flow. Usually the big blowup arguments are the ones where resentment has taken an issue and let it fester over time, making an impending argument a dangerous one.

A Record Against Yourself

Some people are in a deep bondage of self-resentment, where they hold a record of wrong against themselves. Condemnation, guilt and feelings of “never being good enough” rule their thinking. People can become so hard on themselves that the pressure is overpowering. This keeps them from ever receiving and experiencing the grace and forgiveness of God.

Personally, I found this to be a tremendous battle in my own heart. Satan trained me to easily keep a record of my past failures, shortcomings and weaknesses, while holding it all against me. I could feel disqualified in a second if I listened to these impressions. Over time the pressure would build up so much that the stress was unbearable at times. I had to recognize that God was not putting this pressure on me, nor was He holding all this stuff against me in my thoughts. I had to let myself off the hook! Maybe you do, too .

Dangerous to Ignore

Resentment is not an issue we can play

with or allow to fester for any amount of time. If resentment is not dealt with, bitterness brings in its friends to help the defilement cause; retaliation and revenge. Yet if we repent from resentment and its ways, we allow the Holy Spirit to cleanse our memory's file cabinet and see people in a healthy light.

First Corinthians 13 teaches us that love does not keep a record of wrong. When bitterness is in the picture, love gets pushed away. The power of love drives out bitterness by teaching you to live a life where you keep short accounts on people. The more you “keep score” in your relationships, the more you are welcoming a spirit of resentment as a friend in your life. Instead, God teaches us to love our enemies and pray for the people that come against us. He also teaches us that we should owe no man anything except our love. If there is any record we should have, it should be God's record of what He has done for us and the blessing that people have been in our lives.

Questions for Consideration

1. Can you remember a time where resentment caused you to remember a past event through a tainted lens and you ended up blowing it out of proportion?
2. What are some ways you can see where resentment ruins relationships; friendships, marriages, etc?
3. How would you advise someone to get resentment out of their life?

3

RETALIATION

Pay For What You Did!

The tragic events of September 11, 2001 rocked the United States. The attacks took advantage of a vulnerable place in our country's security and our sense of safety was threatened. Thousands of families mourned the loss of friends and relatives who were gone as a result of that day. This grief quickly turned to a need to retaliate against those who were responsible.

Within days of September 11, a series of war efforts were started and America began rallying the armed forces, eventually sending troops to Afghanistan and Iraq. The country unanimously supported this effort as we saw the nation unite together. Americans lined the

streets, chanting “USA! USA!” Congress was overwhelmingly supportive of the President to act as Commander and Chief to proceed with an armed response. Although it was not a country or nation that attacked us, Americans did not care who we attacked. They *just wanted to bomb someone for what happened.*

Years later, Americans started changing their tune as they were still dealing with the outcome of those decisions. Our troops were in both Iraq and Afghanistan and the financial and emotional toll was building at home. Suddenly, people were not in support of the war like they were before. One day they were screaming for leadership to do something, anything, in response to the attack and now they were suddenly critical of the efforts undertaken to do so. Congressmen began backpedaling, claiming they were never for the invasion in the first place. It was quite a reversal.

My intent in recalling this story is not to criticize in any way our country’s decision to go to war. It is the job of a nation to protect

itself and respond accordingly to certain threats. My goal is to help you see in a large setting, as between nations, what a retaliation response does. It causes us to emotionally respond, where we shoot first and ask questions later. While it is natural for nations to respond in such a way to protect its people, it is not the way of God for an individual to live using a retaliatory response mechanism in relationships.

When I address retaliation, I am not talking about a response to someone who is punching you in the face, where you need to defend yourself. I am talking about how unresolved resentment will lead us into a retaliatory way of thinking, which leads us to passionately hope that we get even and the other person will “get what they deserve.”

Counterfeit Response to a Wrong

In the “world’s” terms, retaliation is a hope that something bad happens to a perpetrator or offender. In Christian circles,

retaliation is more hidden. With “Christian retaliation,” We feel justified or vindicated if something bad happens to the other person. We celebrate inwardly when they are not doing well or suffering in some way. “Worldly retaliation” would be pushing someone in front of a bus. “Christian retaliation” is secretly rejoicing that they got hit by a bus.

Retaliation’s language is “an eye for an eye” or “we need to get even.” It trains us to believe in repaying evil for evil, to exact some kind of revenge or strike back. Retaliation can say, “you and I do not belong here. One of us needs to go.” Retaliation bases its work on resentment, taking the record of wrongs to a place of action, by either enacting the response yourself, or hoping within that something will happen to “teach them a lesson.”

Many people do not think they operate in retaliation, simply because they don’t act violently in response to their hurt. Retaliation, however, will have them going to other people to convince others of their side of the story and

tear down the other person. They can use every subtle means to put down the other person and gain sympathy for themselves. Gossip and slander always arise out of these situations.

There are other passive ways that we can engage in retaliation. The classic is the silent treatment or withdrawal of communication. We can withhold good from someone or refrain from giving a blessing out of retaliation. We can even act in retaliation against God by withholding worship, ceasing to read the Word or ceasing from prayer .

Retaliatory Words

The biggest way that mankind operates in retaliation is through our words. We begin to say things about and against another person, group or association in a way that dishonors them, and causes others to engage in that defiling communication. One person is hurt. They bring up a negative view of someone in a subtle way as to get the pot stirred. Soon others take the hook and begin to express the same

distaste. Within moments a deadly work of Satan has entered the interaction, as seeds of discord and division begin to grow.

Just like a country going to war, we must be very cautious in how we respond to hurt. If not, our words will express the defilement in our hearts and will spread the poison to others. All manner of division, strife and disunity can, and often does, stem from words being spoken out of a place of hurt. As the Proverbs writer says, “*Say not, I will do so to him as he hath done to me: I will render to the man according to his work*” (Proverbs 24:29).

Retaliation teaches you to act fast, say something quick, speak your mind, don't hold back and tell 'em how you feel, with little time to think through it. In marriage, retaliatory words can be spoken that you can never take back. The pain that is left can cause another to emotionally limp for years to come. Deep piercings can destroy others, simply from speaking words out of a hurried place of

retaliation.

Many act in self-retaliation against themselves. They speak words against themselves in contempt of their failures, shortcoming or mistakes. Comments such as “How could I be so stupid?” or, “I am never going to recover from this” release arrows into our own hearts. The enemy loves it when we become embittered by retaliating in thought against ourselves.

Give Vengeance to God

The Bible speaks a great deal on this issue. Leviticus records God’s commands regarding revenge, laying the foundation of how we should love our neighbors. It says, *“Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against one of your people, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD”* (Leviticus 19:18 NIV).

God’s Word teaches us to slow down and wait on God, for He will deal with our situations, providing we learn to forgive and

release grace to those around us. Proverbs 20:22 (KJV) teaches, *“Say not thou, I will recompense evil; but wait on the LORD, and he shall save thee.”* Romans 12:17 (KJV) tells us, *“Recompense to no man evil for evil,”* while Romans 12:19 (KJV) says, *“Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.”* We are also told, *“Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good”* (Romans 12:21 KJV).

When you release forgiveness, you are acting in faith that God will deal with the situation as He sees just. When you retain resentment and retaliation, you hold the power of justice and judgment in your own hands. It elevates you to “God” level status, removing the Lordship of God over your circumstances. This was never the arrangement God made and a huge reason why we get stuck. We operate in judgment on our own.

The Consequences of Judgmentalism

One of the deadly effects of bitterness is that we can end up releasing words of judgment over people that have wronged us in some way, as a retaliatory response. We forget that our words can release blessing or cursing, life or death. In today's culture, we can even devalue the power of our words with expressions like, "I'm just saying it like it is!" or "I'm just venting." These sayings are not inherently wrong, but can be filled with vile judgment against other people.

I have watched many people seek to release forgiveness, but still walk with a judgmental attitude against the other person. Retaliation is still in effect, often because the person is seeking justice first. They want payback, because their heart is to see justice manifested. Resentment and retaliation will take a genuine desire for justice and twist it, to keep us from understanding higher truths: mercy and forgiveness.

If you love justice, you are in good

company, because God loves justice too! (Isaiah 61:8) But justice cannot be done on your own terms. If you do, you walk out of the grace of God and enter into a realm of pure law. We can often forgive someone, but continue to say things like, “They’re gonna get sick.” or “They don’t know how to manage their money. They’re gonna stay broke their whole life.”

Judgmental words put us in a position of contempt against other people. The word contempt is defined as “*a feeling that someone or something is not worthy of any respect or approval.*” [10] Contempt sets us up as superior to someone else, where we release judgmental words from our perceived higher position. This is disgusting in the eyes of God, who sent His Son to die so that we could walk in gracious forgiveness towards one another.

Here’s the truth: these judgments can keep you blocked and capped in your life. When you operate justice from your own hands with judgmental words, you put yourself

on the level with Old Testament law and you remove yourself from the grace dimension. When you live in grace, you love, forgive and release blessing, while leaving the justice in God's hands. The sign of someone who forgives is that they genuinely wish blessing on their enemies and do not wish them harm.

Many people fail to move forward because of the judgments they speak about others. These words are harmful to others, but worse off, they keep you stuck in your own life. When we operate in grace, we make sure our words are seasoned with salt, so they add value to others. At the very least, we can still retain a heart of honor, even when talking about the harsh or abusive acts of others.

Why We Retaliate

Jesus contrasted law living and grace living. He said, "*You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' But I tell you not to resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right*

cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have your cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks you, and from him who wants to borrow from you do not turn away” (Matthew 5:38-42).

When Jesus addressed relationship guidelines from the law, He didn't remove them, He actually intensified them! Instead of addressing a rule or outward behavior, He got right to the heart of the issue. “An eye for an eye” is the retaliation mindset, where we approach relationships from a law-based, judgmental mindset. Yet Jesus said, “*For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you*” (Matthew 7:2). He is saying that the judgment you release on others will be given to you as well. This is why so many people are stuck in their walk. They are caught in the quicksand of their own judgments against others!

Jesus raised the bar when revealing the grace walk. He taught people to go ahead and take a hit. If someone takes advantage of you, don't sweat it. If someone needs help, give them more than what they asked for. This blows the law right out of the water, which was based on keeping score in relationships. (Please understand that I am not talking about accepting abusive behavior or situations.)

There are a couple reasons why this is so hard for people to follow. The first reason is that people in this generation pride themselves in avoiding being taken advantage of. We do everything we can to avoid someone "one-upping" us in transactions, exchanges or interactions. It seems that many of our relational survival tactics surround us making sure no one takes advantage of us or takes us for granted. Jesus is actually telling us to not worry about that anymore.

Another reason is that grace living hits us square in the pride spot. In order to "take a hit" every once in a while, we have to have a

great deal of security in Christ and a true humility that cannot be faked. When someone takes advantage of us, we get all stirred up into a tizzy, saying, “How dare they deal with me that way!” Operating in the mode of Jesus’ grace takes a great deal of humility and a deflating of pride in our hearts. It takes a real mature person to take a hit and not get lost in the web of bitterness.

Some may say, “Well I haven’t really said much that is judgmental towards others.” The saying goes, “If you can’t say anything good, don’t say anything at all.” This is true, but how many of us meditate on something bad towards another person? I am not talking about a passing or even a tempting thought against another. I am referring to a thought that parks and stays; bringing to mind scenarios against another person. Jesus was really getting to the core issue: what’s in your heart is what really matters here. If we are honest with ourselves, retaliation is a programmed way of response that we need to put away from our lives.

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:31-32

Our judgments also need to be torn down if we expect God to move in our relationships and untangle us from the root system of bitterness. We must take responsibility for words we have spoken.

Questions for Consideration:

1. Can you recall a time where you responded in retaliation, either in action or words?
2. In what ways do we cover up and justify our retaliations?
3. Describe some practical ways that you can apply today to stop releasing words of judgment and start blessing?

4

ANGER, WRATH & RAGE

A Passionate Flame or Fiery Inferno?

A lot of materials out there are written on the subject of “anger management.” My goal is to move beyond just managing and toward developing a solid sense of self-control. We need to move to a place where we are no longer controlled by the destructive work that anger can bring.

Anger can either be outwardly expressed, or it can be suppressed and pent up inside. Both are dangerous, but it can be argued that the pent up version of anger can be

more harmful in the long run. Many people lean toward the pent up version, because no one can immediately see that one. Suppressed anger can go unnoticed by your coworkers or even family members. Just because people may not see it, however, does not mean you are not becoming one with the bondage of deadly anger.

Suppressed Anger

Pent up anger usually occurs in people who fearfully don't want to harm anyone or do damage to those around them. This was my struggle for so long. I had a core value written in my journal saying, "I will not respond to abuse by passing it on." The problem is that the anger I felt would get shoved down into the cavern of my heart, never really being addressed.

Fear, stress and pressure can cause anger to build up in a person. Disappointment will at some point release this pent up anger.

Those who have a pent up anger response often have resentment stewing under the surface as well. Frustration is another sign that there is some pressure building and anger is rising up. A pattern of this kind of anger will often cause a person to fall into many unhealthy patterns, including isolation, addictions and self-pity.

There are times when repressing anger is helpful and appropriate. For example, when something provokes an anger response in you, repressing it can give you time to process through it and walk out of its clutches. Another example is in the case of when a loved one dies. You will often notice there are usually some people who are handling it a bit better than others, often because they are lending a hand to the rest of the family. Then at some point, the grief regarding the loss comes crashing in and the time to process the pain is upon the person. If the grief is still repressed here, this is when there can be massive danger down the road.

Many breakdowns in systems of the

body can be spiritually rooted in issues of deep pent up anger. This can include the immune and cardiovascular systems. In his book “Stress-Less,” Dr. Colbert shares how anger can affect the cardio vascular system :

When we explode in anger, we stimulate the sympatho-adreno-medullary (SAM) system. In other words, we stimulate the stress response that produces elevated adrenaline. When we seethe with anger, we generally stimulate the HPAC stress response, which is the hypothalamic-pituitary-adreno-cortical response that produces increased cortisol levels. Both of these anger responses over time lead to cardiovascular disease. [\[11\]](#)

Those who struggle with heart issues can often have a common root of unresolved anger, where they have been hard on themselves, even mad at themselves, or mad at life. Those who struggle with self-condemnation are always beating themselves up at every turn, releasing an endless array of arrows toward their own heart. It is important

that those who overcome anger battles learn to become their own best friend and learn to be kind to themselves.

Thoughts and triggers of anger can become so infused into a person's life that it can then be imbedded into their personality. Many family lines are strewn with layers of unresolved anger, wrath and rage. Research and even casual observations tell us that these kinds of sins can be inherited in the family tree, where with each passing generation, the anger intensifies in its manifestation. What was once a mild outburst of anger three generations ago is now continual bursts of rage. Whatever ceiling is allowed in one generation becomes the floor for the next.

Even the label, "Type A" personality shows us how anger runs through generations and becomes a part of a person's personality makeup. In the 1950s, the Type A personality was developed to show what kind of traits were in a person who was more prone to coronary heart disease. [\[12\]](#) This profile

included impatience, drivenness, extreme competitiveness, constant hurriedness, chronic anger and hostility. All these traits not only demonstrate a Type A personality, it shows us a person bound with a spirit of anger in their life. Now if the enemy can train your personality under a bondage of anger, can you imagine what your personality will begin to look like if you got delivered from anger?

Outwardly Expressed Anger

The second kind of anger is that which is expressed outwardly. This often comes out as extreme anger, known as wrath. Another word for the deadly expression of anger is rage, which is uncontrolled anger. These forms of anger often leave a great deal of damage and destruction in people's' lives. It breaks hearts and leaves indelible piercings. It can lead to violent outbursts where destructive words are spewed like a dragon unleashing its fury through fire.

We all know that outwardly expressed

anger can hurt the people around us, often those closest to us. There are many who can be kind in public, but in private are angry and hurtful towards friends and family. Many homes are filled with fear because of the anger of a spouse or a parent that makes victims of the people in the home.

We have to realize that our anger battles will continue to manifest until we hit a breaking point. Hopefully it's not at the point when a disease manifests or a family is already broken apart. The sad fact is that most do not deal with anger until their actions have cost them.

Most try to gain help in what we call today, "Anger Management." But is it possible that we can move beyond just managing anger battles and begin to overcome the stronghold altogether? I believe so. I have witnessed it and watched it be true. But to get there, we have to look to the Bible for the answers we need.

Biblical Guidelines for Anger

1. Anger by itself, is not sin. This may be news to many, but we have to understand that anger initially is not necessarily sin. Anger is often a signal of something that is rising up; either a deep-seated issue in our life or a response to something that we need to pay attention to.

The Bible in fact says, “*Be angry...*” (Ephesians 4:26a). Go ahead, be angry. It is ok. It is what you do with that anger that is the key to what’s ahead. Many people condemn themselves when the anger initially rises up. They spend so much time trying to suppress anger or wish it away, that they never take time to see what may be going on within them that needs to be addressed.

2. Anger is often a sign of passion. Jesus showed His fiery passion for the holiness and honor of the Father and demonstrated that in the temple. Jesus is the best example of someone who was certainly “ticked off” about how His house was being treated; how the house of God was being used to financially

manipulate and take advantage of those who gathered for worship.

When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. John 2:15

Sometimes people do all they can to avoid ever feeling angry, when anger can often be an expression of a passionate fire rising up. We typically get angry about things that we have passionate convictions about. I am concerned that in the name of helping people deal with their anger, we are turning people into passionless drones who walk around with little conviction about life.

Most people carry an anger within them about some sort of wrong in the world, which is really fueling the passion of their calling. Initiated through some sort of encounter they had that broke their heart and made them mad, they take tremendous steps of faith to pursue a calling from God. For example, there are people who have visited other countries and

were so disturbed at the poverty and disease that they went home, left everything, and started working to help people in other nations. Their indignation ignited a passion to do something about it.

Years ago, I left a staff pastoral position with a steady paycheck and stable life to pursue a call to help awaken the hearts of people. Reflecting on my own personal healing and deliverance journey, I was so saddened by the masses of Christians and non-Christians who were battling disease, insanity and brokenness and not achieving any breakthrough. This internal passion sparked an anger that something needed to be done. In this season, I had a tremendous heart connection with God's desire to see His people free. I left everything and entered a world of unknowns, to simply let people know about the extravagant love of God and His ability to set the captives free. All of this happened because of the passion that rose up in me. I could have said, "Mark calm down and just stay with the

safe life.” Many have, and I don’t blame them for taking those roads. Sacrificing everything to pursue a call is no light thing. But, like Jeremiah, I had a fire shut up in my bones and I could not contain it anymore!

*Then I said, “I will not make mention of Him,
Nor speak anymore in His name.”*

*But His word was in my heart like a burning
fire*

*Shut up in my bones;
I was weary of holding it back,
And I could not. Jeremiah 20:9*

If Jeremiah and Jesus walked the planet today, many would say to them, “You have some anger issues you need to deal with.” Don’t mistake passion for anger battles. Anger is often a signal of what bothers you, connecting you to your convictions and passion and most likely, your calling to change the world.

Many of you reading this have become angry over the injustice you see in the world, but you don’t do anything about it. That

will lead your anger into becoming an issue of sin; bitterness will spring up out of this. For many, anger needs to be a launching pad of thrusting a holy passion; a burning to see the purposes of God spread throughout the world. Yet that passion must burn with the all consuming fire of God's love, or else it will open up a massive door for the enemy to bring in a bitter spirit of anger, wrath and rage.

3. Do not let that initial anger become a breeding ground for sin to manifest. “Be angry, and do not sin...” (Ephesians 4:26a) tells us that although it is ok to be angry about something, we cannot let it lead to sin, especially the sin of bitterness. You have a decision to make when anger rises up. Do you allow this passion to be expressed without harming yourself or someone else? Or do you let this become fuel leading you to ungodly ways of thinking and behaving?

The anger becomes sin when we let it manifest in a way that harms someone else or when we let it fester within our hearts

unattended. Jesus knew when to flip the tables, but he also knew when to stand silent. When we learn to process anger properly, we develop self-control; an aspect of the fruit of the spirit that does not allow emotions or feelings to overtake us. We need to recognize that when we are angry, we need to take a personal pit stop and let God deal with our hearts.

The first way that I deal with an anger issue is that I go to God with it. I express it fully to him out loud and allow myself to calm down as I share my feelings with Him. In that exchange, I learn to hear back from Him. I may need to repent of bitterness and anger. I also may need to release a person to God. Or I may just need a nap, because my lack of sleep is keeping me on edge. Speaking of sleep...

4. *You have until you go to bed to resolve it.* I have a rule in our home that I have worked to apply in our family: we don't go to bed mad at each other. Sleeping on an anger issue is deadly. The Bible says, "*Be angry, and do not sin: do not let the sun go down on your*

wrath” (Ephesians 4:26a). This is the same as Psalm 4:4, which says, “*Be angry, and do not sin. Meditate within your heart on your bed, and be still. Selah .*” We can be angry, but if we deal with the issue and settle our hearts before we go to bed, we position our nighttime to be a place for God to release peace over our hearts and refresh us with His presence. When we release our anger to God before we fall asleep, we allow our meditation to be on God’s thoughts, not on the enemy’s thoughts.

Ephesians 4:27 “*Nor give place to the devil ,*” tells us why it is important to deal with anger before you go to sleep. When we allow anger to remain in our hearts, we allow the enemy to have access to our thinking while we rest and rejuvenate during our sleep at night. If you develop a habit of sleeping on your anger, you can expect a spirit of bitterness to have more control in your life the next day. It may not mean you will wake up in a full rage, but it does mean that bitterness has more room to manifest itself the next time you are angered.

Giving no place to the devil can be made possible when we learn to settle our anger issues before we go to sleep. If it's someone in your home, applying this will help squash bitterness from dividing the marriage and home. You may not be able to talk to the person you are angry with before you go to bed but you can pray about it and release the issue to God, so that when you next approach the person, you are able to come from a healthier place.

Many marriages deal with their anger by either blasting the other person or shutting down. When we shut down, we activate the enemy's passive aggressive tactics of bitterness. When you go inward and shut down, you never learn to grow in overcoming conflict. You will continue to become more miserable and your heart will not learn to mature. Instead, you open yourself up for depression, self-pity and disease.

This wasn't easy for us to do and we still have to work at it, but I believe it is worth

the effort. If my wife, Melissa, and I are working through an issue that we can't seem to come together on, we at least come to a place of peace with one another before we go to sleep. That way when we interact with each other the next day, we come from a place of pursuing peace and unity with one another.

5. *Fathers, do not provoke your kids.*

“And you, fathers, do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4). This is a key concept to understand: angry fathers will produce angry children. Many parents manifest anger as a way to intimidate and manipulate children into obedience. This can be controlling and dangerous. Acting in wrath towards your children will cause that pattern to be established in them as they grow older.

I learned this lesson when I was a teenager. I was a year or two from getting my license and I was so excited. Quite often, I would offer to wash my parents Chevy Blazer.

Doing this gave me an outlet to express my excitement because I could move the car back and forth in the driveway. On one particular day I backed the Blazer up so that I could properly wash it. Just putting the SUV in reverse and moving it 15 feet was a thrill for me!

When I was finished washing and rinsing the vehicle, I proceeded to move it back into its parking spot in the driveway. Unfortunately, instead of putting my foot on the brake to stop, I hit the accelerator pretty much to the floor. The SUV slammed forward before I could get to the brakes and stop it. The car rammed into the post and rail fence, broke through it, landed in a garden and smacked a flag pole.

My first thought was, “Oh, I am in for it!” My mom immediately came outside and told me I was going to be in deep trouble when my dad came home. My brother started laughing (as many brothers do) at the thought of my impending punishment.

My dad finally pulled into the driveway.

He then slowly walked towards the scene of my crime. My heart pounded with fear. I thought “*Judgment is on its way and I am not ready for it .*” I slowly crept up behind my dad to see what his reaction would be. After inspecting all the damage, he slowly looked up and said, “OK. Let’s go ahead and clean this up.”

I was stunned! I could not believe I wasn’t going to be thrown across the driveway and beaten. My parents were never violent with me and my dad did not have a pattern of anger against me, but I certainly thought this was the moment when all wrath would be unleashed against me. Instead, he showed me mercy. In that moment of mercy, I learned my lesson and I also made it a value when dealing with people who wrong me or make mistakes that affect me.

Mercy triumphs over judgment. James 2:13

I remember another incident that taught me the importance of patience in the midst of an anger prone situation. As a kid, I was in our

garage with my dad. He specifically told me to stop playing around with some wood boards that were connected to a stack of wood up in the rafters. Ignoring his instructions, I continued to horse around. Suddenly, my carelessness triggered the stack of wood to come crashing down and some planks of wood hit my dad right on the head!

This is another moment where he had the right to smack me in the face because of my disobedience. Instead, after my dad yelled out an “Arrrrgghhhh!” in pain, he steadily said in a low voice, “I said, stop playing with the wood.” He could have lashed out but he didn’t. For you parents reading this, please understand what I am saying. His calm demeanor helped me process through what I already saw. My disobedience hurt him.

Parents, we must all work to overcome our anger issues, because our children will inherit them. Do not be shocked when you see your children acting out the very same strongholds you carry. In addition, they will

also carry the rage you unleashed on them. If you have done this, go ahead and repent to God and to your child. This is not complicated, but it does take a sense of humility to recognize where you as a leader over your children have flaws and at times make mistakes. You don't have to be a perfect parent, just a repentant one.

6. Being angry at yourself will make it difficult to receive God's love and forgiveness. Many people are very angry with themselves. Life and the assaults of the enemy have hit them in some tough spots. They may not have reacted with anger towards others, but that anger went internally towards themselves, releasing a poison within. The enemy loves to keep us blaming ourselves for everything in life, placing an ungodly burden on our hearts. This is the work of condemnation, which will train us to live in self-resentment, self-anger, self-hatred and other self-vs-self battles.

1 John 3:21 tells us, *“Beloved, if our heart does not condemn us, we have*

confidence toward God.” Many people cannot receive from God, His love, forgiveness and grace, because they have too much condemnation in their hearts, leaving them very pent up with anger against their own heart. The enemy is good at training people to be too hard on themselves.

This is something God has had to confront in my own life, because whenever problems would arise, I would internalize them and make me the cause of everything. I had a hard time letting myself off the hook, because my heart was constantly condemning me. I became angry towards myself and would punish myself inwardly, allowing self-bitterness to keep me in a prison and at war against myself. This is a self-condemning way of thinking, where we accuse ourselves in thought. Getting the condemnation out loses the anger that rages against self, which will then free us from anger problems towards others.

7. *Overcoming anger does not mean being a doormat.* The solution to anger is not

living as a doormat for people to walk over. Overcoming anger involves growing in the patience of God and experiencing God's love and grace in relationships. It's ok to stand up for yourself. But remember, standing up for yourself does not mean just telling someone off.

In every battle where anger wants to rise up, God wants to instill in us the work of meekness, which is power and strength under control. Jesus said "the meek shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5). Why? Because those who can have power while keeping it under control can be trusted with the keys of the Kingdom of God.

Can Rage Ruin Your Back ?

Overcoming anger, wrath and rage will greatly improve your relationships and will also change your health. Let me refer you to the following research regarding back pain:

In New York City, Dr. John Sarno, a professor of rehabilitation medicine at NYU School of

Medicine, believes that almost all back pain is rooted in bottled up emotions. Sarno explains how repressed rage and anxiety - over your parents' divorce, sexual abuse, trouble at work - can stress the body, eventually manifesting itself as muscle spasm, nerve dysfunction, numbness and pain. 'Pain is created by the brain to make sure the rage doesn't come out,' Sarno says. 'It protects you by giving you something physical to pay attention to instead.'

Woman's Day Magazine, in their April 17, 2007 issue wrote:

Let go of anger and you may reduce back pain, too. A Duke University Medical center Study found that among patients with chronic back pain, those who reported having forgiven someone who wronged them experienced less physical pain than those who didn't. The study also uncovered another surprise — the forgivers were less angry and psychologically distressed than their unforgiving counterparts.

Remember, if you have an anger issue, you will continue to have it until you overcome

it or it costs you, causing you to realize you have to change.

Questions for Consideration:

1. When have you experienced anger in a way that deeply affected you?
2. In what way do you notice anger damaging people the most?
3. What are some things that stir up an anger response in you?
4. What is the most significant lesson you have learned about anger from reading this chapter?

5

Shut the Door

Exposing Open Doors & Triggers to Anger

To begin overcoming anger battles, it is helpful to understand the open doors and triggers that give anger room and power to operate in our lives. If we deal with these areas, it can help us gain understanding and avoid the anger battles the enemy would use to imprison us.

Signs You Have Unresolved Anger

- You constantly complain and express negativity.
- You are easily irritated and “set-off” over relatively small issues.

- You make a lot of sarcastic jokes about things that bother you.
- You make passive aggressive statements so as to “hint” about things that bother you.
- You are impatient.
- You become completely immersed in your work or job with massive intensity.
- You become very argumentative and always have to be right.
- You shut down when in relational conflict.
- You isolate in social settings.
- You constantly blame people, especially those closest to you.
- You have a constant loss of energy with spells of depression.
- You feel emotionally flat or numb.
- You stop caring about things you used

to care about.

- You smile on the outside, but you are fuming on the inside.

It is important to first understand some overall reasons why we get angry to begin with. These include:

1. *Unfulfilled expectations or demands we have on a person or a circumstance.* Anger can arise when someone does not act or behave in a way we expect them to or a situation in life does not turn out the way we planned or wanted it to. This can open up for controlling or perfectionistic tendencies to keep anger, wrath and rage fuming.

2. *Jumping to conclusions/suspicion.* When we jump to quick conclusions or operate in suspicion, we can easily get worked up in anger. We also can become angry over something that is not really true, because the way we view the situation is distorted.

3. *Replaying scenarios over and over*

with a negative perspective. The more we replay a scenario with a bitter perspective, the more we make room for a distorted perception of the event to become our point of view.

Just like a flame shows different colors depending on how hot it is, anger can have varying levels of intensity. We often live in denial of our anger battles, how they affect us and how they are affecting those around us. Because of this, the fire of our anger can slowly grow over time, eventually burning us and everyone in our path. Like the Proverb says, “*Can a man take fire to his bosom, and his clothes not be burned?*” (Proverbs 6:27).

With that in mind, let’s be open to allowing God to heal and deliver us from our inward battles with anger.

Open Doors That Breed Anger

The following are some open doors and triggers that give room for anger to become a place of bondage in our lives.

A Broken Heart. It is very likely that those who have deep anger problems also have an unhealed broken heart. Wounds from their past remain unresolved in their heart. The anger often stems back to people in the past who did not love the person properly, through ignorance or their focus on dealing with their own junk.

This does not give us a reason to live as victims, but to give our hearts a focus for solution. We need healing of our broken hearts if we ever want hope for overcoming anger. Most people who rise up in anger are defending a hurt. He's not a tough guy, he's a broken guy. She's not a tough girl, she's a broken-hearted girl. Whatever brokenness does not get processed with God and others, will get stuffed down in anger and rage .

Many with broken hearts react in anger and carry it with them as they live in survival mode. They develop a fighter mentality because they have had to defend themselves in every situation. I am struck by the modern day

music, especially because so much of it is fueled by hurt and anger. The songs are full of passion, but behind the message is a broken heart full of anger. This angry tone becomes an anthem to a generation who becomes further polluted by these messages.

Rejection. Those who harbor rejection strongholds lack the power of love and acceptance in their life, so anger often becomes their way of thinking. Rejection cultivates defensiveness, causing them to quickly respond defensively and lash out when anyone even gets near a nerve let alone hits it. Rejection and anger takes things that are said and automatically twists them into something hurtful.

Rejection also keeps us oversensitive and insecure, and as a result we become very easily offended. This opens us up to being very angry at people. I often encourage those with anger issues to take a look at possible rejection strongholds in their life, as the fuel for anger is often rejection.

Inheritance. For the majority of people who have anger issues, this battle is an inherited one. This stronghold often runs through the generations of families, quite possibly for hundreds of years. Those who choose to overcome anger and walk in grace and love break this pattern, and instead of anger, have an inheritance of God's nature to pass down to the next generation.

Pride. Everyone has to deal with pride, but anger can kick up whenever we are made vulnerable. When someone hits a nerve with us, which is usually a place of hurt, weakness or vulnerability, we have to make a choice. Do we allow ourselves to be humble and vulnerable, or do we rise up in pride to protect our image and reputation? Anger is often a sure fire sign that pride is warring within.

I can remember times where my wife and I had an argument over a certain issue. I would stand in another room, upset, because I felt I was right and had my side of the case all laid out. I would talk to God, wondering what I

was supposed to do here, especially because, “I was so right and she was so wrong.”

As I began to calm down, I could hear the Holy Spirit whispering to me, “Go apologize to her.”

I responded, “Why? I am right and she is wrong?”

“Because you have a great deal of pride you need to drive out. It doesn’t matter who is right and who is wrong. Humble yourself, drive the pride out and apologize.” That day I had a revelation that broke another level of anger in my life. Learning to humble yourself in relationships is better than trying to be right.

Stress. The pressures of life and our responses to them will indicate whether or not we will struggle with anger. When stress becomes a chronic issue, we know that fear is at work. The person is not at ease or walking with internal peace. With that lack of rest in our heart, our emotional nerves become on edge and anger can come flying forth.

The following are patterns that can cultivate a stress- driven life, which can open you up to further anger issues:

- Drivenness and striving: constant busyness and driving yourself in unhealthy ways
- Constant performance pressured living: where your identity weighs on your performance at work or in life.
- Perfectionism: pressures to have to get everything right and done perfectly.
- Fear of failure: living by a motivation of fear that something will go wrong, making you feel like a failure.
- False-Burden bearing: carrying a burden for someone else to a dysfunctional degree.
- False-Martyrdom: Saying, “No one understands what I have done, what I have put up with or what I have been through.”

Control. When fear is in the picture, operating with a controlling mechanism is a

strong temptation for many. A basic definition of relational control is *to enforce, influence or dominate a person or situation to move towards your favor and liking*. Anger can be used to control people by force.

Also, when a person's control issues are confronted, anger often manifests itself quickly. Control enforces black and white thinking saying, "*It is my way . . . it is the only way . . . you need to do it my way.*" Peace is never found unless it is done their way. Many who struggle with anger need to examine where they are controlling and need to learn to release. Too much is way out of our control anyway, but many with control issues lose their peace over other people not doing things exactly how they want it done.

Passivity. If I was to name a modern tragedy in today's culture, it would be the spiritual and emotional passivity that exists in the hearts of men today. The leadership that God has placed on us has been stolen by the enemy, leaving a void in the home that only a

godly man can fill. With this emptiness, the wives in the home are often pressured to fill a demand that God never intended them to fill in the first place.

With a passive man, he's not just angry at females, he is angry with himself. No one has fathered him or mentored him in the ways of being a spiritual leader. Because he is not stepping into his God ordained place of leadership, he is angry at himself. But instead of repenting for his passivity, he finds someone to blame—his wife. This is an old enemy trick that Satan taught Adam in the garden. Blame Eve for everything, *"It's the woman you gave me, God."*

I have run across this hundreds of times while helping married couples. She married a "nice guy," because he was quiet and wouldn't hurt a fly. But when they got married, she found out that he was more passive than a log in a stagnant pond. Frustrated that he does not initiate spiritual leadership in the home, she begins to talk to him about her frustrations.

She pleads with him to change and move into a place of being more involved in the life of the home.

For him, however, this pleading comes across to him as “nagging.” With this perception, his rage comes up. He jumps out of his cave and in anger retaliates towards his wife. He lashes out about everything that he does for the home and then minimizes all the wife’s concerns. He then closes his tirade by making her feel guilty for even bringing up the subject. She backs down and he returns to his cave of passivity.

I have watched this more times that I can take, to be honest. I have made more men angry, simply by bringing up this passivity issue in their life. Their passivity is a slumber that wears over them like a grizzly bear going into hibernation. Any action that you see from him is an anger reaction. His interactions with his wife are more passive aggressive comments towards her than really covering her. Meanwhile, the wife is becoming more and

more hopeless and deeply resentful towards him.

Passive people seem like they are cool, calm and nothing bothers them. In reality, they are insecure and afraid to take action. Their fear has lulled them into a spiritual coma of unbelief. They fear doing things wrong, so they don't do anything at all. Meanwhile, those around them have to tiptoe past his passivity, fearing that at any moment they may hit a nerve and unleash his anger.

Injustice. Being passionate about injustice is not completely wrong. Jesus flipped the tables with righteous indignation. Prophets of old would cry out to the people to change their ways that were wrong before God. Being angered over injustice shows that you have a heart that is passionate over the needs of people.

The problem is that we cannot allow our passion regarding wrongs in this world to make us bitter. I have observed too many get taken out by a passionate cry for justice that

overtakes them because they became bitterly angry. When we operate in the grace dimension, we release God to bring justice, while we walk humbly and carry out mercy in relationships.

Unloving Environments. Everyone has wounds that need healing, but for those who grew up in homes that were tense the situation can be more difficult. Homes full of anxiety or nervousness, either from constant violent activity or performance pressure or where the kids had to always do everything right and be perfect, end up producing adults that struggle with “pressure-cooker anger.” Angry fathers often produce angry sons and daughters, while mothers who struggle to nurture their children effectively will produce anger in their children as they grow up.

When sitting down with people to work on anger issues, I often find there exists a common root component in the area of mother issues. There is a key component of love the mother brings to the household. It is the love of

nurture. This is the recovery and comfort aspect of love. Nurture puts a Band-Aid on wounds and comforts. When a child is having a hard day, if they are nurtured well, they grow up able to recover from disappointment and heartache. If not, they will struggle to deal with many of life's challenges.

Disrespect and Dishonor. For many, being disrespected or dishonored can automatically trigger anger and rage. It is important to see if what was done was truly disrespectful, because sometimes we have a tainted filter that causes us to see everyone as against us. Despite that, however, being treated as a lower being is not fun for anyone.

Men struggle with this the most, because they can often feel love through the respect people give them. It's welded into the fabric of their being, especially because there is a leadership mantle on men in their homes. To feel respected is often to feel loved and appreciated. When disrespect comes across, deep nerves can be hit and anger can rise up.

Interestingly enough, the Bible does not focus on wives loving their husband, but to submit to him, *“Wives, submit to your own husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not be bitter toward them”* (Colossians 3:18-19) . A husband is commanded to love his wife, to the point where he is willing to give his life for her. Yet the wife is given instruction to submit, which in many ways shows respect to the position the husband has and needs to carry out.

God’s Word also instructs a man to honor his wife.

“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.” 1 Peter 3:7

This calls him to show respect towards her as well as to care for who she is: an honorable vessel of God. To not honor her is to allow dishonor in the home.

There should be no room in our relationships for disrespect and dishonor. A huge aspect of loving people involves respecting them where they are at and honoring them as God's creation, because that is what they are!

I know that I may need to earn your respect, but I have made it a decision that you do not have to earn mine. I choose to respect you from the start— to respect where God has you in your journey and to honor His work in your life. This helps people overcome anger as they settle in by feeling safe in love.

Some reading this may attract disrespect and dishonor because you do not love and respect yourself. You attract those who are like what you have allowed yourself to be. Loving and respecting yourself as God sees you will provide a healthy lens in which to view relationships. You won't allow people in your life who abuse you and make treating you poorly acceptable. Someone who is constantly disrespected will struggle with anger, but

they'll never get out of the trap until they learn to love themselves and make changes in their relational choices.

Ingratitude . People with deep-seated anger often carry a common thread of ingratitude. Their life experiences have hit them in such a way that they have not been able to maintain a heart of gratitude, which causes them to become jaded, hardened and angry. When gratitude dies in the heart of our life, we begin to cultivate an ungrateful heart. This is fueled by complaining, which is the devil's food. This ingratitude opens us up to many of the enemy's deadliest weapons, including anger, doubt, unbelief, cynicism, self-pity and self-loathing.

Questions for Consideration:

1. Refer to the signs of unresolved anger. Which do you see in your own life?
2. Of the first three reasons we get angry

(unfulfilled expectations or demands we have on a person or a circumstance, jumping to conclusions, replaying scenarios over and over with a negative perspective), which one affects you the most?

3. Which door point or trigger in this chapter do you relate to the most and why?

6

ENOUGH IS ENOUGH

Confronting and Overcoming Anger

We've taken some time to break down many factors that contribute to anger battles. Now I am going to walk you through some simple steps you can take to really conquer the deep rooted anger battles that seem to "take over" in certain situations. You do not need to feel helpless regarding anger and you don't need to just manage anger. You need to be freed to have authority over anger battles.

In this chapter, we will walk through how to overcome anger in your own prayer

life, effectively and accurately. To do this, you are going to need an open heart and a willingness to deal with past issues in your life. Let's review a couple precepts, while introducing some new ones, specifically regarding the bondage of anger.

1. Anger is a part of a root of bitterness. Whenever we see anger in play, we can know there is a root of bitterness that is promoting a work of defilement in a person's heart. Getting bitterness out and learning to forgive is going to be key in overcoming anger.

2. Overcoming anger often involves seeing the door point that allows anger in. Review the previous chapter which will be helpful in identifying what triggers unhealthy anger and keeps you bound in anger cycles.

3. Anger is usually protecting an idol. Understanding this is important if we are going to defeat anger's torment. We typically think of idols through an "Old Testament" perspective, usually referring to an object that

was dedicated to or representing a false god. Yet, an idol is much more than that. Idolatry can be *anything that takes the place of or interferes with God's ways for our life* . This can take the form of any number of habits, relationships, activities or thought processes.

It is critically important to know that most anger has a direct connection to an idol. The anger stronghold is not only connected to an idol in your life, it is protecting it. The anger is a *protective mechanism, keeping anyone from touching or messing with a dysfunctional way of thinking that has become an idol in our lives* . When we are angry, it's not that we are so angry about the current situation, but rather we have unresolved anger regarding a past issue that is now being kicked up. The idol is a way of thinking that protects the hurt and the anger mechanism, and ultimately protects the idol itself.

For example, during the early stages of marriage, I recognized that I would get angry if I felt that Melissa was not listening to me.

Then over time I realized that not being listened to was a sore issue in my life. I would get incredibly worked up if I felt like I was not being listened to. This went back to a hurt I carried growing up, where I felt like people didn't pay attention to my feelings and pain. This created a wound in my life that became a focused place of hurt.

So what was the idol in my life? It was that *people need to listen to me in order for me to feel safe and loved*. It became a focused need in my heart when talking to my wife and others. I believed, "You *have* to pay attention and listen to me or else I will get mad and lose my sense of self-worth."

Is it aggravating when people don't listen to you? Of course it is. God feels that all the time when people don't listen to His Word. But this feeling became an idol for me, because it drove my feelings of worth. When I repented for that idol in my life, the anger subsided. Anger had nothing to hold on to, because the desperate *need* to be heard was not

a driving force in my heart anymore.

Walking This Out: Addressing the Anger

So what makes you angry? Take time to write down what specifically makes you angry. The more precise you can be the better. Write down as many as come to mind.

Before we get to the specifics, take some time to repent for bitterness, unforgiveness, offense, resentment, retaliation, anger, wrath and rage. Use the following prayer tool as a guide to help focus your prayer. Pray through bitterness and each of its given underlings.

Father God, I come to you in Jesus' name and I recognize that I have had _____ in my life. I take responsibility for _____ in my generation and all previous generations. I repent of and renounce of _____. I

ask forgiveness for having _____ in my life and cooperating with it. I receive your forgiveness God and I forgive myself. I ask now that _____ be broken and removed from my life in Jesus' name.

Now refer to the previous chapter and find the door points and triggers that you can see open you up to anger. Write them down here:

Use the prayer tool to walk through repentance of those triggers and door points.

We need to get to the idol that the anger is protecting. Go back to your list of what makes you angry and take notice of the theme found there. It usually begins with a "People need to _____ in order for me to feel loved." It usually goes back to an unresolved childhood issue with mom and dad.

The idol may be a list of things, but it stems off of what makes you angry. Here are a number of examples to help you identify your idols:

Example 1:

Anger Issue: I get mad when people don't do what I tell them to do.

Open Door: Control

Idol: I need to feel a sense of control to feel safe.

Example 2:

Anger Issue: You are not being sensitive to my feelings.

Open Door: Disrespect, Broken Heart

Idol : You **have** to pay attention and be sensitive to all my feelings.

Example 3:

Anger Issue : I get mad when I get bossed around and told what to do.

Open Door: Your own passivity, pride

Idol : You can't tell me what to do.
(Rebellion)

Example 4:

Anger Issue : I do not like it when I am misunderstood.

Open Door: Dad or Mom not listening to me

Idol : Need for others to hear me before I can ever feel accepted and safe.

Example 5:

Anger Issue : I do not like being shown that I am wrong.

Open Door: Rejection, pride

Idol : Needing people to back me up/needing to always be right and do right.

Example 6:

Anger Issue : I get angry when I feel that I am doing everything and no one is helping me.

Open Door: Unfulfilled expectations or demands, control, pride, victim thinking, false burden bearing, rejection

Idol : I am a victim in this situation—doing all the work with no hope of getting help.

Once you have identified the idol, it's time to repent for that idol and give it over to God. Surrender yourself to God and release the grip that the idolatrous mindset has over you.

Anger Free Living

Walking free from the bondage of anger does not just mean getting anger out; we also have to fill ourselves with the nature of who God is. We must put off the “old man” ways and truly put on “new man” thinking when it comes to overcoming anger. We also need to remember the nature of love when it comes to driving out anger.

1 Corinthians 13 helps us to see that *love is patient and it is kind* . Patience and kindness are the first two listed and for good reason, *they are the two pillars of love* . Love gains strength through the power of patience and kindness. ***Patience is the way love handles your negative issues. Kindness is how love***

treats you in all circumstances.

Overcoming anger means growing in patience. Too many walk around life thinking, “If people would stop acting that way, then maybe I wouldn’t get so mad.” Instead, we should be making it our life focus to grow in love by carrying the patience of heaven in our hearts towards everyone we interact with.

James writes that one who is patient lacks nothing:

But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.

James 1:4

What an amazing truth! If patience has a full operation in someone’s life, they lack nothing! This shows you how important it is to learn to walk and grow in the love of God.

The second pillar of love is kindness. This means that when love is in the midst, its mindset leads us to find ways that add life and value to another person. You are not concerned about what you can get, but what you can

deposit to bless the other person. It is the kindness of God that allows us to change by His grace and to be freed from our sins. He could have easily punished us long ago, but instead, He is kind in all ways towards us.

Becoming a person who manifests kindness helps free us from the bondage of anger. True kindness focuses your attention on blessing someone else, not in keeping score of what you are not getting back. Kindness is thinking of ways to add blessing to someone, in a way that will mean the most to them. You find strategic ways to make someone feel loved. This is the heart of love towards others. Bitterness is always thinking about what you don't get from people, while love is looking for another way to be kind. When you spend your time immersed in this kind of perspective, the enemy has no room to get you caught up in anger.

Questions for Consideration:

1. Think about what makes you angry. In

what way has that issue become an idol in your life?

2. What are some common open doors for anger that you need to be aware of?
3. How can kindness and patience become a better part of your life and relationships?
4. Follow the prayer exercise and write down the breakthroughs you experience.

7

HATRED

I Withhold Love from You

In the Old Testament, it was considered noble, and even honorable, to have hatred towards the enemies of God. Under the covenant of law, it was common to hate those who hated God. The law made it very black and white, *“If you don’t love God, then you hate God. If you don’t love God you are an enemy of God. Those who love God hate those who hate God.”* Those who did not serve and honor the living God were seen as being in absolute opposition to Him.

This explains statements that people like King David made, where he detested those who did not hold in awe the laws and ways of God:

*Oh, that You would slay the wicked, O God!
Depart from me, therefore, you bloodthirsty
men. For they speak against You wickedly; You
enemies take Your name in vain. Do I not hate
them, O Lord, who hate You? And do I not
loathe those who rise up against You? I hate
them with perfect hatred; I count them my
enemies.*

Psalms 139:19-22

Those verses shows the loyal heart of David.

As Jesus introduces the New Covenant of grace, He addresses how we should treat our enemies from an entirely revolutionary perspective:

You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. Matthew 5:43-44

In grace, it's no longer the ways of the

godly to hate enemies. You are now in fact commanded to love them. This shakes up the entire religious system of law, where everything was “*an eye for an eye.*” The highest power of the Kingdom of God was highlighted in the life of Jesus: *Love even those who wrong you. In fact, release blessing towards them. And by the way, those who use you and persecute you, go ahead and pray for them, too.* This seems easier said than done, but then again, walking with Jesus raises the bar in every area, especially when it comes to how we deal with each other.

Two Contrasting Ways

Love and hatred are diametrically opposed to each other. Jesus brought the sword of truth to bring a division between these two with Kingdom clarity. The communication of Jesus was and is always clear concerning relationships:

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he

*will be loyal to the one and despise the other.
You cannot serve God and mammon. Matthew
6:24*

You will either walk in love or in hate. It's one or the other.

Our relationship with God is called to be a passionate love commitment, so anything in-between is actually lukewarm . . .

I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth.

Revelation 3:15-16

This passage reveals to us how God feels about love and hate. Although you may try, you cannot walk the middle ground, because there is no middle ground. Either hatred or a love will be the dominant presence. Just like faith and fear will combat for your attention, so will love and hate. In God's Kingdom, you either love or hate. There is no in-between.

One of the great signs of the last days

will be the decay of love in the land, where there will be an increase of hate.

And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another . Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. Matt. 24:10-

12

This hate will grow simply because love will grow cold. Either love or hate will become the dominant way of thinking and it all depends on whether man will choose to follow God's ways or Satan's ways.

You'll Be Shocked as to What "Hate" Means

From the English language, hatred, from Merriam Webster, is defined as "*intense hostility and aversion usually deriving from fear, anger, or sense of injury; extreme dislike.*" Our modern vernacular often uses the word hate more lightly, "*I hate anchovies on my pizza.*" Or we may use it to express high

levels of emotional hostility such as when we say, *“I hate that guy!”*

In the Greek language of the New Testament, the word *hate* that Jesus uses in Matthew 24 is the word *Miseō*, which is number g3404 in the Strong’s Concordance. This word means to hate, pursue with hatred or to detest. **But this word for hate also means *to love less*** . This means that the work of hate involves love growing cold. Remember, following the work of people hating each other, the love of many will grow cold.

If you get this into your understanding, it will revolutionize your relationships, because hate seeps into more areas of our heart than we realize. Wherever love is lessened, hate arises. Wherever there is a withdrawal of love, the work of hate is increasing.

We often think, *“I don’t hate that person. I just don’t like them.”* We fail to realize that this is actually the mentality of hate: *to pull back on love or react to a person we ‘don’t like’ by withholding love.* From a

biblical perspective, this is the textbook operation of hate: withdraw love.

When I discovered this in my Bible study, it was one of the most challenging precepts I ever encountered. It really made me come to a personal realization of how powerful love can be, but also how subtle hate is in our thinking. It challenged how I viewed difficult people or those who hurt me.

In the past, if someone did something against me, I wouldn't respond violently, but I would still operate in hate's mindset. I would withdraw from loving that person. I would take them off of my "do nice things for them" list. I wouldn't pray blessing over them. I wouldn't wish them well. I wouldn't think of how I could be a blessing to them. I didn't spread rumors about them or retaliate outwardly with harsh actions, but I withdrew any chance for the patience and kindness of love to operate.

This all changed for me as I learned how hatred teaches us to withdraw love in relationships. When we withdraw a solid

chance to love on someone, even during a difficult time, we often hold hands with hatred's mindset. Understanding this caused me to grow in a greater dimension of love with people and be less in agreement with hate. When I renounced this mindset and behavior, loving others became so much more fruitful.

When hate is in our lives, we carry the rest of bitterness' armor with us, all the way down to murder. 1 John 3:15 tells us, "*Whoever hates his brother is a murderer . . .*" Hatred simmers like a deadly brew of poison. It stirs up envy and jealousy, while creating a distorted view of relationships. Hatred says, "You and I cannot be in the same place. You need to leave."

Upping the Ante

Jesus challenged humanity's ways of dealing with relationships. He challenged us to have a heart of love towards those who are against us. The New Covenant called for a

renewed understanding of love, which means positioning your heart in compassion even towards those that hate you. This does not mean we have to be best friends with them, but God is teaching us to have a heart of love that is void of hate towards those who are against us or wrong us.

Jesus teaches us that loving those who love you back is not spiritually rewarding. That's easy. Loving someone who seems unlovable or undeserving of love takes us to the highest level of spirituality:

For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the tax collectors do so?

Matt 5:46-47

This is what fueled Jesus to go all the way to the cross, where He would die for the sins of all people, even those who actually rejected Him. This does not mean we tolerate abuse or walk around life letting everyone beat

on our heads. But it does challenge us to walk in a higher level of love towards those who we are actually being hateful towards.

Love is most powerful when it is not easy. Love is most effective when it doesn't seem like it is deserved. The love of Father God that Jesus released to the world is a love that knows how to be patient and kind towards those who do not know how to love back, who retaliate or do not even know how to love themselves.

One of the lies the enemy perpetuates is the notion that love is given when it is deserved. Love that you see amongst humans can often be based on how lovable the person is. The love of God is much greater than this. It goes beyond the expanse of human ability to a place of supernatural patience and kindness.

This kind of love can only manifest when we receive it first from Father God. When we allow proper love to take root in our hearts, we learn to love ourselves, especially when we learn to be patient and kind in our

own thoughts towards ourselves. When we love ourselves properly, we learn to accept ourselves as God does.

Jesus said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets." Matthew 22:37-

40

Love has its fullest power in our lives when we receive it from God, have love for ourselves and then love on those around us. This is the full cycle and expression of love. It is God's desire that His love, grace and forgiveness flow through human beings towards each other. When we come under agreement with God's original intent for love, we fall into the blessing of His design.

When this is tampered with, the potential of love becomes limited in our lives and the enemy comes in to steal. Wherever

love becomes compromised, between God and us, ourselves and us, or a neighbor and us, hatred finds a way to enter. Hatred either brings in a deep sense of coldness in relationships or some kind of bitter response towards someone or a people group.

How We Hate Each Other

Keeping in mind that hatred involves “loving less,” many do not realize they are allowing hatred into their relationship patterns. We often think of hate as only a very outward and violent bitterness. Yet the most deadly work of hate loves to fly under the radar, manifesting itself in a myriad of sadistic ways. The following are some common signs that hatred is operating in our lives:

1. *The silent treatment.* This is by far the number one way hatred operates; by removing ourselves from others as a form of punishment. Parents use silence to punish their children. Spouses walk silent with each other as a form of passive hatred towards the other.

We do this in so many relational conflicts, because we think we are not showing outward dysfunction with our silence, yet we are showing a deadly form of bitterness. Giving someone the silent treatment further conditions people to tolerate that kind of unloving approach. The enemy loves when we withdraw our interactions with others so that love and forgiveness cannot enter to heal the situation.

2. *Harshly withdrawing when you disagree.* Now this can be a tricky one, because there are times you need to have space from toxic people. You'll need to make decisions when to separate from someone who makes peace with sin and refuses to deal with it. A wise separation is not what I am referring to.

The problem is that we often “cut off” relationships too abruptly, as soon as things get a little tense, a disagreement occurs or conflicts arise. Our ability to carry patience runs so thin that we often view our relationships through a black and white lens. I hear it all the time from

people when things get uncomfortable:

“I am done with them.”

“I am over them.”

“We’re done. Goodbye.”

Hatred loves us to make quick and snappy relational cut offs. Because of this, we have become trained to shut down relationships as quickly and easily as we could cut someone off on the highway.

Ask around and see how well people are able to maintain long-term relationships and work through the hard seasons. A growing number have relationships that come and go, mainly because hate has taught us to withdraw at the moment of relational inconvenience. We are so trained to guard our territory militantly, without any patience and wisdom.

I’ve experienced this from others a number of times. A relationship I valued and invested in for years drops out of sight in a moment. All the time invested together meant nothing, as the person had no desire to work

things out. A spirit of hate loves these kind of actions.

We must understand that you can love someone and still disagree with certain things. There are times where you have to separate from a divisive person or an unrepentant person, but too often we make a separation over the smallest things. We think they are major issues, when quite often we've made mountains out of anthills.

This kind of needless separation is what causes church splits, fuels racism, drives business partners to split and brings wedges into marriages. When things get rough, too often the easy answer is to break away and never associate. Have we really done the work of extending love, patience and grace and allowed for wisdom to be in our midst? More times than not, hate will come in to steal the scene.

On another note, many accuse Christians today of being hateful, but their definition is inaccurate. They call us hateful,

simply because we might disagree with a person's lifestyle. This is because the world equates love as agreeing with everything a person believes or does. They often communicate that in order for me to love you, I must accept your moral decisions as right before God. This is not true, but we must also understand that Christians should have an ability to walk in a world with great compassion for people, no matter what sin they battle. Our effectiveness going forward depends on this.

“Our culture has accepted two huge lies. The first is that if you disagree with someone's lifestyle, you must fear or hate them. The second is that to love someone means you agree with everything they believe or do. Both are nonsense. You don't have to compromise convictions to be compassionate.” ~ Rick Warren

3. *Personal battles with envy and jealousy.* Any work of envy and jealousy has hate lurking around the corner. This

battleground says, “ *I don’t like who I am or what I have. I want to be who you are or have what you have. Because of that I do not like you.*” Check yourself when you have unkind thoughts towards someone else. You very likely may have envy working in you towards them.

4. *When the chance arises, you cannot speak kindly of your enemies.* The ultimate test to show whether or not you can love an enemy or someone who has wronged you, is how you speak about them with others when they are not around. Most embittered people fail this test immediately, because they use the opportunity to build a case against the person wronging them, rather than being kind or just saying nothing at all.

5. *Spirits of hate teach us to elevate ourselves.* We become trained to compare ourselves to others in a competitive way, where we seek to elevate our status and image above others. This one can be hard to admit, but we all have to face it. This work of hate

drives in a deep sense of pride, where we don't allow the humility that carries love to operate. A self-superiority mindset develops in our hate.

When hate works at this level, we often see *contempt* in operation, which takes bitterness to a higher level. Contempt comes from a Latin origin, meaning *scorn* and it can speak of anger and hate that is directed toward a "lower status" person. When you develop a bitter heart towards people, you eventually carry a prideful mindset of superiority over others.

7. No discipline. The loving work of discipline and correction is being lost in our modern world and it's keeping many from experiencing the blessing it brings. Many do not realize that love is taught in the realm of healthy correction and discipline. Many children that have not been disciplined properly will actually struggle with healthy self-esteem and identity issues. They've never been corrected properly. Hebrews 12:6 says

that “the Lord disciplines the one He loves.” In fact, Proverbs 13:24 says, *“He who spares his rod hates his son, But he who loves him disciplines him promptly.”*

There are many who have diluted what strong and healthy discipline looks like. Because of abusive homes that have taken discipline to a place of anger and hate, many have removed the rod completely from the picture. This is a massive error, because as the Scriptures teach, if you remove the rod of correction from your home, you are actually releasing hate on your child! Correction is hard work and involves a lot of relational investment. But the blessing of healthy discipline embeds a proper lens of love in a child’s heart.

Hate Towards Self

With the understanding of hate I have shared with you, what happens when this hatred is directed towards self? What about when you withdraw love from yourself?

People do it all the time. We don't necessarily say "I hate myself" but we have been trained to not let love fill our being. We see self-love as being arrogant. That's because self-hate has kept us from understand love properly.

Self-hatred is all about keeping you from truly loving and accepting who you are and where you are at. We look in the mirror and we don't like what we see. We get angry at ourselves when things go wrong. We develop a tension in our hearts about who we are in life.

You cannot change effectively and permanently unless you love yourself into change. Self-hate keeps you from that, so you remain bound.

Whenever you are not comfortable with love, you can guarantee that self-hatred is present. In fact, when I help people with marriage problems, we always need to confront the self-hatred issues that each person carries. Most husbands that are hostile towards their wives are not only hateful towards her, he also hates himself. Ephesians 5:28 tells us that

a man who loves his wife, loves himself. The opposite is also true: *A man who hates his wife, hates himself.*

Many fathers and mothers raised their children with an emphasis that was overly strict and stern. They valued discipline, but did so above the value of relational investment. Their children then base their relationships on rules and regulations.

We have to understand that rules without a loving relationship will always lead to rebellion, fueled with hate. A man who does not properly love himself opens the door for self-hatred. When self-hatred is in operation, the father will express his discipline in anger and rage. He will also continually remind his wife and children of their flaws and shortcomings, thinking by doing so, he is bringing proper correction and motivation. When in reality, this is a subtle and deadly form of abuse.

This applies in all relationships. Our ability to not love others often comes out of a

place where love is not operating towards ourselves. Self-hate is blocking our ability to love and be loved properly. Irritability, crankiness and mood swings can be the driving work of self-hate in the life of a person.

The only solution for hate is love, but it can only be the love of God. Anything else is a cheap imitation. We must embrace His love, once and for all. He accepts us as His children and expects us to do the same for others.

Questions for Consideration:

1. When discovering the biblical definition of hate given, what realizations come to mind?
2. In what areas do you see where you fall into patterns of hate, where you hold back and withdraw love?
3. In the section, “How We Hate Each Other” which area could you relate to the most?
4. Where does the mindset of self-

hate easily creep into your view?

5. What do you feel will help to drive hate out of your relationships?

8

Violence and Murder

Destroying Others Through Words and Actions

I'm not much of a fan of reality television, mainly because of how little they actually portray "reality." In addition, most of these shows that claim to set up "realistic" scenarios are actually scripted most of the way through. In most reality shows, one thing you can definitely notice is that there is a lot of extreme drama. This always seems to boost ratings as people flock to watch a circus act. Feelings become inflated to extreme places as the reality cast members react to hurtful expressions, miscommunication and poor

choices.

One of the manifestations you often see in reality TV shows is violent behavior. Most often the intense drama escalates to epic proportions, where actors seem to lose control. TV viewers may enjoy the entertainment, but the repercussions of violence are nothing to enjoy.

This is the nature of bitterness. Slowly over the course of time it wants to build a continual case that defiles everyone in its path. At first bitterness seems harmless, but when its minions fulfill their long term poisoning, violence comes in to unleash destruction .

Violence never happens overnight. You never see someone suddenly become violent, although it may appear that way. Unresolved bitterness has been looming under the surface for quite some time. Offense, unforgiveness, resentment, retaliation, anger and more have had access for too long.

Violent Storms

The definition of violence is “*a great destructive force or energy .*” [\[13\]](#) This well describes Satan’s work to steal, kill and destroy people in relationships. He does so by letting bitterness perform its subtle work over time. Then when it is ripe, a word or action unleashes destruction, fear and emotional damage onto others.

Violence is not just physical fighting, wrestling or punching. There can be a violent atmosphere in the house without any punches being thrown. Rage can manifest all kinds of violent sensations to others. Just get in someone’s face with intense bitterness and people will feel the breath of the violence within you.

Violence in many cases opens the door for verbal, physical and emotional abuse towards others. In many homes, children grew up where there was constant yelling and fighting. This is a violent atmosphere.

Our country has allowed the lines to be blurred on what is allowed for violence in our

media. We can be very hypocritical in our standards of violence. We sigh in disgust as criminals commit senseless acts of violence upon victims, yet we also tune into movies that display the very same acts, with no sense of conviction.

Dr. Don Colbert, in his book, *Stress Less*, communicates the damage that overindulgence of violence in our shows and movies does to our senses.

The problem with violence is that people become desensitized to it. They sear their own consciences and find they are able to watch more and more brutality and senseless killing with fewer and fewer emotional responses. While people may say they are against violence, by their actions in watching violence-and buying high-priced movie tickets to do so-they contribute to its increase. It takes more and more violence to stimulate feelings of "excitement," because the mind is growing more and more numb to the horror of violence.

In our numbness the love of many keeps growing colder, giving violence greater room to manifest. Society then erupts in violent behavior without any regret and little

sensitivity. The more our country tolerates violence, the more room the enemy is given to execute violent actions, allowing hostility to become commonplace.

Strife

Violence not only releases danger on people, it also keeps power struggles going and people at odds with each other. Those under the bondage of bitterness will become more prone to snapping and reacting harshly in conflicts.

Strife can be defined as self-seeking, rivalry and competition. It also includes the continual maintaining of a point or side in an argument, and where we seek to win followers for our side. Strife is one of the greatest tools the enemy uses to sow discord in a community.

Power struggles are the sign of a work of strife. This is the Pandora's box of the enemy. Once strife is unleashed in a setting, you can guarantee that every evil thing is allowed to enter in, "*But if ye have bitter*

envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work.” (James 3:14-16 KJV). And there is no stopping it, unless heart felt repentance and forgiveness takes place. *“The beginning of strife is like releasing water; Therefore stop contention before a quarrel starts”* (Proverbs 17:14).

Looking back at the chapter on hatred, we can know that hatred also opens up a spirit of strife in the midst. The solution is to put away the bitterness and allow love to come in. Proverbs 10:12 reminds us that *“Hatred stirs up strife, But love covers all sins.”*

I have married couples repent for strife when they can't seem to stop quarreling and fighting. Once you cross the strife line, you allow bitterness and all forms of evil to come in. It's my conviction that strife is the culprit that drives a divorce wedge in a marriage and causes church splits. As it says in

Proverbs 17:1, “*Better is a dry morsel with quietness, Than a house full of feasting with strife.*”

When strife is present, we war against each other and our sin issues. Instead of showing grace and kindness, we end up combating people over their sin struggles and weaknesses. Love has a different mindset. When love covers sins, it does not overlook and ignore sin, it covers as a garment does. As a garment brings a comforting cover to a body, love covers by establishing the healthy context for sin to be dealt with effectively.

Self-Violence

You can be sure that any area of bitterness can be directed towards oneself, and this includes violence. We can see the modern manifestation of self-violence in the act that many teens get caught up in: hurting themselves or cutting. The habit of self-cutting initiates the nurturing and healing properties of the body. Whenever the body gets injured, a

nurture response of the immune system is immediately engaged, sending resources to the wound to bring healing. Not only is this the body's natural way to heal itself, it brings a nurturing and comforting experience to the body.

When a person engages in cutting, excessive piercing or self-mutilation, they are engaging the body's nurture process in a counterfeit or dysfunctional way that God never intended. The cry within the person is for love, nurture and comfort. War in their thoughts has taken them captive over how they feel about life, themselves and their relationships. Cutting may sound distorted and irrational to an outsider, but the person with the struggle is under a weight of oppression that leads the person to these self-damaging behaviors as a way to find relief.

The occult used self-violence, excessive piercing and tattooing as a way to get the attention of the gods. This goes all the way back to the earliest biblical records, where the

prophets of Baal would cut themselves to try and move their gods to action. People who have experienced abuse can find that tattoos, piercings and cutting can be a form of release. Often they repeat the behavior over and over again, as it becomes habitual.

Ultimate Defilement

The ultimate work of bitterness is to defile many, which often invokes the work of murder to carry out its defiling work. Many would quickly respond by saying, “I have never murdered anyone!” We fail to realize, however, that murder can be in action, but it can also be accomplished with words:

Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. James 3:10

*Death and life are in the power of the tongue,
And those who love it will eat its fruit.*

Proverbs 18:21

Just by the improper use of our tongue,

words can be unleashed that give a murderous effect on someone.

On top of that, the Bible teaches us that if we entertain hate for our brother, then we are automatically a murderer, “*Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him*” (1 John 3:15). So we can fairly say we have all been murderers at some point !

Bitterness’ Relief

Bitterness gets its ultimate fulfillment when someone takes another person’s life. Many prisoners who are in jail for murder speak of what happened when they pulled the trigger and shot someone to death. All the rage, hate and bitterness they felt lifted off of them and they actually had a sober mind for a split second. Once the trigger was pulled they realized what they had done for a moment, but then it was too late. Bitterness had already inflicted its poison of defilement by eliminating a human life. Often the next

thoughts are of guilt and fear, where the murderer reacts to cover up their tracks or prevent anyone from knowing about their murderous act.

For those of us who fail to see the effects of our murderous words on others, beware thinking you are far from committing murder. One use of the tongue can unleash arrows that destroy the life and potential of people. In fact, when murder gets unleashed, a spirit of accusation releases some of Satan's deadliest arrows. Satan's name means *accuser*. Of all the demonic works of hell, he saved the work of accusation for himself, where he accuses believers before God day and night. When we allow bitterness to release accusatory words towards others, we allow the deepest work of satanic oppression to work through our members. I have learned the hard way; you never get into the ring with the Accuser without getting a beating. Remaining in the forgiveness and grace of God keeps the Accuser's work far from your fellowship,

family and community .

Murder Against Self

Having suicidal thoughts is a prevailing issue among people today, no matter the financial or social status. A stronghold of self-murder is what drives the temptations of suicide, making the battle over a person's life very troubling. Self-bitterness will accuse a person in their thoughts, causing them to believe they are not of value alive and are better off dead and will take any possible person in its path to ruin their life and break the hearts of loved ones. Millions of people all over the planet are accused in their thoughts over this issue.

I have had to cast out a spirit of suicide from many people who were struggling day after day over whether or not their life had any worth. It may have begun with a personal disappointment, but it eventually moved into further heaviness and depression. Maybe it was

just the repeated torment of anxiety and panic attacks they could no longer handle. Whatever the chronic problem, Satan seeks to use self-murder as an option for a person to end their life. It can make a person feel like a puppet on a string, but there is hope in Christ Jesus to renounce those thoughts and begin to accept the forgiving, life breathing power of God back into our hearts.

Bitterness' ultimate defilement is the elimination of another person. When directed to self, it wants to convince you that eliminating your life is the answer. Personally, I remember the thought of not wanting to be alive being very real in my mind. If I did not come to the understanding that these thoughts were not my own, who knows what I would have done after a while? I stand before you today alive and well to declare that it is a lie from Satan, the father of lies. He doesn't want you alive because your heart, alive unto God, can do damage to his army.

Questions for Consideration:

9

How to Forgive Anyone

Living the Bitter-Free Lifestyle

In this chapter, I am going to outline how to truly forgive someone, as well as how to keep bitterness out of our day-to-day lives. Each of us needs to learn how to forgive every single day, because that is what living in this life demands. Forgiveness unleashes the grace and love of God. You will have countless opportunities to forgive, or the poison bitterness has to offer will spread.

Peter opened up this subject to Jesus by asking him how many times we should

forgive people, “*Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times ?’*” (Matthew 18:21) He knew it was important to forgive, but he was wondering, as many of us would, as to what the limit would be. I am sure he thought, “*There’s gotta be an end to what I have to give out in releasing people. Somewhere I need to be able to drop the hammer and say, ‘Enough!’ No more forgiving from me!*”

In Luke’s gospel, Jesus doesn’t let forgiveness end. He raises the bar, saying, “*And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him*” (Luke 17:4). Jesus’ response always kicked the standard to a higher notch. Matthew records Jesus as saying, “*I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven*” (Matthew 18:22). So basically, that’s 490 times a day! That means if you are awake for 16 hours and sleep 8, you will have to forgive

someone every two minutes!

That's pretty intense. Some people say living under the law was tough, but they don't seem to take notice that Jesus actually brought a grace that raised the standard within us. True grace cuts to the motives of the heart, rather than just our outside behavior. With the revelation of God's grace, we need to understand the importance to exercise forgiveness and apply it every moment of every day. It all goes back to this: *healthy relationships are really important to God.*

A Biblical Example

Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. Matt 18:23-24

A talent was a measure of weight used in transactions. It was typically an amount that someone could carry, so for a strong man, about 75 pounds. Now we have to remember,

we are dealing with a king who is settling accounts, so he probably deals with gold, maybe silver.

To understand how much this man owed the king, we need to do some math. Remember that 1 Talent = about 75 pounds. Each pound = 16 ounces. Therefore 75 pounds x 16 ounces = 1200 ounces, or 1 talent = 1200 ounces. But the man owed the king 10,000 talents. This would be 1200 ounces for each talent x 10,000 talents or 12 million ounces of what was most likely gold!

Here are some stats I have collected over the years of gold prices as I have been teaching on this subject for a long time:

- April 27, 2007 - \$678 an ounce
- August 20, 2008 – \$805.30 an ounce
- January 27, 2009 - \$1100 an ounce
- March 2010 – \$1100 an ounce
- August 2014 - \$1278 an ounce

Let's use a number in the lower range and say the price of gold is \$700 an ounce. At

that rate, we are talking **8.4 billion dollars!** You wouldn't even be able to pay off the interest if you paid for the rest of your life! This is a ridiculous amount of money to owe someone, especially a king!

The man definitely bit off way more than he could handle. *“But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made”* (Matt. 18:25). This was a reasonable punishment, especially considering the amount of money he owed.

The servant tries to do what he can to gain mercy in this situation. There's obviously no way he can pay this back, but in a panic, he promises to anyway. *“The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all’”* (Matthew 18:26). This is an excellent illustration of the insurmountable debt that we owe God because of our sins and the price that Jesus Christ paid on the cross for them. The debt that we had built up that separated us

from God is incredible.

The next step that the master takes unveils the process of how forgiveness truly works, *“Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt”* (Matthew 18:27 - emphasis added). It is critical to understand that ***we do not fully forgive a person until we have released them.*** That is what forgiveness does, releases the person of owing you anything anymore. ***We cannot release a person unless we can have compassion on them.*** This is where love comes in, allowing you to see a person the way God sees them. In addition, ***you cannot have compassion for someone if you cannot separate them from the sin that operated through them.*** Without this perspective, we will only see others through the lens of what they did and nothing else.

Seeing Others Through Separation

One of the most powerful ways we can see people is through a spiritual lens;

recognizing it was most likely the enemy working through them against us. Most of the time we see people as one with their sin, not seeing that it is the enemy that came against us, working through them .



How We Often See Others



How We Need to See Others

Paul made this startling statement in his letter to Rome, *“Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me”* (Romans 7:20). He helps us

understand the sin battles that everyone struggles with. It is not him doing it, but sin dwelling within him. We can understand that when people sin, it is not just them doing it, but the presence of the enemy within them.

This word used for “sin” is a noun, not just a verb. We are more specifically speaking of a being operating through your members. Before you get spooked out about this, we all know about thoughts and actions that flow through us like someone else was sending impulses through our being. This is how sin works. Satan pulls the strings of agreement in our lives to perpetuate his counterfeit thoughts and trains us in the law of sin.

When Paul makes this statement, is he excusing himself of responsibility? Absolutely not! He is not saying, “I didn’t do it. The devil made me do it.” He is identifying the intelligence behind the thoughts, impressions and actions that we fall into that are not of God. Another kingdom is working through our members.

This is why Jesus was able to forgive and say, “*They do not know what they are doing*” (Luke 23:34). Did they know how to crucify people? Of course, Jesus was not talking about their competency in killing people. He was stating that the thoughts and actions the people were operating with were beyond what even they understood. They did not know what kind of thought system they were under. With that understanding, Jesus was able to forgive those who crucified him.

This is the lens you and I need to carry towards those who have wronged us. *It wasn't even them. It was the devil working through them to defile us.* Most of them were puppets on a string, not even discerning who was speaking in their thoughts. I am not saying that people need to be excused or that they had no choice in their thoughts, but rather that we need to understand the driving force that worked to defile us through another person.

That is how I forgive today. I couldn't do it before. But when I saw this “separation”

image, I realized that I needed to remember the enemy is in operation through the people that wound me. Most of the time, they have no idea what they are listening to and agreeing with in thought. With that in mind I can see them with greater compassion.

We move with compassion by seeing people separated from their sin, so we can see the real them apart from sin. We also forgive, because we have been freely forgiven a multi-billion dollar debt! All God asks is that in receiving His forgiveness, we give the same forgiveness to everyone freely.

The Servant's Response

But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!' Matthew 18:2 8

Clearly, this servant had immediately forgotten that he had just been forgiven of significantly more. Like so many of us, he

received this outrageous gift of forgiveness, but then withheld it from someone else. He is looking to get his money back from this guy and is so angry that he is even grabbing him by the throat! (Talk about going all the way to violence and murder.)

So what did the guy own him? 100 denarii. A denarii was one day's wage. So 100 denarii would be about 40% of a year's salary, considering you work roughly 250 out of the year. Let's give this a good annual salary of \$100,000. One hundred denarii would be about \$40,000. Now that's a lot of money! But is it billions of dollars? Not even close.

Do you recognize this same plea the man himself gave to the master, whom he owed billions of dollars to? *“So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all’* (Matthew 18:29). Hearing his own words said to him did not jog his memory of what he was just forgiven of.

A person who chooses not to forgive has

forgotten what he has been forgiven of.

And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done. Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’” Matt 18:30-33

Jesus calls the man who was forgiven but would not forgive someone else, “wicked,” simply because of unforgiveness. There are many out there holding unforgiveness towards someone, and in no way do they see themselves as wicked.

Jesus is raising the bar in our relationships. In order to grow, to experience the love of God and to manifest the full potential forgiveness brings on this planet, we must learn to forgive others, no matter what they’ve done. Most likely, they don’t owe you

a billion dollar debt. Even worse, they haven't nailed you to a cross. If we cannot forgive, then we haven't really understood what it has meant to be forgiven. There is a high calling to walk in the compassion and grace of God in this day and age. To release others, no matter what they've done, is to demonstrate the nature of God like nothing else.

Wanna make Jesus angry? Refuse to forgive as this servant did.

And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him. "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses. Matthew 18:34-35

Interestingly enough, the man gets handed over to the torturers. The torturers here represent the enemy—evil spirits that have access to you and your life because of forgiveness withheld. In my years I have met hundreds of people who were experiencing some form of torment— financial calamity,

loss, sickness, oppression or unrelenting mental torment—often coming out their refusal to forgive someone who wounded them.

No matter the reason you have to not forgive, if you stay in that position you open yourself up to the enemy. He gains legal access to torment you further. This is why keeping bitterness is like drinking poison and expecting someone else to get sick and die. You continue to carry the hurt as well as further torment that comes in as a result of unforgiveness.

On the other hand, when we truly forgive someone, no matter the offense, we loosen ourselves from the grip of whatever was done. We no longer carry the poison of that event in our bodies. When we forgive from our hearts, we can look back at the past wrongs done to us and not be tormented at the thought of the event any longer. We are able to see things through the lens of love and grace, giving us the power to release our testimony of freedom.

Questions for Consideration:

1. In what ways do you take God's forgiveness for granted?
2. Are there areas in your life where you are under bondage, coming out of not forgiving someone?
3. Is there a person in your life that you need to forgive right now?

10

TALKING IT OUT

Effective Conflict Resolution

One of the greatest marks of a mature believer, is the ability to handle conflict effectively. I don't care how much Scripture someone knows or how many years a person has known God, if they do not know how to handle conflict with another person, maturity is not present. Someone who is mature in their walk will know how to embrace conflict and create an invitation for the relationship to go to the next level.

Every relationship goes through conflict. This is the result of bringing together two people who do not think exactly alike on

every thought. Our diversity is refreshing, but it also creates the potential for conflict in various situations.

Most people do not know how to press into the conflict and come out stronger on the other side. This is one of the main reasons relationships become stagnant, drift apart or reach a plateau. We need to learn what to do, so that when we encounter conflict, we can come out of the other side with a stronger relationship .

Four Areas of Conflict:

1. A fight, battle, war, an armed conflict.
2. A competitive or opposing action of incompatibles.
3. Antagonistic state of action.
4. A mental struggle resulting from incompatible or opposing needs, drives, wishes or external or internal demands.

Conflict

Myths

When we are confronted with a conflict, there are often some myths involved that hinder us and prevent us from moving forward.

Myth # 1: Conflict can be avoided.

This is only true if you want to live in a cave or if you never want to deal with anything in your life. If you want to live, it is impossible to avoid confrontation. Many try to live without dealing with conflict, but they don't live; they only survive. Their goal is to avoid conflict at all costs. Many people, therefore, wander around tough scenarios when the answer is really very simple—to confront the person you are avoiding.

When we avoid conflict, we don't live as peacemakers, we become peacekeepers. In other words, we do whatever is necessary to avoid an uncomfortable conversation or argument. Those who “make” peace are not afraid to step into the battle zone to seek peace. Peace “keepers” will sell out to fear in order to keep anything uncomfortable from happening.

Myth # 2: Addressing conflict means something bad is going to happen. One of the reasons we avoid trying to resolve conflicts to begin with is that we assume the conversation to do so is going to be awful and warlike. Although this can be true, we often project way too much doom and gloom into the conversation. Fear keeps us from even wanting to go there, believing the conversation will get too heated and we won't know what to do. We focus on the negative, not seeing the great potential that can come to the relationship if we work through it. We also don't see how much we will grow, regardless of whether or not the other person is willing to walk towards a healed and healthier relationship.

Myth # 3: If I avoid conflict, the relationship will stay great. This is a straight up lie. The truth is the relationship will plateau, often only going so far and never reaching its true potential. From this point, most relationships become fake and fabricated, because no one can honestly speak their heart

and mind anymore. Issues are avoided and interactions become shallow.

The truth is, relationships can only get better when we get to the point where we can address issues, bring up conflict and work through them together. Some of my most fruitful relationships have been those where we walked through the tunnel of conflict and came out the other side stronger.

On the other hand, I have sadly watched way too many relationships fizzle out as people did not want to enter into the realm of honest discussion and healthy conflict interaction. Once you open up a touchy subject, you are shut down, and the relationship is just never the same again.

Myth # 4: Assuming the other person just has it out for you. This is the work of a rejection mindset that starts us off on the defensive. In this mode, we already have our gloves on before the conversation even starts. Most of the time, when I am in a conflict resolution scenario, the person does not mean

to be vindictive, or they are lashing out from a place of hurt that actually has nothing to do with me. It is being projected onto me because it was never resolved from the past.

Myth # 5: Conflict can always be resolved. I believe if both parties are operating with healthy mindsets, then resolution can always be found. But as the saying goes, “It takes two.” So often there is a glitch where someone is not willing to work through the issues at hand in a biblical and healthy way.

The point of entering into conflict resolution is to create an invitation for the relationship to be improved. But not everyone says yes to that invitation. Many want to just focus on their grievance, hold onto their grudge or stay angry about an issue.

Myth # 6: Having a rational conversation will fix everything. This was a subtle lie I believed for many, many years. I thought, “Come on. If they just hear me out. If I can just have a rational conversation with this person, everything will work out fine.” After

spending numerous meetings to no avail, fruitfulness hour-long phone calls and novel size email exchanges, resolution was nowhere to be found. The more I tried to “fix” the situation, the worse it got. I had to learn the hard way that not everyone actually wants to see the situation resolved. Too often people want to just hold onto their junk. Those of us who want to be healthy need to know when to let these people go. Unfortunately, it took me many years to really begin doing this with people I was trying to help who just didn’t want it.

A Safe Protocol

Jesus gave us the simplest, yet most effective protocol for handling conflict that has ever existed. It is filled with order, sanity and even protective backing, in case things don’t go well. The instructions are found in the Gospel of Matthew. It’s amazing that with such simple instructions, we as humans always seem to take the harder and more painful paths,

where we mishandle conflict-filled circumstances and suffer under the consequences. May we soberly come into alignment with how God wants us to handle conflict, and in doing so, may our relationships go to the next level.

The first step is to go alone to the person themselves and talk it out. [14]

“Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother” (Matthew 18:15). This is the hardest step, but one that if practiced continually, can become an incurable healthy habit worth cultivating. Most people have been trained to stew on the issue, talk to a bunch of people about it or even worse, call the church every time there is an issue. All three of these responses is out of order and causes greater damage.

If people consistently took this first step and lived it out, the church lines would be fairly quiet and a lot more ministry work

would get done. Very few conflicts in the church should actually come to the desk of church leadership. Most needs can be taken care of at this level—between the person and the one offended. It is sometimes easier said than done, but we need to apply this way more than what is currently taking place in our world. I know of very few people that actually practice this.

So why do we avoid this? The answer is usually fear. We are afraid of rejection, being hurt or not knowing what to say. At some point, we all have to face our fear issues of confrontation so that our relationships can move to the next level. One of the greatest reasons our relationships are so poor is that people have given into a coward's way of thinking and living.

We also don't go to the other person and work out the issue because we lack the tools needed to maneuver through tough discussions. We never watched others do it in a healthy manner, nor were we given practical

application on how to do it. We were preached at and told we need to do it, but were never equipped .

How to Go to the Person

Let's spend some time focusing on learning how to do this, because working things out in a one-on-one setting is where people seem to struggle the most. Working through conflict works much better when we learn how to talk things out, with God, in our own minds and with others. We live in an age today where people do not know how to talk things out. We either wait until we are so pent up that we explode at another person, or we go to someone who has nothing to do with the issue and "vent," which really is just gossip.

Most conflict resolution tools people use lead to wrath, which Satan trains us in, and will *never* produce a righteous outcome. It only stirs the pot of war more. When talking to the person you have an issue with, you need to speak constructively and strategically.

Otherwise strife will kick up and every evil thing will begin to manifest, *“For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work”* (James 3:16 KJV).

Talking to another person who has wronged you or sinned against you, therefore, requires wisdom to gain the greatest fruit. James gives us the instruction of wisdom in this manner, *“So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God”* (James 1:19-20). James provides a means for healthy one-on-one communication.

Be aggressive to listen and hear the other person’s point of view and understand their heart. Take a good amount of time doing this. This is what being *“swift to hear”* or *“quick to listen”* means. The agenda for the discussion should be to hear the other person and understand their heart’s intentions. Steven Covey in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People* , taught, “Seek first to

understand, then to be understood.”

Our ungodly training, however, often leads us to be quick to judge, and then to lash out in response to our perception of the other person’s motives. When we are wronged we have the urge to get our side out on the table as soon as possible. Most of our listening simply involves nodding our heads and thinking about what we are going to say, until it’s our turn to talk. This is not being slow to speak. This is called, “I can’t wait to speak.” This always leads to a dead end. You might win an argument, but you lose the potential for a quality relationship.

So how do you know you have listened effectively? When you can properly articulate their side back to them. After you have listened, you are not done listening. You need to share back with them what you feel like they are trying to say, “So what I hear you saying is . . . Is this correct? Is this what you are saying?” When they answer, “yes” then you have been quick to listen. This doesn’t mean

the person is to talk for two hours about their side, but it means you have appropriately affirmed their feeling and thoughts.

Healthy Boundaries

During a discussion focused on resolving a conflict, it is important to maintain healthy boundaries. The following will help to achieve the most fruitful outcome.

1. Above all, create an atmosphere of love for the other person, by affirming what is good. Don't just focus on what is bad or annoying. Notice how affirming Paul the apostle was in his writings: "*Great is my boldness of speech toward you, great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort. I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation*" (2 Corinthians 7:4).

We can establish an atmosphere of love by our body language, tone and words. These can all add to or take away from there being a safe place of love for people to reason together. Love provides the best environment

so that when truth is spoken, it can be done from a place focused on God's heart.

2. Don't make this about yourself, or else you will become defensive and all about you "being right." Focusing on you will allow a self-seeking mindset and strife to enter the conversation. Maturing is learning to make conversations about the other person and about solid resolution.

3. Ask God to help you maintain a spirit of meekness. To be meek means to have strength under control. This is a tremendous quality in the heart of a believer. Jesus even said the meek will inherit the earth! [\[15\]](#) This means with power under restraint, we can be trusted with the responsibility of authority in this life and the life to come. God is seeking to entrust His Kingdom to us, but if we do not operate in meekness, we will become easily overthrown by the onslaughts of offense, bitterness and combative behaviors.

4. Learn to walk in humility and take responsibility for your part in the conflict. No

one is perfect in every situation. Be willing to apologize for the hurt you caused the other person, even if your intent was good. This can sometimes be painful and difficult, but in taking God's road, we sometimes have to humble ourselves before God by giving people grace. This often means apologizing simply because they were hurt, regardless of your intentions.

Some people just cannot do this, and it shows the level of pride that keeps them from humbling themselves under God's mighty hand. They wonder why God's grace is not flowing through their life. Sometimes it is simply that they refuse to manifest what humility requires, a bended knee.

In this, you may need to address a dysfunctional belief system you carry. It's always important in conflict resolution to check your own heart, where there may be unresolved hurt and strongholds from the past digging into the current discussion. A lot of times we are blasting someone from an

unresolved hurt that has nothing to do with them. When we are refusing to address our faulty belief systems, we limit our ability to get free and change.

5. Refrain from “you” accusatory statements. When using “you” statements like “you always do this” or “you are so selfish” we allow the Accuser to come in and take part in our conversations. Refraining from that helps to keep the conversation in a place where people are less likely to feel the need to be defensive. Stay away from using “you” statements which tend to be accusatory. Instead, use and emphasize “I” statements or even “we” statements.

6. Stay away from judging the person’s motives. Don’t assume you know where people are coming from and why they do what they do. We don’t know the full story of other people’s hurts, thoughts and motives. We hardly know our own motives, so it’s important to not think we have a definite idea on what someone else’s full motives are as we

go into the conversation.

7. Don't shut down. This is a classic weapon the enemy trains us in. We get so angry or hurt that we shut the person off by shutting down. Don't give into it. Stay engaged; even if you are angry. Stay in the game until you can find a place to land in the conversation. Even God gives us an invitation, saying, "*Come now, and let us reason together, says the LORD*" (Isaiah 1:18). Let's always keep the invitation open to reason together with each other.

In a discussion, when I speak the truth in love, I am not slapping the person with truth and then saying, "I say that in love." That's not how this works. We must first invest in a loving relationship, so that we have already created an atmosphere to allow truth to come in. How do I know I have invested in a love relationship? When I am speaking in such a way that my highest priority is the relationship, not just being right or just putting a person back in line .

So What if This Does Not Work?

So what if going to the person does not go so well? They don't listen, they are stubborn or the conversation leads to the situation getting worse. Then feel free to put a pause on the conversation and enter into the next stage of biblical guidelines. It is a good thing God has a follow-up contingency plan!

Take another person with you. “*But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that ‘by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established’*” (Matthew 18:16). Now you are bringing someone with you that will help act as a third party, and will also be able to bring to account as a witness, everything that is said. I have mediated over many of these meetings encouraging a friend or a person in the church to work out issues with another person. Many times this can solve it. If not, there is still another step.

Bring it to the church. “*And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if*

he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector” (Matthew 18:17). It is at this level that the church should be brought in to help and bring added leadership and council. I have also facilitated at this level many times over the years. Some were very successful and resulted in better relationships. Others went terribly as people did not want resolution, but just wanted to keep fighting.

The person may need to be removed from the fellowship. When a person is unwilling to work towards peace or come with a spirit of reconciliation, the devil can begin to use this person as a tool for division. Splinters can fly throughout the church. Within days, deceptions and strife can start kicking up. That is why the church has been given governmental authority at this level to remove people from the fellowship who are now a danger to the flock. There is a realm of grace that everyone should be given, but allowance to unrepentant and divisive behavior in the

name of grace is counterfeit grace.

When Jesus spoke of binding and loosing, He was unveiling a spiritual act that is given to the body of Christ as a way of manifesting God's kingdom on the earth. *"Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven"* (Matthew 18:18). *Binding* speaks of forbidding. *Loosing* speaks of permitting. We as children of God, operating with God's order in relationships, have the delegated privilege to forbid and permit. We can stand against the works of the devil and forbid his way of thinking from entering into our midst. At the same time, we have the opportunity to permit and allow all of who God is to come and touch our lives. It all comes down to what manner of thought we allow to feed our lives.

The depth of meaning here is incredible. Literally translated, this verse says, *"Whatever you would bind upon the earth will already have been bound in heaven with*

ongoing effect, and whatever you would lose upon the earth will already have been loosed in heaven with ongoing effect.” We are aligning ourselves with heaven, by establishing here on earth what we recognize as the heart of God through what we bind and loose. Notice that this delegated power and authority from Christ is taught in the context of forgiveness, reconciliation and conflict resolution. We need to bind or forbid bitterness, unforgiveness and all the enemy’s trappings, while loosing or permitting forgiveness, grace and love to permeate our lives.

We cannot expect to walk in the power of prayer without the power of healthy relationships. Jesus even takes it a step further, *“Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven”* (Matthew 18:19). So even the idea of coming together in prayer and seeking God to provide an answer to our requests is hinging on our ability to get along and walk in unity. Biblical

conflict resolution aggressively protects the unity of the flock, keeping the divider out of our midst.

Jesus wants us to know that He desires to be in our midst, to work and operate to the fullest. *“For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them”* (Matthew 18:20). But we must be willing to walk according to His purpose in regard to each other.

I heard this verse a thousand times growing up in prayer meetings. People thought that because we were gathered together, that Christ was in the midst of that gathering. Not true! Just because we all get into a room together means nothing. You could have a gathering of 2 or a gathering of 20,000. It doesn't matter. If healthy relationships and loving unity amongst the body are not present, the power of Jesus Christ will not operate in the fullness He designed us to experience. Our gatherings can become nothing more than pep rallies or community gatherings.

Remember, God is just as concerned about our relationships with each other as He is our relationship with Him. Walking this process out is not easy, especially because it will confront all of the places you find uncomfortable. Those who you have conflict with are often exposing areas of your heart that God wants to deal with. Facing conflict according to God's terms will help you speed along the path of spiritual growth, while giving you a greater revelation of God's heart for people.

I have practiced this protocol more times than I could even count. There were times I walked away with skid-marks on my back. I have been betrayed. I have experienced false accusations and complete misunderstandings, mostly by people who did not want resolution or who did not want to follow the biblical process. Yet, through it all, I am thankful, because every conflict provides an opportunity to grow in who I am and developing the heart of God in my life.

Through the pain and rough seasons, I have learned more about the love, grace and forgiveness of God than I ever have before.

Many people don't bother dealing with conflict, because they don't want the skid marks or the hurt. Instead, they imprison themselves and miss out on tremendous growth opportunities. The good news is that even when you get deeply hurt, there is a God who is available to walk it out with you so you can heal and get back in the game of life again. This only occurs when we access God's amazing forgiveness .

Guidelines of Respect

Years ago, I clipped the following guidelines regarding relationships and conflict. I read about a young pastor who developed some guidelines for relationships at his first church that he started. It being his first church, he was intimidated by the challenges, so he put together some guidelines whereby everyone could agree to respect one another and exercise

kindness towards each other. The rules he developed were:

1. If you have a problem with me, come to me (privately).
2. If I have a problem with you, I'll come to you (privately).
3. If someone has a problem with me and comes to you, send them to me. (I'll do the same for you.)
4. If someone consistently will not come to me, say, "Let's go see him together." (I'll do the same for you.)
5. Be careful how you interpret me. On matters that are unclear, do not feel pressured to interpret my feelings or thoughts. It is easy to misinterpret intentions.
6. I will be careful how I interpret you.
7. If it's confidential, don't tell. If anyone comes to me in confidence, I won't tell unless (a) the person is

going to harm him/herself; (b) the person is going to physically harm someone else; (c) a child has been physically or sexually abused. I expect the same from you.

8. I do not read unsigned letters or notes.
9. I do not manipulate; I will not be manipulated. Do not let others manipulate you; do not let others try to manipulate me through you.
10. When in doubt, just say it. If I can answer without misrepresenting something or breaking a confidence, I will. [\[16\]](#)

These are rules he promised to live by and asked the church to do the same. I encourage you to carry this into your home, office, church and leadership teams for the greatest effectiveness possible.

Questions for Consideration

1. Which myth about conflict has

most affected your view of conflict resolution?

2. Where do you struggle in practicing healthy conflict resolution in your life?

3. What steps did you find helpful?

11

LIVING IT OUT

Manifesting the Forgiving Lifestyle

To forgive is to set a prisoner free and discover that the prisoner was you. Lewis B. Smedes

Not forgiving someone is like drinking rat poison and waiting for the rat to die. Anne Lammott

Once a woman has forgiven her man, she must not reheat his sins for breakfast. Marlene Dietrich

Always forgive your enemies—nothing annoys them so much. Oscar Wilde

The practice of forgiveness is our most

important contribution to the healing of the world. Marianne Williamson

The good news is that, in God, it is possible to forgive and to forgive anyone. We need to have an experience with the forgiveness of God ourselves so that we can release that out to others. Those who have a hard time forgiving have forgotten what it means to be forgiven.

We also have to realize that bitterness is a spiritual parasite that seeks to train us in NOT forgiving by not releasing those who have wronged or offended us. God designed every believer to be able to forgive and release others. If you struggle to activate that forgiveness, then something has joined you in thought to make you believe otherwise. Keeping you bound is the work of Satan's kingdom.

Forgiveness is rarely a one-time event, although it can be. Most of the time we have to keep walking out forgiveness until we detoxify

our system of bitterness. Manifesting forgiveness is also a lifestyle. You will need to practice forgiveness on others all day long. You will also need to receive forgiveness for yourself over the daily issue of your life, too.

Getting Past the Avoidance

For so many, when you bring up the subject of forgiveness, all kinds of uncomfortable thoughts and feelings come to the surface. They quickly want the subject changed, because there are often some deep unresolved hurts in their life. A typical response might be “Don’t go there.” Quite often the hurt takes center stage in their life and they are unable to see the potential for freedom that exists through forgiveness.

It can seem impossible, but every believer carries the Spirit of the Forgiver in them. Our Father has forgiven and will continue to forgive the sins of our lives as we walk in relationship with Him. Because of His presence in our lives, we carry the forgiving

power of God within us.

The enemy in our thoughts has taught us through bitterness that forgiveness is either impossible or not an option. Here are some lies the enemy will give you to **NOT** forgive someone:

- 1. Your situation was too hurtful. *“Mark you don’t understand what I have been through, seen and experienced.”* Sometimes rejection keeps emphasizing the hurt, so we struggle to let go and walk free.**
- 2. Ignorance - you don’t need to deal with it. We don’t see the importance of addressing forgiveness issues and working through them, so the hurt and the enemy fester under the surface.**
- 3. If you forgive, it is like saying that the other person’s actions were acceptable. Forgiveness is never about saying what someone else did**

was ok. In fact, the hurt that was done to you actually hurt the heart of God. He hates to see mankind disobey his precepts and hurt one another with the ways of sin. It breaks His heart that the responsibility He has given to mankind has been abused or ignored.

4. There is no difference between the sinner and the sin. If we do not practice separation, we see only the sin, not the person apart from the sin working within them. Seeing the person separated from the sin that is at work within them helps us to have compassion on the person, realizing it's the enemy taking advantage of their own brokenness.
5. You are justified in holding the resentment.
6. You hold the keys of justice, and you deserve to see yourself

vindicated. Rather, we ought to leave vindication and justice in God's hands. (Romans 12:19)

7. You have your pride. We don't want to humble ourselves and let go of those who have hurt us or wronged us.
8. It is too late to deal with it; the past is the past so just move on. The problem is that the past is the past *as long as you have dealt with it*. The past is not the past if you cannot talk about it. That is a true sign of healing. You are only truly free if you can talk about it freely with no "ping" or ache in your belly.
9. The person you need to forgive is dead. It doesn't matter. We still need to release them if we are holding onto something from our interactions with them.

Clarifying the Process

It is important that we understand forgiveness' power in our lives by clarifying some things about what it looks like. Allow me to hit some random areas about what forgiveness involves and what it does not.

The goal of forgiveness is reconciliation, but that does not always happen. If you have forgiven someone, but they are not willing to work on reconciling, it is important that you take your peace with God anyway. The result of forgiveness is not always ultimate reconciliation. Not everyone will forgive, not everyone will receive forgiveness, and not everyone will want to reconcile. The ultimate result of forgiving others is for you to be conformed into the image of Christ Jesus and to extend the power of God' s love. No matter what the response is, you will climb to a higher level.

Forgiveness clears the ledger; but it does not immediately rebuild trust. Trust needs to be built over time. You may have forgiven someone, but that does not mean that

suddenly they are a safe person to be around. You do not need to be their best friend or move into close interaction. Forgiveness clears the toxic fog off our lens, but a close relationship may not be there. Trust may have to be rebuilt and that can take time.

For example, a wife who has been abused needs to forgive, but that does not mean there is clear evidence of change or trustworthiness now. Many people will forgive others and then run back into the relationship foolishly. I always have to remember: I may have changed, but that does not mean the other person has changed.

I have watched addicts destroy a family or marriage. Those affected begin to forgive, but then they quickly take the addict back into the home or continue to cover up for the person. This is unwise. Forgiveness does not lead us back into destructive, abusive or toxic relationships.

Forgiveness is really about you.
When I say this, you need to understand that

bitterness makes your pain all about the other person; what they did and how much they have affected your life negatively. This is why we drink poison and expect the other person to get sick. Instead we get toxic and ill. Forgiveness is all about you being free. It's about you moving on with your life freely. Forgiveness says, "I am going to let you go so I can stop focusing on you and move on with my life."

Your breakthrough in life may hinge on you forgiving. Many times people have trouble finding a new job, because their last boss hurt them and they carry unresolved bitterness. You may not see a new relationship open up unless you forgive the ex. I have seen many get stuck in ministry, especially because they never took the time to forgive their last pastor or church leader who wronged them. You cannot expect God to heal your body from a disease and continue to carry unforgiveness towards someone.

Omit the need for an apology or an explanation. Forgiving means I don't need a

whole story or reason behind everything to forgive someone. R. Brault has an amazing quote, saying, “Life becomes easier when you learn to accept the apology you never got.” When you walk with a grace-filled heart, getting an apology or an explanation is not critical to the execution of forgiveness. Receiving an apology from someone is only a bonus.

Forgiveness does not mean you are weak or that you are a doormat. In fact, it is the exact opposite. Those who forgive are some of the strongest people on the planet! They carry the meekness of God and become those who inherit the earth as Jesus said! In addition, because you forgive someone, does not mean they can just keep acting abusive or beating you up. You may have to establish some serious boundaries with toxic people, until they can learn to act civilized and interact in a decent manner. I have at times had to put up boundaries for years with certain people who were dangerous to be around emotionally.

We need God's wisdom to do that. You can still forgive them, however, and be released from the toxic thoughts that would come your way. You can also bump into them at the store and not get all riled up inside. That's the power of God's kingdom!

Forgiveness and Trauma

Many of us have bitterness and unforgiveness issues that come out of traumatic experiences. This may have been because of abuse, a tragic accident or an abandonment situation. Regardless, we must understand that part of the healing of trauma must be the forgiveness of those involved with the incident. Without processing through forgiveness, we allow the torment that came in at that traumatic moment to remain. We must understand that when we refuse to forgive, Satan has a legal right to stay and torment us continually over what happened [\[17\]](#)

There are many different modalities used out there in the name of healing or inner

healing. Some can be very dangerous and even non-biblical. If I had a nickel for every emotional healing technique that is out there, many used in the name of God, I would be a millionaire.

One method I am very concerned about is when traumatic memories are erased from the person's memory. The idea is that if we can remove the traumatic recall from the person's memory, we can remove their torment. There are two problems with this. First, the person may forget the memory, but the enemy is still there to torment them. Now they can be tormented beyond their conscious ability to know what they are tormented about.

Second, they lose their testimony. Someone who has truly been healed from a trauma can remember the incident, but they are no longer tormented by it. This gives them the ability to declare their testimony of what God has done in Christ Jesus. If you cannot remember a trauma, how can you testify about it?

Forgiving is never about forgetting. It is about remembering, but with a new viewpoint of love, grace and a healed perspective. When the tormentor's control is broken over your life, you can remember the incident, but have compassion for those who wounded you and did not love you properly. You may even have compassion on their brokenness that led them to act in sinful ways towards you.

Forgiving Parents

When it comes to forgiveness, we all have to face the reality that we need to learn to forgive and release our parents. Many of the issues we carry with God, ourselves and others often trail back to our relational breeches with our dad and mom. Many ignore the pain their parents left on their hearts, so they ignorantly walk around with a limp that never seems to go away. Others live their entire life as victims, thinking, "If I only had different parents my whole life would be better."

No parent is perfect. Even children

from the best parents on the planet will need to work through issues. In fact, the best parent was in Luke 15, where his son decided to walk away and go on his own. And he did that with an amazing dad!

We must realize that if we do not face the pain from our parental issues, we can be doomed to carry that cloud around. If we do not forgive our parents, we will inevitably repeat their sin patterns. No matter how many vows you make, saying, “I won’t be like my dad.” If you don’t forgive them, their sin will follow you and continue to manifest in your life. Forgiveness can open up for a healed relationship with our parents. If not, we do know that God can open up the doors for a new generational pattern to be unleashed in our lives!

In the heart of every parent is a desire to have a good relationship with their children. Every child was made with a desire to have a solid relationship with his or her parents. There is just so much junk from the enemy that

interferes with this relationship between parent and child.

We are going to address how to break free from Satan's interference in the next section. Before we do, read this story:

In his book, Capital of the World, Ernest Hemingway wrote about a father in Spain who had a son named Paco. Because of his son's rebellion, Paco and his father were estranged. The father was bitter and angry with his son, and kicked him out of the home.

After years of bitterness, the father's anger ended and he realized his mistake. He began to look for Paco, with no results. Finally, in desperation, the father placed an ad in the Madrid newspaper.

The ad read :

“PACO, ALL IS FORGIVEN. MEET ME AT THE NEWSPAPER OFFICE AT 9AM TOMORROW. LOVE, YOUR FATHER.”

Paco is a rather common name in Spain, and Hemingway wrote when the father arrived the

next morning, there were 600 young men—all named Paco—waiting and hoping to receive the forgiveness of their fathers.

This story illustrates very well what a father's forgiveness and love can do for his son.

10 Stages of Bitterness and Forgiveness Ministry

There was a song written not too many years ago that had a line in it, saying, “It’s too late to apologize.” I never want to agree with that. We have right now and right now is a great opportunity to say we are sorry, to forgive or to pursue a restored relationship with someone.

The following are some steps you can take to walk into forgiveness. You may have a million things screaming inside of you, “No!” but if some part of you wants to forgive, God can work with that.

1. Take a moment and pray. Ask God to reveal to you the people that you hold

unforgiveness and bitterness of any kind towards. Write their names down. You may need to include God on that list, as many people carry bitterness and anger towards God for various reasons.

2. Identify how difficult you think it will be to forgive. On a scale of 1-10, 10 being really easy, write down a number next to each name on how easy it is to forgive them. One would be pretty much impossible. Nine would be a near walk in the park to forgive them.

3. Address bitterness and the underlings of its root system. We will use the following prayer tool to address the hindrances to forgiveness. Find a quiet place and set some time aside where you can pray through this. If you have someone to support you, that is awesome, but you can also work through this on your own.

Personal Ministry Prayer Tool

Prayer of Repentance

Father God . . .

I recognize that I have had _____ in my life . . .

I take responsibility for _____ in my generation and all previous generations . . .

I repent of and renounce _____ .
..

I ask forgiveness for having _____ in my life and cooperating with it . . .

I receive your forgiveness God and I forgive myself . . .

I ask now that _____ be broken and removed from my life in Jesus name.

Prayer of Deliverance

(For Person Doing the Ministry or To Do Yourself if By Yourself)

In the Name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, by the power of the Holy Spirit . . .

I take authority over you, _____.

I break your power _____ and cancel your assignment .

I cast you out and remove you, _____ and command you to leave in Jesus' name.

Father God, heal the place where _____ has been and fill that place with Yourself .

You are going to use this prayer tool to go through each of the areas of bitterness. So that means you will pray *out loud* through the *entire* prayer process over each key word in the list below.

Bitterness

Offense

Unforgiveness

Resentment

Retaliation/Revenge/Judgment

Anger/Wrath/Rage

Hatred

Violence

Murder/Accusation

The key to the prayer tool is not to use it as though it is a magic formula, but rather as a guide to help you focus on what you are battling against and removing from your life. As best as is possible, engage this time of prayer and repentance from your heart. You

may experience some major emotional release. You may also feel a lot of things kick up as you go through this prayer. I have found that many people have so much interference and interruptions kick up right when they sit down to work on this. Couples who decide to do it together often have a quarrel or some form of distraction keeps them from executing this process.

Remember the goal of forgiveness should be deep repentance and character transformation. Whether you feel an emotional release or not is not the goal. It helps to experience that, but it should not be the main gauge.

As you pray through the prayer, feel free to pause and talk it out with God. Express to Him what happened and the pain you are working through. It is so critically important that you make a heart connection as best you are able. Pray all the way through, addressing each area, down to and including murder.

4. Forgive them out loud. Once you feel

that you have prayed through each area effectively, it's time to take the next step. Go ahead and address each person on your list and out loud forgive them, as though they were in the room. When you forgive them, make sure you forgive them specifically. Generic forgiveness statements don't have the power that specific ones do. For example, "Dad, I forgive you for leaving me . . . for leaving Mom. . . . for abandoning us and never being in my life."

You may need to meet with the person to forgive them. This does not need to happen every time, so you need to use wisdom, but sometimes it can be powerful. You may need to write a letter that you never send to the person, forgiving them and releasing them. You may also need to ask for their forgiveness for your involvement that may have contributed to the problem.

You must see the power of your participation in forgiving. I not only believe that forgiving others will set you free, it can

also unlock their ability to walk in greater freedom with God, *“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained”* (John 20:23). Could it be that your forgiving action could unleash the power of God to release His love and grace over that other person’s life in a greater dimension?

5. Release any bitterness and anger that you have had towards God. It is not about forgiving God, because God can never sin and doesn’t need to be forgiven. But we must repent and ask for forgiveness for having bitterness towards Him, while talking through a release from that bondage.

6. Make sure you forgive yourself. I know that I often have held unforgiveness, anger and resentment towards myself. I would not allow myself to let go of many situations in my life. Condemnation would own my thoughts, but when I forgave myself, a great release was able to come into my life.

Declaring that we forgive ourselves

affirms God's forgiveness for us. We come into agreement with the forgiveness God has for us. It affirms that we are not going to hold something against ourselves any longer, but receive the blessing of being forgiven.

7. Tear down and renounce judgments you have made towards that person. With effective forgiveness, I not only release and forgive the person, I want to remove all words and motives of judgmentalism I have aimed towards them. This is where I verbally renounce where I spoke words and entertained thoughts of judgment against the person's character, their surroundings and their future. As I release that judgmental heart towards that person, I can also be released from those judgments hindering my life. Remember, the way we judge others is the way God will deal with us. Sometimes we need to release judgmentalism on others to free up our own walk.

8. Pray for the person. This is the real proof that you have forgiven and released

them. In fact, if you are still struggling to forgive, begin praying for the person so that you gain the heart of God towards the person. *“You have heard that it was said, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.’ But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you”* (Matthew 5:43-44).

9. Bless them. If unforgiveness is still meddling in your thoughts, sometimes it takes an action that will seal the repentance and allow closure to the situation. Find a way to bless them in a way that would mean something. Often, this will be in the form of a financial blessing or an action that costs you something.

Sometimes when someone has acted wrong toward me in ministry, I may just send them a generous offering in addition to my forgiveness, so that I never harbor anything against them. *“Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for*

it is written, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. Therefore, 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; If he is thirsty, give him a drink; For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:19-21). Acting in this way can help seal your breakthrough so you can move on.

10. Ask God to help you become “unoffendable.” This doesn’t mean that you will never be hurt, but that you will not succumb as easily to being offended by people’s actions. Remember, what offends you, reveals you, “*A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense*” (Proverbs 19:11 NIV). Your personal growth will be limited by what can offend you and take you out.

Please note: additional resources on forgiveness and relationships are found in the appendix section of this book.

The Better Way to Live

One of my goals in life is to become more and more “unoffendable.” But in order to do that, I will have to face some stuff. I have to be willing to experience some hurt, process it out with God and get back into the game. Disappointment, downright betrayal and backbiting will come, but each experience gives me an opportunity to exercise the grace and power of God. You see, the more we learn to not be offended, the greater we will be able to see and hear what God is doing and perceive life through a clearer lens.

You may not be able to change what happens to you, but with a clearer spiritual perspective, you can overcome and grow in God, as you walk Bitter-Free!

Appendix 1: A Relationship with God

God loves you very dearly and has an amazing purpose for your life.

We love Him because He first loved us. 1 John 4:19

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. John 3:16

The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy. I have come that they may have life, and that they may have it more abundantly. John 10:10

Because of sin, man is separated from God and cannot know and experience His love and purposes.

*for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God
Romans 3:23*

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

Jesus Christ came to earth and died on the cross for

our sins. He rose from the dead and is the only way to a relationship with God. Through Jesus, we can know God's love and purpose for our life.

But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 5:8

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. John 14:6

Jesus invites us to open up to God and have an intimate relationship with Him.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. Revelation 3:20

Our responsibility is to believe and receive Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name. John 1:12

When we receive Christ, we do so by faith, believing in what He did on the cross, not on our own ability or works.

For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. Ephesians 2:8-9

You can receive Christ now by faith and enter into a

new relationship with God through prayer.

If you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him.

For "whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." Romans 10:9-13

Here is a suggested prayer:

Jesus, I recognize my need for You. I thank You for dying on the cross for my sins, and I open my heart to You right now. I receive your forgiveness for my sins and I thank You for giving me eternal life. I receive You as my Savior and Lord. I invite You to come in and take control of my life. Show me Your love and lead me to become the person You want me to be.

If this prayer echoes the desire of your heart, I invite you to pray it right now and Jesus will come into your life, as He promised. God is now your father!

Appendix 2: The Armor of Bitterness

(Towards God, Self, Others)

BITTERNESS

Offense

Unforgiveness

Resentment

Retaliation

Anger/Wrath

Hatred

Violence

Murder (In act or with the tongue)

Others Areas to Consider:

- o Condemnation

- o Strife: especially in the home
- o Rebellion
- o Cursing: especially word curses
- o Suicide
- o Death (life and death in the power of the tongue)
- o Slander / Gossip / Evil Speaking
- o Malice

Appendix 3: Fighting Fair for Couples

Here are some healthy boundaries married couples can use to “fight fair” and get somewhere in disagreements. Sometimes you need a good fight to work through an issue, so don’t avoid them, but learn how to maneuver through them for maximum benefit and breakthrough.

We Boundaries

Here are some guidelines to agree on *beforehand* that apply during fights, disagreements and conflicts.

1. We will seek to honor and treasure our marriage in thought and words; with each other and when talking about our marriage to other people.
2. We will not use

passive aggressive communication in our family. If something bothers us about the other person, we will work it out with God first and then communicate in love with each other if necessary after talking to God about it. This includes using jokes as a way to communicate convicting issues.

3. We will never mention divorce. We consider that a swear word, equivalent to the “f-bomb.”
4. We will remain sober to the importance of never using words that can cause permanent damage. Respect can be maintained, even if we are angry about something.
5. We will not bring up old, unrelated items from the past or past issues that have been dealt with and forgiven. (This means we will stay in the present and focused on the issue in front of us.)

6. We may call a "time out" if the conflict escalates to a potentially damaging level. This can mean politely removing ourselves (with kindness) until we can come back together and speak with clear heads and hearts. We will not shut off, storm off or just drop "dead silence" on the other person as a weapon.
7. We will never touch one another in a harmful way.
8. We will never go to bed angry with one another. This may involve some late night discussions, so that we make peace with each other—not giving the devil any room to operate.
9. Quitting is not an option with it comes to reconciling in our marriage. Whatever it takes, we can and will work this out.
10. Forgiveness is always THE option.

Me Boundaries

1. I will exercise patience and release kindness in my interactions so that love can manifest. (1 Corinthians 13)
2. I will work to show on my face what is in my heart - a desire to love and understand. (Psalm 43:5)
3. I will be quick to listen . . . I will spend the majority of my time listening.
4. After being quick to listen, I will be slow to speak and slow to wrath. (James 1:19)
5. I will be sure to deal with my own areas of sin and weakness first. (Matthew 7:3)
6. I will speak gently and keep my voice down. I will exercise self-control against harsh words that can cause deep damage. (Proverbs 15:1)
7. I will be willing to repent for where I

do not honor God in my behavior. (2
Timothy 2:25)

Appendix 4: Keeping a Heart of Honor with Dishonorable People

It is important that we honor people around us, whether they treat us well or not.

And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise. Luke 6:31

Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another. Romans 12:10

The Bible also tells us to honor our parents, that we may live a long life.

Honor your father and mother, which is the first commandment with promise: that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth. Ephesians 6:2-3

So how do we honor those who are not

acting honorably? How do we honor fathers and mothers who do not act honorably? The following can help you in this endeavor:

1. Address your expectations. Sometimes you can have expectations on people, but not realize that they may not have the capability, at the current time, to fulfill them. Often times we need to “take a chill” and not get so hung up on everything.
2. Give grace. Being gracious involves not being so upset about certain things that are said or done.
3. Give forgiveness. There is a root of sin in people that comes against you. (Romans 7) If you don’t forgive them then the sin they carried can now live in your life. When it comes to parents, bitterness can grant a bridge for your parent’s sin to repeat in your own life. I never want to carry the sins of other people in my own life. Forgiveness

helps me to do that.

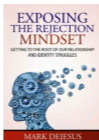
4. Release them. Release control. Release the desire to fight. Release the need to be right. Learn to let go.
5. Leave justice in God's hands.
6. Make necessary boundaries, where you can love and honor them, but not be tied to their sin and ungodly ways. You will have to address the guilt factor when doing this, but there are times where you need to keep a safe distance from the toxic strongholds of people. Not everyone is safe.
7. Give honor by loving them where they are at. Recognize they can only live out of the knowledge and ignorance they carry. Jesus was able to maintain his position of forgiveness by saying, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do. (Luke 23:34)

Other Books by Mark DeJesus

Inside Out Transformation: Walking Out the Journey of Healing and Freedom

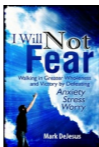


Exposing the Rejection Mindset: Getting to the Root of Our Relationship and Identity Struggles



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***Wholeness and Victory by Defeating Anxiety,
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[1] Matthew 6:15, Mark 11:26, Matthew 18:35

[2] Colbert, Donald. *Stress Less: Do you want a stress-free life?*
Siloam, 2005. Kindle File (Page 72)

[3] Wright, Henry W. *A More Excellent Way: Be In Health*. New
Kensington, PA: Whitaker House, 2009

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Colbert, Donald. *Deadly Emotions: Understand the Mind-Body-Spirit
Connection That Can Heal or Destroy You*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson
2003.

[4] *It is important to state that these ailments often have common root
issues. This should not to be considered a 100% guarantee, as there can be
many contributing factors to disease. These root understandings, however,
can provide phenomenal understanding of what can contribute to making
us and keeping us sick.*

[5] Lucado, Max. *In the Grip of Grace: You Can't Fall Beyond His Love*
Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 1996 (Chapter 15)

[6] Source Unknown

[7] [http://www.lisaescott.com/forum/2010/05/16/forgive-good-sometimes
i-want-stay-mad](http://www.lisaescott.com/forum/2010/05/16/forgive-good-sometimes-i-want-stay-mad)

[8] *By Marilyn Marchione The Associated Press Thursday, April 5,
2007; 9:08 PM*

[9] www.facebook.com/drleaf or [ww.dr.leaf.com](http://www.dr.leaf.com)

[10] <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contempt>

[11] Colbert, Donald. *Stress Less: Do you want a stress-free life?* Siloam, 2005. Kindle File (Page 60)

[12]

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Type_A_and_Type_B_personality_theory

[13] <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/violence>

[14] *Now I do not suggest that if the person is of the opposite sex, you should do this alone, unless it is in a public setting, such as a church service, where you can briefly pull the person aside and address the issue.*

[15] Matthew 5:5

[16] Charles W. Christian's "10 Rules for Respect"

[17] Matthew 18:34