

Transformational Ministry

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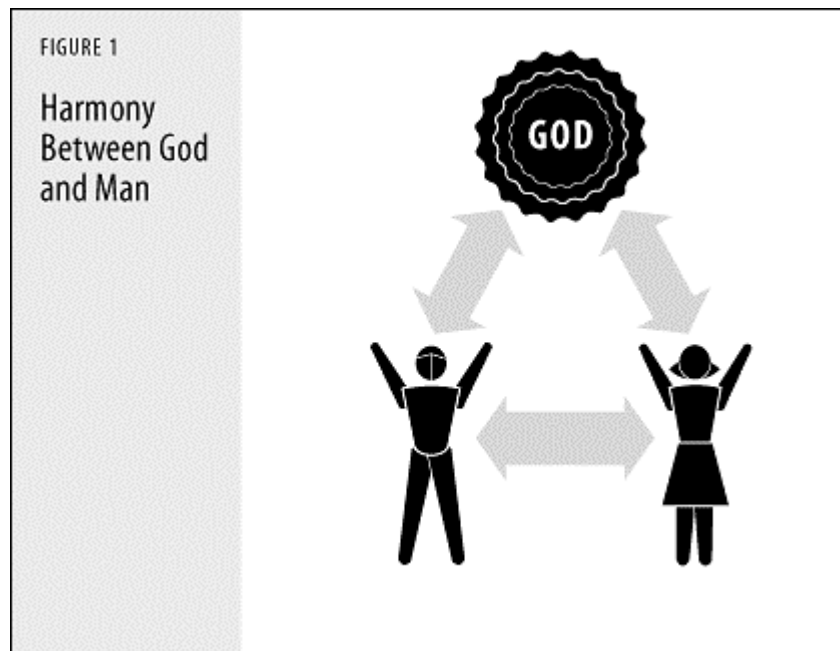
Transformational Ministry

Introduction

The Necessity of Transformational Ministry

I have been a church planter for 15 years, the last 12 years planting churches which meet in homes. Before that I had planted and pastored a larger type of church which had grown through conversions of the lost. In many cases we were working amongst inner city people. I was convinced early on, and this has only been reinforced in all the years since, that the ministry of transformation (Cf. 2 Cor. Chapters 3 and 4) is an essential and basic ministry necessary for establishing and sustaining healthy Christian communities (churches).

Church planting calls people to walk in community with their God. An important task of pastoring is teaching people how to love one another in the context of Christian community. The reason that this is so essential is due to the nature of sin. God created man as a community being. God created man in the image of the triune being. "Let us make man in *Our* image." Gen. 1:26. And then He made man male and female. Man was created in the corporate image of God and to be a corporate being. Man will only find his completion in community--with God and his fellow man. This was his experience in the garden. This relationship is pictured below:



When man sinned, immediately there was fragmentation in that community. Adam hid himself from Eve as well as from God (Gen. 3:7f, compare 2:25). One of the saddest verses of the scripture is Gen. 3:9 where we see God seeking out the fellowship He so desired with Adam only to find Adam missing. But the alienation doesn't end here, for when Adam is confronted with his sin, he blames God as well as Eve. Eve, when confronted, shifts the blame to the serpent whom God had created.

So here, very early in the history of man we see that sin fragments community. In Genesis 4 the

FIGURE 2

Fragmented World

We are crippled and cut off from God.

Sin separates us in our relationships.



spiral of destruction which sin causes in relationship reaches a low when Cain kills Abel. And so we see in the present world the destructive spiral that sin has on relationships; this sin which Satan introduced to the human family to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:9) the plan God had for man--a plan to live in harmony and loving community. God's plan was to create man for fellowship with himself and with one another. The devil's plan was to destroy this! And the result is that man

carries within himself the seeds of his own destruction. Man is now born a sinner and our fragmented world is a reflection of that.

But Jesus came to undo the deeds of the devil. He especially came to restore in us the ability to love (Cf. John 13:34f.). In John 17:9-36 Jesus clearly has in mind the establishment of community based on love. Love sustains and strengthens community. Since the fall all of mankind has been plunged into sin, and the consequences are obvious, especially when viewing the fragmentation of relationships in our world. Salvation is designed to deal with the sin issue. Jesus came to save us "*from* our sins", not *in* our sins. (Mt. 1:21). Jesus plan was to save a people for God who would be God's own people, reflecting the very nature of the triune God--a

God who has existed in community since before the foundation of the world.

FIGURE 3

Cycle of Renewal

Acts 26:16-20

"To open their eyes, that they may turn from darkness to light and from the power of Satan to God...that they should repent and perform deeds worthy of their repentance."



But we find that man tends to revert to old patterns and thus, even after radical conversion, believers tend to drift back into old ways of handling problems. This leads to sin and resulting fragmentation of Christian community. All one has to do is look at the sad state of affairs in most churches to realize that there is more

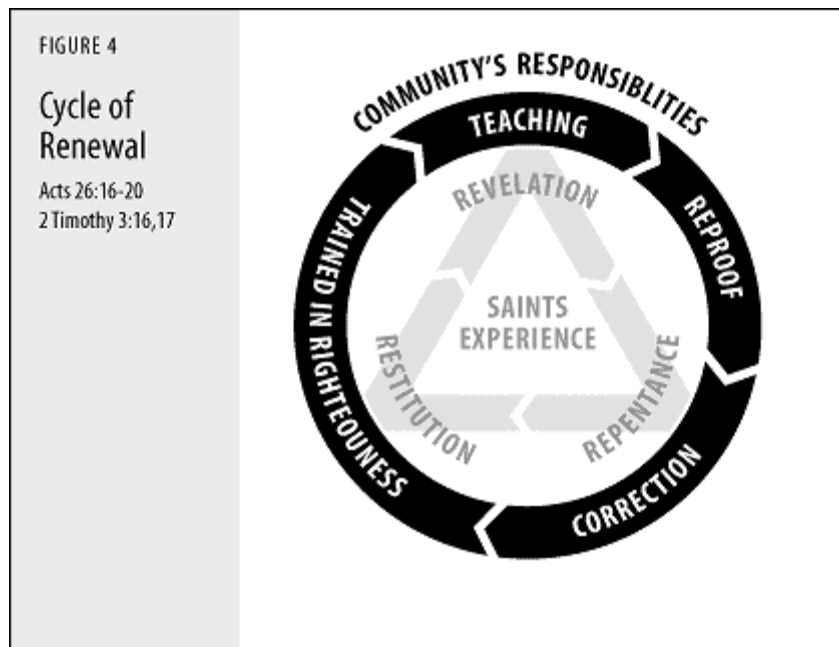
fragmentation from sin than unity arising out of love. This book is written to pastors and church planters who want to build Christian community which will stand against Satan and his attacks to take captive believers and wreck their communities.

We will be relying heavily on the Apostle Paul's theology (Romans 5-8) and methodology of transformation. Of course no transformation of people's lives can occur without the activity of the Holy Spirit. Indeed the Spirit's main task in saving people is to transform their lives into ones that are Holy and reflective of their Savior. But Paul worked with the Holy Spirit especially using the Word (Col. 1:24-29). And we are going to look in detail at the way Paul engaged in this ministry.

There is no question that Paul saw transformation as an essential aspect of his calling as an evangelist and church planter. In Acts 26:12-20 Paul relates to Agrippa his testimony of Jesus' call to him.

“I am sending you to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins.....I kept declaring...that they should repent and turn to God performing deeds appropriate to repentance.”

He clearly expected those who came to faith to have a radically different life in the Kingdom compared to their lives before meeting Jesus--just as his life had radically changed! He outlines in this passage a pattern of experience that he clearly expected for those who would follow Jesus as disciples. In vs. 18 he expected that their eyes would be opened (like his were). They would then repent, turn from the kingdom of Satan to the kingdom of God. They would receive forgiveness of sins, and then in vs. 20, perform deeds in keeping with repentance. None of these things were optional, they were all linked together. This was the new life in the Kingdom that Paul expected for those which would respond to the Gospel.



Clearly Paul's message was not merely having ones sins forgiven, but rather receiving Revelation from God (opening their eyes), Repenting of walking in darkness , and making the necessary changes to walk in the light. Paul did not see this as optional for a few super-saints or the clergy, but for *every believer*. I use the following triangle throughout this book to show the experience of the saint from Acts 26:18-20. This will be explained in detail in the ensuing chapters.

Paul realized that he was an active agent cooperating with the Holy Spirit in this activity in the lives of believers. He did not expect this experience to “just happen”. He said that Jesus had sent *him* to do this (of course with the agency of the Holy Spirit. But it is interesting how Paul puts it in this passage.). So Paul saw himself, and, I believe, other leaders as essential to see this transformation occur. I believe he gives the details of his and other leaders responsibility in the task of renewal in 2 Tim. 3:16,17.

“All scripture is...profitable for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness; that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

Paul clearly sees the Word as essential in this task. But the fact that others are involved shows what I think is an important concept...That transformation occurs in community. I have placed the different uses of the word around the Cycle of Renewal below. From this we can see what ought to be the Experience of the Disciple and the Responsibility of the Community in the ministry of transformation. The rest of this book unpacks this in detail.

Responsibility of Community

CHAPTER ONE

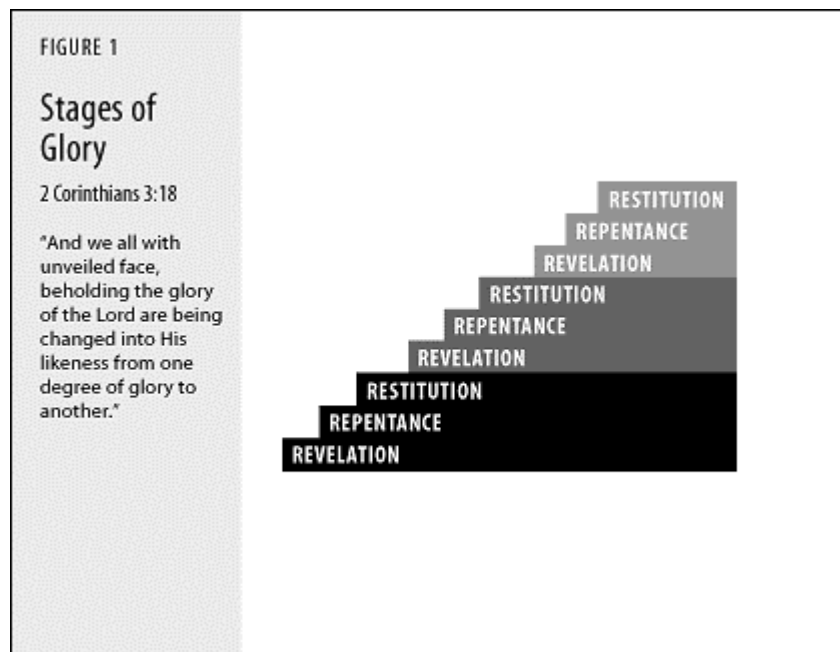
THE CHURCH

The goal of this book is to help Christians and Christian leaders get a practical understanding of God's plan for Transformation. Transformation is an upward climb, going from one stage of Glory to another; as we are transformed into His image (2 Cor. 3:18). One might say that the inner transformation of God is ongoing in the life of a sinful man. The work is never completed, at least in this world. The Apostle Paul says:

"Not that I have laid hold of it yet, but one thing I do know; laying aside that which I have accomplished, I press on for the high calling of Christ Jesus."
Philippians 3:13f

Paul was almost at the end of his life and he still hadn't fully reached his prize.

As we look at the process of transformation, we can observe that each progressive stage has three steps, followed by a plateau. These steps form what we call the cycle of renewal (See the diagram in the last chapter.). The first step is Revelation (being able to see ourselves as we are, being able to see God as He is), then follows Repentance (we see what we've done wrong, we go before the living God, confess and ask for forgiveness--this step usually leads to a great feeling of release), and lastly Restitution (bringing forth deeds in keeping with Repentance).



These steps, as summarized by Paul in Acts 26:18-20 must happen in this order. It is the repentance which follows revelation which allows a free flow of the Holy Spirit which will enable restitution. In repentance we are relying upon God's work for us. Thus in repentance we find rest (Acts 3:19), and the strength to make restitution in God's strength (Ph. 2:12f, 4:13). If one tries to progress directly from Revelation to Restitution and skips the step of Repentance,

one will usually end up with a form of penance resulting in legalism and a great deal of pride. This will be discussed in detail below.

This cycle may have to be repeated several times until the person is brought to a state of Renewal. Renewal could be described as the person's life is so changed that he or she acts in completely different ways than he or she would have acted in the same circumstances before renewal. For instance a thief is no longer a thief but rather works hard and is generous in his giving (Ephesians 4:28).

Renewal then brings us to a new plateau, which we may remain on for sometime consolidating the new patterns of life which are now ours in Christ. We remain on that step until God brings us some new revelation, often through a crisis or suffering, that tests us and shows where we are lacking in our faith and knowledge of God (Cf. I Peter 1:3-9). We should receive every test with joy, recognizing it for its potential to reveal the true state of our faith (Romans 5:3-5). We ought not to be surprised or discouraged when such tests reveal our need to grow, for our heavenly Father is neither surprised or discouraged. But rather, as a good Father, He brings discipline for our God that it might yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness (Hebrews 12:11).

The Christian life is one of continual growth from one stage of glory to another. We are never finished with our journey until we are finally delivered into the fullness of His Kingdom. God is never done with us. We need to enjoy those plateaus where we can see our God and Father in new ways, the world in new ways, and ourselves in new ways. But we should not be content with years of no new ascents.

This is the normal pattern of the Christian life. Paul says in Roman 12:2,

"Do not be conformed any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so you may prove the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God."

God's perfect will for you is not stagnation--it is life of progress! He wants you to grow in Him, so hopefully, ten years from now you won't be in the same place you are now. At 50, I am nowhere near where I was at 30. And hopefully at 70, I will have progressed yet further. But my goal each day needs to be to learn of Him and to please Him (Cf. Mt. 11:28-30).

We need to watch out for those who would camp out on a stage of glory when God has called them upward. When a crisis begins to happen, we need to help them look up the mountain and say, "Time to move on," rather than looking behind and saying, "How can I keep myself from falling?" We need to encourage those before whom God is moving to follow the pillar of smoke and the pillar of fire.

Apathy or ignorance about transformation is a major problem in the church today. That does not mean that people aren't saved. They may be, but they have often been taught that the first stage of glory (coming to Christ) is the most of salvation that anyone can experience in this world. They may get a "second blessing", but seldom a third and a fourth (how many stages of glory are there?). Often the result in the church is that we have constructed a nice comfortable Upper

Room, and they're trying to wait out the warfare in this world until Christ returns.

But Jesus didn't give his disciples the Upper Room to live in. They only remained there for ten days of prayer until the Holy Spirit came upon them. He then propelled them into the streets where He has always meant His church to be. Members were to be prepared for eternity by being tested through the trials of this world, progressing from one stage of glory to another as these trials expose areas where we need more revelation, repentance and restitution.

We as the church need to understand this; we need to be pressing on in our own lives; often propelled by our ministry and calling. This is especially true of leaders. Often people think that we can take a little green pill, and we will have instant maturity. I personally thought I could have Christianity down in one year! Twenty five years later I'm still learning! This is going to take my whole life and more! Leaders are not exempt from making progress.

In community we need to learn how to "stimulate one another on to love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24). We need to do this with young people, who are looking for little green magic pills. But we also need to work with older ones who may have mastered the forms of the Kingdom but need to continue to grow in the knowledge of the King. We need to encourage them as they grow and learn. This kind of life is often very frustrating. None of us are there yet; we're all struggling. But we need to encourage each other in those struggles to keep on the road.

This life takes a lot of forbearance and patience, characteristics that the "quick fix" West cannot identify with very well. The best selling books in Christian or secular bookstores, are "how-to" books--three simple steps, and life is better! Transformation doesn't work that way, especially in the area of Christian character! The power of God is not present in a how-to book with three easy steps. A how-to book is no substitute for the difficult truths in Romans 5-8; a how-to book is no substitute for the power of God! There is nothing wrong (for both Christians and non-Christians) with instilling disciplines in our lives, but that is a far cry from partaking of the living bread and experiencing the healing power of God.

Yet Christians run after these how-to books, often following the latest "pop" psychology which will be out of vogue in a few years. Ten years ago the watchwords were co-dependency, dysfunctional family, etc. What are they today, and what will they be tomorrow? But where are these words in the Bible? We need to get back to the Scripture and see what it has to say. The promise of 2 Timothy 3:17 is that the Word of God makes the man of God adequate to "**EVERY** good work". And the good works that are clearly the context have to do with this work of transformation.

What has happened is that too many Christians have fallen into the trap of trying to follow humanistic solutions for spiritual problems. We have fallen into the trap of Jeremiah's time. Jeremiah 2:13 says; My people committed two great sins. They've ignored my cisterns, and they've hewn out for themselves other cisterns. One of the great problems of the church today is that we don't know how to use our Bibles. We don't know how to take the Word of God and the power of the Spirit and combine those two sources of power to see transformation in our own lives and the lives of others.

Instead we want the quick fix! We don't want to work hard; we don't want to turn to God and ask how He wants us to help others, and then beg for His help. We rarely search for Truth in this handbook for survival in a fallen world. Instead we devotionalize the Bible. The hard work is for the professionals, the psychologists and psychiatrists. Christians cannot be expected to do much with deeply troubled people. Of course one wonders what the church (and God!) did for the 1900 years before Sigmund Freud!

Hunting and searching for how scripture applies to life is hard work. Seeking God and His power so that I am able to implement the truth is hard work. Often the Bible does not say how to do something; it simply says do it. You have to look to Him and seek His face for the particulars on how to do it. That isn't easy, but if we, as leaders, do not do that in our own lives, we can't expect our churches or church planting teams to do this.

The real problem with Christians following after "pop" psychology is this: when we settle for these types of humanistic solutions, they don't work! So many counselors say, "You need professional help." Talk-radio hosts say, "You need professional help." Even Christians say, "You need professional help."

Have you seen the professional help? I have--one of my closest friends was a psychologist. I watched it wreck his marriage! It is like experimenting with gineau pigs, but using people instead. Psychologists have among the highest rate of divorce and suicide of any professional group. So what are we to think of that professional help? Going to a college and getting a degree does not mean you will be able to help people. The proverb is true "When the blind lead the blind they both fall in a ditch." (Mt. 15:14) But God's promises that His Word will indeed enable Godly leaders to bring about necessary change in those who will follow Jesus in His Kingdom (2 Timothy 3:17).

Psychologist engaging in "the study of the soul" (the literal meaning of the word), for the most part don't even believe in a soul! Those that do believe in a spirit realm may be more focused on the occult and New Age! One of my psychologist friends says that channeling is the latest thing in psychological circles! Satanic rituals being infused into psychology! And we look to such as these for help? (Of course there are very helpful Christian psychologists who use Biblical principles in bringing about healing. I am not talking about these. Jay Adams, Larry Crabb and many others use God's Word in addition to employing some disciplines found in psychology.). But secular professionals don't have any hope to give. They can't heal. The best we can hope from psychology is identify problems and help people cope with them. Secular psychology is a broken cistern that will not hold water.

Psychology can't bring healing, only Christ can, through His Word and by His Spirit. But at least psychologists are trying to help people. The sad thing is, not only do Christians put their hope in such broken cisterns but they do not learn how to use God's word to bring healing. Broken people get saved and come to church for months or even years. But they don't get healed. They leave crippled, and what do they think? Christianity doesn't work. God doesn't have an answer for me. For them the crushing reality is, God's people don't have an answer for them, because that is what we show them!

But God does have an answer for them; His son came to undo the deeds of the Devil, to help those with deep problems. Jesus can do that, but it won't be a quick fix; it won't be through a quick how-to book. It will be through a laborious life of ongoing Revelation, Repentance, and Restitution. There's no easy way out; no quick fix, no little green pill.

WHY IS THERE SO LITTLE HEALING IN THE CHURCH?

In order to be able to give real healing, we need to understand the place of the church in God plan for healing. To do that, we need to understand what the church is. One of the problems is that the church is no longer what God created her to be.

The church today, by and large, is an institution. People "go" to church. In the Bible, do you ever see anybody "go" to church? Nowhere! No-one went to church! Why not? They were the church. The church meets, but no-one "goes" to church. That implies that the church is an institution, or a place, or an event. But the early church was none of these things.

Why is there so little healing in the church? One of the reasons is because the church has become an institutional treadmill, largely irrelevant to life. You may go to church for an hour or two a week and experience a great charismatic feeling for one hour, or you may hear great theological truths. But then you go out into the world and all the problems are still there. What happens to you? The glow wears off pretty quickly; sometimes before Monday, certainly before Tuesday.

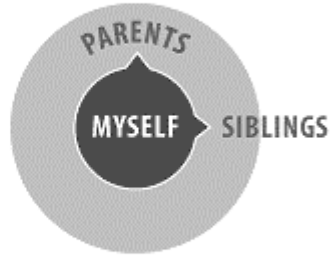
There is nothing wrong with having a great worship experience, or listening to great messages. But in John 13:17, Jesus said, "If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them." Where's the blessing? The good evangelical church of America knows too much and does too little. It has doctrine galore; we can argue for hours about when the millenium is going to come and when the rapture will take place, but what are our lives reflecting? Are we loving God? Are we loving our neighbor? That's the measure! When we get to glory, Jesus is not going to give Western Christians a multiple-choice test and award us our crowns based on how much we know! He is going to hold up our lives beside what we know, and then you get the rewards based on what you have DONE! For most of us, the list of what we knew will run out the door; what we did will pale in comparison.

If we are going to see our churches empowered as healing agents we need to understand that the church is not a school and it's not an institution that propagates religious experience to charge you up for an hour or two each week. The most prominent metaphor in the new testament describing the church is family. As a family the church is uniquely suited to bring about healing of souls. Let's think about this for a second.

What family were we born into? Adam's family. How does this work out in space and time for me personally? It means that my first family, my parents and siblings, were of Adam's family, too. And what's the characteristic of Adam's family? Sinfulness. I was born into an earthly family which practiced sin, and we sinned up a storm together! We didn't try to. It was not our goal. But we had no power but to do otherwise.

FIGURE 2

Two Worlds:
First World



I was born in a non-Christian family, and so the above pattern was obvious to me soon after coming to Christ. Looking back, I can see how many good things I received from my parents. I have worked with people who were brought up in truly Christian homes who had a worse upbringing than I did, and bore the scars. Of course it is likely that their parents bore the scars to their first family (for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.) and did not experience healing, but passed on the sins down to their children.

But I also learned from my first family all kinds of ungodly ways of living in this world. Everyone learns different things, because everyone's family is different. I also believe that we all receive different flesh (Gal. 5:16f) from our parents. But one thing is true of everyone's first family...everyone in it is has sin. Some look worse than others, but they are all sinful.

FIGURE 3

Two Worlds:
Second World



Now, as I moved out into the world I began practicing all these patterns that I had learned in my early years. Many of these were reinforced by the world and thus incorporated into my pattern of life and worldview.

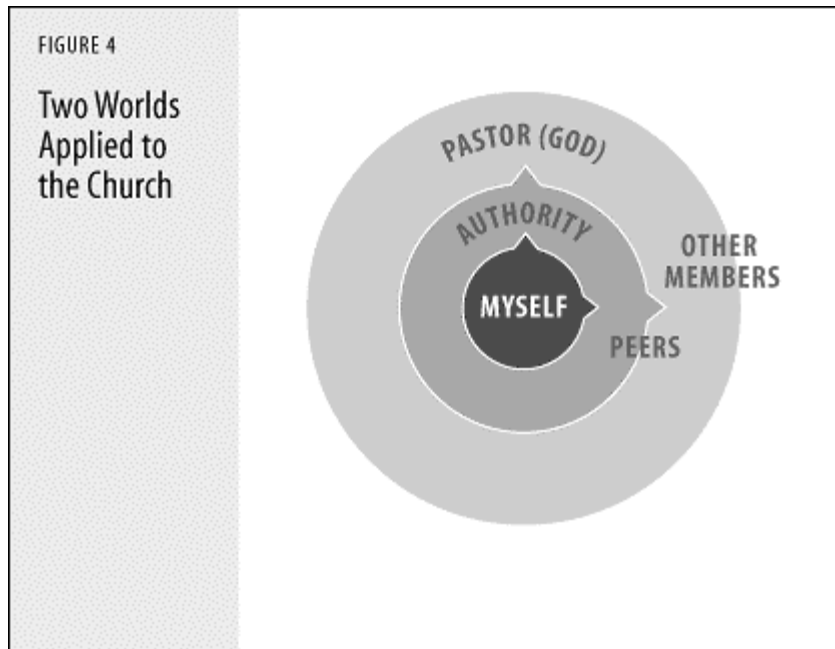
When I came to Christ I came face to face with my Creator God and His perfect son, Jesus, who was the perfect man I had been created to be. 1 Corinthians 13:11 says:

"When I was a child, I thought as a child, I reasoned as a child; but when I became a man I put childish things away."

This is what God demanded of me as far as maturing in the Christian life. For 24 years I lived as a child of Adam. But God wanted me to put these childish things away. Some 25 years later He is still faithfully showing me new patterns that I picked up in my first family which need to be put away. But too many Christians are still living out the lessons they learned in their first family with little or no change. They are content having their sins forgiven. But Jesus died to set us free from sin, not just to cover our sin (Cf. John 8:31-36).

But How am I going to reverse this pattern of sin?

The answer is that I have to be involved in another family. We could call this the "Family of God." This family has parents in it. These are the Elders. A look at I Timothy 3:4,5 reveals the Father-like requirements for leaders. The family has siblings; what do we call those? Brothers and sisters in Christ. And if the church is a community, that's the model you have; you have a family.



What are you going to find in the people who come there? Sin. They will relate to leaders in similar ways that they related to parents and worldly authority; rebelling against them, trying to gain favor with them, etc. All the problems they developed in their early life will be brought with them into this new family! Their relationship with their brothers and sisters in Christ will expose similar problems that they had with their siblings. If you understand this, that all the people coming to church--your

church--will bringing their baggage with them--all the sin they've ever learned, all the coping mechanisms they've used, then you, as a church can begin to become a healing agent.

FIGURE 5

Cycle of Renewal

Acts 26:16-20
2 Timothy 3:16,17



For healing to occur the church needs to be a family. The first thing the church family does in the healing process is to teach in such a way to lead to Revelation. The best place for this to happen is a meeting in small groups. It may actually be a house church, or a larger congregation that meets in cells. But any way this is worked out, these small groups must be able to allow people to relate to each other in close ways as in a family.

Now, how pleasant do you suppose such a church will be? How pretty is it to have sin revealed? Not very. No-one likes it. So the church must be trained in the ministry of transformation and understand how it works. No one likes discipline in a family, but without it a family will be very fragmented.

So what's the tendency in small groups, when sin is revealed and comes bubbling out? Most of us would ignore it and try make everyone feel comfortable. We don't like Revelation. What does the Bible say about it? "Men love darkness rather than light!" (John 3:19). But light is good even if not pretty! Why? Because light merely exposes the hidden sin already existing in the person's character. Family interactions just bring it into the light. Once exposed healing can begin as one goes through repentance and restitution.

So we need to train the church to accept that Revelation, though painful, is good. It leads to growth when we act appropriately to the Revelation. Rather than trying to avoid revelation and keep things comfortable or getting all concerned and worried over what is revealed, we need to work on bringing about healing through transformation.

Small groups are especially uncomfortable. When people are brought in there is going to be light; there is going to be Revelation. The process will be painful, and will almost never be easy. It will most oftentimes be painful, and ugly, and hideous. The question is, how can we be agents in transformation and healing?

In house groups, the older Christians especially need to understand the Cycle of Renewal so that they can go help disciples work through the mess! Integral in this is knowing how to use the word of God to bring about Transformation. The following diagram places the responsibility of the community in using the word around the cycle of renewal. The responsibility of the community is found in 2 Timothy 3:16,17.

2 Timothy 3:16-17: "All scripture is God-breathed, and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work."

In verse 16, Paul states that the word of God is used in order to change people's lives. How adequate is the man of God armed with the word of God to do this deed? *Thoroughly* equipped for every good work! Do we need to send believers to professionals? We need to be the professionals. That's the challenge--to use the Word as God intended!. We need to develop in our church families older, more knowledgeable brothers and sisters who handle the word this way.

We will often feel inadequate to do such work. And that is okay; God blesses humility. He is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Paul himself when talking about the ministry of transformation says "Who is adequate for these things?" (2 Cor. 2:16). But he goes on to say " but our adequacy is from God" (3:5).

God wants us, like a family, to turn to each other in times of trial and need. I've been able to work with people who have been locked in bitterness, hatred, and strife. Why? For 24 years, all my pre-Christian life, that is where I lived. When God saved me he led me to a good church where an older man took me under his wing and disciplined me to "put off all bitterness and wrath and anger clamor and slander along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other just as God in Christ has forgiven you". (Eph. 4:31,32).

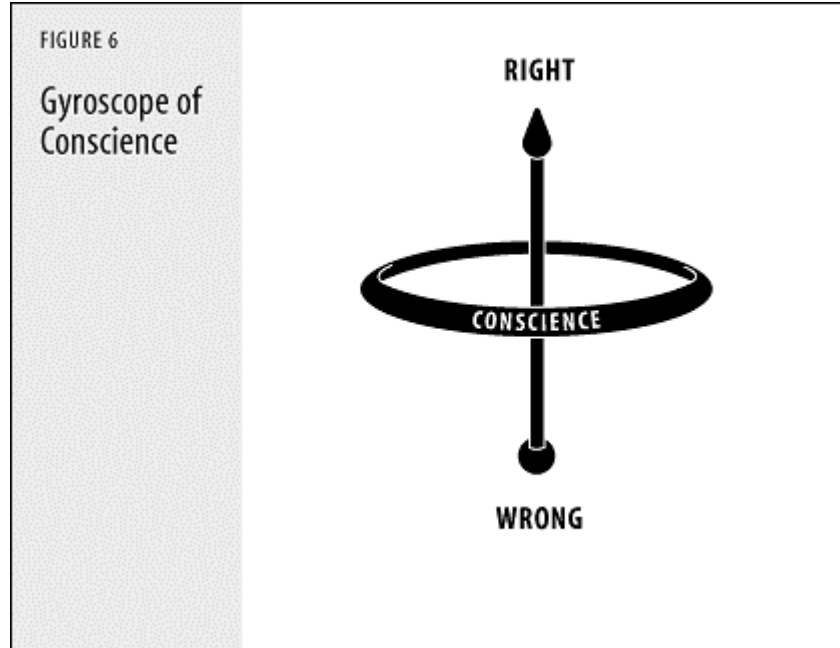
God helped me through this older man who brought me through the process of transformation. God then enabled me, by His grace and through His Word, to help others in this area and other areas, as I applied the same principles in His Word (Cf. 2 Cor. 1:3-7). I am an expert on being transformed from bitterness and anger. I had to be, because God had to get me through that so I could experience God's power in real deliverance from these sins.

God's Word, used by the man (or woman) of God accomplished this. How does this work? The rest of this book goes into this in great detail, but I will give an illustration here to give you an idea.

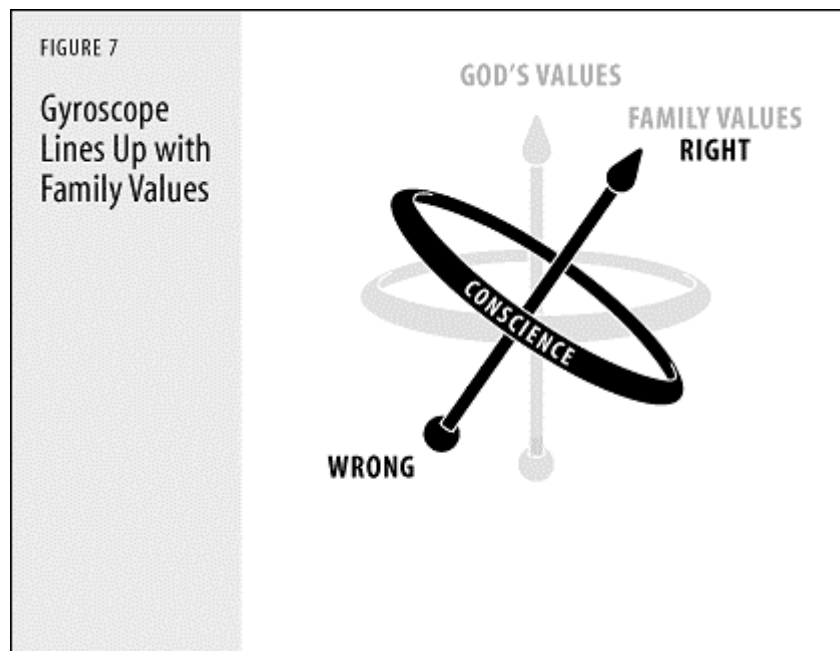
The Word informs the conscience. We were created as moral beings by God, and thus we have a conscience. We can think of the conscience as a moral gyroscope. A gyroscope is basically like a top. It has a wheel in the middle of it that spins, and when you try and push it off its axis it doesn't push very easily. Gyroscopes are what are used to steer satellites, and various other things that are used without gravity. The gyroscope, once headed in a direction, keeps on going in that direction.

Our conscience is a sort of moral gyroscope. It tends to always head in one direction, and whenever something or someone pushes it out of kilter, the result is feelings of guilt. Paul says not to sin against one's conscience; the idea is that the conscience is the residue of the image of God in us. It's the only thing we've got to discern God's will. Martin Luther said, "It's neither safe nor right to go against your conscience." It's not safe because, once you go against your

conscience, the conscience becomes calloused. Then things can easily spiral out of control.



So the question is: Does our conscience lined up with God by nature? No. Our conscience is usually lined up with the norms and values of our culture, particularly those instilled in us by our family. Usually, our morals reflect our family. Remember the two-worlds diagram: our parents stand in the place of God, and therefore it's their influence that usually has the greatest in shaping us and our values. Once we get out into the world, our values can get re-shaped, but usually they're fixed by this point and only undergo slight adjustments by the world. Whenever we go against these moral norms, we experience a sense of guilt.



So when a person sins against his conscience is that person actually guilty? It depends on whose standards we are using. Let's use the example of a girl raised in a strict "Christian" home, in which dancing is not allowed. Her senior year of high school she gets asked to the Senior Prom. She goes, and dances. Afterwards she feels incredibly guilty. Is she? By her own conscience; yes, she is guilty. But by God's holy standard, no. At least there is nothing in the scripture which condemns dancing.

The word of God is designed to inform the conscience and bring it back into alignment with God. When we begin working with people we need to understand that their gyroscope isn't lined up with God. We need to be teaching them what God's Word really says and re-forming the conscience. It may take a while to re-calibrate the gyroscope; to get it to twist from family and worldly morals to God's morals of love. There may be certain things in the family's morals that were fine and are lined up with God, but there will be things that aren't. The Word of God becomes the external standard by which we can start reviewing our moral guidelines and making changes and adjustments.

Thirty years ago it was absolutely immoral to live with a girl. Everyone understood that; anyone who slept with a woman felt guilty. That's just the way it was. Today that is no longer the case. Now, we live a different culture; a Christian counter-culture, as it were. Christians understand that God says such a thing God is immoral and thus sinful. But why? Because our gyroscope is lined up with God through His Word!

When a person comes into the church and is living with a girl, their gyroscope is not lined up with God. They may not be experiencing any feelings of guilt. If they are, we bring them to Repentance; but we cannot assume that they are. And if they are not, we need to inform their conscience of what God's Word says. That's a little more difficult than saying, "The Bible says that the immoral shall not inherit the kingdom of God," because our culture also says, "Why is it immoral?" The world says that it is OK to sleep with someone you love. Immorality in sleeping around or with someone you do not love. Or cheating on someone you love.

To transform such a person we need to deal much more deeply than merely superficially dealing with the sin. We need to explain that God is not a capricious god, sitting up in Heaven and saying, "Today I'm going to outlaw men and women sleeping together. Write that down." Instead we need to show the new believer that this violates the Law of Love. We need to explain that this law is there because of how He created us! God created the sexual bond to be a powerful bond between a man and a woman; the deepest form of giving between a man and a woman, and this relationship needs to be protected within a covenant relationship; an abiding and lasting relationship of love. The consequences of not protecting a sexual relationship catastrophic in terms of suffering and pain, and resulting callousness (Eph. 4:17-20) which leads to a lifetime of destructive behavior.

TEACHING

We need to understand our culture and the things that contribute to the moral conscience, so when a person asks why he shouldn't be living with his girlfriend we can explain it to him. If he

(or she) responds by saying "I don't know if I believe that," then we need to lead him to a deeper encounter with God by looking at the natural consequences of sin.

For example, I would then ask him if he's ever broken up with a girl he's slept with.

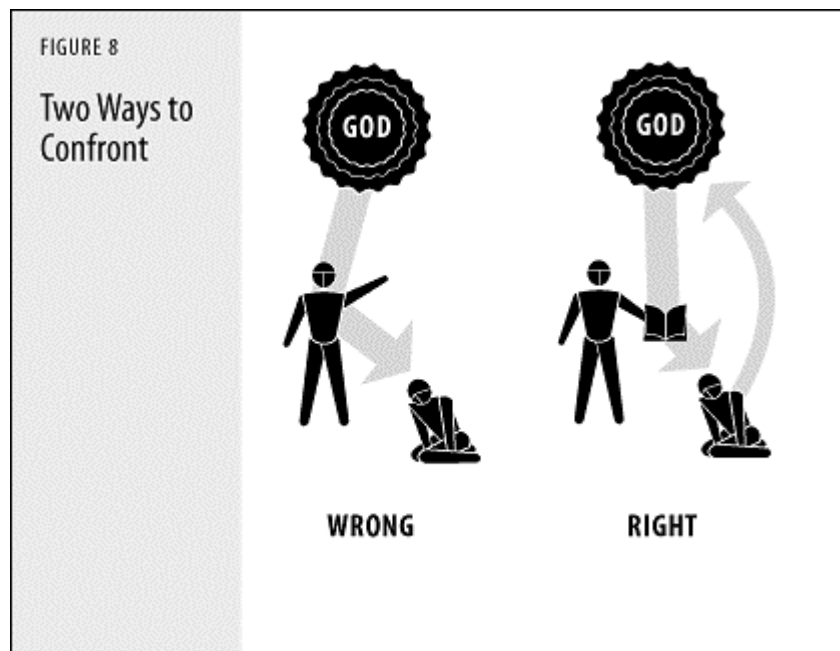
"Yeah."

I would go on: "How did it feel?"

"It was horrible."

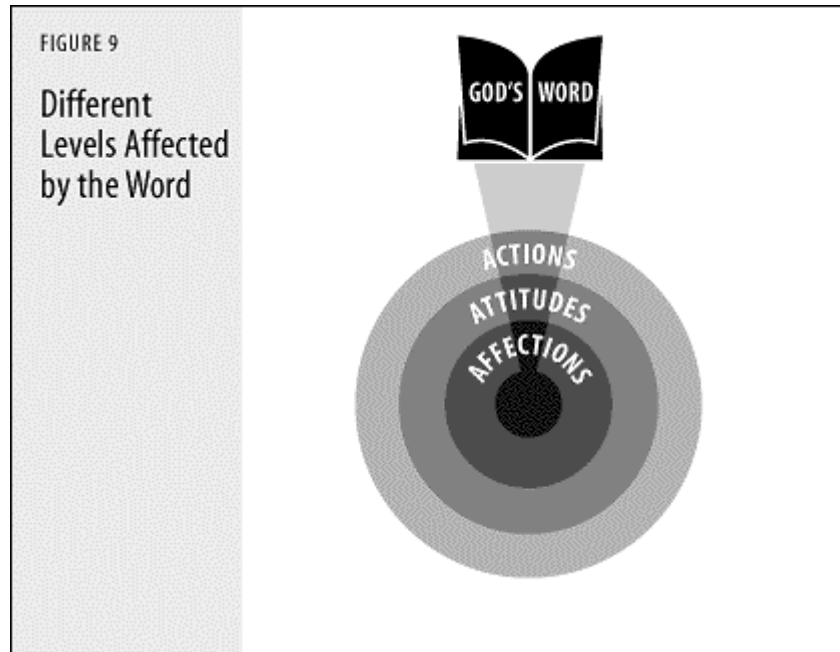
I would go on inquiring about the pain, any resulting depression, etc. I would conclude by asking "Do you see the wisdom of an all loving God who wishes to protect men by confining sexual relationships to marriage?" I would probably show him Eph. 4:17-20 which would explain how sexual relationships before marriage actually hinder intimacy in marriage. I would also hold out the hope that this callousness could be cleansed by Jesus as he repents and cleanses himself and brings forth deeds in keeping with repentance. With Jesus all is not lost even when we sin grievously. But we should not presume upon God's grace by persisting in sin (Hebrews 10:26-31)!

This exchange also shows how we should try to bring light to those in darkness. The goal is to bring them to an encounter with the living God through His word. The goal is not to get the person to respond to us as we place ourselves in the place of God. The diagram below shows the best way to confront vs. this less helpful way.



So we need to understand these things, so we can inform people's conscience for the Word, so they know not only what to do but why to do it. They will then be able to transfer a specific moral principle over a broad spectrum of experience.

It is important that the conscience is lined up with God. Attitudes affect Actions. The word of God is used to teach, but it is also used to reprove. It is used to work on Actions, but the word of God can be used to go much deeper, to work down through the Attitudes, down to the Affections.



Lets say you go up to this new believer who is living in an immoral way. You take him to the passage: "The immoral shall not inherit the Kingdom of God." (Eph. 5:5) You ask him what this means; he says he doesn't know. So you ask him what being immoral means. He doesn't know that either. So you go back to the Old Testament, and you keep working until he understands. Then you ask him what he thinks he should do. His response: "What do I have to do? Move out?"

What is the attitude reflected in the way he asks the question?

"Are You going to tell me what to do?" So now you begin to address the attitude. "Excuse me-- are you asking me what I'm telling you to do, or are you asking what God is directing you to do? What do you think God's directing you to do?"

What is his attitude? Is he letting God be God, or does he have a better idea than God? What's the attitude?

Finally he says, "I'm not going to move out."

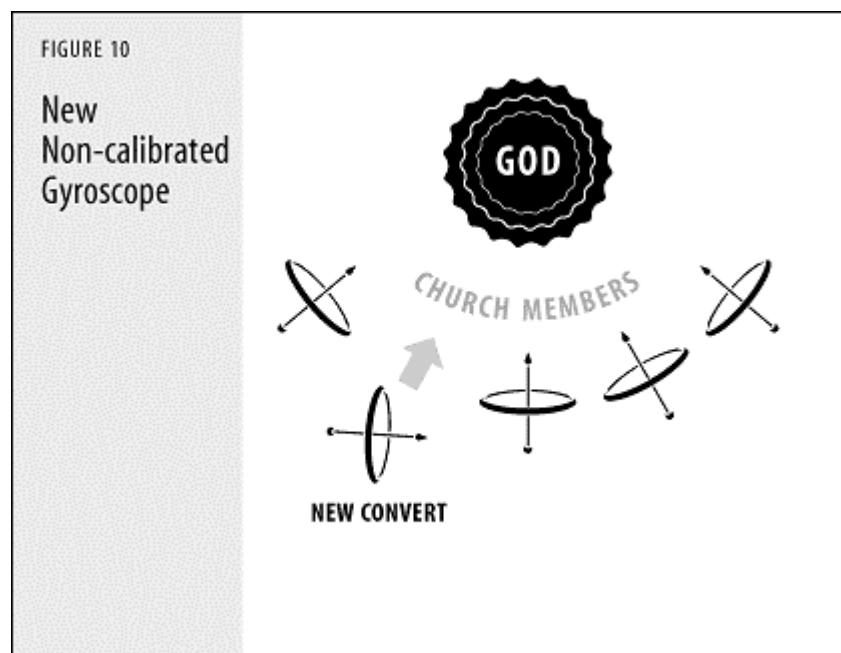
REBUKING

The loving discipler then points out to him that his actions are a reflection of his heart. Who does he love? Who is he serving? Where are his affections?

Here you have gone from attitudes to brining revelation to his Affections. Does he love God? Or himself? He may say he is loving the girl, but even this shows that he does not trust God and his word. Is he serving God or is he serving himself? The reproof needs to go as deep as it possible piercing even to the very attitudes and affections of the disciple (I Cor. 4:5, Hebrews 4:12).

CORRECTING

Let me say that at this point, the church is essential in the area of correcting. The church is the picture of the new life being lived out. Let's diagram the church using the illustration of the gyroscopes. By the church, I mean a group of people who are close enough where they can see each other's lives. So let's show a new person coming in.



The new person coming in is out of sync and will come to realizes that something is not quite right here. While everyone else is spinning in one direction (hopefully God's direction), he is spinning in a slightly or even largely, different direction. The church should realize this as well as expect this from new believers.

As the gyro becomes exposed that it is out of kilter, the responsibility of the church is to help the gyroscope be re-calibrated so that it is in synch with the rest of the church. Too often members of the church get offended at wrongly calibrated gyro's rather than helping in re-calibrating them. The church needs to realize that re-calibrating gyroscopes is part of God's plan for the church.

As the church members live out a substantially different life than that of the world, and a new believer becomes involved intimately in the fellowship of the church, he will realize that he's not spinning the same way. Hopefully he will see lives that are attractive, something that draws him

in and makes him want to be a part of this life. This type of correction itself may not actually be verbal or even intentional, but simply through example; the person comes into the circle, and their spin is imparted to him.

Having said this though, it may take some real directed help to make the necessary corrective changes. But hopefully by this point the new believer has developed some relationships where she can ask for help from older believers. It may be seeking out an older woman to ask for help in her relationship with her children, or help in her relationship with her husband (Titus 2:3-5).

The Word of God is able to correct, and the people of God are often the delivery instrument of God. Small groups, or house churches, are incredibly powerful in their ability bring about these types of changes since they are modeled after the family. If the house churches become ingrown, focusing simply on itself, and not on God, what happens when a new believer comes in and his gyroscope is off is that this group is either going to condemn and exclude him because of his flaws, or try to accomodate him in his sin and make him feel comfortable. When this happens, his gyroscope actually imparts spin to all the other gyroscopes rather than the other way around, and the other gyro's are going to start spinning out of place. This type of church will eventually go downhill.

Both the condemning church and the condoning church are self-centered churches. What we need are God-centered churches. God-centered churches are always looking upwards as well as outwards, looking how to serve God, seeking God, sacrificing, going through suffering, as they are the caldron through which new believers will be transformed and the world will be reached. The church of Jesus Christ needs to be a loving family; a family that is willing to teach, reprove, correct and train the family members.

I recommend the book of Proverbs to those who are engaged in this kind of ministry. Skim through the book, especially chapters 9-30, looking for the put-ons and put-offs that apply to the person you are discipling or counseling. Often the verse includes some of the consequences of persisting in sin. This will help motivate the disciple to change. "Do not loose heart in doing good, for in due time we shall reap if we do not grow weary." Gal. 6:9. People don't change easily. As you try to spin against him, he will spin back against you. Your patience and perseverance will be a test of your faith.

I believe that transformational ministry is an essential part of God's plan for His church. There seems to be a strong movement in the modern-day church to cell churches and house-groups. These models will be very difficult if they are going to expand by bringing in the lost.. There will be times when, as leaders, we will ask, "What in the world am I doing? I don't need this aggravation."

At times like these you must remember: God has called you to this aggravation. These are His children. He has chosen them to be in His family. Your responsibility as a leader is to bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Your tool is the Word with which you will teach, reprove, correct and train in righteousness.

You have no right to check out, and if you do, you prove yourself to be a hireling and not a

shepherd (Cf. Acts 20:28 and Jn.10:12). God has called those of us who are leaders to this kind of ministry. We need to give ourselves to others, especially those who are unwanted.

We need enable the old gyroscopes to have their way with this new one, as everyone's focusing on God. We need to train people and tell them, "When new gyros come in, initially things are going to be uncomfortable, because the gyro isn't lined up yet. We're going to labor with these people, we're going to work with them, we're going to see them transformed into the very image of Christ as God enables us to liberate His Word through His Spirit in their lives. Whoever God is going to lead into that person's life to help them, we're going to help that person. We're not just going to try to get them to conform so we can feel better. We're going to bring that person into conformity with God, so he can be better.

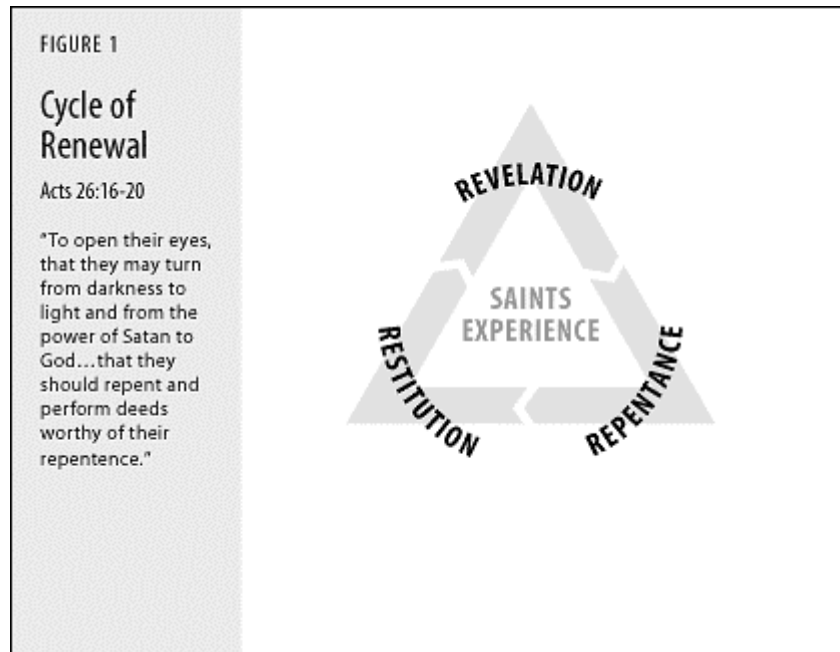
There will be times when a new believer does not make the transition and has to be disciplined and put out of the church. That is very painful. The group will often respond saying, "We just don't want this anymore." They may not consciously say that, but they will feel that way. They may stop evangelizing and reaching out. As leaders we need to prepare our churches for such suffering. This is the norm! The norm is not being cloistered in our little community saying, "Wow, this is great! This is just wonderful!" No; the norm is bringing in the battered, the broken, the wounded, and realizing that it is going to be messy (Jude 23). But God will gain glory!

CHAPTER TWO

Teaching that leads to Revelation

The Nature of Man

The first responsibility of a discipler engaged in transformational ministry is to teach to believer in such a way as to allow the Holy Spirit to bring revelation. We see this in the cycle of renewal. From Acts 26:18:



By revelation we mean to open the eyes of the believer in such a way that he or she sees God in a new way: more holy, powerful, exalted than previously. But we also see ourselves as we are before such a holy God: less worthy, more deceived, less trustworthy, often more corrupt than we previously realized. Revelation also often gives us greater insight into our fellow man. We see him in a more compassionate light than ever before and worthy of our attention, help and love.

The teaching I am talking about is not a matter of theological indoctrination, but rather teaching that directly confronts a person's existing world-view. It is this type of teaching that leads a person to revelation that will immediately proceed to repentance. Modern man needs to become aware of the desperateness of his situation, the hopelessness of his plight. "You were without hope and without God in this world!" Paul says to the Ephesian gentile believers. And the same is true of the gentile today. But often our world-view is directly opposite of this. We are taught that we are all basically good. Any evil we have done is programmed into us by an evil system or evil parents, or an evil society. So this chapter attempts to address this sinister world-view.

Man's Basic Problem

Let's brainstorm for a little bit. We live in a fragmented world, a world that is loaded with

problems. Think about your church. Don't think about yourself at the moment because, of course, you are one of the fully sanctified ones. But think about people in your church; what are some of the problems people face in their day to day lives? What problems do your unsaved friends and relatives face? On a separate piece of paper you might want to make a list of these. Some ideas below may get you started.

Are their marital problems? Parental problems? Lack of confidence? Abuse--physical, sexual? Depression? Drugs? The list could go on and on. Those problems are compounded by bitterness and hatred: fallout in families so that brothers aren't speaking to sisters, children aren't speaking to parents (by children I do not mean fifteen year old children but thirty-five year old children!). Tremendous problems! Overwhelming problems.

Most of these problems come down to problems in relationships. Look at your list. How many of the things you have written down are caused by failing to relate properly to one another? Some relational problems are obvious such as divorce, or child abuse. But other problems such as drug or alcohol addiction often are an indirect result of problems in relationships, often those whose roots extend back to childhood.

It's important for us to get a handle on the importance of relationships from God's point of view. For God, relationship is everything!

Turn to Genesis, the book of origins. It's good to get back to the origins; for if one is to understand how to be involved in transforming man, one has to understand who is man? Why is he here? What is his problem?

One of the major reasons secular counselors are not able to bring complete healing is because they don't know who man is. But Jesus does! He was the perfect man! And He lived the perfect life. And Jesus came to undo the deeds of the devil, and much of his deeds involves destroying souls by destroying the relational venue in which those souls exist. Much (not all) "mental illness" is simply the natural outcome of these "deeds of the devil".

In order to understand who is man we must understand why he was created. Turn to Genesis 1:26.

"So God said, 'let us make man in our own image and likeness, and let him rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the sky, the cattle, over all the earth, over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.' So God created man in his own image. In the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."

Here is a general discussion about God's creating man. Note specifically that God created man as a communal being. "Let us make man in our own image..." God is a triune being, fully complete in himself, a being existing as Father, Son and Spirit. God is a communal being and he created man as a communal being. "Male and female He created them". Man is thus a relational being by nature. The fall has corrupted that nature, but man was created for communion.

Look over in Genesis 2:18: "The Lord God said, `it is not good for man to be alone; I will make a helper suitable for him.'" Before God made this helper, who did Adam commune with?

With God! God communes with him in Genesis 2:15-17. But God goes on to say in 2:18, "this isn't quite the full picture I had in mind, I will make a helper for him." (loose translation).

So God created the other animals and brought them to Adam, but none of these were suitable helpers. So, in verse 21, "God caused a deep sleep to fall on the man, and he slept. He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib He had taken out of man, and brought her to the man. The man said, 'this is now bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman, for she was taken out of man.' For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

Here we see several things about the nature of man. One is that man was created a communal being. That is, man was created in such a way that his soul wanted to have contact with other like beings. He was first created to have communion with God ("let us make man in our own image"). He was created to desire to commune with God because he was created in some ways like that Creator (for example his ability to communicate in speech). The fact that God said "let us make man in our own image" shows that God is a communal being as well. He exists in communion with Himself. One of the characteristics of man is that first of all, man was created plurally: male and female--man was incomplete when by himself alone. Secondly, man was communal; able to commune with God and able to commune with one another. So man is born with a basic need to commune. Man was not created to be an isolated individual.

In many cultures other than the Western one, people cannot comprehend the individuality of the West. For instance, if one was to go to Japan as a teacher and tell a class, "The first one to get the right answer gets a prize," the whole class would wait until everybody in the class had the answer before anyone would volunteer the answer. The success of the group is more important than the success of the individual. How can that be?

The West, since the Renaissance, has been strongly influenced by Greek independent thought: the individual is the most important unit. Charles Colson has written an excellent book, Against The Night, which is about living in the post-Christian age. He exhorts us to prepare for the next great dark ages which are already upon the western world. Who are the "new barbarians" who usher in the new dark ages? Radical individualists who care for nothing besides themselves. They feel the only way they can ever be fulfilled is by focusing on the self. And so they focus on themselves, to the exclusion of everything and everyone else.

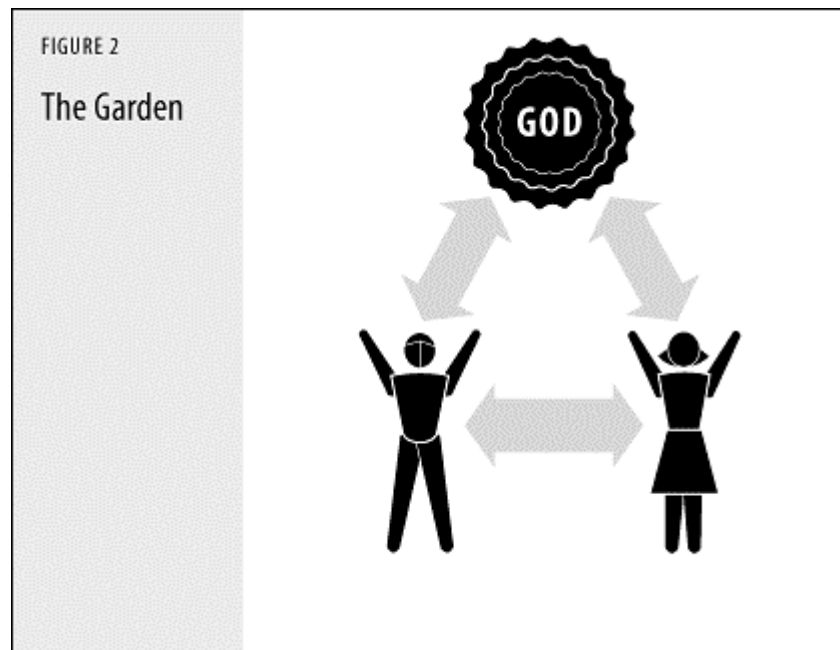
Francis Schaeffer once said that Western man's problem is that he tries to figure out the whole by focusing on the parts. He feels that if he can just get down to the smallest part--himself, then he can understand the whole and thus become like God. The reality is that he winds up ultimately being fragmented. When all one has is the pieces of the puzzle and has rejected the master picture which directs him to understand the placement of each of the pieces, what else could one end up with but a mess of disjointed pieces? This is the state western man finds himself at the

beginning of the third millenium. He has tried to become like God without God. And the result is inner fragmentation as well as fragmentation in his world of relationships.

This book is written for a western audience. Therefore, one of the major things this book will deal with is some of the fundamental flaws in Western thought which are anti-Biblical. Every culture, due to the fact that culture is a composite of the norms of people who make up that culture, has aspects which carry with it the image of God. But every culture also has aspects which have been perverted and are anti-God. An example of one of these in our present culture is the whole "self" movement. Too many Christians have been duped into accepting the major problem with man as being his or her "self-esteem". Others have written more extensively on this subject (see Jay Adams, Self-Esteem, Self-worth) so I will not go into that here.

But we will focus in the fact that improving our self esteem will NOT solve man's problems. Man was created a communal being. Therefore, working out his problems in isolation (self focused) will, in fact work contrary to who man was created to be and likely will lead to greater fragmentation.

Who was man created to be in communion with? As we have said, man was created to be in communion with both God and other human beings. There is a two-dimensionality to man's need for communion. There is a need and a desire for both communion with the infinite as well as the finite. C.S. Lewis said one of the things which led him to God was the fact that deep in his heart--and the heart of all men--there is a sense of the eternal, a desire to know more, to reach out, to go beyond the limits of the self. The individual is not enough to meet the needs of man. Therefore there is a desire to look up. Ever since man was first created religion has been a part of his culture. Only recently has man has tried to stamp out religion through atheistic communism. And it just doesn't work, because it is contrary to the way man was created.



In the same way, trying to ignore others, or using other people to fulfill one's selfish needs (the western materialistic capitalism) also works contrary to the way man was created. Capitalism ends up in existential nihilism; something I believe the west is rushing toward at break neck speed and is pretty clear in the youth of today involved in killing rampages. They are "without hope and without God in this world". Ephesians 2:12.

Man was created for communion with God and his fellow man. Jesus said that one could reduce all the

commandments to simply two: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and might, and love your neighbor as yourself" Mt. 22:37-40.

Man gets it wrong on how to reach out to God. Let's think for a second: how did the Pharisees feel that they could get to God? Through the Law! The Law was seen as a means to righteousness. It had nothing to do with relationship, or with a love relationship with a heavenly Father. How did Jesus view the Pharisees in their attempts to reach God? They had missed the whole mark!

"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You tithe mint and dill and cumin and neglect the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness." (Matthew 23,23)

And what do justice and mercy have to do with? Love! Relationship! This the Pharisees could care less for! For them, keeping the Law meant achieving a righteous standing with God. To these Jesus says "You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel". He goes on to say they are full of "self-indulgence."

And guess what? Many Christians today are in danger of falling into the same error! For them, they have the New Testament law, and are arguing about whether we ought dance, drink wine or smoke cigarettes, or debate over the end times, never asking how these relate to the law of love!

Everything that rises out of the teachings of Jesus is motivated by love. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another." (John 13:34). John summarizes Jesus teaching this way: "... not writing to you a new commandment, but the one which we have had from the beginning, that we love one another." (2 John 5, Cf. I John 2:7,9; 3:11,23; 4:21). We can hear Jesus saying, "Listen, you need to learn how to love; therefore, do unto others as you would have them do unto you." Much of Jesus' teaching was practically how to love my brother and sister. Jesus exhortation is the same for us today: we as the church need to learn how to love!

Sitting down with a teenager and telling him not to sleep with his girlfriend because God said so won't do it today. It's a stupid reason, if you think about it. God said so. But why did he say so? All His laws flow out of the understanding of love. When I sit down with my sixteen-year-old son, I need to explain to him how loving a woman means protecting her and guarding her sexually until they are both ready for marriage. Because by guarding her sexuality I am guarding her very soul--not to mention my own! (Eph. 4:17ff, I Cor. 6:18). The command is because it fulfills the law of love. It is also very painful and callouses the heart to engage in sex outside of marriage (Cf. Eph. 4:17-19).

But explaining sexual purity in this way is a lot more complicated than saying "God said so". But it will protect the child from becoming a Pharisee who thinks "If I do this I'm all set." God is not so pleased with our outward activity; He looks on the heart.

1 Corinthians 3:10,12 says "...let each man be careful how he builds... gold, silver and precious

stone, wood, hay, stubble, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work". What determines what type of material we are building with? In the context you have to read all the way to 4:5, where we find that the day of judgment will expose the hidden motives of a man's heart." A lot of Christians do all the right things for all the wrong reasons. When they get to Heaven, all those right things will go up in smoke except those good things done out of a good heart (3:15).

Grasp the urgency! Those who are saved must learn how to be motivated by love. We must work through the issues of what it means to love both God and our neighbor. We need to understand the New Testament life that Christ has given to us; a new life, which is fundamentally a life of love.

If we, as members of God's family, are going to engage in the ministry of transformation whereby broken, wounded men and women are recreated in the image of God, with the product of this ministry being communities of His kingdom in the present world which reflect His love, then we need to keep at the center of our theology that man was created for this very purpose: to commune with his creator and his fellow man. Man is by nature a communal being--created to love!

Chapter 3

Teaching which leads to revelation (continued)

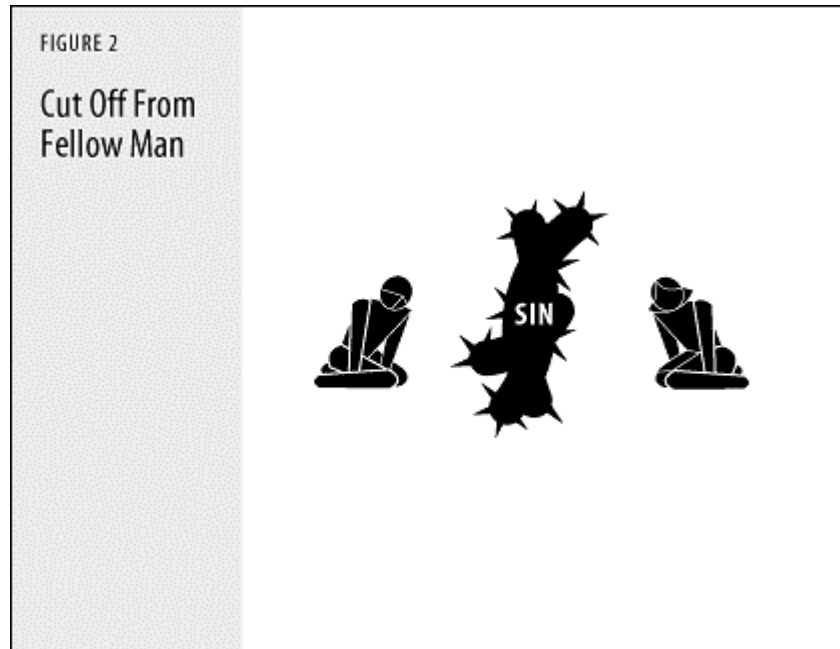
Man's Problem

What is man's problem? As we reflect and discuss all the things that redeemed men face as they come into the Kingdom and join God's communities of love (your church), what is man's problem? What is most basic? By now you know the answer--Broken relationships! He's not loving his neighbor! Why? He doesn't love God! In reality, it's the love of God that enables us to love our neighbor. "We love because He first loved us" (I John 4:19). This broken relationship with God is the root of all of men's problems and must be solved before we can deal with the broken relationships with our fellow men.

We have broken and violated God's Law by refusing to love God. From the fall of Adam man has been plunged into a life of self-destruction. Every man is born a sinner, cut off from his Creator. Man's relationship with God is nonexistent. We're born as zombies; born still-birth. We're born dead. Ephesians 2:3--"you were dead in your transgressions and sins." Man does not become a sinner the first time he sins; he is born a sinner cut off from His Father and dead to the very purposes of his creator.



How hard is it to teach a child to sin? To lie? To be selfish? You don't teach them how--by nature they know how to sin. They're born that way. They're born in a fragmented relationship with God, and live out their life doing the best they can to cope in the self-centered, selfish experience of this world. It is a life of fragmentation with their Creator, which is reflected in a progressive fragmentation in their relationship with their fellow man. The problem is sin! Man is born crippled, starting with his nature and working itself out into his practice.



If someone asks you why you think Christ is the only way, just ask them to seriously look at the world. And people can still believe in evolution? How can it be that man is getting better and better? Man is getting worse and worse! His brokenness is increasing in both magnitude and intensity. Fragmentation is progressively building generation upon generation of sin so that the 20th century has been the bloodiest and most inhumane in history! Man is born unable to fulfill God's plan for himself. Every person who gets redeemed into God Kingdom has no idea how to fulfill God's plan. They need to be taught (Cf. Matthew 28:20).

Let's illustrate. Think of boats. What's the purpose of a boat? To float in the water and carry people or cargo, of course. Let's suppose you're Noah, and there's no water, no ocean. And you build this 450-foot long boat, 30 feet high. And it's sitting out there in the middle of the desert. How does it look? Ridiculous! When man sinned, he was transferred from the water of Eden to the desert of this fallen world.

Now there's a lot of good things you can do out on that boat in the middle of the desert. If you're the skipper you can polish the teak wood, polish the brass and make the boat look real nice. We call these things "good works." But will it get the boat to float? No! God is not impressed with people running around the decks polishing the brass! The problem is, the boat is not in the water! Man can do all kinds of good works and keep the boat ship-shape, but he can't get it in the water. Man, in his fallen condition, is unable to please God. Romans 8:7--"In the flesh man is unable to please God--he is not even able to do so."

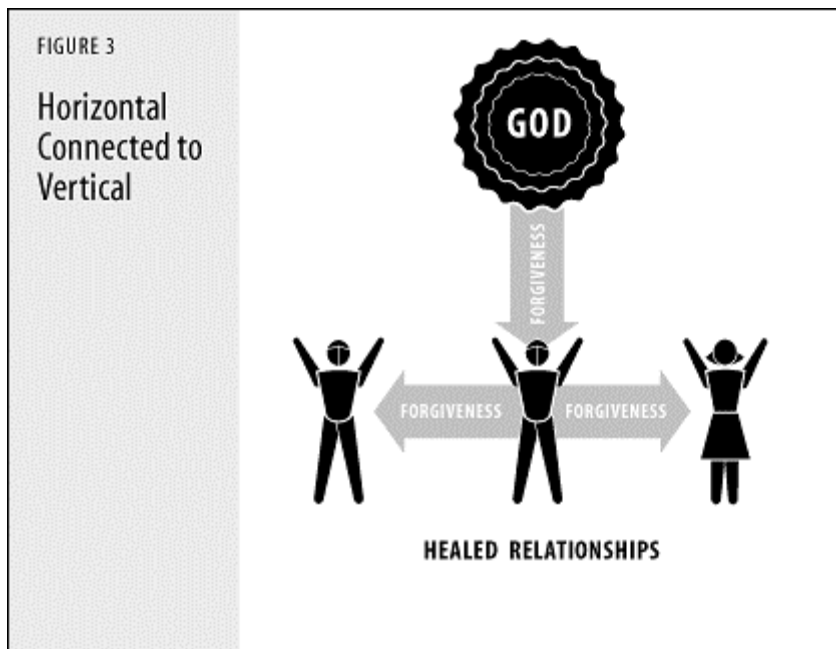
So how does man respond to this situation? Some men don't even try. They are not polishing the brass or taking care of the boat. They have invested heavily in the desert and hope no rain comes while they are alive. Others are simply trying to survive and hang on, while their boat rots away. They have been so battered by sin in this world, that they simply hope to survive. And there are still others, the religious ones, who desperately try to keep the teak wood and brass fittings in good shape hoping this will be good enough for God. But no man is able to get his

boat to do what God created it for--float in the sea--for "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." Romans 3:23).

And suddenly they get saved! How well do you think they're going to take care of that boat when they're flooded with the living water of the Holy Spirit? How well are they equipped at keeping boats in good order to sail? Depending on what they were doing before they were saved, they will have varying degrees of proficiency keeping the decks clean and orderly. But NONE of them will know how to sail! You can only learn how to sail by sailing and they will need to be trained!

Being raised by Christian parents, or in a living church, may be similar to having read a lot of sailing manuals. Christian parents need to realize that they have a responsibility to raise their children "in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4), but they cannot force them to become Christians! Parents can teach them how to take care of the boat and we ought to be doing that, hoping that at a young age they will become saved and be flooded with the water of the Spirit, but it may happen at an older age.

Once saved, they will have to learn first hand how to sail and navigate in the tumultuous waters of this world. And that will be a scary experience for the parents! (I speak from experience here having raised two teenagers.). Keep teaching them! I have met numbers of people who came to Christ in their thirties and forties, having been raised in Christian homes, and their progress in the Kingdom was much more rapid than someone who was not (like me). Those who were raised in such homes were thankful that they were able to learn the principles of Christianity, even if they rejected the substance.



The goal of the church is to fulfill the great commission through calling men and women into fellowship with God and their fellow men in His Kingdom. Those coming into Communities of the Kingdom will come with all sorts of problems and ungodly methods for coping with the problems inherent in a fragmented world. Salvation which brings healing involves helping people find Biblical solutions to their problems in a way that brings progress to removing barriers between themselves and God as well as

themselves and their fellow man. You could call the latter horizontal healing. The process of training people in this kingdom living we often refer to as discipleship. But remember, the horizontal is simply a reflection of the vertical relationship with God.

We must keep uppermost in our mind that the fundamental relationship man was created for was a relationship with God. Now, I ask you, how easy is it to see this relationship with God? How visible a relationship is it? Not very; primarily it is an invisible one. There are times when we experience tremendous floods of God's love and His care and mercy. At these times God appears more real to us than the things of this world. We may have experiences and visions which appear more real than this world. However, these experiences are like water flowing into a cupped hand: it runs out through your fingers. We may try different ways to keep that sensation or get it back, but it almost never works. Our relationship with God must remain invisible because God himself is invisible--at least in this present age! (One day, of course that which is invisible will be visible!)

Consequently, we must occasionally ask ourselves: "how am I doing with God? I feel like I haven't had much contact with Him. Am I okay or not okay?" Jesus said, "Inasmuch as you've done to the least of these my brethren, you've done it to me." (Mt. 25:40).

The horizontal relationship we share with our brothers is a reflection of the vertical relationship we have with our Father. The two are intimately connected. If you are truly experiencing the love of Christ, you will love your brother. And "if you are not loving your brother who you can see, how can you say you love God whom you can't see?" (1 John 3:).

Someone once told me, "find the person you like least in the church. That's how much you love God." That's pretty sobering. But that person was much more accurate than someone who says "I only need God; not anyone else." When I came into the Kingdom I had been a hermit. God used marriage to teach me that I do need someone else, and that relationship with my wife does affect my relationship with my heavenly Dad! 1 Peter 3:7--"Husbands, dwell with your wives in an understanding way, rendering them honor as unto a weaker vessel, as joint-heirs with God, so that your prayers may not be hindered."

A lot of men have not yet learned that lesson. They think they can treat their wife like yesterday's garbage, and then get to their little quiet time and pray and generate good feelings. Listen, the devil knows how to generate good feelings.

So, let's say it again, the problems in our horizontal relationships with people can and do reveal problems in our vertical relationship with God. I implore you: when you notice problems in your visible, human relationships, look at your invisible, vertical relationship with God. You may have to say, "Okay, God, what's wrong? I don't know you perfectly yet, but I want to. I want to know the true God perfectly. I want to learn what you would have for me through this difficult experience, and especially how to love you and my neighbor more perfectly. I'm the one who has to change and learn better how to love, for you are perfect, and everything from your hand is designed for my good." (See Romans 5:2-5; 8:28-37).

Many Christians try to solve their problems through "how-to" books which often rely on simple formulas. Follow the formula and you solve the problem. But if an unbeliever can follow the same formula as a believer and achieve the same results, the question is has any transformation of being taken place (Cf. Romans 12:2; 2 Cor. 3:18)? How can someone who does not have the

Holy Spirit put away sin? God allows problems in our lives to transform us into the very image of Christ! Man's problems are not solved by a bunch of disciplined activities. Rather problems are designed to show where there are flaws in our faith. As we face these we grow in our knowledge of God and our faith! When a person comes to you broken and battered, the solution is not confined to the horizontal relationship! Indeed it is usually not even the primary problem. We must always make sure that we get back to their relationship with their heavenly Father.

I have had much opportunity to meet with people because of a reputation for being a helpful Christian "counselor." Many an unbelieving husband has asked me for help with his wife. What was his real problem? He had a broken relationship with God! I could give such a man plenty of advice on his marriage and helpful things to do, but that would be like putting band-aids with anesthesia on a gushing wound; he could walk away saying "I feel so much better now," but later he would die from loss of blood! I wouldn't have solved his problem; I would have made him feel better.

To a large degree today in America, most counseling is reduced to feelings and solving horizontal problems. We hear it all the time: "how do you feel?" "Do you feel better?" If you study the Bible, you will find that it talks about "feelings" not nearly as much as we do. We need to get our minds to embrace on the mind set of the Bible; not the secular reasoning of this world. If we're going to truly help people, we cannot give them relief from their feelings; we must give them release from patterns of brokenness and fragmentation. Relief is filled with band-aids; release is surgical. Is surgery "fun?" Does surgery "feel good?" It does not.

When people come to asking for help in the horizontal relationship, the solution, which begins in the vertical, will not make them feel better. Chances are, since it begins with a revelation of sin which leads to repentance it will make them feel worse (Cf. Acts 26:18-20. For what happens to the messenger see vs. 21). True, the pain is short-term. In the long-term there is nothing in comparison to Kingdom-Living. The pain cannot be compared to the glory (2 Corinthians 4:16-18). But it is a painful road all the same. The Apostle Paul said in Acts 14:23, "encourage the brethren saying, through much tribulation you shall inherit the Kingdom of God." That's a promise. Not many of us as Christians claim it, but it is a promise we cannot escape. We cannot avoid the suffering, but we can grow through it. I'll be discussing this in much greater detail later.

So when people come looking for relief, and want to focus on the horizontal areas of their life, we must tell them: "No, the problem's much deeper than you think, and the solution's going to be much more painful than you think." We need to keep that in mind; the solution is much more serious than a bunch of simple do's and don'ts.

The problem of too many shepherds is that they focus on one plane--the horizontal. Someone comes and says, "My wife doesn't trust me."

"Well, what have you done?"

"Well, I slept around a little before we were married, and a little after, but I've been faithful for the last ten years."

A typical response is to do this and that thing, never thinking to deal with the man's relationship with God; never thinking to deal with his wife's relationship with God; never thinking about the vertical at all! Yet that is where the healing is going to happen! I can't say it enough; the horizontal merely reflects the vertical! Therefore, always ultimately we need to help those who are hurting in their relationship with God.

In the above real-life example, I found that there had been deception before they were married about the previous relationship, sexual immorality in their relationship before marriage, and bitterness on the part of the wife toward God that He had allowed her to marry such a man.

The man had many wrong understandings about the plan of God regarding sex and marriage which went back to a whole misconception about the person of our heavenly Father. No simple, one step solutions to healing here! But God opened their eyes, brought them both to repentance, and they have a wonderful marriage today.

Chapter 4

Teaching that leads to Revelation (continued)

The Solution

Fundamentally, the root cause of all man's problems is that he has had a falling-out with God. He does not know God, and for the most part does not want to know God (at least on God's terms), although he may seem as though he does. What does man need? What man needs is to be converted; the fundamental problem requires a fundamental healing: being redeemed by a loving God from sin. The desert needs to be flooded with living water! Every man needs a radical change in nature, from being self-centered to being God-centered. How does this happen?

To answer this question we need to ask another: The falling-out between God and man is whose fault? Who is guilty for causing the problem in this most fundamental relationship?

Of course man is! Man is at fault for the barrier between him and God. Man is the Villain. And God is the Victim. We do not usually think of God as a victim, but He is. Why did God create man? To commune with Himself. Man was created to commune with God and ally with Him in the cosmic battle against Satan, who at the point of man's creation had been thrown out of Heaven to dwell on the earth. Man was God's instrument of choice to bring this cosmic horror to its conclusion. Man was created to both commune with God and join Him in this cosmic warfare with Satan, to bring about the ultimate destruction of the Devil and his fallen angels. Then man would forever after live in communion with his Father.

So what happened? Man defected. He became a traitor! He knifed his Creator in the back! He joined Satan in the great rebellion against God! And so presently man finds himself born in rebellion against God! His self-centered Adamic nature is a natural ally to Satan's schemes. A person may not know that he is a part of Satan's army, but he is. Adam joined that army in such a way as to insure the conscription of all his posterity. By serving himself, he serves the Devil.

So, God is the Victim and man is the Villain. Now what can man do to undo this problem, since he's born this way?

Nothing! He cannot do a thing!

Now this is a real problem. Not only was there a falling-out, but the villain (man) cannot undo the damage. We're dead! "You were dead in your transgressions and sins" (Ephesians 2:1). Man is hopeless; he is completely unable, in and of himself, to reach back to God.

This is important, and we need to understand the depth of our hopelessness or we will never understand God's grace. Man is totally bankrupt; there is nothing in his account that will pay to rebuild this breach--to undo the damage to his Holy Creator.

So there's no hope for the Villain, right? The Apostle Paul said, "You were without hope and without God (Eph. 2:12)." No hope. The first element of the good news is bad news: that man is without hope; they are fatally flawed, living in death.

So how do we escape? Where is the hope? How can we sit here now, "clothed and in our right mind?" How did we get here? Where did salvation come from?

The hope for reconciliation in this cosmic falling out lies with the Victim. The Victim is a God of love. But He is also a God of Justice. And God said, "the soul that sins is the one that dies." And what does Justice demand in this situation? Justice cries out for death, and Justice must be served. God cannot compromise who He is; Justice must be served. Therefore, God must punish the sinful soul with death. For that is the just wages of sin.

How does Love find a way? What does our loving Father do? He sends His own son, born of woman, to die as a man on the cross, to pay the just penalty for man's sin. The solution that Love finds is Jesus, to hang on a cruel cross, where God the Father executes Justice--expending His righteous wrath on his own son. He separates Himself from His own son, so that His own Son can experience Hell--that is, separation from God the Father. Jesus Christ experiences Hell on our behalf, so that the penalty is paid in full.

He experiences physical and spiritual death; the victim, therefore, solves the problem in Himself. Salvation is a transaction between God the Father and God the Son. This, of course, is the great doctrine of Justification. But we need to capture the essence of it in order to appreciate what it accomplished--our ONLY hope!

The sons of Adam were not, and are not now, involved in this transaction; it occurred completely separate from them, 2,000 years ago on the cross as the Son of God offered Himself as a propitiatory sacrifice on our behalf, to pacify the wrath of a just and holy God.

It is important to understand what happened on the cross so many years ago; too many of us today lose sight of it. God the Son came on our behalf to die on a cross. His Father took our sins and placed them on His son, and then executed the judgment that our sins deserved on His own son.

We may not be able to understand exactly how all this happened. But it happened. God is not a space-time being as we are. Your sins and my sins, the ones we committed two thousand years after the fact, were placed on Christ on the cross by the Father, who executed judgment against that sin. "By His stripes, we are healed." (I Peter 2:24)

Who did that? Who accomplished this salvation? God did! Was Man involved? No--we were not even alive! God did it, and if God did it for you, and your sins are paid for, then are you right with God? Yes. If you are justified, are you declared innocent? Yes! Has everyone been declared innocent? No. Why are you declared innocent, and not someone else? The answer is very simple: no-one knows! All I know is, He did it! And revealed it to us!

Some people seem to think that is not fair--"God does not seem to be just." Listen, justice demands that we all go to Hell--that's the "just" thing! In fact, allowing anyone into Heaven would be considered "unjust." But it is merciful, and our God is one of Mercy. The fact that all don't go to Heaven shows that God is still just, and He does what he pleases. God is God, and we need to understand that.

The basic problem of crippled men is that they have not experienced the forgiveness through Jesus Christ which leads them into a relationship with God, a relationship that will not be compromised by sin. That is, when you are justified, you are justified past, present and future. Justification is not something that happens over and over again; when you are placed in Christ, ALL your sins have been forgiven Forever! You are adopted into God's family.

The most basic problem with sinful Man (those in Adam) is that he needs to be reconciled with a holy and righteous God. He needs Justification which leads to a personal walk with God! One of the major problems today is that Christians do not understand the nature of their justification. What is the requirement for men to "be saved?"

THE REQUIREMENT FOR SALVATION

Justification does not equal Salvation, but is rather a sub- category underneath Salvation. It is the door through which men enter onto the narrow way to salvation (Mt. 7:13f). What is required for a person to go through this door and enter into the road leads to life; that road upon which we will find sweet fellowship with our living God?

The requirement: humility. What was the problem with Man when he fell? Pride! He wants to be God! He wants to think he earned it! He wants to think he deserved it! When one really understands the transaction between God and God, and the nature of salvation in Jesus Christ, it is a tremendously humbling thing. He experienced hell for us so we could have a relationship with our Father in Heaven!

In a counseling session once with a couple--the woman wanted a divorce and the man came to me and said "Fix my marriage", I explained to them that they had a problem in their relationship with God. They objected--"No no, we're all set; we're Christians and know all this."

Let me advise you early on: do not believe a Christian is one just because they say so. Salvation many times is presented as a little ticket to Heaven; believe the four little laws, say a prayer, and you'll wind up in Heaven. Thus people do not end up loving God or loving their neighbor, but they do have this little ticket. Jesus Christ is not a ticket, and Salvation is certainly not a ticket to Heaven! Salvation is New Life in Christ. Many people may have tickets; but I have often found they do not have life.

When people come to me, I presume they are not saved; I don't care how many times they prayed to receive Jesus! I presume that they do not know God. Therefore, you have to question them in a slightly different way--especially when they know all the "right" answers. How do you expose them for the rebels they very well may be? Or lead them lovingly from their confused shadows into His marvelous light?

I asked the wife if she was saved; she said "Oh yes, I'm a Christian." The man thought he was set, too, being a good Catholic. But in the first session he realized that he had never experienced the life of Christ inherent in the new birth. After he expressed his desire to experience the new birth, I told his wife, who was of the opinion that her husband did not love her, that before now he did not have Christ; now he did, and God could teach him how to love her. It might not be the

love that she wanted or expected, but I explained that none of us can have exactly what we want. We are not God, and therefore do not really know what is best for us--and certainly have no right to control what we believe is best. She had to be willing to stay married him as not only because she was the one who had chosen him, but also because he was the one through whom God was going to teach her to love.

I asked her if she was willing to do that. She said, "No."

I asked why not.

"Because I deserve better than him."

We then went back through the topic of salvation again, and I asked her what she deserved from God's point-of-view. She said that she did not know what I meant.

I asked again, "What do you deserve? Are you a sinner?" She told me she was a good person, that she deserved to go to Heaven. I said, "You're as good as God?"

She replied, "I mess up a little bit."

I asked her again, "Do you deserve to go to Heaven or not?"

Finally she admitted, she probably needed Jesus to save her (But her tone of voice betrayed her lack of belief in this fact).

So I asked her, "You deserve Hell, then." She couldn't bring herself to say it. No wonder she thought she deserved a better husband! She thought she deserved Heaven! Her God saw things only from her point of view. He saw her as a good person and her husband as an evil one. God always agreed with her and let her do whatever she wanted. And when her God was not so agreeable--he was thrown away. Of course the problem was that her God was not the creator God of the universe. That is a problem with many who call upon His name today. He is a God of their own imaginations. Such a God cannot bring healing--or salvation!

So then next week when we met again, I asked her, "What do you deserve?" Until she admitted that she deserved Hell, we couldn't get anywhere! This person was proud, and arrogant, and she had created her own God! And she would determine what kind of husband she should have gotten. That person can not be saved! Pride had blinded her from the truth!

She did not have the necessary ingredient for salvation--humility! We need to see God as He is--righteous, holy, our Creator! The cosmic Law-Giver, the One who said, "Here's how to love your neighbor!" We keep telling God, "I have a better idea! I'm like Henry Ford! I can do better than your plan! I don't need your book or your Holy Spirit! I can do it myself!"

You may think the above example an extreme one, but my experience is that this is all too often the norm.

We need to see ourselves as God sees us. When He looks down from Heaven upon the sons of Adam He does not see any good people! NONE! Not one! Romans 3:9-18).

I asked this woman how God saw her when He looked down from Heaven; she said He saw her as a good person. I said "You just told me you were a law-breaker!" She said, "Well, I'm not perfect." How does God look at imperfect people? "The wrath of God abides on the sons of disobedience!" (Ephesians 5:6). Does God look down from Heaven and see a bunch of good, little, sincere people? NO! God sees a bunch of people who are hostile to him; who thumb their nose at God, who spit at Him and mock Him, who could care less about Him. That's what God sees. And until we are willing to see ourselves the way God sees us, we are not able to understand our need for Salvation.

We need to see that we are poor substitutes for God. The mess we see in the horizontal realm results from the fact that everyone is their own God! Everyone thinks he has a better plan! In reality, of course, we don't. This woman had five children, aged nine years old to one! Now she was going to divorce her husband! And everything's going to be better? (Her husband, though unsaved, was a good provider, never beat her, or was physically abusive to her. He had been unfaithful when they were engaged years before, which she had recently found out.) She was going to be happier? She insisted she was.

I drew the scenario out with her. On the average, two years after a divorce child support from the husband stops, and he moves to another state; the Law can't catch him. She insisted that wouldn't happen. I asked her if she's was willing to bet her kids life on it, to which she had no answer.

Then I asked her what man would have her. She had five children! Was she crazy? No man would want to shackle himself with that support! She was going to wind up raising those children on her own, poverty-stricken and on welfare, claiming that she was having a better life than the one she had! This scenario is being repeated all too often in the USA today. It is amazing the power the devil has to blind the eyes of the unbelieving.

People are so deceived and proud that they don't realize that they are poor gods. We have to get those to whom we are witnessing to see that the just consequences of the wrath of God are already being worked out! Galatians 5:7 says "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked. What a man sows he reaps. He who sows to the flesh reaps destruction; he who sows to the Spirit reaps eternal life." One of our problems in evangelism is that we try to make people feel good! Our purpose should be to make them feel terrible, because their state is far worse than they think it is! The surgery is much more radical than they think they deserve! But what a sure hope of abundant life for those who enter in!

Ultimately, salvation is a matter of yielding control of our lives up to God; letting God be God. This is captured in Acts 2:37: After Peter announced "that this Jesus, whom you crucified, God has made Him both Lord and Christ!" (I doubt that made them feel very good.) "And they fell down on their faces and said, `Brothers, what shall we do?' Peter said unto them, `Repent, and be baptized.'" He did not say, "Here is a ticket to Heaven"; No, he said "Repent; turn away from your sins, your self-centeredness, your self-righteousness! Serve the living God!" A person gets

saved when God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, opens blind men's eyes through the mystery of preaching, and that blind man throws himself unreservedly upon the mercy of the living God. And God will save any who do that.

But God will not save the man who tries to cut a deal with God. "I'll get saved, God, if you do this; I'll get saved, God, if you do that." God is not interested in playing our games; if we try to cut a deal with God, we really haven't given up control. God saves those who unreservedly throw themselves on his mercy.

What's the evidence of salvation? Acts 2: Repentance. Turning away from "I am God", to "Thou art the living God".

But it is secondly a salvation from the kingdom of darkness to light. Peter said "Be saved from this perverse generation." This is pictured in baptism, which is the sign of a person leaving the kingdom of this world for the kingdom of God. Baptism is rather like a rite of passage; a passage into a new country.

Because of this, salvation culminates in being added to the church. By the church I mean the universal church of Jesus Christ, but I also mean a specific group of believers, with whom true kingdom living is being learned and practiced. Many "Christians" say that they want to be baptized, but that they do not want to be added to the church. For these, there is still a problem somewhere; where is it?

Let's find it, for those who desire to follow God cast their lot with God's people. There is a horizontal, as well as a vertical, component, intimately connected. We can't tell God, "I really want to love You, but I can't stand these people." It does not work; that is not true salvation. Salvation has two components. The next chapters focus on the second component--the horizontal one.

THE EVIDENCE: FORGIVENESS

What's the evidence of Salvation? One of the first evidences is the ability to forgive. Often times people seek counseling after tremendous battles, leaving them with overwhelming bitterness and resentment between them and their fellow man. There is a falling-out with other people. We need to head Jesus parable in Mt. 18:21-35.

When we are saved, remember, a falling-out has been healed. We've had a falling-out with God, and who were the villains? We were; God was the Victim. As we get saved, there are many other people who have served as Villains in our lives: spouses, parents, loved ones... Many times when older people get saved there is much bitterness and hatred in their lives. One of the first evidences of Salvation is when they realize the greatness of God's Salvation for them. They realize the situation receiving God's grace puts them in, and they are able to pass that on to others as they forgive others, just as God--through Christ--forgave them. (Eph. 4:32) We will study this in much more detail later on, as we discuss sanctification and how we continue to grow in Christ.

We also need to realize that if we do not forgive, neither will our Heavenly Father forgive us. (Mt. 6:14f) We may ask, how can that be? Isn't salvation by grace through faith without works? But inherent in the new birth is that the saved one become humbled, that humility which comes in realizing their horrible Villainy, worse than any Villain could ever be in the horizontal realm. We violated our loving, heavenly Abba--our daddy in Heaven. We violated Him worse than anybody in this world could ever violate us.

But Our Father forgave us, through Jesus Christ. And it is imperative that we understand this in salvation. And if we do, how can we not forgive our brothers?

Let's say you run into a person in the highways and byways of life, and he says, "I am a Christian! I have received Jesus Christ!" Can a person receive Jesus Christ and still be lost and going to Hell?

Yes; it is possible to believe everything about Jesus Christ and still not be converted. Cognitive understanding of Jesus Christ is much different from surrendering your life to Him, throwing yourself unconditionally and unreservedly at His feet and committing yourself to be His bond-slave. He is the Lord; we are His bond-slaves; we cannot have it any other way. Yet I have met many who do not understand that reconciliation with God is necessary for a relationship with Him. Understanding of Him is not enough. They may understand the 4 Spiritual laws and even have much sound theology. They may know a lot about God, and yet still not know Him. For they have not come to a point of throwing themselves at His feet unreservedly and unconditionally. But those who do, will find mercy and life! And one of the first evidences is to extend God's grace in forgiveness to those who have sinned against us.

We need to be carefully evaluating our gospel. Our gospel does not make people feel good; usually it makes them feel worse. But remember, there is hope! Our gospel is one of hope (Romans 15:13). Most people aren't fooled by a ticket to Heaven.

Once, many years ago when I would go around with the Four Spiritual Laws, people would say, "It can't be that easy." And they were right; it's not. So we need to give them the full gospel; the real thing, realizing that unless God opens their eyes, they're going to perish anyway. At least now, however, they'll perish without an excuse. They won't be able to stand before God and say, "No-one ever told me." They will realize on Judgment Day that they ultimately only served themselves; we need to let them know beforehand. At least then they'll have an opportunity to experience the life of Christ. And our hands will be free from their blood.

If we're going to help battered and broken people, we need to do a lot more than make them feel good. We need to lead them to the foot of the throne, where they can surrender to the King of Kings, and learn to live in His Kingdom!

Chapter 5

Teaching that Leads to Revelation (continued)

REGENERATION

We have already learned that man is crippled. We have said that his relationships with both God and other people (the relationships for which he was created) are fractured because of his fallen state. Without accepting God's offer of forgiveness which leads to transformation, man is going to continue on in his broken relationships. Those relationships are only going to get worse and deteriorate with the passage of time. Let's review a typical person's life in this state of disrepair:

A baby boy is born. His mom and Dad love him. They do the best they can. They can't do very well, though, because they are broken people as well. But they try. As little Junior grows up--let's say Junior is me, in which case there are four other little Junior boys and a Junior girl. What happens as this family goes through life? They're not making contact with God, because they are cut off from Him--they may go to church, but that's about it.

So they go along, banging into other people like cue balls on a pool table. And what are all those other people doing back to them? Banging back--they're all sinners, and therefore tend to cope with problems by responding sinfully. What results at the end of these years of constantly banging into other people? An adult broken person! That's the way it is to live in a broken world. There's no hope, because we're cut off from God. Some people wind up crippled in one way, others in another, but everyone is crippled.

By the time I was 21 years old I was a hermit; I hated people. I was totally isolated. My parents were divorced when I was 18 years old and moved off to California. My family fragmented into pieces. By then I was already a bitter, spiteful person and this situation did not help. My view of people was that all people did was injure you, and I wanted no part of that. I locked myself into a chemistry lab, working 18 hours a day, sleeping 6 hours a night, and that was it--that was my life. I had been shaped and molded by my experience, and I was practicing what I had learned.

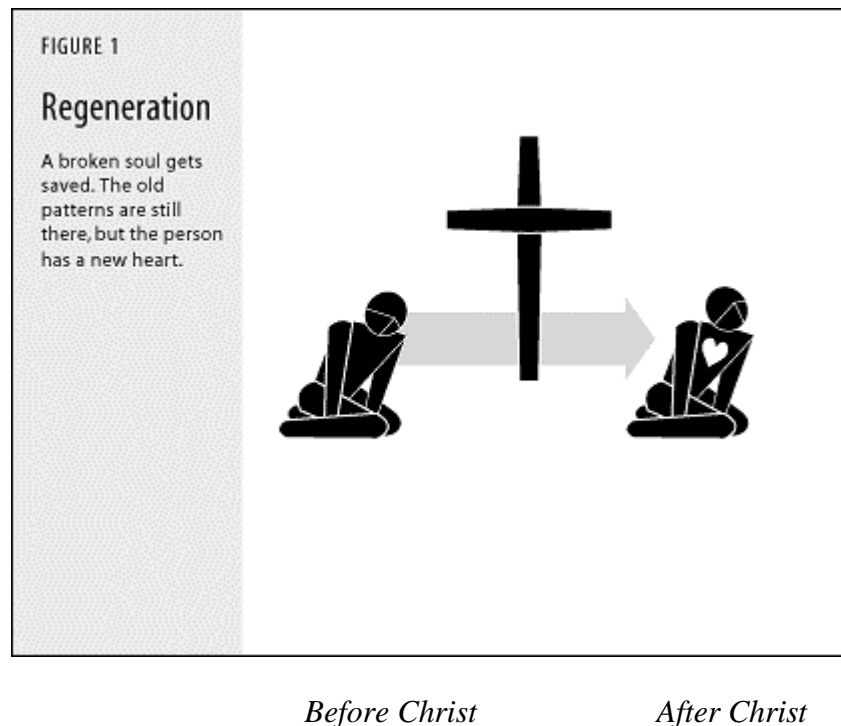
Was I contributing to my problem? Of course! Originally, perhaps not so much, but as I went through life I learned various coping mechanisms. I learned that when people hurt me, I should hurt them back. That was one way to keep people from hurting you, and that's what I did. By the time I was 24 no-one liked me and that was fine; I didn't like them either.

So now I come to Christ. What did I look like the day after I came to Him? Before I was a hermit, now I've accepted Jesus. What do I look like? I look like a hermit! How else am I going to look? I've spent 24 years looking at the world from one point of view. That all has to change now, but it's going to take some time. Every single person was my enemy, they were all out to hurt me. And so I isolated myself. I was a survivor. And most people are by the time they come to Christ.

Each of us have our own experiences that have trained us to be un-Godly. And beyond that, we live in an un-Godly world. That world tells us how to respond to people. One way is to hurt them before they hurt you! Is that a righteous point-of-view? Is that what Jesus taught? No. He taught us to "love your enemies?" Is that "love those who hurt you?" "Bless those who curse

you."

Is this what the world says? Of course not! What has happened is that the world's view has encouraged a cycle of progressing brokenness, making our brokenness and emptiness and separation from God worse as we sin against those who sin against us. If you do something different, like love your enemies, you are insane. Thus, all Christians should be locked up. All you have to do is turn on the television and you see that the whole world is programmed into un-Godly responses to problems in this world. Media, books, radio--the habits become reinforced until we react in this manner without even thinking. We reflexively respond in un-Godly ways to the challenges and problems of the world.



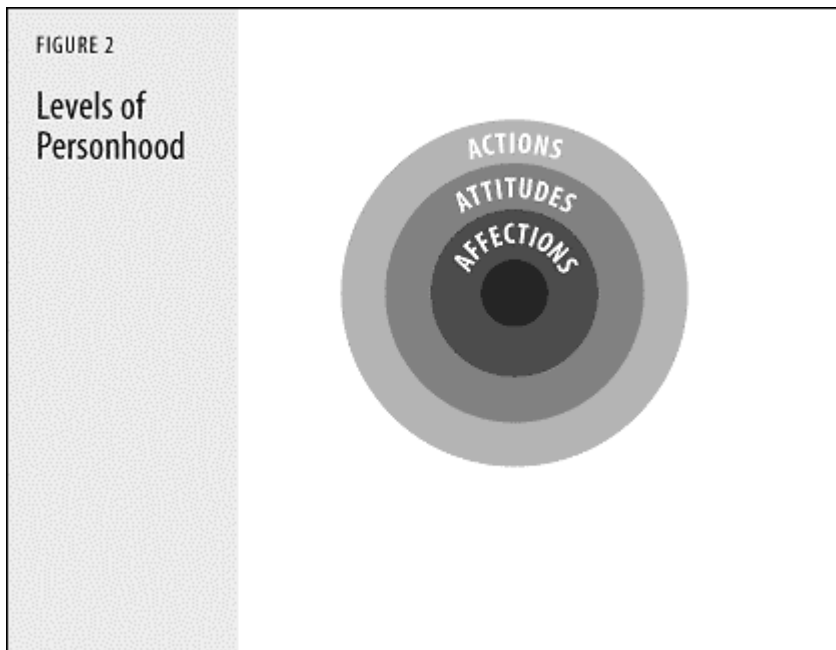
The above picture is how we look when we first come to Christ: bent-over, crippled, but with God's Holy Spirit now in our heart. But we are still trapped in our old patterns. I can just see the angels in Heaven the day I was saved: "Who is this Dick Scoggins character? He's a mess! How is he going to get turned around. We need major reconstructive surgery!"

When people come into the church, they come in broken and battered! The question is, are they simply broken and crippled, or are they broken and crippled, but with God in their heart? There is a big difference between the two; it's hard to tell, but if you look you'll see. That's why it's usually good to withhold judgment; it's hard to tell if a person's saved or not. I'm not going to presume they're saved or not saved; I'm going to presume that they need to find out, because they are the ones who need to know! Their fruit will display their faith (I John 2:3). They're the ones who have to understand that the day before and the day after does not mean much difference in what they look like!

Where's the difference? Is there any at all? Yes, there is; the difference is deep down in their

soul, in their heart. Something fundamental has been changed. God put a spark, a new life in them. Where before they were dead, now they have been made alive in Christ. We call this Regeneration.

One of the major mistakes we make as we try to work with people is that we don't focus on this level of the person. We can think of a person as having three levels: Actions, Attitudes, and Affections. What level do most churches focus on? Usually, the Action. Why? It's what you can see! This is interesting especially since Jesus said, "Judge not by appearance; judge with righteous judgment." In Proverbs it says, "The plans of a man's heart runs deep, but a man of understanding draws them out." We need to find out what is the state of the person's heart. Is this person new in Christ?



In order to do that we need to review a good deal of the preceding chapters with the one who professes faith in Christ. If we are going to progress both in our own lives and in our ability to help others, we must first understand the concept of Grace. We define "Grace" as "something God does on our behalf." "Works" are things we do for God, but Grace is something God does for us. It's not required; He does it simply because He chooses to. He does it graciously.

Last chapter we discussed Justifying Grace; we said that Grace was Jesus dying on a cross in our place, so that we don't have to die. Jesus died so I don't have to. In this chapter we are going to look at Sanctifying Grace or Regenerating Grace--slightly different. This Grace places a new life in us; a life of the Holy Spirit. This new life means God will control more and more of our life as we willingly surrender to whatever we see from God. God will give revelation that leads us progressively deeper in our walk with him. He may start with our actions, but He will progress to our attitudes and affections. God wants to change us from the inside out. He may start with the outside, but He will never be finished until He has changed our hearts. Jesus told the Pharisees, "You are whitewashed tombs; clean on the outside, but inside only dead bones." Too many Christians are like that; their actions are perfect, but their thoughts (attitudes and affections) are

far from God. In order to help others, we must be working at the right level. We may start working with Actions, but the Holy Spirit will not be content until the attitudes and affections are transformed.

But God begins the work of transformation with a person's heart; God does not begin with his behavior. God ends with his behavior, but God begins with his heart. So God puts in us a new heart (The promise in Jeremiah, repeated in Hebrews 8: "I will take out that heart of stone and put in a heart of flesh, so that you may know me."). He puts this new heart in us so that we can commune with Him! Not so that we can "do things" for him, but so that we have something in us that reaches out to God--and makes contact, communion.

Over and over again, Jesus said, "I always do what pleases my Father." That is the picture of communion: a desire to please, a desire to seek out and please our Heavenly Father. The Apostle Paul says, "As children of light, we seek out what is pleasing to the Lord." (Ephesians 5:10). That's a strong word; I am not seeking to behave before God, I'm seeking to please Him; I'm seeking affirmation and affection from God! Every one of us wanted our parents to be pleased with us, for them to pat us on the back and say, "Good job!" That's what we all live for, to please those we have strong affections for! This is a reflection of the fact that God has put inside our hearts a desire to please someone greater than ourselves. Ultimately, we won't be satisfied until we please God. That's why we look forward to the end of time, when on that day God will say to each of us, "Well done, my good and faithful servant." (Mt. 25:23). I've finally pleased my Heavenly Creator--I've pleased my Daddy.

REGENERATION

That's what Regeneration is all about. It is a new life that God puts in us and sustains by His Spirit which gives us a desire to commune with God, to please God.

So when I was first saved, I had one desire, that was to commune with one soul in all the universe--The Boss; my Lord, my Dad. Guess what happened to the hermit? He began to break down. A hermit cannot commit to someone outside himself and still be a hermit. A hermit has to be alone, completely isolated. So God began to break that down by putting new life in me.

Do most Christians understand this? From what I have seen, I would say no. Many feel that they have made the decision for God; the average person walks down at a Billy Graham rally and thinks, "I have included God in my world." The exact opposite is true, of course, but they don't know that.

So as Christians, there are several points about Salvation that we need to understand if we hope to reach out effectively (in such a way that souls are healed). We have already discussed Justification. So let's look at Sanctification.

Look at Romans 6 (chapter 5 deals with Justification, chapter 6 deals with Sanctification). Romans 6:1--"What shall we say then? Are we to continue in sin that Grace might increase? May it never be! How can we, who died in sin, still live in it?"

This is an incredible statement. What has happened to the relationship between us and sin? It has been broken; we have died to it! Who I was has changed since I have experienced Christ's forgiveness and His new life! There has been a death here; the death is to sin.

When did I die to sin? When Jesus was crucified! Verse 3--"Do you not know that all of us have been baptized into Christ Jesus, having been baptized in his death? Therefore, we have been buried with him in baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead to the glory of the Father, so we too should walk in newness of life!" So when did I die with respect to death? When I became joined with Christ, in both his death and resurrection.

Who were we united with before we died with Christ? With Adam, whom as we remember, defected and united with the Devil (we were not united with the Devil in the same way that we are with Christ--we were simply thrown in on the Devil's side, whereas we are one with Christ). Before a man comes into Christ, he is alive to sin, he is alive to Adam; his spiritual heritage is from Adam.

What makes him dead with respect to God? "You were dead in your transgressions and sins." (Ephesians 2:1)

So what has Salvation done? It has given us a new heritage; it has caused us to be born again! We are born into a new family with new life! Before, we could say, we were "in" Adam; now we are "in" Christ! We've been translated from one kingdom to another kingdom. Our relationship with Adam has now been broken, in the same way that our relationship with God was broken when Adam defected into the Devil's camp! So we've been united with Christ in the resurrection so now, we actually have a new life!

Do you suppose I understood that the day after I came to Christ? No; I didn't understand that at all. Fortunately for God to save us such knowledge is not necessary. But if we are to progress in the Christian life and experience deep healing, such knowledge is essential! We need to know this, that we have been buried with Him! That's why it's so important to be baptized; baptism does not save you, but it is a sign of your identification with Christ. Once a person understands what baptism means, they ought to be baptized. I would postulate that most Christians in the first-century understood that baptism was reflective of their dying with respect to their old life, and a sign of being raised up to a new life (in a new community!). Most Christians today, I feel, do not understand any of this! They don't have the slightest idea of what baptism is; for most it's just a ritual, full of ceremony.

Romans 6:6--"Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Christ, that our body of sin might be done away with, might be rendered powerless, so that we can no longer be slaves to sin."

We can see the process of renewal here. What happened to us? Our old self was crucified with Christ. In the last chapter we discussed justification: Jesus was offered in our place; He died in such a way that I would not have to die, but could be offered forgiveness. This is what we know as a substitutional sacrifice.

Salvation, however, is a double-sided coin; justification is the top side. The bottom side of the coin holds particular significance for those of us in the West, for this challenges a whole mind-set that we have been raised under with respect to our understanding of salvation.

The bottom side of the coin is this: Jesus died in such a way that I died. This is known as a vicarious sacrifice. In the Chapter 5 of Romans we learn that in Adam, we all sinned and thus all died. Adam sinned as a vicar; he sinned in such a way that we all sinned in him. This troubles Westerners, because--for many Christians, anyway--we believe that life begins at conception. The Bible has a different view of when life begins. The Bible states that life begins in your father, and in his father, and in his father, all the way back to Adam.

When Jesus Christ died on the cross, the life of mankind--begun in Adam--split! A whole branch broke off, a branch that was no longer in Adam, but in Christ! A new race of man, a man that follows after God, not the things of the world came into existence. The other type of man still exists, known as the children of the Devil (John 8:44-48). But we are of a redeemed race!

Christ died as a vicar, like Adam. Romans 6:6 says He died in such a way that it could be said that I died. He was then raised in such a way that I was raised with Him to have a whole new quality of life. In Adam I was a hermit; in Christ I am no longer. I could not remain the way I was. Why? Because I AM different in Christ, and my fate is sealed.

Shortly after I came to Christ I realized that I was someone different. I didn't know who I was, but I knew that I had changed. Something inside had changed. Something that had not been there before had entered into my being. I had new life. And what does this new life do? It changes us slowly, over time, until we are no longer slaves to sin. This change may not be sudden; I was still a hermit the day after I was converted. Why? Because it was all I knew. No one told me any of this, so I continued to live like a hermit. However, I was no longer able to be at peace with myself living in the same way. Suddenly the old clothes didn't seem to fit anymore. Something had changed.

However, despite these changes, many Christians continue on in their brokenness for several reasons; we'll get into this in much greater detail later, but oftentimes it's because they're ignorant of who they are. Others may forget who they are; still others rebel against who they are; and others are confused about who they are. But we need to understand that those reasons simply keep people locked into their old ways. These things are often used by the devil into deceiving us that we cannot change. But if a person is truly new in Christ, they have a new life and a new being.

So here's a question for you: are you a sinner or a saint? Is a saint who sins different from a sinner who acts like a saint? Of course this is true, but what's the difference? The difference resides in the nature. When a person says "I am a saint," he is saying something about the innermost part of his being. If a Christian says "I am a sinner," he is lying, or is deceived. If he says, "I sin," he tells the truth. The difference is fundamental. Too many Christians think they are sinners trying to act like saints; they're trying to put on a mask, but start from a position of defeat. Too many Christians focus on their own effort to try and be something that God already created them to be!

For the Christian, is Sanctification based ultimately on what he does? The answer to that, fundamentally, is no! A legalistic view of the doctrine of Sanctification is based on what I do. At root, Sanctification is based on who I am, and that is due to God's grace. God can take a practicing homosexual and crucify him to the cross and bring forth a new man. That man may struggle with homosexual feelings; that man may even stumble. But that man, if he is in Christ, will no longer at root be a homosexual. I don't care if it's in the genes or learned behavior; in Christ they are new.

2 Corinthians 5:17: "Any man who is in Christ is a new creature. All things are passed away; behold, all things have become new."

New Christians ought to have identity crises; they don't know who they are! The day after I was saved, was I a hermit? No! Did I act like one? Yes. There's a difference between saying I am, and I act like. The Apostle Paul and Jesus Christ did not tell us to be what we're not. They told us to be what we are; act according to who are in Christ! Too often we act differently. We act like children of the Devil rather than children of God.

Sanctification, then, is in a way based on what I do, but what I do should be based on who I am. When I act according with who I am, I progress in Sanctification. A Christian is not a sinner trying to act like a saint. A Christian is a saint who, out of ignorance, confusion, deception or rebellion, may sin.

This is one reason I don't like the words "positional" or "conditional". Whenever I hear a Christian say, "That's positional truth," I hear them saying that this truth is theoretical; it has nothing to do with them in reality. Their conditional reality is different from the "position" in Christ..

That's wrong. I am new in Christ; it has nothing to do with "position"; what in the world is that? The day after I was saved I was no longer a hermit by nature, even though I still acted like one for sometime after. God had to peel away years of actions, attitudes, in order to expose sinful, self-centered affections. I had to face my wrong views of God, myself and my fellow man in order to remove the barriers that kept me from acting like a child of God.

He is still working with many of those today. But deep in my heart, I wanted to please God. To those new in Christ, they will have an unquenchable desire to please God. Many Christians still struggle and have difficult time, because they don't realize that although they are new in Christ, they still many times don't act it. But with careful nurturing in revelation, repentance, and through restitution continuing around the cycle of renewal, they will enter more and more into the fullness of who God created them to be.

Often when working with new people in discipleship; I see them as a little flower bud. God's already put the life inside of them. My responsibility is to get those hard green coverings out of the way so that the bud can blossom. I don't have to force that person towards any kind of goal. God has already put the life in there; we just need to free it to grow. We need to have confidence and courage in that; so many Christians are worried that the bud might come out dead. If it is

then there was never life in it and there's no sense in pasting on dead petals. But if it's alive, then we should have no fear, as we work and labor and struggle with people from one stage of glory to another.

Chapter 6 Revelation

When a person comes to Christ, initially they will experience a type of euphoria, a first stage of transformation. It may not be the day they receive Christ; the day I received Christ I didn't feel anything. However, a few days later, I did. I got an incredible sense that the Lord was with me.

As a person progresses along the way, sinful actions and attitudes begin to be revealed to him by the Holy Spirit. For example, I was reading the Bible, and it said "A foul mouth is an abomination to the Lord." I swore worse than most truck drivers; probably every fifth word out of my mouth was a curse word. I read that and thought I shouldn't have a foul mouth anymore; that day I stopped swearing. To this day God has cleansed me from that habit. So often there may be an initial cleansing from somewhat superficial behaviors. But it is the first signs of God's power and life at work in the person.

But over time we tend to return to our old patterns--especially ones that are deeper rooted in our character. Some patterns change very little over time. We may dress them up so that they have a "Christian" flavor and are not offensive, but fundamentally they don't change. We could call these patterns "besetting sins," or "fortress sins." One of mine was bitterness; we'll be discussing this in greater detail later.

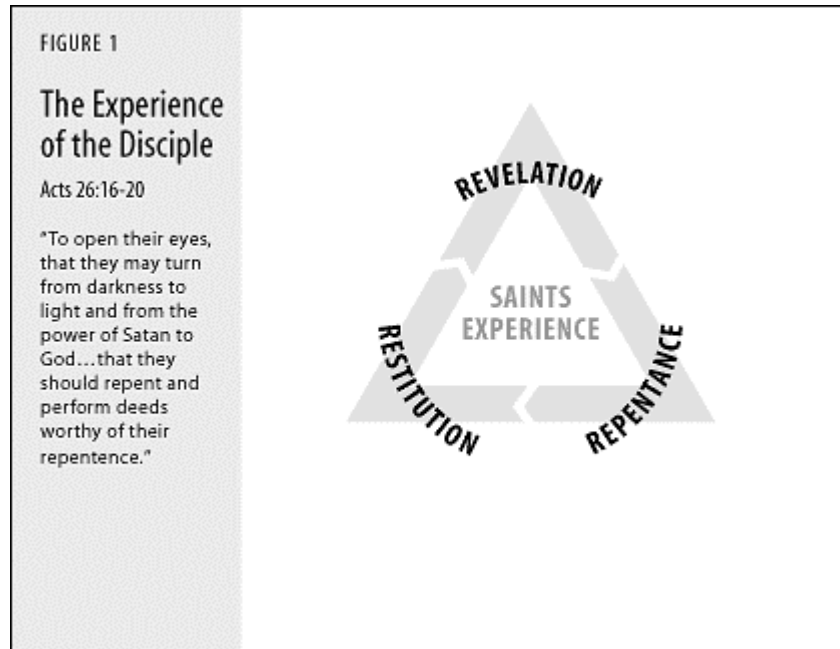
Why is this? Why do we tend to return to old patterns? Because we are comfortable with them. They work! They enable us to survive in a fallen world. As we walk through this world, we realize, "I will not trust that person next time, they hurt me." And so we develop sinful coping mechanisms to survive in a sinful world. We develop a world view that we think is correct. Then we develop mechanisms to accompany that world view.

So here I am, newly regenerated and I've stopped swearing. Did my view of the world change fundamentally? No; not fundamentally. God wants it to change, and that's going to be part of the process of Sanctification. Remember, Paul said, "Do not be conformed any longer to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Romans 12:2

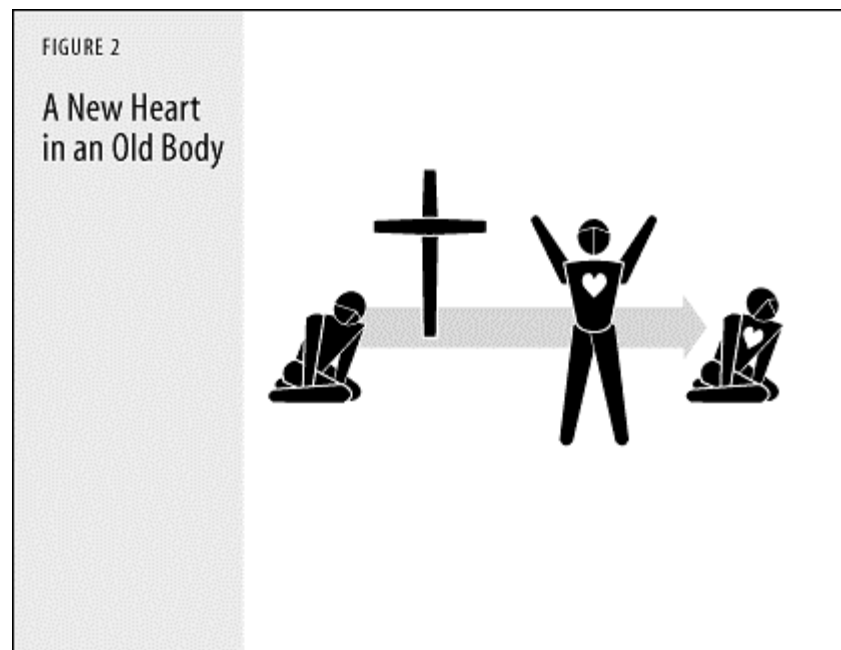
Ephesians 4:22-24 discusses putting off the old man and putting on the new, and you do that as your mind is renewed. This is a process; this is not a one-time event. Mind renewal is an ongoing process, and this is what we talk about when we talk about Sanctification. The rest of the book of Ephesians discusses some of the most basic patterns believers need to put off and new ones to put on. I have found these section of scripture very helpful in exposing such patterns as I work with new believers.

As new Christians come into the church they bring with them a sinful world view and sinful coping mechanisms. They have learned how to use those to survive in a fallen world. They will often be quite fearful of making changes in these coping patterns. Sanctification involves seeing these processes of fragmentation and decay reversed, and replaced using the cycle of renewal to put on the new man. The cycle of renewal begins with Regeneration. But it progresses through the steps of Revelation, Repentance, Restitution. Restitution often brings more revelation of

deeper sin (at the attitude and affection level) which leads to greater transformation, ultimately resulting in Renewal of the mind.



This chapter we will focus on revelation (or illumination) and specifically what keeps people from seeing the light. A good deal of responsibility of the church in community is turning on the lights so, when God opens the eyes of blind men, they can see.



One thing that new Christians need to understand is that they return to old patterns of sin because of one thing: their flesh. When a person comes to Christ and he gets a new life, he still has his old flesh. When is he going to lose that flesh? When he dies, or when Jesus returns. But until then he has to deal with a deceptive and crafty flesh. I am convinced that flesh does not change much over the course of our lives. Romans 7 where Paul is giving his personal testimony of his ongoing battle with his

flesh ends with the statement: "Wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? But thanks be to God through Jesus Christ." Paul continues on in Romans 8:23. "We ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves grown within ourselves,

awaiting our adoption, that is, the redemption of our bodies."

When is Christ finally going to deliver us from these bodies of flesh? Not in this world. It is going to be a constant battle; Romans 7-8 is the description of the normal Christian life. It is not one of ultimate victory over sin; it is one of step-by-step existential righteousness being secured in the desert, in the wilderness, fighting the battle against the flesh (Cf. Galatians 5:16f). We need to understand that. Those who are living the Christian life looking for the "quick fix" will be in for a rude awakening, because our tendency is to sink back to our flesh; our flesh never dies until we do.

So how are we to progress upward? The cycle of renewal begins with revelation, and revelation comes primarily through the Word of God. But our progress is not simply a matter of reading the Bible and memorizing scripture or learning different doctrines. Growth is not primarily through cognition, but through our experience of God (Cf. Ephesians 3:14-21). Our growth (as well as our ability to fight our fleshly tendencies) is largely dependent on how we view God, how well we know Him (as opposed to knowing ABOUT Him), and how we walk in faith based on that experiential knowledge.

God is seen by many older Christians as an Egyptian taskmaster; He wants our obedience and nothing else; He wants our righteousness. Not true. God is a proud and loving Father, who is proud of His children. He is pleased when we obey Him. But He does not disown us when we fail Him. What kind of Father would that be!?

As He brings us through these times of trial and difficulty, He loves us and cares about us. He brings us to these times of trouble because He wants us to be conformed to the image of Christ. He knows what is better for us. Look at Job. He was a righteous servant. God calls Job, "My servant, Job, throughout the book. But whereas Job was righteous, he had some flawed views of God. God allowed the trials to bring Job to a whole new understanding of Himself. And his latter state was far superior to his former.

He loves us and wants our love, not simply our obedience. This was the failing of the older brother in the parable of the Prodigal son. That parable, interesting enough, was told to Pharisee's. I once heard the application to it that "God would rather see a dirty face than a clean back". How many older Christians are content to know God afar off and even envy new believers who have turned from a life of sin to a personal relationship with a living God/

Once we understand the loving nature of our heavenly Dad, then we can stand in His light and say, "God, you knew I had this 'dirty shirt on, even when I couldn't see it; thank you for pointing it out to me. I'm ready to take it off. Show me how to live like your son Jesus in this area of my life, so that I can be a son you will be proud of." This reaction is opposite one of shock and embarrassment when sin is exposed with the believer wondering what others are going to think.

God is never surprised when we sin. He knows when we are tempted and He knows when we will fail. Remember Jesus Himself knew that Peter would deny Him. But what did He do? He prayed for Peter that his faith would not ultimately fail, but that when he was restored he would

strengthen the brethren. The way to make progress in sanctification is not by being ashamed of our sin, but rather seeking out God's help in time of need (Hebrews 4:16). And then we will need to seek out other brothers and sisters, as well; Godly men and women who are going to be able to lend a hand. If we are to make progress in this walk with God, our view of God is important, and we need to honestly face our shortcomings. God is not surprised when we sin. God is never surprised. We may be surprised (that is part of the nature of revelation), but God never is.

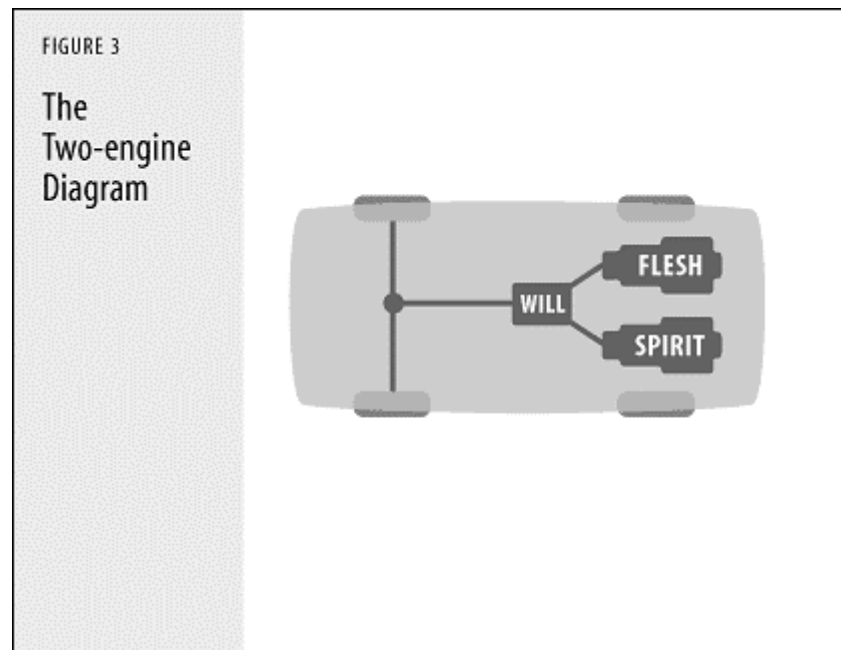
So the problem with troubled Christians and Christians who need to grow is to learn how to grapple with their flesh. Galatians 5:13 gives us the definition of "Healing":

"Brothers, we are called to be free; but do not use your freedom to indulge the flesh, but rather serve one another in love."

The definition of "Healing" is a person who has so experienced God's transforming work that he is able to serve others. This passage makes clear that a Christian has two choices: he can serve himself, or he can serve God by serving others. How easy is that choice to make as we walk through life, moment by moment? Not very, according to verses 16-17:

"So I say live by the spirit and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh; for flesh desires what is contrary to the spirit, and the spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you may not do what you please."

What type of relationship does the spirit have to the flesh? The word translated above "conflict" means Deep-seated hostility, animosity. Every time we make a spiritual decision our flesh is going to be antagonized. The flesh seeks to serve itself; the spirit seeks to serve God. Every Christian experiences this battle within them.

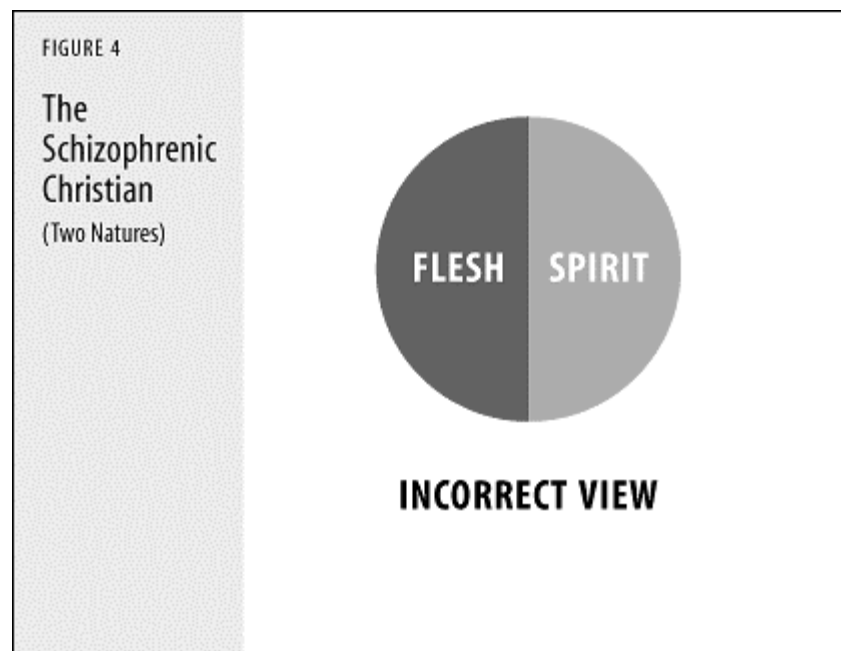


We can illustrate it this way: think of a person like an automobile. There is a rear-wheel drive (here I betray my age), a drive train, and a transmission. And when a person comes to Christ, he has two engines in him. Before Christ he only had one, but now he has two. We find them in verse 17: the flesh and the spirit; two power sources. These two power sources hate each other. What are they trying to do? They're fighting for control. But the driver is the only one who can control the

choice; the driver is the one who must decide which power source he's going to use.

He exercises that choice through the transmission, which we call the Will. Galatians 5 is appealing to the Christian not to shift into "flesh gear". However, which desires do you think are the most immediate and thus seem to be the most powerful? The flesh! As a matter of fact, in Galatians 5:16 it says, "Do not gratify the desires of the flesh." The word "desires" is very powerful; the word has the idea of craving. "If I don't get that, I'm going to die!" Have you ever worked with alcoholics or other addicts? When you do, you understand those kind of cravings. They really think that they'll die if they don't have one more drink. But if they do, they'll be okay. The flesh is deceptive. Do you believe that if an alcoholic really has just one more drink, they'll really be okay? Of course not; the flesh never has enough. You could spend your whole life investing in your flesh, and your flesh will never be satisfied. It always wants more. And much of the world has bought into that deception. Capitalism is built on that! You always want more and more. The flesh is never satisfied. The flesh's power lies in its ability to deceive the person that a little will be enough. It holds out a promise of satisfaction which it cannot deliver.

So the desires of the flesh are intense, and antagonistic to the spirit. We are never free from them while we live in this body (Cf. Romans 7:24, 8:23). Many times a person will say, "I didn't want to make a decision that I wasn't at peace with." Many times the decisions we make will not be ones of peace, at least peace with our flesh. Most of the intense spiritual decisions I've made have not been done in peace. There is all sorts of agony going on in my soul, because in most cases these decisions involve a crucifixion of the flesh. But a decision made in the Spirit will lead to a peace that passes all understanding.



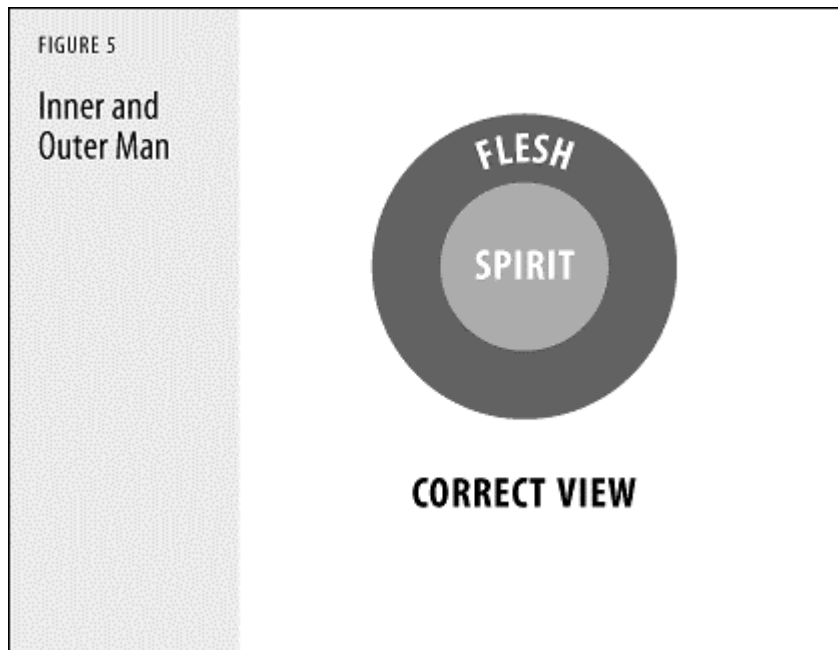
But if the flesh is the most immediate, what is the deepest desire? A glance at Romans 7:22 reveals that the deepest desire of a regenerate person is to please God, because that's who you are. We discussed in the last chapter how if any man is in Christ he is a new creature. He is still susceptible to lies and deceptions, and even to return to old patterns; but if he is truly in Christ, there's something in him that will never allow him to have the peace and joy he used to have in the sins he enjoyed before

he became saved. Before Christ he had only one engine; the flesh engine. He may have had a lot of peace in his sin as a non-believer. But the only place of peace for the Christian is in the heart of God. No matter how hard the road of the Spirit is, and how much pain is involved, we need to

realize that a person in Christ will never be satisfied until he or she come to that place of rest in surrender to the Lord.

It's important to know that a human being is not a spiritual schizophrenic. The diagram below represents how a new believer might think of himself based on the discussion above.

But the flesh and spirit are not equal halves. They are both present, but they are not equal. As a matter of fact the flesh can sometimes look stronger, through temptation and trials. But the Spirit is always there, whispering "Turn back; turn back; you know better." And if the Christian understands this, which voice should he listen to? The spirit's! Why? Because it's who he is! He may not feel as though that's who he is, but it's true! Therefore, when I say that the choosing should reflect the identity, why should it? Because we should always choose in accord with who we are! A better picture is the one below based on Paul's description of his struggle in Romans 7:21ff.



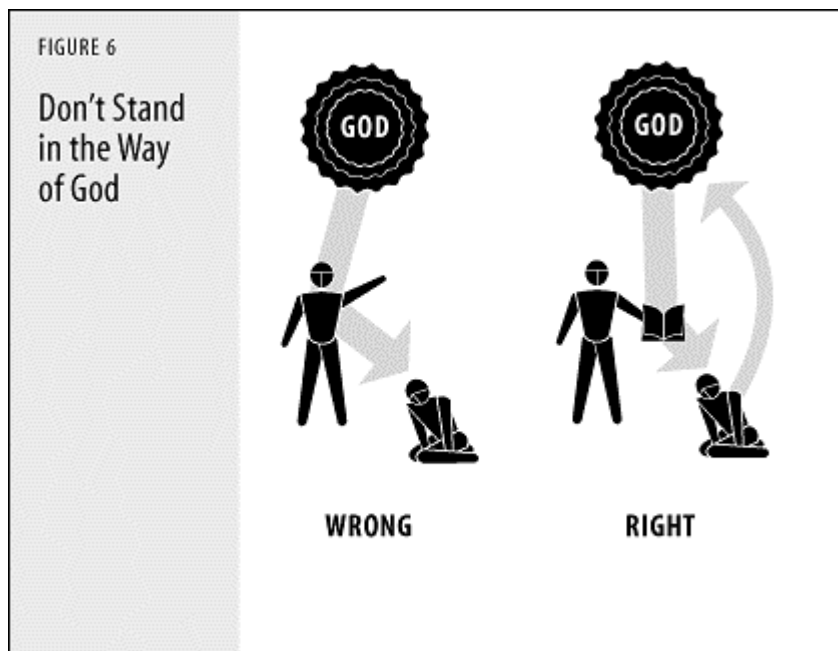
Conflict is inevitable because the flesh is always there, and sometimes it can confuse us and deceive us. But we need to understand who we are. I am a child of my Father! Should I act as His son? Of course I ought to; why would I act any other way? Paul says in Romans 6, "Shall we continue in sin so that Grace may much more abound? How can it be?" God forbid! You died, and your life is now with Christ. Have you died? Yes! We have been placed in Christ, through the Holy Spirit, and our choosing should reflect that.

WE SIN OUT OF IGNORANCE

So why is it that Christians sin? We'll look at four reasons. First of all, many Christians are ignorant of who we are in Christ. That's way it's so important to teach people who they are

before you tell them what to do. Too often Christians tell them what to do without ever telling them who they are. Christianity then becomes no more than loading extra burdens upon a person's back and trying to be obedient to God in their own strength.

Obedience should be a product of hearing the voice of Jesus illuminating the path He calls us to follow. We respond in loving obedience to the master. There ought to be something inside the believer that resonates with His Word; His Spirit (John 10:27f). If there is no resonance, obedience will only be superficial and likely degenerate into legalism. Don't tell a pagan to stop living with his girlfriend; what's wrong with two pagans living together? Get him renewed in Christ, and even then don't tell him to stop living with his girlfriend! He has to realize that this is what Christ wants him to do, and he needs to know why. Take him to the Word (eg. Ephesians 5:5) and see if the Spirit will open his eyes. Help him devise a plan for freedom (eg. marriage, another brother's home to stay at, etc.). But don't stand in God's place. This will promote a priesthood of yourself and a legalism by him rather than an intimate relationship with God



Keep in mind that revelation begins with who he is IN CHRIST. Many are ignorant of who they are. External obedience leading to legalism is not an appropriate solution to the deep seated problem of sin. They must understand that they are new creatures in Christ. They should no longer serve their immediate impulses, but must search for their deeper desires. Society today tells us to live by our feelings; emotion is truth. That is wrong! We need to teach people to respond to their deeper desires, not their immediate ones. We must deal with people's ignorance with the word of God and truth. Believers often sin because they are ignorant of who they really are.

WE SIN BECAUSE WE FORGET

Secondly, we many times forget who we are in Christ. The Devil likes to confuse us, and he does! I've listened to "propositional statements"--things like "I am no good." Is the person a

Christian? If so then this statement is a lie! Who are you to tell God what's good and not good? You're a liar! A good principle is found in Romans 3:4:

"Let God be found true, though every man be found a liar..."

We need to start listening to propositional statements which we, and others, make with our own lips in order to measure this truth against God's truth. There are an awful lot of people who are confused because they are deceived. They believe a lie rather than the truth. And they act accordingly.

A close believing relative struggled with anorexia for over a year and nearly died spending 9 weeks in the hospital. Though a believer, she was gripped by fear and deception. She was afraid that God's plan for her life was bad and would not including goals which she had set up as idols. And she believed that we (her family) were the enemy and really did not love her. When a believer gets to this point of confusion and self-deception they desperately need to see the truth of God's Word as an external lighthouse offering them a way to safety. Fortunately she came to her senses and repented of her belief of lies. Today she is walking with God and serving Him. But for a while she forgot who she was.

WE SIN BECAUSE WE REBEL

Thirdly, we rebel against who we are. And we do this much more often than we think we do. Basically, once you peel away all the Christian veneer we will often find rebellion deep in our hearts. Moses said of the people who were grumbling against him, "Do you not know that you're grumbling against God?" When we grumble against our circumstances, when we grumble against the hard work God has called us to, when we grumble against others, we are grumbling against God.

If you're called to shepherd God's sheep, there will be many times when you grumble against God for the stubbornness and stupidity of His sheep. God understands, because He puts up with the same aggravation. He is shepherding thousands of souls. But He is there to teach us and make us stronger. And in order to do so, we have to continue learning about God. In the working out of our calling and ministry, God has so arranged it that we become transformed. Our God is a good God, even when He doesn't look good. What's the problem when we say that God doesn't "look good" to us? Of course it is our point-of-view. The solution then is to grow in faith; we need to have that vertical relationship improved. When we are in rebellion against God we need to seek the things above and get God's point of view.

WE SIN WHEN WE ARE PASSIVE

The fourth and final thing we do which leads us into sin is, we simply refuse to choose. This gets a lot of believers into problems. Incidentally, do you know what happens if you have a choice between the flesh and the spirit and you refuse to choose?

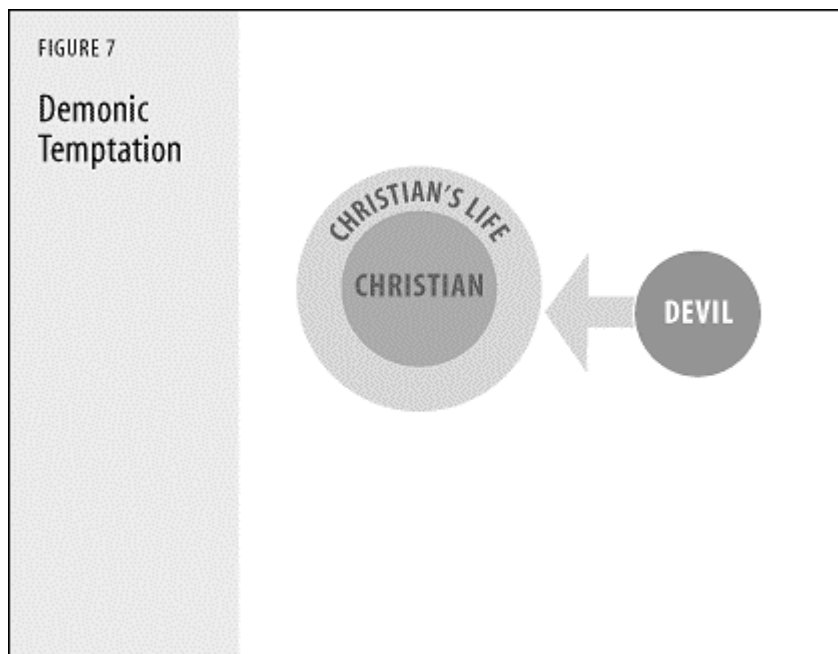
With computers they have what is called a default drive. If you don't choose a drive for your computer the computer automatically chooses the default drive. Can you guess what is the

default engine in a person's life?

You guessed it! The flesh wins, just by default. You have to choose the Spirit. (Galatians 5:16) Why is that? The reason is that God respects your ability to choose; He does not force Christians to choose Him. Nor does He deceive Christians into choosing. God wants you to choose with your will--choose Him out of love-- because then what you do gives him glory. The Devil does not have the same type of respect for our will. If Christians refuse to rebel against God, can't be deceived or confused, the devil would at least hope to freeze their will. Then he has you by default. God only wants the free, volitional surrender of lives to Him. The devil will take whatever he can get. Oftentimes we refuse to choose and this opens us up to the devil.

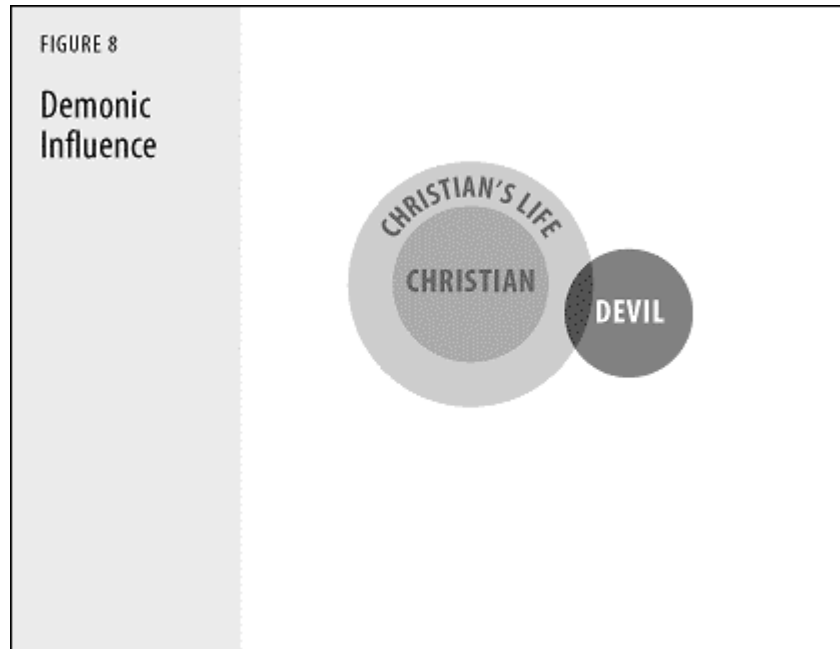
Christ died to restore our agency; our ability to choose. "If the Son shall set you free, you shall be free indeed." (John 8:36) Free from what? Free from sin (v.34)! That is, we are now free. We can now choose righteousness; but we must choose (Cf. Romans 6:13,16). If we do not choose, then deception, confusion, etc. opens us right up to demonic influence, and the Devil just walks right in.

If we could think of the spiritual life, God wants the Christian to be in a position of standing against the Devil and his attacks (I Peter 5:8ff). We could draw an small, inner circle below to represent the person; his being and personhood. The Outer Circle is his life; attitudes, regular daily patterns, etc. The Devil is constantly attacking a person's life, looking for a place of entrance (2 Corinthians 2:11).

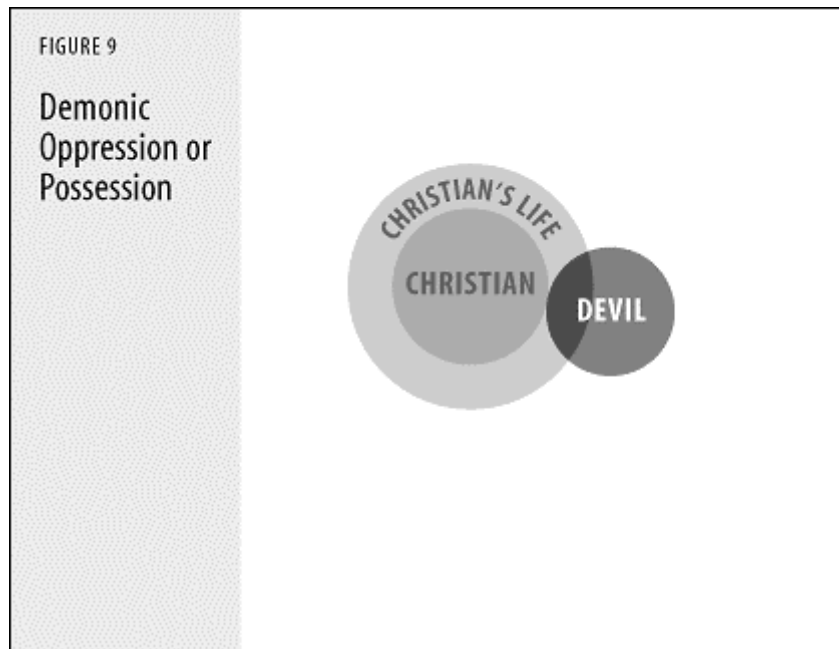


In Ephesians 4:26f it says, "Be angry, and yet do not sin. Do not let the sun set on your anger, neither give the Devil a place." There's a clear illustration of this kind of attack, and in that case the Devil's trying to get a foothold through anger that the sun goes down on. Anger is not sinful; it's what motivates the anger and what you do with it that can be sinful and used by the devil. Anger is sinful if it's selfish. If you go to sleep on it, you give the Devil a place. (OUTER

CIRCLE IS DENTED) Notice, the Devil has not entered the person's being, just his life. The Devil has a place now.



The thing with the Devil, he is never happy to just have a place; he's always looking for more. Always! (OUTER CIRCLE'S DENT GROWS)



And ultimately, that place grows to such an extent that the Devil can actually commune (talking, putting thoughts into) with the person. Christians are not even safe from this; the Devil can commune with them too, and start communicating lies directly to the person. This becomes evident when you hear people say things that aren't just not true, but are absolutely false. They are becoming confused in their identity. I think this is likely what happens when a Christian commits suicide; they've yielded so much ground over to the Devil, and

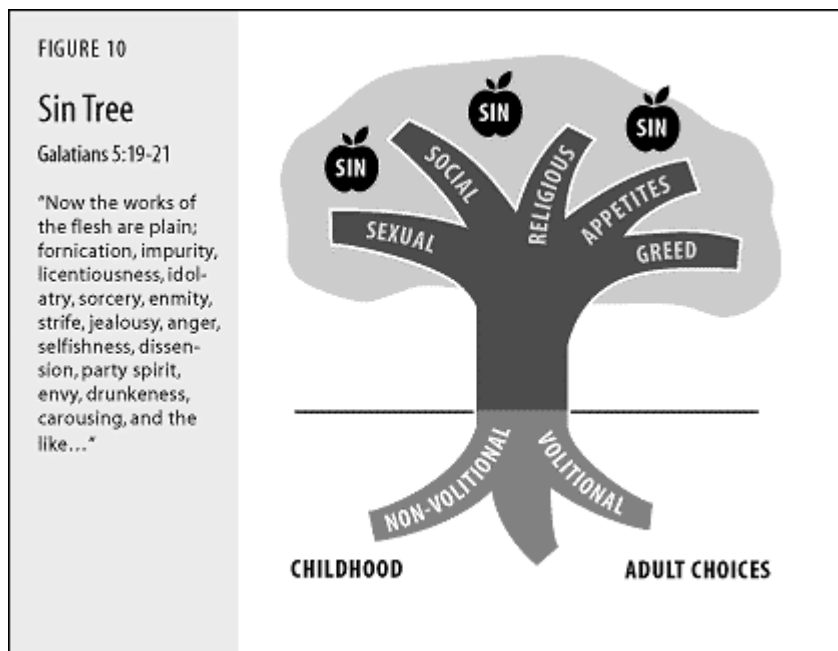
the person becomes so confused that they believe a lie rather than the truth. A person who commits suicide believes that he's no good, his life is better off ended.

Incidentally, no-one comes to Christ a completely full circle as an adult. Everyone has yielded some type of ground over to the Devil. Usually the devil doesn't really pay attention, because after all, none of us are very important to the Devil. But after we come to Christ, he starts paying attention, and starts attacking in those weak areas that he's had influence over. Because now we are a threat to his dominion.

When a person comes under attack while you're working with them, this often indicates that you have found an area of fortress sin. The attitude of the counselor has to be, "What a great opportunity; this person can actually be healed in this area of their life, by standing against the Devil and learning how to use spiritual weapons and tools (2 Corinthians 10:3-5)." In the area of fortress sin, we have to realize that it just doesn't "pop up"; fortress sin has been developed over time and often has some deep roots. Usually we see just the fruit of it, but we have to dig down deep and find the roots of it, in order for real healing to occur.

GOING FOR THE ROOTS

If we were to analyze the patterns of sin listed in Galatians 5, we could call them the branches of the sin tree. There are four general areas in which our flesh tends to become developed, different patterns of sin. You have the areas of sexual sin; the areas of social sin; the areas of religious sin; and the areas of sinful appetites. Moving into Ephesians 5, we can add covetousness to the list.



When you run into a person who has these types of problems and they are unable to shake them through simple confession and repentance, often you may need to understand where the problems come from (the roots). There are two possible roots: non-volitional and volitional.

Non-volitional roots are ones that we did not choose. For instance sins that are passed on from the parent to the child whether by genetic means or learned patterns would be non-volitional.

For example problems a person has arising from abusive parents would have non-volitional roots.

Volitional roots are ones in which we have chosen patterns of sin and they have become areas of fortress in our lives. Examples of these would be pornography and masturbation. These are patterns often chosen in adolescence which often are carried well into adulthood.

In the next chapters we'll see that the way out is through Repentance (ownership of the sin that is ours) and Restitution (new patterns which will bring restoration) regardless of whether the roots are volitional or non-volitional. Obviously the focus of repentance will be different in each of the two roots as will the necessary restitution. But as for the subject of this chapter, Revelation, we need to expose the roots so that the believer will be able to understand and come before the Lord and fight against deeply imbedded sin patterns.

Let me use myself as an example: If a person in the church looked at me in the first month after I was saved they would have seen that I was a hermit. I actually shrunk back into corners in the church and tried to avoid new people. Fortunately for me, the person who led me to the Lord would not let me escape.

On which branch of the sin tree was this pattern? The social branch. That much was obvious. What wasn't obvious was that I hated people; I was embittered towards them. A brief look at the elements making up this branch in Galatians 5:20 would have shown me guilty and practiced in all of those things enumerated.

Why was I embittered? The answer--and it took me three years before I fully understood the roots--led all the way back to childhood. Often sins lead back to childhood experiences when our view of the world is just forming. I was raised in a family of six children. I sought praise, wanted my parents to be proud of me, and never got it (from my point of view). Consequently I saw the people around me as competition, trying to do better than me, and so I, in turn, had to do better than them, by any means necessary. Bitterness gave me energy, and I channeled that energy into over achieving. And I did it. I was very successful in whatever I did. I beat everybody, so it was a no wonder I had no friends.

But when I got saved, I was embarking on a journey into a new kingdom, where there were new rules. And I had to begin to crucify much of my old world view including this one. Or else I may have become very "successful" in the church--but very destructive as well.

So with fortress sin, you often have to trace the fruit back to the root, in terms of showing where the flesh is highly developed. This done, you can begin to teach them how to stand against the flesh, in prayer and looking to God. Repentance comes ultimately through looking to God.

2 Corinthians 3:18: "Beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, we're transformed into that same image, from glory to glory."

Ultimately I need to have my eyes fixed back on God, praying that God will show me not just what to do but why to do it, and what to do when I get tested.

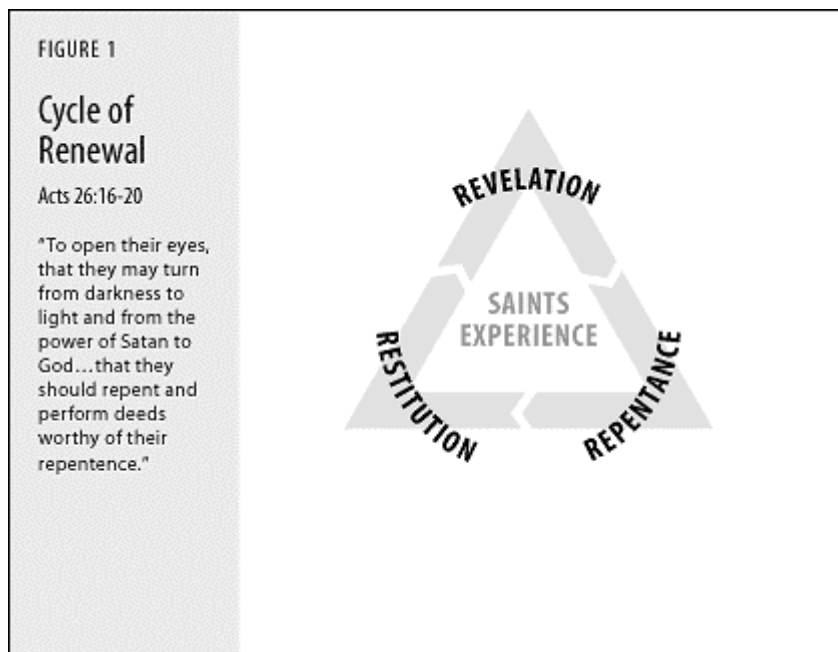
For me to walk in the Spirit, my whole world view had to change. I had to learn how to give myself to others, and how to react in Godly ways when I did get hurt. I had to look to God for this, and doing so meant realizing that I did not know God very well. I didn't understand God's plan for my life very well; I needed to get to know God better so he could teach me. God said, "I have a different way for you to deal with this; incidentally, it's going to hurt you a great deal. But that's part of my plan, too." With help from a mature believer, I had to dig down into my soul, to the root of my bitterness and sin, before I could be changed and become the man that God wanted me to be.

That's what we have to do: go to the root to fix the fruit if you're going to transform the life. God is still, 25 years later, working in areas of my life, working with fortress sin. When will I be through with this? When my body dies, then I'll be finished. God will take me to himself, and clean up the rest. But in this world, He wants me to go through this process of Repentance, Revelation, and Restitution, so that I can be renewed according to the Spirit of the Mind. This is the kind of thing we have to be doing, helping other people to see and do as well.

Chapter 7

REVELATION/REPENTANCE

This chapter we will expand on what we have learned about Revelation, and then move onto Repentance.



The Cycle of Renewal begins with Regeneration. Without Regeneration we cannot hope for renewal. A person may turn over a new leaf, but it will likely return his old ways, for, as the Word says "Can a leopard change its spots or an Ethiopian his skin? So can you who do evil, do good." Our only hope for transformation is Regeneration which proceeds through the cycle of renewal. This needs to be part of our the gospel which we preach. The old man is put off in Christ, and we become new! And what is the only way to regeneration? Throwing ourselves on God's mercy, surrendering to Him.

Once you do this, He does come in, those old coping mechanisms and sinful patterns are going to be exposed (revelation) have to go (repentance and restitution), through the power of the Holy Spirit. As we go through the cycle of Revelation, Repentance, Restitution, more Revelation due to the Restitution, ultimately Renewal is the result.

How do you know when Renewal has occurred? Renewal has occurred when someone does something that would have caused one reaction before, and now reflexively the person reacts in a new way. For example: I was working with a man who had a real problem with swearing, and I was trying to bring him to the point where he could let go of the pent-up anger inside him that was causing this problem. We had isolated several ways he dealt wrongly with conflict and problems in his life. He began practicing these.

He came to me one day, all excited, and he said, "I can't believe what happened last night. I was working with some real heavy weights out in my garage, and I dropped one of them on my foot,

and I said 'Ouch!'" He recognized that he had been renewed! Jesus said "out of the fullness of the heart, the mouth speaks." The cleansed heart had yielded good fruit.

When renewal happens the inner man has brought about fundamental change in the outer life. When you bless the ones who curse you, when you do good deeds to those who persecute you and you do it reflexively (without thinking and planning), now you know God has changed your entire being at the deepest level. Sometimes it takes a long time--years, even most of a lifetime--but God expects us to be faithful at whatever level you are at (Ph. 3:16). And as long as we stay on the road, as long as we keep seeking after Him, as long as we do not bow to the Devil's lies (he loves to try and convince us that we will never change), we'll get there! We will experience progressive renewal as we follow the cycle of renewal.

In the last chapter we discussed Revelation in the areas of fortress sin, looking at the diagram of the automobile and looking at who we are in Christ. This chapter we're going to look at a different vehicle for revelation; the revelation that Christ brings to us through suffering.

Suffering is a key ingredient in Sanctification. Romans 5:3-5 says, "We exalt in our sufferings." Why? "Knowing this: that sufferings lead to perseverance; perseverance, proven character; proven character, hope."

Does suffering automatically bring proven character? No. What suffering does do is bring out the way in which we reflexively respond to situations. When we suffer, we tend to respond to our immediate desires. These are usually in keeping with the old man. When you're suffering you want to survive. Survival instincts are deeply rooted; we usually learn them in home situations when we are very young. The problem is, God calls us to lose our lives, for His sake. This includes our survival responses which violate the law of love.

Through suffering, these opportunities give us the ability to see ourselves as we really are. John 3:20--"This is the judgment; that light has come into the world and man loved darkness rather than light." Human nature tends to not be very thankful for illumination. It's like a doctor telling you that you have cancer. You are liable not to thank him immediately for the news. As you work with people, initially they may be receptive. But as you turn on the lights they may pull away, becoming resentful, resistant, etc. You can assume that the initial response to illumination is not going to be a joyful one. But Proverbs 28:13 says, "He who covers a transgression will not prosper. But he who confesses and forsakes sin shall find mercy."

I would say one of the biggest obstacles today to bringing people to healing is the issue of self-esteem. Our culture right now says a man's greatest problem is with his self-esteem. God does not say that. God says man does not have a problem with his self-esteem. He says we should love our neighbor as ourselves. The problem is that we love ourselves too much. God's word says we have too low a view of Him and too high a view of ourselves.

If our goal in helping people is making them feel good about themselves, then we should not bother turning on the light of His Word. But if the goal is to illuminate the man walking in darkness because only then will he be able to experience all that Christ has for him, then we can boldly turn on the lights! And then how is he going to feel about himself? If he is walking in

sin, likely rotten! That's the appropriate response to light, if you're wallowing in darkness. But if you stay in darkness, you will never experience healing.

When the light goes on the disciple will often initially be concerned only about himself and how the darkness may look. This response can be especially bad in someone who has been a Christian for a long time and learned how to dress up the flesh rather than crucify it.

This retreat from the light (often using smoke and mirrors and blaming the bearer of the light) then gives way to feelings of impurity and even despair. They feel rotten about themselves because they ARE rotten! The light brings clarity, and when we walk clearly in the light we see our sin. Of course the solution is not an injection of self esteem. The solution to these feelings is a Savior, and once again throwing ourselves at his feet, confessing our sin and being cleansed from all unrighteousness (I John 1:9).

When does a person begin to feel better? It begins the moment he repents (Cf. Acts 3:19). But it doesn't reach fulfillment until he develops a practice of righteousness resting in what Christ has done on the cross. Those involved in the healing process need to have faith that people CAN change! They need to know God's diagnosis and prescription for sin. "Were you a thief? 'Steal no more, and instead labor with your hands, and give to those who have need!'" (Ephesians 4:28). When is a thief going to feel better about himself? When he's generous and gives away his money! Now the person has become new! It may take years to get him there, but he'll get there!



We need to suffering as a key provision from God which can expose flaws in our character. Think of yourself as a dam. What's behind a dam? A reservoir. The reservoir represents your life's experiences. Normally your life is going along fine; the dam is admired by many. But then the storms come; suffering happens. The waves of the reservoir get whipped up, and water crashes against the dam! The trials cause cracks to begin to form in the dam. The dam begins to show weaknesses.

Now the question is, where is the problem? There are, of course two answers to this: the problem is in the dam or the problem is in the storm. Too many of us, in our affluent, avoid pain at any price culture, blame the storm rather than the dam. When undergoing the storms of life

we blame the people around us! We blame the circumstances! We see ourselves as victims. If only the storms did not come, then the dam would be fine. But God never promises that storms won't come. He merely promises that when they do, the life not build upon his world will fall (Mt. 7:24-27).

"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who build his house upon the rock. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. And everyone who hears these words on Mime, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon that sand. And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."

Most of us will not admit that the problem is in the dam. Fewer still take responsibility for our actions which often both contribute to the storms onset as well as its severity. As a result we do not "exalt in our sufferings". Instead we look for relieve from the storm rather than release from destructive and character weakening patterns in our life. Rather than seeing life's storms as God's providential means for illuminating flaws in our character and evaluating the storm and our responses, instead we want out of the storm. If escape doesn't come we often revert to blaming God for not being loving enough (or powerful enough, etc) to deliver us from the storms of life.

I have counseled for over twenty five years, and never once, have I ever heard anyone say at the outset, "The problem is me. Please help me look at my life and make a thorough cleansing and transformation." Never! (Well sometimes a wife will start out by saying that her mistake was in marrying the guy.)

There are all sorts of excuses for sin a failure. But they are blinded to the fact that the problem is not the storm; it's in the dam! They are looking for relief from the storm, rather than to rebuild the dam. But if the storm does go away and they get relief, they ignore the fact that another storm is coming. They throw a little whitewash over the dam, and now everything looks pretty again. But the same thing is going to happen the next time the storm comes along. Except for one difference: the cracks are still there and will only get bigger. A chain reaction is going to occur, in which the whole person will eventually collapse. As Ezekiel says to the house of Israel regarding the false healers of his day:

"They have misled My people by saying, 'Peace!' when there is not peace. And when anyone builds a wall, behold, they plaster it over with whitewash; so tell those who plaster it over with whitewash that it will fall. A flooding rain will come and you, O hailstones, will fall; and a violent wind will break out..." Ezekiel 13:10ff

Often the person, under extreme and sustained storms will undergo what a nervous breakdown. A breakdown is simply the result of an inability to cope with the storms of life. The dam collapses and along with it the persons ability to cope with life. A nervous breakdown is not something Christian healers should be overwhelmed with! For the Christian it's a great opportunity! The old coping mechanisms didn't work; it's time to build a new dam, only this

time stronger, built on the love of Jesus and his word. (Mt. 7:24f)

For the most part, secular psychiatrists and psychologists have little idea how to build a stronger, better dam. They simply erect the old one over again, installing some hopefully better coping mechanisms than before. Certainly building self esteem on foundations of sand will not work for life's storms. When that person runs into the same problems, he'll have another nervous breakdown!

So every time we face storms in our lives, we need to see it as an opportunity for revelation. We need to see the cracks in the dam, and say to ourselves, "At last! Revelation! Something's wrong! Lets look at the dam in this storm as God's purposeful provision to bring revelation and ultimately transformation in my life!

Perhaps this is best illustrated with Job. Was Job a sinful man (Job 1:1)? No; he was a righteous man! And yet he found himself in storms which God allowed. As he went through his various trials and storms, and what did the storms finally reveal? Were there any cracks in the dam? Of course! Though righteous, he was not perfect. Only Jesus was the perfect man. What did the storms reveal?

Clearly Job had some wrong views of God. His understanding of who God was and how he worked were pretty severely off the mark! But, before the storms came, the dam was perfect. Job was righteous! His understanding of God and His workings were able to keep up with his life experiences. The evil one had a plan for the storms he would bring--to show Job as a self-centered servant who would curse God when he was no longer benefitted by his walk with God. But God had a different plan for the storms in Job's life: to reveal flaws in Job: flaws in his view of God; flaws in his view of himself. But unlike many of us, Job stood up to the test; he never cursed God. Although the storms tested him to his limits, Job passed the test; he never cursed God. He remained faithful. But the storms did reveal a lot of faulty theology in Job; theology that ultimately needed to be changed in order to bring Job into harmony, not with the God of his mind, but the true God of the universe.

In the end Job was given the blessing of communion with God. And in that communion he came to a new realization of who God was and who he was; and he fell down and repented of many of the things he had wrongly attributed to God (42:1-6). The storms as painful as they were, had, in God's economy, resulted to Job's own benefit; a deeper understanding and communion with God.

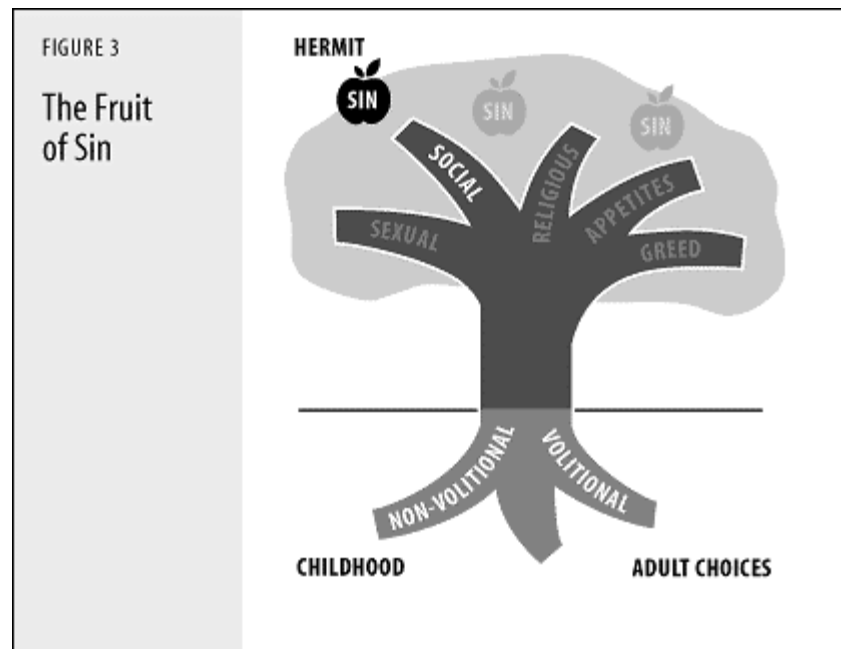
We can see other examples where God uses circumstances which the enemy tries to use to destroy us to further His plan (Cf. Genesis 50:20, Acts 2:22-24). The same holds true today when trials come upon the saints; God tests us so we may see the cracks in ourselves. His tests are for our benefit (I Peter 1:6-9; James 1:2-4,12-16).

The point of Job's story is that God, in His infinite mercy, allows us to be tested, so that these flaws may be seen and dealt with; so that we may repent and receive the greater blessing of deeper communion with God. Job did not curse God; in that manner he passed the test. But in the process other flaws were exposed. So as the storms of life break against us, we need to be

asking God, "What is it I need to learn?" God does not just sit in Heaven and enjoy watching His children suffer. He has a purpose. There is a goal in our suffering. Suffering leads to perseverance, perseverance to proven character, and proven character to hope, but only when we deal with suffering in the appropriate way. (Romans 5:3-5). The way to deeper communion with God is along the road of suffering.

If our response to suffering is hiding away in the hold of our boat, waiting for the storm to pass, then we may make it through the storm, but it's unlikely we will find deeper communion with our Lord. If we search for relief from the storm rather than examine the boat for leaks; we may find relief, but there's another storm coming. And that one will likely find a more leaky vessel, unless we grow through the storms. This fallen world is simply one storm after another. "Through much tribulation we shall inherit the kingdom of God" (Acts 14:22). "Those who desire to live godly will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12).

God is not pleased with those who hide in their hold and want to learn nothing. He has promised that "all things work together for good, for those who love God and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28). And much of the good in suffering comes through growth. Growing in God's world means looking at the dam, not running from the storm. We need to honestly face ourselves as we are. We need to evaluate what the storm is revealing in us. More often than not, those providential storms will reveal things in us which go to the core of our being. It's at that level that we need to be evaluating ourselves. Job had no sins on the Actions level; it was in his Attitudes and Affections that needed repentance and transformation. When God didn't work according to Job's preconceived ideas Job became confused got angry at Him. In the end, he realized he was wrong about many of those preconceptions. This time of tribulation and trial showed Job's faulty attitudes and affections.



An Example

It is good to look at the fruit that comes out of the storm, and try to trace it to the roots. Using my own experience as an example; I'll trace my path from the time I came to Christ to what was my first break though in the journey of being transformed from one stage of glory to another.

When I came to Christ I was isolated, a hermit. If we look at the sin tree diagram, My sin on the sin tree was on the social branch. The fruit of

my sin was my being a hermit.

What's the solution, the "put on" that needs to replace being a hermit? Fellowship! But this solution focuses on my sin at the Action level. It is OK to start with actions as long as we don't end there. God is interested in far more than behavior, he wants our love! (Remember the parable of the righteous older brother--or the prodigal son, depending on which son we are focusing on. Remember, the parable was told to the Pharisees as a rebuke to their being upset that Jesus was spending so much time with sinners. God would rather see a dirty face than a clean back!).

A brother confronted me with the fact that I needed to be in fellowship. I hated the idea of going to meetings of the assembly, but it was something I knew I had to do (Hebrews 10:23ff). So I began my journey out of the hermitage and tried to learn some rudimentary social skills--and believe me, for a hermit scientist used to working with test tubes and not people, they were pretty rudimentary. I made progress in this for a number of months. My behavior was improving.

But about that time I encountered a problem at work; my boss screamed at me in front of others and embarrassed me. I could have killed him; I was furious! I would normally have gone home and spent the night tossing and turning, figuring how to get even with him. I would have fantasized about how I would kill him. But that night after work I went out to my car and faced reality. God said "Be angry and sin not, and do not let the sun set on your anger" (Ephesians 4:26). I sat there before my God with His word clearly before my mind and realized I had a choice--I could forgive him (Eph. 4:32), or I could allow the evil one a place and yield the place Christ had in my life (27,30).

I recognized that I did not have the capacity to forgive my boss, so I simply prayed, "God, I know I can't continue to nurse this anger at this man and still follow you. But I can't forgive him either. So you forgive him, and somehow make my heart right." (I remember the prayer clearly, and though I would say it a little differently now, God looks on the heart, and the Holy Spirit fixed the prayer as it rose.) The next morning, I woke up after a quiet night's sleep (a miracle for me who was normally an insomniac). I went to the office where I was an aide to my boss. I walked into his office and was shocked! There was no fire in my eyes, no malice waiting to seek revenge--just peace! I knew God had answered by prayer and cleansed my heart! (Eph. 4: 31).

Later that week another person really set me off, and I went home wanting to bash his head through a wall. After a half-hour I realized this probably wasn't very godly either, and I needed to confess this, too. Then I realized that there was a problem--a pattern was being revealed--a pattern of bitterness. (Obvious, you say, but not to me--suffering was necessary.)

As I explained this to the older man who I met with weekly for prayer and discipleship he explored the breadth and depth of the problem. We found that it was deep rooted and extensive. As long as I could remember I had been a bitter person. I had done a lot of damage with my bitterness over the years. With this man's help, I began to evaluate the damage I had done, repent of it and make restitution to those I had injured.

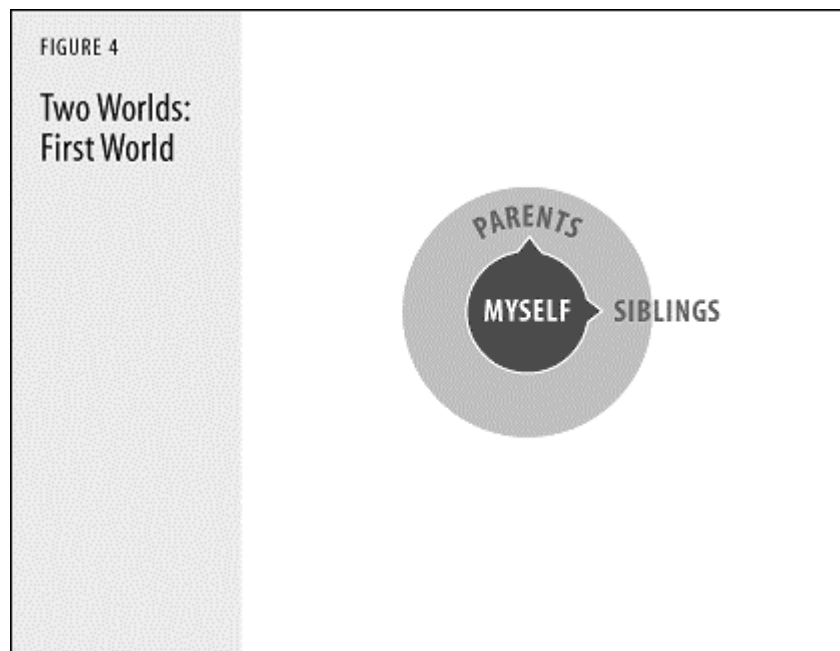
As I did this, God's spirit progressively gave me a new freedom to love and experience true koinonia with the brethren. What had been a dutiful behavior (going to church) had now become transformed to something new as my attitudes and affections for others were transformed by

Christ's love flowing through me (I John 4:19). The fruit of isolation was traced to the root of bitterness. Once the axe was laid to the root, the fruit began to die and be replaced by the new fruit of the Spirit!

A further step came some three years later. I decided that God wanted me in the mission field, so I approached one of the pastors and told him that I felt called to China. This pastor prayed for several months and conferred with the other elders. He finally returned and said, "You can't go to China." I was furious, and I slept on that anger for several weeks. That resentment began to dig down. What happened was, I had resolved my hermitage after I came to Christ, but God now wanted to work with it at a deeper level, to bring greater freedom. The original freedom had lasted a couple of years, but now God was revealing other attitudes and affections that were much deeper. He wanted me to get to a new level of glory!

I had another pattern now, but with a common root; I had a problem with authority. I may have never spotted this, but luckily I had the same loving brother who was willing to turn on the lights when I was wallowing in darkness. I had gotten annoyed at my pastor; I had gotten annoyed at my bosses. This brother suggested that the problem may be much deeper; perhaps my problem was with God. This threw me into turmoil. That was a rude awakening. This brother suggested that this problem ran all the way back to my relationship with my father. So we began working through what had happened between my father and me.

I had some real problems with my dad, and I didn't particularly like this brother saying so. We had known each other for a few years, but I had never discussed my dad. So we began working toward freedom from roots which ran back to my childhood.

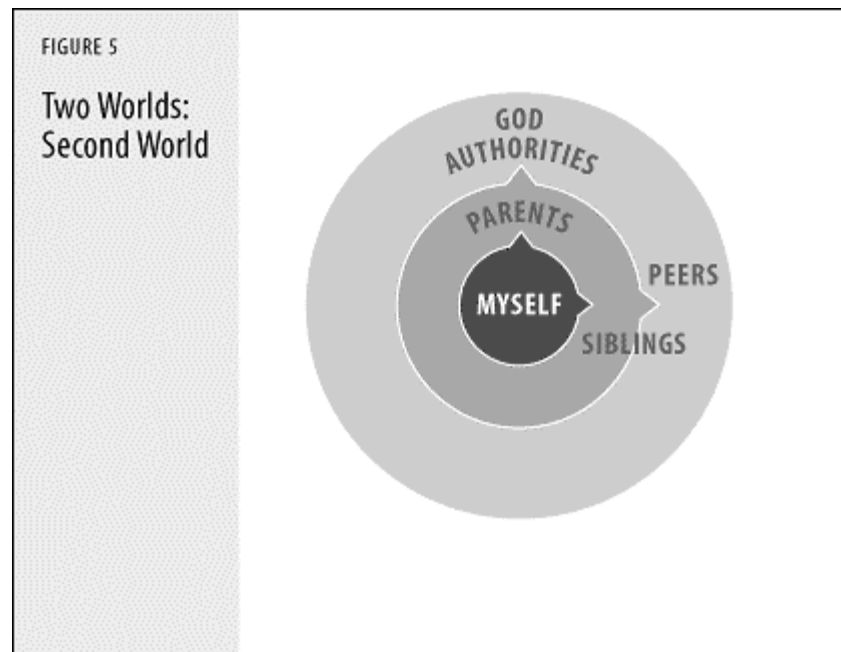


My older brother in the Lord pointed out that our view of the world is shaped within the first few years of our lives, in our first world, our family. For a little child who is less than five years old, he is the center of his world. Make no mistake! He learns to relate to the people in his world.

One group of people he has to relate to is his parents. These are the ones in authority. Another group he must relate to is his peers; his siblings. I was the second son in a family of six children. What does a child who is the center of his world want from his parents? Attention! They're the most important people in his world--why can't my parents see how important I am?

My coping mechanism, my way to get my parents to notice me was through achievement. So I became the athlete, I became the scholar. Now there was another problem; one of my siblings was an older brother. I had to be better than what he was in order to get the attention of my

parents. And I was better. I was like Jacob; a supplanter. I had other brothers and sisters as well; in fact, I had one retarded brother, as well as one sister (the only daughter in the family). There was no way I was going to get the attention I felt I deserved. I was a pretty selfish child.



Siblings, then, for me became rivals. I developed an intense competition with them; maybe it was inherent flesh, rather than developed; I don't know. But that was the way I dealt

with my siblings.

But then I move out into the world. Who are authority figures in the world? Bosses; professors; coaches; teachers; pastors. These are the ones I relate to. How do I get their attention? By achieving. Driven by bitterness; no-one thinks I'm good enough, no one ever notices me; I'll show them! Very destructive patterns. I learned how to harness this anger and channel it into energy, in such a way where I was an over-achiever. I had to beat my peers; they were there to be conquered. Consequently, what was their attitude towards me? They didn't have very much to do with me. The net result: I was a hermit!

Of course, I didn't understand all this during my adolescence and early adulthood, or my early walk with God. I knew that I was supposed to love my neighbor, and so I worked hard at it. I progressed in the way that God wanted me to.

But finally I got to the point where God had to say, "It's time to move to a deeper level now. We need to achieve healing, and in order to do so I have to bring several things into your life all around the same time. It will be painful, but I do it because I love you. You need to understand that you're not as godly as you think. Your godliness is put on to impress your pastor. You want to go to the mission field because that's where the really committed Christians go. I'm not

pleased with that kind of motivation. I'm pleased with you because you are my child, and I love you. Not because you've done anything, but simply because I have chosen to bestow my love on you." I needed to learn a lot about God, and I needed to learn a lot about myself; this kind of revelation was necessary--an painful.

THE PLACE OF REPENTANCE

But what's the solution? How do I break this cycle of destruction? Repentance. After Revelation comes Repentance. You are only required to repent of what's been revealed to you. When I first started, nothing of this had been revealed to me. The Holy Spirit, in His infinite wisdom, reveals these things to us slowly, over time as we are ready. If we learned this all at once it would crush us! I had reached the first stage of glory, but I was starting to get comfortable. God had to say, "Time to move up to the next step." Stage Two took three years for me to work through; more Revelation, Repentance, Restitution. I was using anger to push me, and I had to learn how to be motivated by love. That was difficult and frightening for me to learn. For me James 1:19,20 had to be learned at a deep level.

But God calls each of us to advance from glory to glory. The breaking out of the previous stage of glory begins with repentance, and repentance is much like death. He calls us onward and upward (Philippians 3:8-14). Whenever God calls us to repent, it means letting go of who we were and what we have achieved and saying, "I will let it all go be whoever you want me to be, Lord." That's death! Giving up aspirations and turning ourselves over to God is death! Repentance is very much like death; very hard, very painful. Often we try to escape and settle for something less than the fullness that God has for us. Repentance is fearful, for it asks us to walk where we have not traveled before. Regardless of how many years a person has been in Christ there are new stages to climb, new heights to experience. And regardless of how long we have been in Christ, each new ascent is fearful though exhilarating. Repentance is where our true faith in God will grow.

What is Repentance? Any time you hear someone justify or excuse or shift blame, that is short-circuiting Repentance. Whenever someone says, "That's the way I am, but..." or "You don't understand the kind of life I've had..." that person is not repenting. And over time, that person is not going to advance beyond his current stage of glory. Acknowledging sin is not the same as repenting of it.

At the point in my life where I was at, some three years after I was saved, I had to come to a hard decision that I knew was going to be painful. I had a choice. I could change Christianity to simply actions, to what I did, and forget about motives. But in that case I would have to ignore I Cor. 3:12-15, 4:5). Or I could acknowledge before God that my motives were wretched, to fall on my knees before God and admit that I needed to be transformed--in my actions, attitudes and affections.

I had to make a choice. If I had chosen at that point to say, "I'm going to redefine Christianity," I believe God would have withdrawn His blessing of fellowship from my life. I could have gone through the motions much like David did after sinning with Bathsheba; attending the temple, doing the sacrifices. I could have gone as a missionary to China. But it would have been less

than the abundant life He had planned for me. But instead I made the choice that would determine my future; I chose God above myself, His goals above my own.

Unfortunately, I've seen too many Christians who have been saved ten, fifteen, eighteen years still stuck on the first stage or maybe second stage of glory. They've redefined Christianity simply to Actions, a bunch of duties. They haven't been transformed. They have compromised a life of death and obedience for one of convenience and going through the motions. The Devil knows this. He'll keep after them, attacking and tearing apart their foundation, until finally the dam bursts.

I know of too many Christians who were fruitful at some level (not to mention the ones who never bear fruit), only to have their lives collapse because of flaws from which they hid their eyes. How many of those failed leaders had opportunity at an earlier stage to face themselves, and their motives, but they would not. The Bible is clear "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked. WHAT A MAN SOWS HE REAPS. He who sows to the flesh will from the flesh reap destruction..." (Galatians 5:7,8).

How many have simply looked at their actions and ignored their motives to their own undoing. We carry within ourselves the seeds of our own destruction. It is our flesh, and we ignore it at terrible risk and destruction! We will not be without our flesh until we go to be with Him (Romans 8:23). No one is mature enough to ignore their flesh. And our flesh will even subvert our good deeds for God (I Corinthians 3:2,3,10-13; 4:5. I urge you to read the whole passage in this light, though I do not have the time to go into this at length).

So Repentance is what is necessary to begin the transforming process. Revelation brings no transformation. Revelation simply exposes what needs to be transformed!

The greatest chapter on Repentance in the Bible is in Psalm 51. David was a man after God's own heart, and yet he fell into sin with Bathsheba. He tried to cover it up, but ultimately could not.

In this psalm, you will find no excuses for his sin. No justification, no shifting of the blame, no begging for mercy according to human standards, but justice on God's terms. David takes full responsibility for what he has done. And this is one of the keys of repentance. He agrees completely with God and His judgment. He pronounces himself guilty (Ps. 51:1-4).

A thorough repentance will include an evaluation of motives as well as actions. The disciple needs to understand that there are reasons why he sins. We were brought up in ways where we chose these sinful ways, and they worked for us. We need to realize that we need to break these old patterns by repenting (a change of mind) of the suppositions which led to the actions. The man who says, "I repent of those ways and the motives behind them; the actions were wrong, and the motives as well" is the one who will experience Renewal.

Repentance must first be directed toward God. "Against Thee and Thee only have I sinned." (Ps. 51:4) Repentance is not directed toward ones' self--it is not primarily a person feeling sorry for himself. It is directed towards God. We stand before Him. In order to repent, we must be God-

centered. A self-centered man looks to himself, directs his repentance toward feelings of remorse for himself. God-centered people climb up to where God is and make judgements based on how God sees us! Repentance is directed towards God. Remorse is very different from repentance (2 Cor. 7:10). Witness the difference between the remorse (sorrow) of Judas verses the sorrow which leads to repentance of Peter around the events of the cross.

The general sign of true Repentance is a change in Attitudes. There is usually a new humility, a desire for relationships to be restored, not holding onto "rights." (Ps. 51:10-12). This will lead naturally to Restitution--a desire to make restoration for damages done (Ps. 51:13-19). Generally, if Restitution does not follow repentance, the Repentance was not authentic. It may have simply been an act of sorrow.

If a person is to repent they need to accept full ownership for their sin. Any justification, any excuse, short-circuits repentance. Repentance involves choosing. Repentance calls on a person to make a decision. It treats the person as an agent who can choose, whose choosing reflects his soul, and ultimately affects his eternal position. Repentance is a choice to rely on God's provision and no longer on himself (Cf. 2 Samuel 12:7-8).

Oftentimes I hear the adage, "God loves the sinner but hates the sin." I am not sure that's true; God condemns sinners to Hell, not sins. God hates sinners; they are at war with Him. Once sinners come to a place of Repentance and throw themselves in His mercy, God receives them as Children in His kingdom. God loves His children, but not all are His children (John 10:26f).

We need to be very careful who we encourage as to whether or not they are children of God. There are those who have turned to darkness; are allies with God's enemy, and engaged in the war against the establishment of His Kingdom. They are not God's children, but the devil's (John 8:42-47). But those who remain in the fight, those who remain in the light, are His children. We choose, and we will pay for our choices. For the Christian, even he will pay. Those who sow to the flesh will reap to the destruction in this age (though they will be saved by fire) those who sow to the spirit will reap eternal life along with great rewards (Cf. I Cor. 3:14f).

We need to realize that the cycle of destruction will continue even after we are saved until we find the way out, and exercise our agency in accordance with God's provision. We're not going to be renewed in five easy steps. It took me twenty-four years to get to the end of myself and surrender to the Lord. It took me four years to get up to a place where I could serve God with some degree of purity of heart (I fear my first years of service will be found mostly wood, hay and stubble). But God is gracious; four years to lay a new foundation and break up twenty-four years of self centeredness. That's not bad!

An important aspect of Christian community is encouragement (Hebrews 3:13f, 10:24f, 12:11ff). Healing will not be quick, but if one has truly repented, it will progressively occur. But it is up to him. He is responsible for beginning a sin habit, he's responsible for continuing a sin habit, and he is responsible for ending a sin habit. And he is also responsible for rejecting the help and provision that God offers. God will not force obedience. He wants it chosen freely. Love requires it. And God want obedience motivated by love (John 14:15).

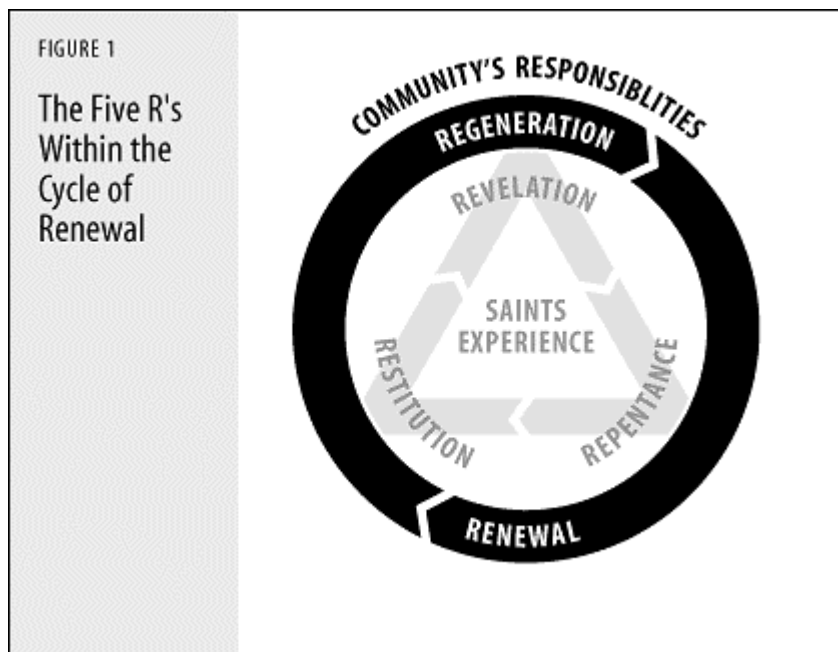
An illustration might be helpful here. If a person jumped off of the Empire State Building he is responsible for jumping, but he finally says, "I repent!" He can't stop his fall, since he is trapped in the laws of Gravity. But suppose God provides a brother with a net partway down the descent. That brother catches him in the net. After a while he realizes that this is harder than he thought, and jumps back out of the net again. As he does so, he's more accountable now than before, especially when we explain: "I threw out the net to you as God's provision. You rejected it, and the a vital relationship with God. You cannot have God on your terms." Good counseling makes the person doubly accountable.

We should never ever work with people in a way which allows them to reject God's provision still say, "That was a good experience." If they reject God, they ought to in the process get a little taste of what the fire they will likely encounter on judgment day (Hebrews 10:26-31).

Chapter 7 RESTITUTION

Introduction

Let's review the five R's in the transformation process; Regeneration, Revelation, Repentance, Restitution, Renewal. We have already looked in detail at the first three. Now we now come to the third; Restitution.



Paul outlines the three central R's that we have called the cycle of renewal in Acts 26:18:

"I was sent to open their eyes (REVELATION) so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God (REPENTANCE), in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance amongst those saints who have been sanctified by Me."

In 26:20, Paul concludes with:

"I told them they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance." (RESTITUTION)

Evangelism for Paul was not merely presenting Jesus, or asking his listener to say a prayer. It was nothing less than pointing out that redemption has as its plan the total reclamation of individuals and their inclusion into a New Kingdom. "Deeds appropriate to repentance" were part and parcel of the message, not an add on for a few spiritual giants. These deeds we will call Restitution.

The word "Restitution" appears several times in Exodus 22. It has the idea of restoring what was taken with peace and reconciliation as a result. This is the *reactive* use of the word: looking back

to damage done and undoing it as much as possible.

But we are also using the word in this chapter in a *proactive* sense. That is, taking steps in changing behavior in such a way that such acts violating the law of love will not occur in the future. When we use the word in this sense, it is more related to "training in righteousness" as mentioned in 2 Timothy 3:16.

Oftentimes, steps of Restitution proactively will lead to more Revelation, as we move to deeper levels of Illumination. As we go through the cycle we may start repenting of behaviors, but end up repenting at the motivational and attitudinal level. This is appropriate since Jesus tells us that our "righteousness much exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees" (Mt.5:20). Whereas the Pharisee's "righteousness" was only a matter of outward deeds, the righteousness of God's children should spring from a heart of love (Cf. John 14:15). Thus the cycle may need to repeat itself many times, until we the deepest levels and motives of our being are revealed, where true healing can take place.

When healing has been thorough the result is Renewal. Where renewal has taken place, a person reflexively acts in righteous ways even, or perhaps especially, when suffering unjustly (I Peter 2:18-23). Renewal is recognized when a transformation is so thorough that initial *action* causes a different *reaction*. We can think of it in terms of stimulus-response; a particular stimulus causes a certain response. When an old stimulus brings a different response, true transformation has occurred. The man who said "Ouch" when a weight dropped on his foot, where formerly he would have sworn a blue streak, has been renewed. Those who *act* Godly are not necessarily renewed (mere behavior); those who *react* Godly are.

Barriers In The Cycle

In this chapter we are going to look at Restitution and how it brings about Renewal. But Restitution can also bring us face-to-face with new understandings of the depth of our brokenness. As we go through completing the cycle, we will often encounter barriers to further growth. We need to face these barriers as they come to light (more **Revelation**) and engage in new levels of **Repentance**. Each time we face a barrier we need to see it as a road mark to still more revelation.

But where do these barriers come from?

Ultimately, Salvation is a matter of turning from this world to God, a change of loyalties. Before we are saved, who is the authority of our lives? We are. Before we're saved, the "I" is in the control; it is central. We can call this Pride. Pride is what blocks us from doing God's will. Pride is the root from which the particulars of our flesh find its expression. Pride can manifest itself in a number of different ways; Eve took the fruit because the serpent deceived her into thinking that she would become like God, whereas Adam apparently took it out of outright rebellion. Salvation challenges us to change loyalties, to turn from being Self-centered to being God-centered. This, of course, addresses motives.

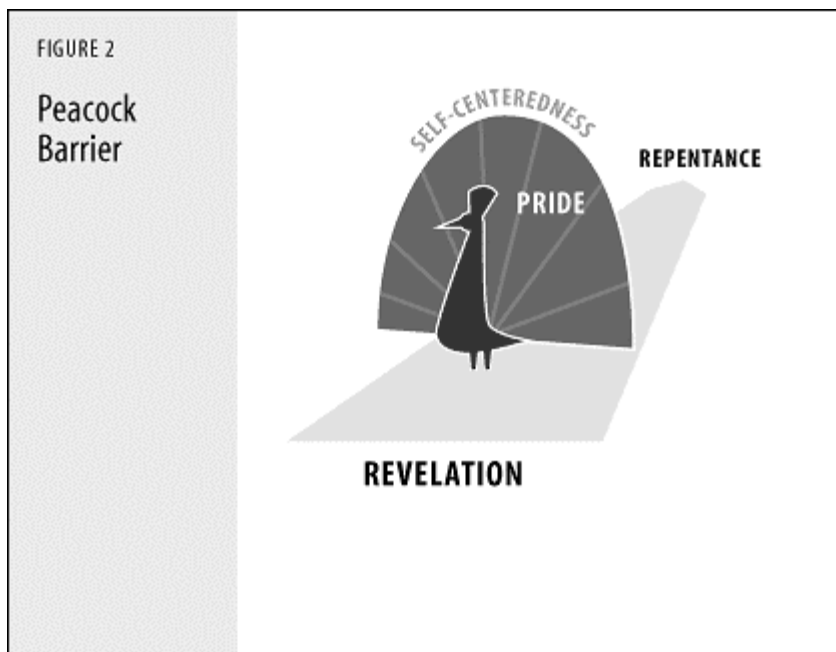
Pride manifests itself in many ways, but one subtle way is *Self-Centeredness*. So many Christians are self-centered and don't even know it. For instance, they can only see the world

through their own eyes. Let's take a husband and wife relationship. The wife comes to him and says that the children need this or that. The husband says, "I don't see that"; as though since he doesn't see it doesn't exist!

Self-centeredness is exactly that way; if it's out of our vision, it doesn't exist. I have worked with many missionaries who have this as a major barrier to their being effective. Their point-of-view is the only one, and because they can't understand anything else, they disregard it. Yet one of the essential abilities in crossing cultures is seeing the world from other's perspective. Often what appears to us to be true is not so. Perception is not the same as reality.

If we are going to grow in Christ it will be necessary to see that our point-of-view isn't the only one, and just because we can't see another's viewpoint doesn't make it invalid. God often puts others in our life to give us a glimpse of his incredibly complex creation. After all, God's point of view is really the only reality that matters. Often he places others in our lives who have a perception of reality that is more closely aligned to His. Self-centeredness prevents us from seeing others point of view and therefore often, God's perspective on things.

Pride also manifests itself in another way: *Self-consciousness*. This is usually seen as a problem of low self-esteem: "poor me; I'm so worthless. I'm not any good." Who's the center of that universe? "I"! They are saying negative things about themselves, but they're still the center of their world! It is instructive to listen to how many times they use the word "I." Sometimes what seems to be low self-esteem is just inverted pride.



The above represent the two extreme ways Pride usually manifests itself. We could call these two ways **Peacock Pride** and **Turtle Pride**. Peacocks strut around all puffed up with themselves. It is easy to see that they are the center of their world. But self-effacing, hiding turtles are just as much allowing pride to control them. Peacocks are easy to work with; they're obvious, and usually don't camouflage sin. Turtles are much harder. Very few people consider that a Turtle is being self-

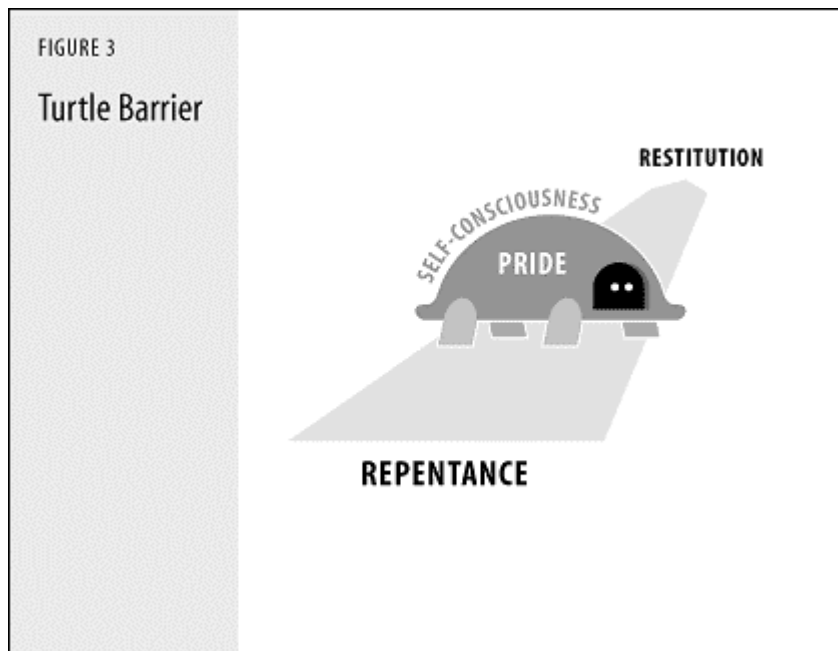
centered and proud. Most Turtles are motivated by fear. The Bible says, "Perfect love casts out fear." Love is not concerned with the self; it is concerned about other people. Fear is concerned with me; self-preservation.

So how do we deal with these Peacocks and Turtles? If we think about the cycle of renewal,

where is a Peacock going to manifest itself? The Peacock usually raised the barrier between Revelation and Repentance. In extreme cases it may be between Regeneration and Revelation.

How do peacocks react to light? Often they refuse to see the problem, so it doesn't exist, since they are the measure of truth (Cf. 2 Cor. 10:12f). When the light comes they explain it away. Or they may use mirrors and complain that the person bringing the light is not doing so in a helpful enough way. They will not admit when they are wrong. They may have all kinds of excuses as to why their reactions were justified. As a matter of fact, the extreme Peacocks will do everything but repent. They've learned how to dance masterfully around having to acknowledge that they were wrong.

If you are working to try to get a Peacock to repent, and he refuses to, you need to focus on the attitude of Repentance, the attitude of arrogance. Many times you need to focus on attitudes instead of issues with peacocks. The issues are mostly helpful in illuminating prideful attitudes. But the issues will not bring deep healing. It will be a momentary success followed by more failure as the peacock returns to form.



The Turtle is a different story. When the light shines on a Turtle, he is often remorseful and will outwardly repent, but often not in his or her heart. How can you tell when a person is repentant in his heart? If a person is repentant he will bring forth fruits in keeping with repentance. That is, he will follow through on restitution. This is where turtles are often exposed.

So we see the Turtle barriers are quite different from the Peacock's; the turtle blocks the cycle between Repentance and Restitution. The turtle may repent quickly, but often it is superficial. He is constantly saying, "I'm sorry." But when it comes to actually doing anything about it, he resists: "I could never do that. You could; I couldn't. (using mirrors)" He takes a more passive

stance, often appearing as a victim.

Whenever we encounter barriers, we need to pause and focus on them looking for further, and deeper Revelation. The turtle usually will not make restitution, even though she may bring forth great words of promise to do so. Usually turtles will need help and close accountability in order to make real progress. Those helping turtles must be sure that follow up on restitution occurs.

Distinguishing Turtles and Peacocks

Once a person sins, his response to the light will show you what whether you are working with a turtle or a peacock. A good parable to illustrate these two extreme responses is the parable of the two sons in Matt. 21:28-32. See if you can guess who is the peacock and who is the turtle.

The father asks them both to go to the vineyard and work. The first son immediately says, "I'll go! I'll go," but he doesn't. The other son says, "I won't go," and ends up going. The second son is the Peacock--"I'm not going to go!" But he repents. The first son is the Turtle--"I'll go!" but he does not. The turtle may say "yes" a million times over, but don't ever expect to see him in the field. The peacock may defiantly say "no" only to repent quickly afterwards and follow.

The Turtle who claimed he would do whatever needed to be done and then did not do so, needs to be confronted with his "Turtle-ness." Why hasn't he followed through? Many times, if you turn the light of God on these barriers, you can get greater Revelation which will go to the heart of the turtle (and as mentioned earlier, this is often fear; the loyalty is to self-preservation, not loving others through God's love). Incidentally, often when you do this, turtles will become very angry. Turtles have learned how to control their world by being victims. They want to look like the good guy (weak but good); they do not want to look like villains.

What happens when you turn on a Peacock's lights? They get angry, too. They, however, usually get angry up front at the point of Revelation and call to Repentance. A Turtle won't get angry until you push and push and push for restitution. Finally he often explodes. At this point he often is, perhaps for the first time, able to see his sinfulness and take steps toward real repentance that will lead to restitution.

The Covenant of Forgiveness

How can we practice this process of Restitution regularly? There are all kinds of ways of giving Restitution. The important thing is for the restitution to fit the sin. This takes a good deal of experience to learn how to exactly fit restitution to particular sins. Buy a good exercise is to look through Proverbs and find those things that the writer warns against as well as what he encourages in its place. Another good place to look is Ephesians 4:25-6:9 looking at the put-ons and put offs. For instance in place of bitterness (4:31) the restitution would be to put on kindness, gentleness and forgiveness (4:32).

We are going to outline a pattern that needs to be applied in every area where interpersonal relations occur. It needs to be applied whenever sin brings a strain or break in relationships. It will be essential in the Christian home, in the church, on teams, etc. We call it the Covenant of Forgiveness. It lays out a pattern of restitution that brings about Renewal.

The Covenant of Forgiveness is found in Matthew 18:15-21, under the section often referred to as church discipline. The Bible is very specific on this pattern which is outlined to resolve interpersonal conflict. One of the major problems in our families and our churches is that we do not do what the Bible tells us to do--we have every excuse under the sun why not to follow the instructions in this passage. Leaders, as they study, will find that they need to have this pattern practiced thoroughly in their own lives, their families and their teams. I urge you: Learn it! You will use this for the rest of your life. There is no way around it, particularly for leaders in house groups.

To have a Covenant of Forgiveness you need two people. You need a villain and a victim. Who is normally the villain--Peacock or Turtle? Most peacocks take to role of the villain whereas turtles adopt the role of victims. The script tends to form early in the relationship (you might think of the marriage relationship). Each person operates from his or her adopted roles; but in a way each is a villain (since both sin), and the obvious villain is not necessarily the greater one. Turtles can fight just as well, and often more ruthlessly, as Peacocks; they just look better. We are going to study how Mt. 18 changes that relationship, working uphill the normal roles.



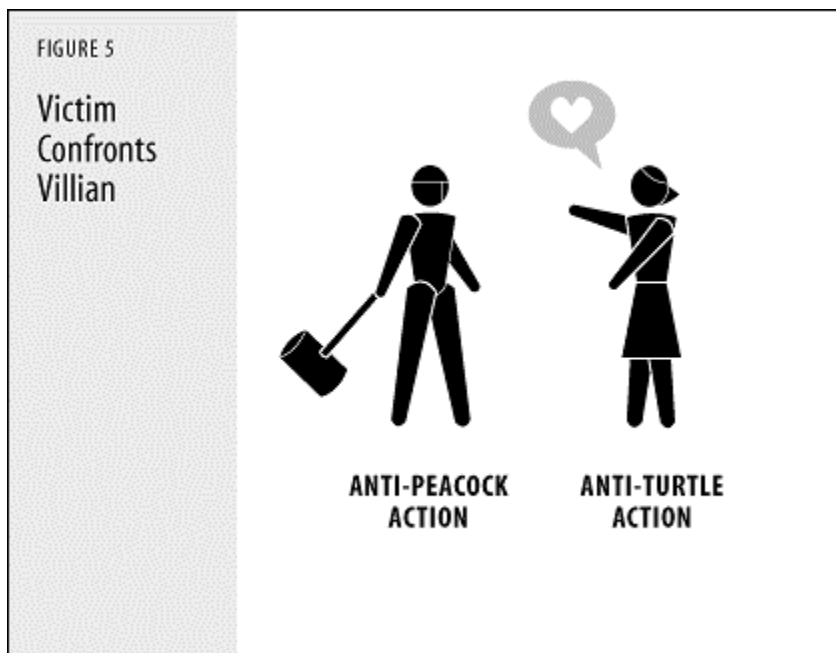
What is the victim's tendency when conflict erupts? Victims tend to take a beating, and continue to look Godly (and many times feeling as though they are Godly). They often go to others letting them know how hard their lives are, and receiving a lot of sympathy. Sometimes others will even intervene for the turtles since they are so bruised and do their fighting for them!

FIRST STEP: Confrontation

Now, according to Matthew 18:15, what is the victim supposed to do? The victim is supposed to confront the villain. Is that the normal victim role? No. Do victims want to go confront villains? No. Why not? Because they won't look like victims any more; they will look like a villain. They

can no longer withdraw into themselves, and gain sympathy, often manipulating the situation and getting others to do their dirty work.

Confrontation means giving up any opportunity to manipulate; as a matter of fact, it forces them to do something they don't want to do. A victim has learned how to control others and situations by being a victim. Incidentally, turtles normally control relationships, not peacocks. It appears like the villain does, but he does not. The villain becomes a responder to the victim's manipulation, often provoking them to villainy (although this is no excuse for their sin!) But the victim is often the one in control. Therefore, the best way to change the relationship is for the victim to make a change.



So the victim needs to confront the villain. There are several things she needs to review before confronting the villain.

First the victim needs to have clearly in mind what God's purpose is in the confrontation. It is not to exact a pound of flesh, or "get even". It is not to control the villain or the situation. In Mt. 18:15 we see that the goal is "winning your brother"--reconciliation.

A second motive should be to benefit the villain by bringing revelation. This follows from the fact that everything we do should be motivated by love. So the victim needs to figure how the villain will benefit from the confrontation. This will greatly help the villain when the victim confronts, and as she prays for the outcome of the confrontation. As she prays over this, she needs to keep in mind long term benefits to the villain rather than short term ones. In the short term there will likely be more pain for her. Often the victim actually pays twice for the villain's crime: once when the crime occurs and the second time when the victim confronts the villain. Even if everything goes well, the victim normally goes through anguish and turmoil preparing for the confrontation.

These steps outlined in Mt. 18 may not seem to make a lot of sense, and it often does not appear, according to our human wisdom, that it will work. But it is God's command, His ordained process for working through conflict. And my own experience has shown God's wisdom is far greater than ours. I have seen many relationships restored and transformed as Matthew 18 has been faithfully employed.

When the victim does confront the villain, she needs to do it in a Godly way. That means she must take the logs out of her own eye first (Mt. 7:1-5) and approach the villain with a humble and loving attitude. The victim needs to be certain that she has repented of any contribution to the problem and made restitution before confronting the villain. Often when this happens the need to confront disappears as God grants light to the villain and he repents without being confronted.

But once the victim has gotten rid of the specks in her eye, a question might arise as to: "Do I need to confront?" There are some signs that help us to know when a villain needs to be confronted.

First, if the victim does not want to confront his villain, the chances are good that she needs to. Turtles are beset with passivity. So one of the goals of Matthew 18 is to change the passive victim into an active minister of God's grace to the villain. There will be growth at the very least for the victim.

Secondly, if the villain can be helped by the victim's confrontation, then he needs to be confronted. The victim needs to go to her brother in love, having already forgiven the villain for the damage done and thus can approach the villain with *his* good in mind.

Keeping in mind the victim may still have some specks in her eye, when she confronts the villain, she needs to do so with an open spirit, to try to get the villain's perspective on things. If there are any more specks to be removed she should do so quickly so that she can operate in the power of the Spirit having confessed all known sin and thus be walking in the light. One of the areas of pride we talked about was self-centeredness; victims are just as self-centered as villains. They often don't see things from any other point-of-view other than their own.

If you are in a position of counseling a victim through the process of Matthew 18, you have to find God's point-of-view. Do not focus on the villain (which is where the victim wants you to focus); focus on the victim, to get the logs out of her eyes so that she can go to the villain with what she sees as God's view of what the problem is. Never jump to conclusions. Remain open. A good proverb is: "The first to plead his case seems just, until another comes and examines him." (Proverbs 18:17)

So the first step in the Covenant of Forgiveness is that the victim must confront the villain. If you're dealing with someone who's been a victim for a long time, she may need a lot of Revelation, because before the step of Restitution (on the victim's) part comes you will encounter a lot of turtle barriers. And this may take some time and some trips around the Cycle of Renewal before she is ready to confront.

SECOND STEP: Confession

The victim confronts the villain and the second step should follow. The ball is now in the

villain's court. If he executes the second step appropriately he will repent, confess, ask for forgiveness, determine what restitution is appropriate, and take the appropriate steps bringing forth fruit in keeping with Repentance.

But the spirit of the villain will be crucial. He needs to listen to the victim thoroughly, asking questions so he can have all the revelation possible. He should see this suffering as his opportunity to grow (Cf. Romans 5:3-5). He must accept the victim's point-of-view, especially if there is a perception of sin on his part. Once he has a thorough understanding of his contribution to the breakdown of relationship, he needs to confess all sins specifically, saying, "I was wrong for...."

If you wanted to put this scene to a script, the victim would have the first line. She would say: "You sinned, and you did so by..."

It's important for the victim to name the sin and make certain the label is Biblical. It is not helpful to be vague. For instance if she says the villain was not sensitive. This is not as helpful as saying "You did not live with me in an understanding way (I Peter 3:7) specifically by not even asking me if I thought we should by a boat for your fishing!" She also should confront in a gently way (I Thessalonians 5:14).

The villain responds with the next line: "I sinned by not following God's command to love you sacrificially and understand you" acknowledging his specific sins, and then saying, "I was wrong."

This all assumes the villain is going to be walking in the spirit. The villain states: "I was wrong." In order to say that, he needs to have an attitude of humility—clearly a mark of one walking in the Spirit. By doing this, though, he is now taking on the role of the victim. He is allowing the victim to be right, and himself to be wrong. So the villain--the Peacock--has actually taken a position in opposition to himself--the humble servant, just as the victim took the opposite position of her normal script, now being the confronter rather than a mere passive responder.

If the villain is really sincere about this, he will allow the victim to cross-examine him after he has confessed. This is important; the victim needs to see the villain's spirit, which is one of humility, sorrow and repentance. Also it may bring about a much deeper repentance as attitudes, not just actions can be addressed.

Obviously we are saying that this is much more than a simply saying "I'm sorry". "I'm sorry" is not repentance. "I'm sorry" is an expression of an emotional state. Repentance is a statement of guilt and takes full responsibility for the action. Therefore, Repentance says "I was wrong, I am the guilty one". Any statement with a "but" in it is not full repentance. For instance if the husband says: "Yes, I was wrong in not trying to understand you, BUT you don't listen to me." The "but" excuses the sin and therefore rejects ownership of this sin.

Most Christians do not follow the Matthew 18 process very well. Usually it goes down something like this:

The victim goes to the villain and says, "You hurt me."

The villain responds by saying, "I'm sorry."

Then the victim says "That's OK".

This accomplishes nothing. The center of the victim's world is still himself, not God. The villain has not repented (and thus remains at the center of his world). And finally the victim has let the villain off the hook. Everyone is still self-centered; no one has changed. An opportunity for growth is lost.

THIRD STEP: Forgiveness

The victim's appropriate response to the villain's repentance and confession is to say, "I forgive you." Saying "It is all right" is wrong. Is sin all right? Of course not! Sin is never all right! A person who sinned has sinned; he needs to repent and be forgiven. Sin can't be excused, it must be forgiven! If it could simply be excused Jesus would not have had to die on the cross. So the victim says, "I forgive you," thus canceling the debt and letting it go. The victim has already done this as a preliminary to the confrontation with respect to God, but now does so in the presence of the villain.

Others have written that forgiveness is a three-fold promise. When forgiving, the victim is promising:

- not to throw what has happened back up in the villain's face;
- not to tell other people about it;
- and not to rehearse it in her mind.

Since forgiveness involves this three-fold promise, we can refer to it as a covenant. Exercising the covenant of forgiveness enables a victim to take the place of Jesus in suffering unjustly. And this finds favor with God (I Peter 2:18-21). It will also bring a new release of the Spirit in the relationship.

FOURTH STEP: Restitution

The fourth step on the Covenant of Forgiveness is Restitution by the villain. Restitution resolves to find a way to keep from repeating the patterns that caused the problem. Restitution is not a promise--it's a plan. That is to say, a villain does not say, "I will never do this again," and it's over. Rather the villain says: "I am going to do this, to make sure what happened before can be dealt with in an ongoing way until new patterns are the practice of my life." Plans of restitution are often difficult, a lot of work, and painful on the part of the villain. But it will ultimately change both parties in permanent ways.

Plan B Part A

Fortunately God has given us recourse if things don't go exactly according to the plan above. But let's look at the worst case scenario. The victim goes to the villain, and the villain explodes; he refuses to listen to the victim. According to Mt. 18, one or two witnesses must now be brought in. Usually it's at this point that a church leader may be brought into the conflict. The conflict is now escalated; more people are beginning to see that the villain is really a villain. He looks terrible now. The villain knows that people are talking about him; it's not gossip, it's Biblical (as

long as the guidelines are adhered to)! These new people have been brought in to observe what's happening, confirm where fault lies, and help direct the parties to take appropriate responsibility for what they have each done.

Many times, however, a victim does not want the third party to come into contact with the villain. Why? Often it may be because the situation may not be as bad as the victim makes it out to be. When the situation is seen by an objective third and fourth person, all sides are heard from. Often the victim is not quite so helpless after all. As mentioned above, victims want control, usually through manipulation. Control of information is a way of manipulation. This is why God, in his wisdom provides others who can see both sides, to remain neutral and see how they can help both parties.

Mt. 18 defines the scope of the exercise of the Covenant of Forgiveness. "When a brother sins against you, go to your brother." It is very important to define what sin is. Many times we fail each other's expectations. This is not sin; this is failed expectations. We often fail each other; what's important is that we fulfill God's expectations. When we do not do that, then that is sin. When we fail each other, that is not sin. There is a world of difference, and it must be delineated. Failed expectations is not sin, unless the expectations are God's clear commands. Many times people accuse us of sin. Is sin defined as failing their expectations? Are they God? Are their expectations God's? No; of course not! In such a case the victim can learn much as he/she brings along the one or two others.

Often in such a case, misunderstandings can be cleared up. And expectations which are hidden can be brought into the light and reviewed. With a wise third party often real healing can occur, many times of scars that have been years in forming.

Plan B Part B

Let us suppose the first part of Plan B has been followed. The victim has received more revelation and has continued to walk in the spirit confessing and repenting with the one or two who are now with her in the process. But the villain has become further hardened and shows no movement towards repentance even though it is clear that he has sinned.

Matthew 18:17 says the next step is to bring it to the community so that all in the community can try to bring the brother to repentance. Often it is at this point that the erring brother will finally come to his senses. At this point there are a lot of resources that God can use to minister both to the victim and the villain. God's Spirit often uses one or more of these to bring the brother to repentance, or even bring more light for the victim so that she can further grow and lay a foundation for God to work more deeply.

Plan B Part C

But if even here there is no repentance, God has given further instruction in Mt. 18:17. "If he refuses to listen even to the church let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer." Notice that throughout the passage the reason for further steps of discipline is not because of sin but rather an unwillingness to receive the light ("listen"). That is the villain is hardened in his position and not humble, not accepting the counsel of others. This is a very difficult step to take, putting someone out of the assembly. But it is sometimes necessary for the reclamation of their soul (Cf.

I Cor. 5:5).

The Covenant Illustrated

The Covenant Illustrated

Let us close this chapter with a real life example from my own experience. I had come home a half an hour late to a furious wife one night. Coming through the door I apologized for being late.

Cathy was less than mollified as she served her dry, overcooked dinner. We got into it immediately.

"Your apology doesn't cut it, this is about the 5th time you've been late in two weeks. The dinner is spoiled again and I'm just supposed to shut up and smile and say 'How was your day, darling.' Well I'm fed up."

Now at this point I could have taken the easy carnal tack of pointing out that she should forgive me and obviously had not since she brought up the last 4 occasions. However the look on her face and perhaps the prompting of the Spirit told me that this would be an attempt at starting an argument I could win, but at some cost to the relationship. So I thought it wise to take a little different tack.

"So your a little upset, huh?" I responded.

"No, I'm mad. You sit there with your guys and talk about who knows what, and I am always the one left holding the bag. Well, I'm sick of it!"

"Well, I'm sorry I am late, what more do you want?" I replied.

At this point we were getting nowhere fast. I felt it would be wise to try to get at whatever was eating her. We men are a bit slow on the uptake, and women always expect us to be mind readers. I realized that this would likely get uglier and by this point I really wanted to disarm this before it could do further damage. It took sometime to get to what was for Cathy a painfully obvious truth, but one that was not obvious to me probably because I didn't want to see it.

"You don't care about me as much as you do the guys you meet with!" She sobbed.

Bang! I was caught. Trapped like a rat! I could have tried to cover it up, but she was right! Probably not to the degree she believed it, but there was no question she had hit a real nail on the head. And I found I didn't want to escape. I was cut to the heart as, for the first time, I saw how deeply my insensitivity and lack of care had hurt her. I'm sure that my voice tone, and my body language spoke more loudly than my words when I said "I am so sorry, Cathy. I had no idea how selfish I have been and how little regard I have paid to you. Please forgive me. I have been wrong."

She looked at me skeptically, believing my sincerity but doubting that the next time would be any different. She did know her husband, and I knew myself and knew I could not promise that I

would never be late again. She wanted to hear the ideas I might have for restitution before she believed in the genuineness of my repentance and would close with the forgiveness bit.

After some discussion we focused on the real problem: not my lateness, but my lack of care. For restitution I suggested that whenever I was going to be late (Cathy decided 15 minutes late was truly late), I would show my care by calling her and letting her know (BEFORE the 15 minutes was up). This turned out to be a good solution since my office was in my car and Cathy knew it would take me time to find a public phone and call (Mobile phones had not yet been invented!). The pilgrimage to a phone booth was a testimony to the fact that I was thinking about her and cared about her. This solution has held us in good stead for the last 18 years even though now I do have a mobile phone. The pattern has changed!

I went on to work on some deeper levels of how God would want me to love my wife which were revealed from that experience as I practiced the cycle of renewal.

Conclusion

A Paradigm for Problem Solving

Too often we are guilty in the Christian church of superficially trying to help people. We try to stick verses or quick 3-step solutions to people in order to try to get them to behave better. I hope that this book has shown the reader that there are principles that can help people live free from the brokenness of our souls. But they are not simple or easy. Let's not sin as the false prophets did in the time of Jeremiah: "They have healed the brokenness of My people superficially, saying, 'Peace, peace,' but there is no peace." Jer. 6:14

I am going to conclude with a paradigm for problem solving. It's a thought problem. I want you, the Reader, to evaluate yourself in this paradigm. (A paradigm is a sort of scheme that one can hang things on, very similar to a parable.)

Problems may be solved at different levels. The following paradigm is designed to help us understand these different levels, and illuminate which level on which we tend to work. We'll use the illumination of an 'idiot-light' on the dashboard of a car as the paradigm.

The Parable

Driving down the road one day a light on the dashboard flashed, 'low-fluid.' Several avenues of action are possible:

- One: realizing that it is only an indicator of windshield-wiper fluid, and seeing that the day is beautiful, the husband simply continues along and ignores the light.
- Two: his wife, who also drives the car, becomes irritated with the light--which her husband seems to have no interest in fixing--and sticks a colorful sticker over the nagging light.
- Three: Their son, who also uses the car, keeps opening the hood every few weeks and adding more fluid, which continues to be lost at a rapid rate since the cap to the fluid container is missing.

The real solution is to fix the container by calling the Dealer who carries such items, ordering the cap, going down and fixing it to the container. On a deeper level, however, we might realize that

some character flaws perhaps are being illuminated.

Presuming the husband is responsible for the upkeep of the car, he is proving himself irresponsible in the task. This is a seemingly small problem, and thus doesn't seem worth the pain of confrontation that the wife should make, rather than putting a colorful sticker on the dash.

However, on a day that it is raining, and the windows are covered with road-spray, this oversight could lead to an accident. A similar problem later could be an oil light, which when ignored could lead to an engine meltdown. None of the characters in the above scenario are really addressing the problem. Their approaches take care of it at a certain level, but really do not get to the root problem, addressing it in such a way that those involved are transformed in character so that this and future related problems are cared for.

We need to be sensitive to the level at which we're comfortable dealing with problems, and realize that God will likely call us to go to a deeper level for the sake of all those involved including ourselves. Every problem will be different, and appropriate to handle at different levels. We need to take into account the danger of the problem, the strength of the relationship, the readiness of the person involved, as we try to discern the level at which God would have us work.

My thesis is that each one of us would tend to work at a different level, naturally. While most of us would prefer to work at a shallower level, God is calling us to go deeper. We need to realize what level we are comfortable at, because the chances are always that we'll slide back to that. We will ignore the problem, put colorful stickers on it, or continually pour fluid in the container.

We are all called to grow in Christ. We will never reach that point of maturity until we are ultimately reunited with Christ. But we must always be pressing on in this world as we prepare for the next. God is always asking each of us, individually and as church bodies, to move forward. We cannot afford to be lazy. We must strive forward as Paul, laying aside what lies behind and stretching for what lies ahead, reaching upward for the prize of the upward call of Christ Jesus.

May God grant you and your transforming community to grace to persevere in the ministry of transformation!