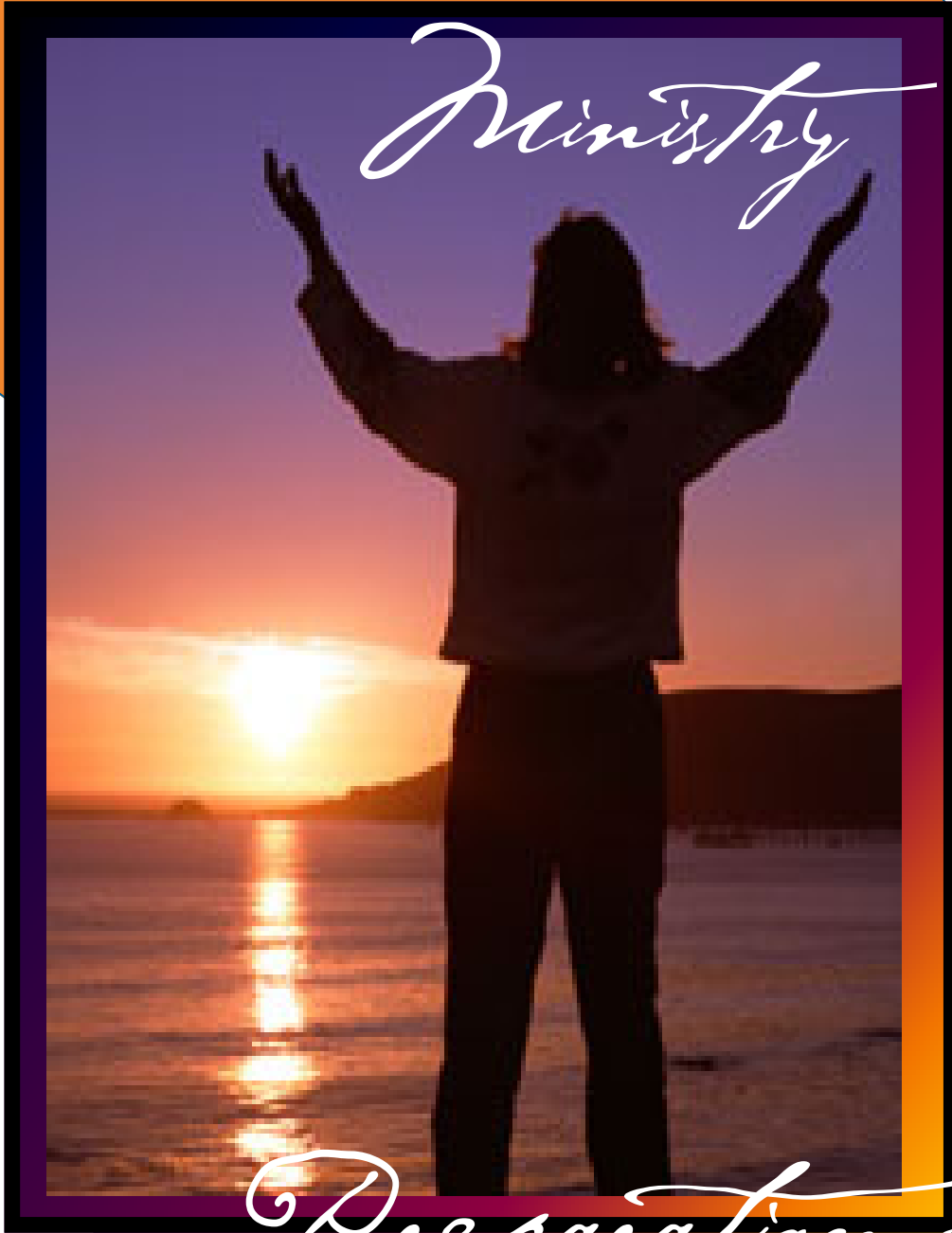


Personal

Ministry



Preparations



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Dear Friend in Christ,

Please review each article in this booklet. After you have finished, stop and consider prayerfully what the Lord is revealing to you and the areas where you might need ministry. List these items on the "Ministry Work Sheet" located in the back of this book.

It is possible that an article doesn't seem to apply to you. That is OK. Move on to the next article. Please call your ministry helper for clarification about an article if needed. This information is not all-inclusive, but it can be a good beginning for most in need. Some of the articles may contain a large part of your life and take some time to process. Feel free to deal with some of the articles one at a time. For example, if you discover there are many events in the area of "Forgiveness" to address, you may have a separate ministry time for that alone and continue with the rest at another time.

We recommend at the end of your sessions that you would probably benefit by getting into one of our small groups, healing ministries, or a Bible study. We can also recommend a professional counselor to you, if you would like one.

May the Lord fill you with His Grace as you begin this process.

Joyfully Serving Jesus,

Gary Heese
Pastor of Pastoral Care Ministries

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THE PERSONAL MINISTRY GUIDE

This guidebook is all about ministry—breaking spiritual bondages and healing hurts. Many people confuse ministry with counseling. The simple difference between the two is that counseling deals with talking and reasoning through problems while ministry uses biblical principals to identify spiritual bondages and applies the redemption of the cross through prayer to those bondages. Spiritual bondage is not necessarily demonic, although it may be. Most of the time, it is the result of false beliefs, wrong choices, or ignoring simple principles, which can lead to a belief system that affects our personalities and behavior in negative ways. As a result we live our lives *driven by the flesh*, rather than being *led by the Spirit*.

POSSIBLE SOURCES OF SPIRITUAL BONDAGE

The following are some of the spiritual bondages we normally deal with in ministry. No matter which areas we identify with, the wonderful truth is that the redemptive power of the Cross of Christ brings freedom from any and all bondages.

Unforgiveness is the most common root of a spiritual bondage. It can lead to resentment, bitterness and internal torment.

Relinquishment is giving up our right to something we feel like we deserved. It can also be the act of giving up someone we may have taken responsibility for.

Condemnation can come from others' expectations of what we *should or should not have done*. It can also be the result of our own negative self-talk or not living up to our own standards.

Vows, inner vows, or pledges have often been made when we were young. They can blaze a trail for our wrong choices in life.

Bitter root judgments about others are caused by our resentment, and we can begin to act like the ones we resent as our judgments come back on us.

Curses are often the result of negative words spoken over us. An authority figure may make a negative statement to a young person and the person will repeat it to himself or herself over and over until it has become their core belief. It then has the power of a curse over them.

Soul ties are formed between any two people who have a strong emotional connection. This can be based on a sexual relationship, an inappropriate authority, or fantasies. Soul ties that are not broken can cause a spiritual bondage which in turn causes problems in other relationships.

Shame can be a consequence we experience when we do not live up to expected standards or commonly held values.

Non-Christian spiritual experiences (false religions and the occult) are an open invitation to demonic influence in our lives.

Generational or hereditary sins can be recognized by family patterns such as alcoholism, divorce or adultery that are passed on from parents to children and to the children's children.

Nationality or ethnic bondages can result from living under a commonly spoken, negative phrase regarding cultural traits such as: "Americans are prideful and materialistic," "Germans are perfectionists," or "The English are aloof."

SOURCES OF HURT

When we get to the root of it, the source of a spiritual bondage is unresolved hurt or unconfessed sin in our lives. These unresolved hurts directly affect how we function in relationships. They can drive us to compulsive-addictive behaviors, cause us to act out irrationally in inappropriate ways, or cause us to withdraw and isolate from the outside world. When left unattended they can lead to any of the spiritual bondages listed previously.

Some of the sources of hurts are listed below with suggested biblical principles for how the Lord can come and bring healing to free us from bondage.

Rejection is the most common source of pain in our lives. This rejection may come through words of criticism, judgments, or physical/emotional/sexual abuse. Even non-verbal communication can show strong signs of disapproval. Some have been rejected while still in the womb. Depending on our personality and make-up we may react to these wounds differently. We may have a difficult time overcoming rejection until we have had the Lord come into that memory and bring healing.

Someone with a strong personality or a strong will may react to rejection by rebelling. What they are really doing is rejecting rejection. They are saying by their actions: "I will reject you before you can reject me." Usually they don't realize that this is what they are doing. The reason for being unaware is that this is a basic human response. We defend ourselves from further hurt, however this can affect every other relationship we have. At the extreme, the consequences of rebellion with this personality may eventually lead to a life of crime.

Someone with a more passive personality may have a broken will and live from a root of rejection; withdrawing into themselves, becoming overcome with shame or depression, rejecting themselves, and avoiding relationships. When we react in this way we may look at life through a lens of rejection. When this reaction is taken to the extreme someone can come to a place of hopelessness to the point they may try to take their own life.

A form of rejection which can be extremely damaging to individuals is abandonment. When a parent abandons a child, that child feels the most extreme form of rejection. They will usually react by becoming clingy with the parent that is still in their lives, and they may express anger and wrong behaviors that are unexplained. In later years they can become controlling or possessive in relationships.

A more common but less easily recognized rejection is emotional abandonment. A parent may be present physically—going through all the right functions—but not present emotionally. Most will say: "I know my dad loves me, but he just never said it or showed it." The interaction physically and emotionally was just not there.

All of these are forms of rejection which can cause us to believe lies about ourselves like: "I am unworthy..." "I am not lovable..." "I don't measure up..." And the list goes on.

False Prophets Negative words spoken over us are like false prophets in our lives. A person in authority or a peer may speak words that are hurtful, and as we take those words into our spirit they become a part of us.

Judgments Statements that judge us for being something we are not or are an exaggeration of who we are can drive us to be like the declaration that was made. Parents telling their kids:

“You’re up to no good,” or “You’re just like your dad,” or “You’ll never change,” are judgments that can have similar effects as a curse; negatively affecting the kids’ life choices.

Another example would be a stepfather calling his daughter a whore because he did not approve of her friends or how she dressed. This is also similar to a curse or an action that has the power of a curse and can alter the girl’s belief system about who she is and how she should live.

Favoritism can have the full weight of rejection to a person that has gone through it. It often is rejection, though it does not need to be actual rejection for us to feel the same effects. We can be completely accepted by someone in our life but when another person close to us, a sibling or a peer, is chosen as a favorite and given special attention we can feel completely rejected and react in the same ways as described above.

Betrayal is another hurt, which can be damaging to present and future relationships. It can be a devastating blow causing us to even close our spirit off to having close relationships; choosing never to trust or be close to another person again.

Negative Self-Talk Lies that we begin to believe we can say to ourselves or think about ourselves until they are truth to us. This perceived truth can drive us to a destructive lifestyle.

REDEMPTION

Redemption means “to be bought back from” as if someone else owned you. A redeemer reclaims what once was his but was lost. We have been redeemed from the hands of the enemy by Jesus dying on the cross and shedding His blood that we might live, and have life more abundantly. Experiencing new life in Christ comes from faith in Him. Experiencing “life more abundantly” comes through praying and applying God’s principles to the bondages in our lives. Sadly, few Christians are truly applying the redemption of the cross to every area of their lives and therefore are missing out on an abundant life.

Revelation is the first step to redemption. Just as we received revelation of the need for a Savior, we also can have our eyes opened to the various parts of our lives that still need the redemptive power of the cross. However, revelation without application can leave us stagnant. Simply understanding without acting will not bring change.

Repentance is the beginning of change in our lives. We identify the sin and who we have sinned against; repent of our sin; ask for forgiveness; and are forgiven and cleansed of our sin. This is a common redemptive step we can take in an area where we are stuck.

Release is the second most powerful step to redemption we can take. When we release forgiveness to those who have sinned against us we are free from being bound to them.

Recognition of the works of the enemy and the spirits that are possibly controlling or influencing us helps us realize the lies we believe and the control of the enemy that we can renounce.

Renouncing is a verbal rejection. Through this we can break our connections to false beliefs, curses, spirits that are influencing or tormenting us, vows, false religions, soul ties, generational sins, condemnation, and any other forces of darkness.

Relinquishment is letting go of responsibility for—and control of—someone else or surrendering our own perceived rights, plans, expectations, hopes, dreams, and things we think we deserve.

Restitution is paying back what we owe someone else.

Reconciliation is restoring relationship with someone who we have become distanced from.

The process of redemption for any one event in our lives may include one or more of the above steps. As we go through the process it is important that we do so with the help of another person, that we speak and pray out loud instead of in our thoughts and that we recognize that the true healing of redemption comes through Christ’s power and not our own strength or the strength of someone helping us.

We have many natural human responses that we use to avoid pain. On our own we tend to dance around the point of pain and usually fail to adequately address it. To have a helper that is objectively walking us through the process of redemption can make all the difference. This person can aid us in working through difficult points and help us catch the things we are

missing. In addition, the Holy Spirit's presence where two or more people are gathered in His name is a significant part of the process that is often overlooked.

In Romans 10:10 the Bible states, "It is with your mouth that you confess and are saved." There is an importance to speaking things out loud that has an effect on our lives that goes deeper than when we just think about things. Speaking out loud is part of the redemption process that moves us from having thoughts in our mind to making decisions in our heart. For this reason, much of the process involves speaking out loud to forgive others, break curses, etc.

It is also important to speak out loud when dealing with issues relating to demonic forces. Satan will only be defeated if we confront him out loud. He cannot read our mind and does not have to obey our thoughts. Only God has complete knowledge of our mind. As we address areas of the occult, it is important that we submit to God inwardly and resist the devil by praying, renouncing, and breaking bondage out loud.

Christ purchased our victory when He shed His blood for us on the cross. Realizing our freedom will be the result of what we choose to believe, confess, forgive, renounce, and forsake. No one else can do that for us. The battle for our mind can only be won as we personally choose truth.

FORGIVENESS

FORGIVENESS IS NOT...

Saying that what was done is okay

What was done was wrong. It wasn't right. You did not deserve it. This may be the first time you have heard this. You may have even been accused by family or friends of lying about the event.

Releasing the guilty party from the legal or divine consequences of their behavior

Believe me, they will be judged. If the consequences of their sin have not come upon them already, it will.

Something that you have to achieve on your own

Some of what God asks of us in the way of forgiveness seems so huge that in our own strength we can't possibly accomplish it. It is only through God's grace that we can do this. So what I do with many is suggest, "Would you like to pray and ask for God's grace to begin forgiving?" I am often amazed at how His grace will flood over them and in minutes they are ready to begin forgiving some of the worst of offenses.

Merely words said to satisfy some legal standard

If we are forgiving because we have to, it won't be fruitful. If we are forgiving because we have made an excuse for them, it will be equally unfruitful. For example: "I can forgive them because I know they had a bad childhood." This is *excusing* not *forgiving* and, while it may seem healthy, it is ultimately not helpful.

Dependent on the perpetrator's response

This procedure is completely between God and us. The person doesn't have to be alive, present, or involved. In fact, only rarely will the one who has hurt you be a part of this process and then only by God's doing, and this may not come until years after you have forgiven.

Easy

It begins with a choice and continues as a process. If there is any one thing the enemy is using most effectively to keep the church in bondage, it is unforgiveness. Most people we do ministry with start out in this way: "God help me", "Lord I'd like to", "Father I want to" or "Jesus, give me the strength to forgive." We gently stop them from going further and suggest that forgiveness will start to be effective when they choose to forgive. Forgiveness begins with a choice.

A feeling

It is a choice. If we wait until we feel like forgiving, we will be in bondage forever.

FORGIVENESS IS...

Taking yourself out of the judgment seat simply because it belongs to God alone

I don't think most of us have acknowledged that when we do not forgive we are being the judges of that person. By acknowledging and accepting Christ's forgiveness for ourselves, we have no right to withhold forgiveness from anyone.

An act of God's grace being poured out through our hearts

In our own human strength, we often can't forgive as completely as God would like us to. But, He gives us the grace to go beyond what we think is possible.

A result of being transformed into His image

When forgiving you are taking on His mind and heart, and clothing yourself with Him. It is as much an opportunity to set you free, as it is an opportunity to set the other person free. In reality when we choose not to forgive, we give our offender the right to continue hurting us. This can be true even if the one who has hurt us is no longer around. Our offender has power over us until we choose to forgive.

A removal of a significant part of Satan's ground

When we forgive we remove what has allowed our perpetrators to hurt us over and over again. This sets us free from their abilities to emotionally destroy us and our relationships with God and others.

An act of the will

When we hold something against someone with our will, we can let it go with our will. Forgiveness is not a servant of our feelings.

One of the basic elements for deliverance

In every ministry time we have been a part of, it has been essential to forgive or repent (or both) for freedom to come. When someone renounces an evil spirit or attempts deliverance without considering the steps of forgiveness, they usually don't experience freedom. If forgiveness isn't there, freedom rarely happens.

LEVELS OF FORGIVENESS

The following levels of forgiveness are several misunderstandings of what forgiveness is for many members of the church. Most of these misunderstandings are for an excuse not to forgive, even though Jesus commands us that we have to forgive. Many people in the body of Christ have adopted these convenient ways of avoiding this command. Only the last three on the list come close to what God asked of us when it comes to forgiveness.

I can't forgive

We hear this often, but after asking God for His grace it is usually overcome. If a person has made a vow ("I will never forgive...") then they are unable to forgive until the vow is identified. When they pray, renounce and break it, then they can forgive.

I can't forgive, it would be a betrayal

This is a bondage often found within a fused relationship. For example, a mother can draw her daughter into a marital conflict with an alcoholic father. She shares about the child's father's bad behaviors and this causes the child to take ownership of the mother's offense. The relationship becomes an alliance against the father. Later in life, the adult child is stuck with the mother's offense and doesn't know how to get rid of it without feeling like she is betraying her mother. In a case such as this, the daughter needs to put the responsibility for her mother into the Lord's hands and let Him be her protector.

I will forgive when they ask me

Jesus said we have to forgive unconditionally. A person's repentance is not a requirement for us to forgive them. If it were, what would happen if the person died before they could ask for forgiveness?

I forgive, but I'll have nothing to do with them

In some cases this could just be a way to punish the other person or to get revenge since forgiveness has not really taken place. When an offense occurs within the church we are commanded by Scripture to find reconciliation and be reunited. However, there are situations such as domestic violence where it is wise to forgive but maintain healthy boundaries.

I forgive, but I'll never trust them

This is sometimes a wise boundary but it can be another way to get revenge. If we vow to never trust, we never will. Trust eventually comes down to a choice, just like forgiveness. Of course there is the need for repentance, change, and consistent appropriate behavior. However, we often say "I'll never trust again" as a way to punish or get revenge. *There are natural exceptions, such a case of child sexual abuse, where I would not recommend the risk of trusting.*

I forgive, but they owe me

We need to come to the place where we can pray “I forgive and he/she owes me nothing.” When we look at the bottom of the record we see a balance due of zero. This is not an easy process and we want to take time to weigh the cost of what we are giving up. Often, the debt is huge and it is one that can never be repaid. So what other choice do we have but to forgive?

I forgive, but I want justice

This is one that I sometimes talk about with survivors of incest, rape or other violent crimes that seemingly go unpunished. Even though the world declares that we have a right to see a perpetrator come to justice, our need for justice can get in the way of our ability to forgive. Jesus laid down all of His rights and unjustly died on the cross for us.

I forgive, but I want revenge

In the same way that our need for justice can hinder forgiveness, our need for revenge can do the same thing. In Scripture God says that vengeance is His and that it is His place to repay. His word guarantees that no one ever gets away with anything. We can forgive a person on multiple levels, but if we are still looking for an opportunity for revenge we have not completely forgiven them.

I can forgive because...

To say, “I can forgive because...” is an act of adult reasoning in place of actual forgiveness. Some examples of this might include: “I can forgive because he didn’t mean to...” or “he was drunk at the time...” or “my mother had a terrible childhood.” None of these express the true meaning of forgiveness. They are just excuses for wrong behavior. When we forgive as if the person did what he did on purpose, we are truly beginning to forgive.

I forgive

“I choose to forgive” is the principle in forgiveness that we are trying to accomplish. However, it is a good first step and not total forgiveness. To find total freedom we want to follow through with forgiving specific offenses.

I forgive and he/she owes me nothing

This is a healthy beginning and a declaration that brings freedom.

I forgive, and I choose to bless them

Even better is to come to a place where we can bless the person, pray for their salvation, and come to see the person as God sees them; precious in His sight.

HOW DO WE FORGIVE?

We pray and ask for God's grace. We begin forgiveness with a choice as an act of our will. We come to a place of forgiveness where no one owes us anything. When forgiving we need to be as specific as possible within the offenses for each event. It's necessary to understand that forgiveness begins with a choice but often continues as a process. There may be days where we are reminded of hurtful events and we may need to continue to forgive again.

HOW WILL WE KNOW WE HAVE FORGIVEN?

When we are reminded of the person, see them or speak to them, and we have no negative response, we are free! In years to come we may even choose to pray for this person and our hearts will be broken with compassion for them. When this happens we have experienced the heart of Jesus for them.

FORGIVING OURSELVES

I know God has forgiven me, but how do I forgive myself? Self condemnation is another bondage that can be used against us to keep us from fulfilling God's purpose in our lives. Too much of the bondage most Christians live in is self-inflicted. I have found it so helpful to explain how, when we don't forgive ourselves, we are placing ourselves above God. If God can forgive us, who are we not to forgive ourselves? We are saying God isn't the judge, we are. God sent His Son so we might be free. How much more we can worship Him when we see even another redemptive power of the cross. Forgiving ourselves is as simple as this: "I choose to forgive myself for..."

RELINQUISHMENT

Relinquishment is not a familiar term to us. In its simplest sense though, it is “letting go.” For those of us that have grown up in the church we are familiar with the biblical concept of “dying to ourselves.” And, as Christians we often give and receive the advice to “just give our problems to God.” Both of these are means of relinquishment. However, experience has shown that most of us aren’t sure what “letting go,” “dying to ourselves” and “giving our problems to God” really mean, and the application of these processes has not taken place in most of our lives.

So, what is relinquishment?

Three basic dictionary definitions of relinquishment are:

- To loose one’s hold on something or someone.
- To surrender a right.
- To put aside a plan.

RELINQUISHING A RELATIONSHIP WITH SOMEONE

One area of relinquishing a person is letting go of someone who we have lost relationship with. This loss of relationship can happen through brokenness, life circumstances, or death. Friendships fall apart, families move away, and loved ones pass on. Bondage comes when we hold the rights to these relationships in our hearts and refuse to release them.

For example, a child may have difficulty releasing his right for having his biological father with him at all times. The father may even abandon the biological children and spend all of his time with his new stepfamily. I have seen adult children carry resentment for this type of offense years into their adult lives. The only path to healing for this is to release the father to the other family.

When a close family member has died, or we have experienced a miscarriage or an abortion it is common for us to hold onto the deceased in a way that can be a burden. We almost deny that they have died and we keep them alive in our hearts. This burden usually becomes more than we can bear and one day we finally must release the person into the Lord’s hands so He can take care of them and we can be free.

Redemption

Pray and release the person (or the child) into God’s hands. In the case of infant death it’s letting go of the responsibility for the infant and allowing God to carry it. The case of releasing an adult (such as a close family member) to death eventually requires releasing the right to that relationship in our hearts. When we lose a relationship it is necessary to allow a time of mourning to take place to grieve the loss.

Where a relationship has ended simply because of circumstances in life (such as geographic changes or a broken friendship) we again need to grieve the loss or change in the relationship, release the right to it and release the person into God’s hands so that we are not bound and they aren’t either.

RELINQUISHING CONTROL AND RESPONSIBILITY

Another area of relinquishing someone is to release control of—or responsibility for—another person who may not be meeting our standards or living in a way that we approve of. It is a common occurrence for us to accept responsibility for another person’s behavior, choices, or life

decisions. When we do this we are likely not respecting the person as an individual and are often unknowingly enabling them to continue in their choices.

The first sin we are committing when we act in this way is unbelief. We are not trusting God for this person. In fact, we are interfering with God by preventing them from experiencing the consequences of their behavior or decisions. A second sin that follows closely behind is the sin of trying to take Christ's place as their savior. They already have a savior; they just may have not accepted Him or fully submitted to His authority.

Often, the person making poor life choices is actually trying to escape from our control. A controlling parent can be the driving force behind the exact thing they are trying to prevent. By exerting inappropriate control and taking inappropriate responsibility for a child, a parent can leave a child feeling rejected and like they don't measure up. As discussed earlier, the wound of rejection is often the cause of rebellious behavior. In fact, a common definition of rebellion is "the rejection of rejection."

How is relinquishing someone different from abandonment?

Relinquishment is giving someone up; abandonment is giving up on someone. When we let go of someone we love, we stop taking responsibility for him, but we don't stop fulfilling our responsibility to them. We can relinquish by not rescuing a person from their consequences (legal or financial), but continue to support them spiritually and emotionally. We can stop trying to control, condemn, and enable them while maintaining a loving relationship of compassion, empathy, and conversation.

Redemption

An effective approach is to pray and put this person in God's hands; releasing responsibility for them and control of them. If applicable, we can confess and ask forgiveness for the unbelief and for attempting to be their savior.

When we are able to release someone to God's care, we are set free from inappropriate responsibility, the associated guilt, and an emotional roller coaster where they directly affect our moods. One of the ways we know we are free is that we do not feel a sense of anxiety or depression every time the person comes to mind. Our minds and hearts are freed to focus on other things and to care about other people. Letting go allows us to do new things with joy and enthusiasm.

RELINQUISHING OUR RIGHTS

Society tells us about our rights. Television ads tell us about our rights. We are entitled to this, we are destined for that. We deserve better. The truth is: If we all got what we deserved we would be dead. When we hold onto rights we think we deserved, it either keeps us stuck in the past or it can keep us stuck in unmet expectations of the future. Both of which end up bringing us grief.

A good way to figure out whether we are in bondage of this type is to look for "if only's" in our lives. "If only's" are impossible and illogical demands of the past or future placed on others or ourselves in the present. These obsessions deny reality as it is now, and they are one of the most effective tools the enemy uses to prevent us from functioning rationally.

“If Only’s” of the past

“If only I had a different father or mother...” “If only some one had loved me...” “If only I had gone to college...” “If only my parents had not gotten divorced...” “If only my parents *had* gotten divorced...” “If only I had a normal childhood...”

This is an area of relinquishment that lies at the edge of forgiveness. It is often a part of unforgiveness which is usually not identified and therefore often not dealt with. This area can cause us as much grief as unforgiveness itself.

It is not that we did not have needs or that the wounds of injustice were not devastating. The problem here is we have a life message stating that if only something in the past would be different then we would be okay. These thoughts and a constant focus on the past can become idolatry. They can repeatedly throw us into a downward spiral toward anger, depression, and self-pity. We believe life still owes us something. Unfortunately, life can never pay us back. We can't be born into another family. We can't change the past. Nor can we change what was done to us. What we can change is how we respond to these things. So how do we get free of the “if only’s” of the past?

Redemption

If we are holding onto an “if only” of the past we can repent of the idolatry and ask God's forgiveness. Then we can relinquish our rights and ask God to fill the voids in our hearts. He is the only one that can complete us. Where needed he can also “re-parent” us; stepping in and taking the place of the loving father or mother that was missing from our lives.

“If only’s” of the future

“If only I were married...” “If only I had my own business...” “If only I would win the lottery...” “If only I could have children...” “If only I had a boyfriend...” “If only I could pass geometry...” “If only I had someone to love me...” “If only I could get away from my house...”

It is healthy to have hopes, dreams, goals, and plans for our lives, but when they determine our identity or become a way to make us complete, they then become idolatry. Jesus gave us the example of living our lives saying to God, “Not my will, but Your will be done.” Some of our plans may not be part of God's plan, and giving up our rights to those plans—relinquishing our hopes, dreams, and goals—will help us come to peace with His plan.

After Abraham gave up Isaac to the Lord, He responded and built a great nation out of him. Similarly, it may often be the case that after we relinquish our hopes, dreams, goals, and plans to God, we find that He was the source of them and He may respond by returning them to us in a bigger and better sense. When these things get restored they may not look the same or match our expectations but we will always be more blessed for our obedience.

Redemption

If we can identify with the idolatry in an “if only” of the future it can be a good start to repent of it and ask God's forgiveness. Then we can relinquish our rights and trust God with our hopes and dreams. Scripture promises us that if we trust in Him for our future instead of trusting in our own understanding He will make our paths straight.

“If only’s” that bring condemnation (the “Should haves”)

“I should not have done that...” “I should be getting better grades...” “I should not have taken drugs...” “I should not have had an abortion...” “I should be better at respecting my parents...”

These are all statements that have an element of truth but when we dwell on them they bring condemnation. They are like a mask of good intentions, but they will never bring change. They will only cause shame, guilt, failure, depression, anger, and self-loathing. These statements can cause us to be in a continual cycle of failure and regrets (as commonly seen in cases of substance abuse). Often, this condemnation can come from people in authority, our peers, or our cultures that put demands or expectations on our lives.

Redemption

The solution to this condemnation is to ask God to forgive us for sins we have committed; forgive ourselves for not measuring up to our own standards, God's standards, or someone else's standards; and ask for God's strength to make better choices next time.

In many cases, a new vocabulary can also be of great help. Instead of saying, "I shouldn't keep eating like this," we can learn to say, "Lord, please give me the strength to eat in a healthy way," or "Lord, I would like to improve my eating habits. Please teach me your ways."

ACTIONS THAT MAY HAVE THE POWER OF A CURSE

Negative words spoken over us by a person in authority or a peer can be very hurtful. Even if they were only spoken once, we may continue repeating these words to ourselves hundreds of times. These statements can become a part of our belief system going deep into our spirit, affecting our personality, our behavior and even our physical appearance. This is evidence that the hurtful word can certainly have the power of a curse over us.

“But no one can tame the tongue; it is a restless evil and full of deadly poison. With it we bless our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the likeness of God.” (James 3:8-9)

Negative Self-Talk can be a self-induced curse. The negative self talk can begin from our how we see an event, such as when parents get divorced a child may believe he is at fault or there is something wrong with him. Other times we have started the negative talk from not meeting our own standards. Other examples could be as someone who is giving up “I’m tired of living... Nothing ever goes right... What’s the use? ...I give up... I might as well be dead...” And then there are comments like; “It’s driving me crazy! ...It runs in the family... I’ll never amount to anything... I’m a mess...”

“For as he thinks in his heart, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7)

Implied curses are non-verbal actions that show disapproval.

This is another way we receive curses. This is very subtle and not as easy to define. The implied curse comes from what we interpret from someone else’s expressions of disapproval (frowns, scowls, or other negative body language). Some people in authority have an uncanny ability to control or manipulate others with their action or expressions of disapproval, with facial expressions or body language. Sometimes this comes from the way they may ignore you or not acknowledge your presence when they walk in a room. We begin interpreting what that means and tell ourselves that we don’t matter or we can’t do anything right because they always show disapproval. We receive these signals and establish a conclusion in our minds that can have significant power over us.

Redemption

There are three steps to breaking these kinds of curses. First, we *recognize* the lie we have believed and *repent* of it; asking the Lord to forgive us for believing it. Next, we *renounce* the words spoken over us: “In the name of Jesus it no longer has power over me.” Third, we *replace* the lie with the truth: “From this day forward I choose to believe what the Word of God says about me.”

VOWS AND INNER VOWS

VOWS

“When a man makes a vow to the Lord or takes an oath to obligate himself by a pledge, he must not break his word but must do everything he said.” (Numbers 30:2)

"Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.' But I tell you, do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God's throne; or by the earth, for it is his footstool; or by Jerusalem, for it is the city of the Great King. And do not swear by your head, for you cannot make even one hair white or black. Simply let your 'Yes' be 'Yes,' and your 'No,' 'No'; anything beyond this comes from the evil one." (Matthew 5:33-37)

“It is a trap for a man to dedicate something rashly and only later to consider his vows.” (Proverbs 20:25)

A vow is a solemn promise that commits us to a behavior, a course of action, or a way of thinking. Vows allow us to adopt a statement as part of our belief system. We bind and hinder ourselves with vows such as “I’ll never get married,” or “I’ll never have children,” or “I’ll never trust a man.”

Sinners and saying, “I will never do this again,” has good intentions, but we immediately condemn ourselves when we do this. When we make this same mistake again we have not lived up to God’s standards. However, when we vow never to do it again and break the vow we have failed to live up to our own standards. When we break God’s standards we can go to Him for forgiveness and redemption. When we break our own standards we have no savior. We are stuck. Therefore, even vows with the best of intentions can lead us into condemnation and shame.

INNER VOWS

“For as he thinks within himself, so is he.” (Proverbs 23:7)

An inner vow is an unspoken determination we have made in our heart. Inner vows are different from spoken vows in that they are non-verbal and therefore frequently undetected. They can arise from traumatic life experiences and often occur very early in life. An inner vow made as a child can go down deep into our heart where it lies forgotten but continues to guide the course of our life. A distinctive mark of inner vows is that they resist change, and consequently we rarely grow out of them. They have a strong ability to blaze a trail for decisions we make in our adult life and can direct the course of our life the same way that a railroad track directs a train.

Inner vows may be at the root of—or work together with—compulsive behavior, bitter root judgments, hidden resentments, fears, and woundedness. The crucial factor concerning them is that they are often the key to healing. Their stubborn resistance to change, until recognized and broken, may be what blocks release from other areas.

Redemption

When you have recognized that you have made a vow, you can pray in this way: “Lord, I ask you to forgive me for making this vow of _____. I renounce it in the name of Jesus. It no longer has a part of me.” Instead of making vows, a healthy choice for positive change would be

to say, "Lord, I want to walk in your ways in this area of my life. Please give me the grace to accomplish it."

The way to find hidden inner vows is to ask the Holy Spirit to reveal them to us. As David wrote in Psalm 139, we can pray, "Search me, O God, and know my heart."

When vows are released in the power and authority of Jesus' name, they are broken, immediately restoring our freedom of choice. Our lives are free from the predetermined route of the vow and we are more open to the Lord directing them into His fullness.

BITTER ROOT JUDGMENTS

Bitter root judgments are vows that include another person such as; “I will never be a drunk like my dad,” or “I will never marry anyone like her,” or “I will never treat my children like my dad did me.”

The simple laws of God that affect all life

Life will go well for us in every area in which we could honor our parents, and life will not go well for us in every area in which we could not honor them (Deuteronomy 5:16). To honor means to respect or to esteem. No child has yet had a set of perfect parents. Therefore, as children we have all had areas of opportunity to dishonor or disrespect our parents. If we have chosen to dishonor, we may now be encountering difficulties in our own lives.

We will receive judgment in the same areas of life in which we have handed out judgment against others (Matthew 7:12). Psalms 96:13 also declares that God will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His truth. The laws of God will operate regardless of whether we know of them or are ignorant; whether we believe or disbelieve.

Whatever we sow, we will reap. This is another law of God that is as certain as the physical law of gravity. When we sow a seed of judgment against someone, it has multiplication potential to cause much torment in our lives. The longer a judgment continues, unrepented and unconfessed, the greater power it gains.

Consequences of Judgment

Judgment is made and registered in the spirit. It becomes an expectation (such as, “that is the way my parent is,” “that is the way men are,” or “that is the way authorities are”). This is referred to as “bitter root” judgment because it is a judgment created and festered out of unforgiveness.

When we harbor a bitter root judgment against someone, the same judgment is projected into our other relationships; especially marriage or other close relationships. There is often a negative expectation that our spouse (or others) will show the same characteristics as the person we have harbored judgment against. Hebrews 12:15 states: “See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter roots grow up to cause trouble and defile many.” The fruit we harvest from a bitter root makes others not want to be around us.

We can also project a similar judgment onto God. We can know in our mind the truth about God’s character, but our heart can have trouble fully believing it. Our perception of God is based on life experience with people in authority, and instead of believing God’s character to be as the Bible describes it, we can project aspects of their character onto Him.

Redemption

To be free of Bitterroot Judgments, we can identify vows such as “I will never be like my mother,” or “I will never marry someone like my dad,” To break the power of the judgment, we can pray “God forgive me for this bitter root judgment that I will never_____. I renounce it in the name of Jesus and I pray that you break any judgment I have brought on myself.”

GENERATIONAL OR HEREDITARY SINS

“For I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand generations of those who love me and keep my commandments.” (Exodus 20:5-6)

We get from our parents and pass on to our children family values, belief systems, blessings, curses, and patterns of behavior. The ways we handle conflict in the family, forms of discipline, family rules and responsibilities are preserved. The good and the bad are passed on from one generation to another.

In the case of generational sin, the consequences for a parent’s sin will bring wounding to their children. When the children become adults they in turn hurt their children in similar ways and the consequences get passed on to the next generation. It’s only the intervention of the cross that can bring a stop to this and replace the consequences with blessings.

Some generational sins such as alcoholism are easy to see. However, some families that have a history of alcoholism mistakenly look at their present lives with pride thinking the sin is broken. They miss the root cause of the alcoholism—numbing pain through compulsive behavior. The children get wounded from the alcoholic’s behavior and find different compulsive behaviors to numb their own pain. The second and third generations simply substitute one compulsive behavior for another.

The good news is that whatever we have struggled with or identified as something that needs to be broken. We can do that with the power of the cross.

Redemption

“Lord I pray that you forgive me and my ancestors for the generational sin of _____. I renounce this generational sin in the name of Jesus. It cannot be passed on. I pray for your grace to adhere to your ways and refrain from passing this behavior on to my children.

SOUL TIES

God created us for relationship with Him. He also created us to be relational beings and form closeness and unity with others. But, when our relationships are inappropriate we break relationship with God and directly affect our relationships with others. There is bondage that comes from having inappropriate relationships (such as sex outside of marriage or someone taking advantage of us sexually against our will). We call this type of bondage “soul ties.”

“Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a prostitute is one body with her? For he says, ‘The two will become one flesh.’ But the one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with him.” (1 Corinthians 6:16-17)

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” (Genesis 2:24)

Soul ties can occur through strong emotional relationships, sexual experiences, or relationships of inappropriate authority. These are deep bonds that are naturally formed between us but that take us into bondage. We are not saying that it is wrong to have strong or deep relationships with others. Problems arise in an inappropriate relationship or when a healthy relationship ends for one reason or another and we have not let go of it. When this happens we are still bound by the soul tie.

The bondage that comes from soul ties can keep us from functioning in healthy ways in other relationships. For example, if we have strong emotional ties with someone or have a physical relationship with someone before marriage these ties can hinder us from fully becoming one with the person we marry.

Regarding purity, the Scriptures tell us that our body is considered to be the temple of the Holy Spirit. Scripture also cautions us against defiling our temple by sinning sexually. Our main motivation for breaking soul ties is to cleanse our temple and restore purity.

“But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, his own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”. (1 Peter 2:9)

“Therefore, prepare your minds for action; be self-controlled; set your hope fully on the grace to be given you when Jesus Christ is revealed. As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: ‘Be holy, because I am holy.’” (1 Peter 1:13-16)

Redemption

To prepare for the ministry of breaking soul ties, take a time to pray and ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you those areas where soul ties exist in your life. Consider the following:

- Are there areas of impurity (sex, inappropriate touching, lustful thoughts, etc.)?
- Has anyone defiled me?
- Have I defiled anyone?
- Are there emotional ties that need to be broken?

It can be helpful to compose a chronological list; starting with the first incident you remember and working your way to the present.

You may also want to consider memoirs or gifts from someone you were in a wrong relationship with. When we are seeking to break off soul ties with someone it may be helpful to remove the photos and other things that we are keeping to remember them. Pray and the Lord will show these things to you.

When soul ties are broken we experience freedom that can leave us feeling pure and clean again; free from guilt and shame. Combined with relinquishment we can enjoy the newness that comes from being able to let someone go and move on with our lives.

This prayer is used to break spirit and soul ties when sins of adultery, fornication, homosexuality, pornography, or prostitution are an issue:

Heavenly Father, I ask you to forgive me for committing the sin of [name the specific sin] with [name the person], and I take back any ground I gave the devil through this relationship. I bind, cast off and put away from me any evil influence of [the person's] spirit over my spirit or my spirit over [name the person]. I cut off any spirit and soul ties. I renounce this relationship once and for all, in the name of Jesus.

This prayer is used to break the power of an inappropriate authority in your life. Inappropriate authority would be defined as someone oppressing, controlling, dominating, or manipulating someone in a relationship:

Heavenly Father, I forgive [name the person] for the inappropriate authority they had in my life and I forgive myself for allowing it. I take back any ground that was given the devil through this inappropriate authority. I bind, cast off and put away from me any evil influence of [the person's] spirit over my spirit. I cut off any spirit and soul ties. I renounce this relationship and I renounce this inappropriate authority, once and for all, in the name of Jesus. (If applicable, you may also want to renounce the spirit of slavery).

SOUL TIES MINISTRY

To prepare for this, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you those sexual sins committed to you or by you, which need to be brought into the light. Compose a chronological list [emphasis on list], starting with the first incident you remember working your way up to the present time. Strong emotional ties may also need to be broken.

Ask yourself -

- Has anyone defiled me?
- Have I defiled anyone? [women, men or children]

BREAKING SOUL TIES PRAYER

This prayer is used to break spirit and soul ties when sins of adultery, fornication, homosexuality, pornography, prostitution or bestiality are an issue.

Example 1 (Sins you committed)

Heavenly Father, I ask you to forgive me for committing the sin of [name the specific sin] _____ with [name the person] _____, and I take back any ground I gave the devil through this relationship. I bind, cast off and put away from me any evil influence of [name the person] _____ spirit over my spirit [or my spirit over [name the person] _____]. I cut off any spirit and soul ties and break any affinity. I renounce this relationship once and for all, in the Name of Jesus. *Affinity: A relationship similar to marriage relationship.*

BREAKING INAPPROPRIATE AUTHORITY

This prayer is used to break the power of an inappropriate authority in your life. Inappropriate authority would be defined as someone oppressing, controlling, dominating, or manipulating someone in a relationship.

Example 2 (Sins committed against you)

Heavenly Father, I forgive _____ [name the person] for the inappropriate authority they had in my life and I forgive myself for allowing it. I take back any ground that was given the devil through this inappropriate authority. I bind, cast off and put away from me any evil influence of [name the person] _____ spirit over my spirit. I cut off any spirit and soul ties. I renounce this relationship and I renounce this inappropriate authority, once and for all, in the name of Jesus. (You may also recognize the need to renounce the spirit of slavery).

CLEANSING THE HOME

You may also want to consider certain possessions in the home that don't glorify God. Consider memoirs or gifts from someone you were in a wrong relationship with. Consider also pornography, idols, souvenirs from vacations or other countries that might represent false religions and the like. Pray and the Lord will reveal these things to you.

DISHONOR TO SHAME

“Honor your Father and your Mother, as the Lord your God has commanded you, so that you may live long and that it may go well for you...” (Deuteronomy 5:16)

This passage holds a promise for honoring our parents. However, often from wrong choices in life, we experience the opposite: consequences of shame through dishonor. We may dishonor our family by sins we commit, and even if the family was not aware of our sin we experience shame anyway. This seems to occur like the balancing of an equation. This is only corrected or justified by applying God’s principles through the power of the cross.

It is helpful to know the difference between guilt and shame at this point. Guilt is a consequence we experience when we sin against God or break God’s law, where as shame is what we feel when we break man’s law, a social standard, or even a standard we ourselves have set.

Many have asked God to forgive them for a sin they have committed but have not experienced complete freedom because they have not been released from the shame. This can be the result of dishonoring themselves, their family, or even the Body of Christ. For example, some people who have been raised in homes with high values find that when they have fallen short of those values, they have ended up carrying shame for many years.

What if it wasn’t us who sinned but someone that sinned against us? This is sometimes a common occurrence that an adult child carries the shame of another person’s sin. The dishonor may be against her and she is carrying the shame. This result of shame is often a by-product of false guilt. In this instance, it would be good to begin by forgiving the one who has dishonored us, renounce the false guilt and the shame, which is often inflicted by the perpetrator, and receive the honor deserved as described in Isaiah 61:7: “Instead of shame and dishonor, you will enjoy a double share of honor. You will possess a double portion of prosperity in your land, and everlasting joy will be yours.”

Redemption

The redemption provided for us through the cross is clear. We first ask God to forgive us for dishonoring our family (considering the family values that have been violated). We may sense the need to ask a representative of the body of Christ to forgive us (if the sin we feel shame about was committed after we accepted Christ). If we are still not free we may need to forgive ourselves for falling short (if the standard is reasonable and not an unrealistic expectation set by ourselves or others). Finally, it can be helpful to ask our family members to forgive us for our sin as well.

MINISTRY WORKSHEET

Pray and ask God to show you:

1. Are there times in your past when you were hurt by someone you need to forgive, and for what (consider authority figures). Who do you need to forgive and for what? List traumatic experiences for which you would like prayer over.

2. What "If Only's" do you need to relinquish?

3. Were there any negative or hurtful words that may have been spoken over you, or you have said to yourself, which you wish to break the power of in your life?

4. Are there any vows, inner vows, or judgments to confess and break?

5. Are there any generational or hereditary sins in your life you would like to break?

6. With whom may you need to break soul ties, or are there any inappropriate authorities in your life?

7. Are there areas you may have dishonored yourself, your parents, or the Body of Christ?

8. What do you consider to be the things in your life that you should have done (should haves) or the things you shouldn't have done? (should nots)



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