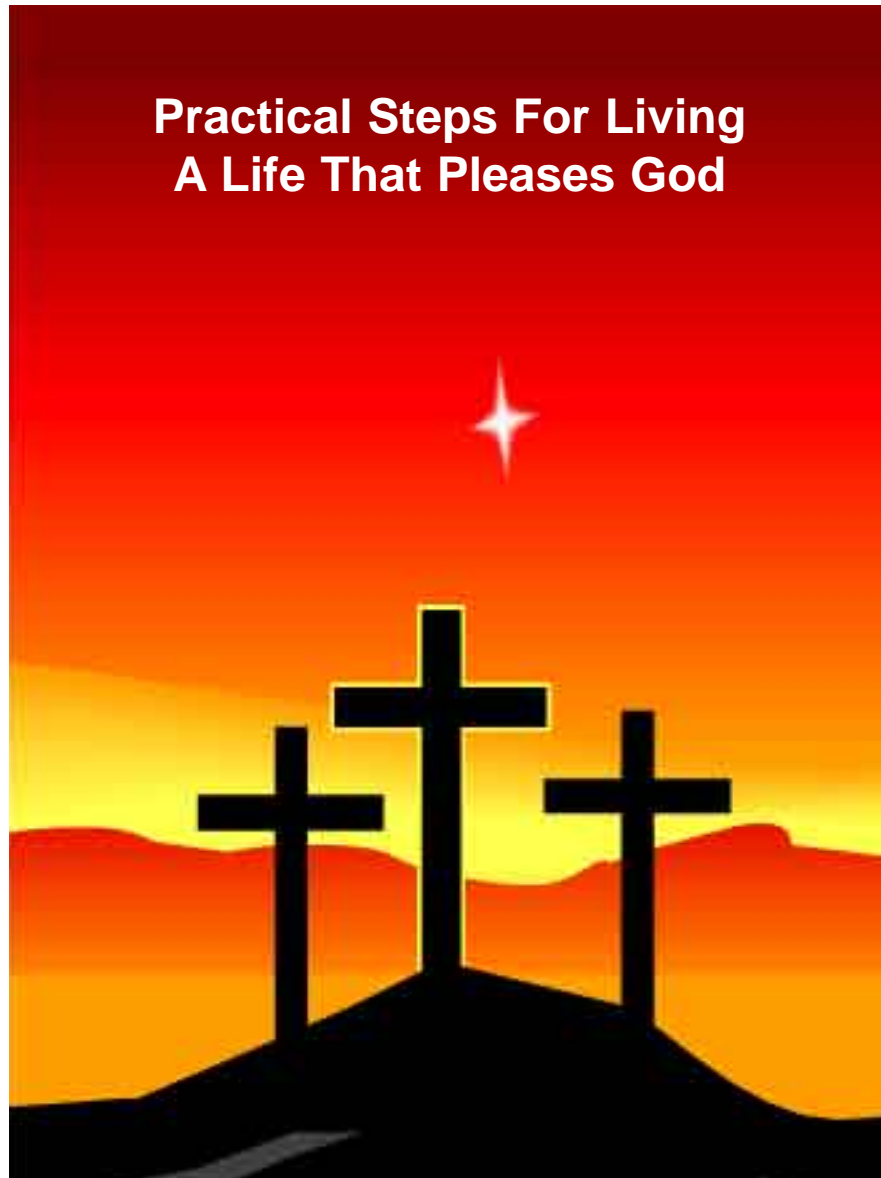


LifeBytes:

5. When Fear Is Good



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Dear Friends,

In our last LifeBytes, *Blazing a Trail*, we discussed the stages of development a man must go through in order to fulfill the pinnacle of his call in life — to be a biblical elder. We shared how difficult it is for men to get through the Wounded Stage of life, especially if he hasn't had consistent input from godly older men along the way.

If the point didn't get across clearly, we want to emphasize that it's far better for a younger man to learn to cooperate with God in the changes He wants to make **before** the onset of the Wounded Stage. This will make the Wounded Stage that much easier on EVERYBODY.

By giving deference to your father and to other older men during your Phallic and Warrior stages, you can reduce significantly the pain of the Wounded Stage. With that in mind, we want to address two other factors that are connected to your spiritual development:

1. **The crucial importance of a biblical fear of God.**
2. **Guidance for those who would help younger men.**

The Beauty of Fearing God

First, we want to stress that the fear of God is a good thing. As a matter of fact, it's essential if you want to relate to Him as GOD. Holy and awesome fear evidences that you understand Who He is, what He has done, and what He is capable of doing to fulfill His purposes.

As we were writing this LifeByte, David Wilkerson's 9-13-04 message arrived at our doorstep. As has happened so often in the past, the stream of the Spirit was flowing the same way in him and in us! In his cover letter, Wilkerson

lamented, "The more this nation loses its **fear of God**, and the more that depravity is justified, the more certain it is that **America will be judged.**"

Your fear of Him in no way nullifies your love for Him or His love for you. In essence, your fear demonstrates your deference to Him. And deference causes you to live with your Lord in proper humility. When Jesus extended friendship to His disciples in John 15:15, He in no way nullified His position as KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

While I served in the Navy, certain senior officers extended friendship to me. But out of deference to them, I would never think of bringing them down to my level by presuming on that friendship. I always honored these men for the position of authority they held over me. The same holds true for fathers. You can enjoy wonderful, loving friendship with your sons, but your biblical position as their father — one who deserves honor for having given them life — can never be put aside by either party.

The fear of God is threaded throughout both Testaments. There are many facets to fearing God. Let's review a few.

Moses gives us one reason for God desiring His children to fear Him: "*God has come to test you, so that the **fear of God will be with you to keep you from sinning***" (Exodus 20:20).

King David reminds us of the consequences to those who lack a fear of God: "*God, who is enthroned forever, will hear them and **afflict them—men who never change their ways and have no fear of God***" (Psalm 55:19; see Isaiah 11:2).

The concept of fearing God isn't too hard to understand. Our God, like any loving parent, corrects and disciplines His children when they are disobedient.

A healthy fear is a restraint that hopefully stops them from violating His holy standards.

When was the last time you evaluated your own “fear factor” in light of God’s awesomeness? The Book of Proverbs abounds with reminders of what is entailed in the fear of God. Please read them thoughtfully:

*“The fear of the LORD is the **beginning of wisdom**, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding” (9:10).*

*“The fear of the LORD **adds length to life**, but the years of the wicked are cut short” (10:27).*

*“The fear of the LORD is a fountain of life, **turning a man from the snares of death**” (14:27).*

*“The fear of the LORD **teaches a man wisdom**, and humility comes before honor” (15:33).*

*“Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the LORD a man **avoids evil**” (16:6).*

*“The fear of the LORD leads to life: Then one rests **content, untouched by trouble**” (19:23).*

*“Humility and the fear of the LORD bring **wealth and honor and life**” (22:4).*

*“Do not let your heart envy sinners, but **always be zealous for the fear of the LORD**” (23:17).*

*“Fear the LORD and the king, my son, and **do not join with the rebellious**, for those two will send **sudden destruction upon them**, and who knows what calamities they can bring?” (24:21,22).*

Did you notice that good things are promised to those who fear God? Fear of Him is not just to constrain us, but to bless us. But unless we fully observe Him through the lens of holy fear that permeates both Testaments, we’ll be deceived by the current “grandfather in the sky”

myth that excuses sin and gratifies wants.

These examples from the Newer Testament reiterate the Proverbs wisdom cited earlier:

*“I will show you **whom to fear: fear him** who after killing you has authority to throw you into Gei-hinnom! Yes, I tell you, **this is the one to fear!**” (Luke 12:5). Note that Jesus was addressing *His disciples* here!*

*“Then the Messianic community throughout Y’hudah, the Galil and Shomron enjoyed peace and was built up. They lived in the **fear of the Lord**, with the counsel of the Holy Spirit; and their numbers kept multiplying” (Acts 9:31). Followers of Jesus grew in number because they lived in such holy awe of God and obeyed the Spirit’s counsel.*

*“So it is with the **fear of the Lord before us** that we try to persuade people. Moreover, God knows us as we really are; and I hope that in your consciences you too know us as we really are” (2 Corinthians 5:11). Our testimony of God’s truth emanates from a conscious fear of Him in our love relationship with Him.*

*“Since you call on a Father who judges each man’s work impartially, live your lives as strangers here **in reverent fear...** Be respectful to all — **keep loving the brotherhood, fearing God** and honoring the emperor” (1 Peter 1:17; 2:17). These are ongoing elements of our walk in Jesus, whether vertically with our Lord, or horizontally with fellow believers and government authorities.*

The Greek word for fear used by each of these writers is the same, **phobeo**, from which we get the word phobia. It’s a powerful word of emotion indicating terror! Talk about a very real biblical truth that’s been shrouded by today’s “greasy grace/no consequences for sin”

misconception of our awesome, holy God!

“If anyone says, ‘I love God,’ yet hates his brother, he is a liar. For anyone who does not love his brother, whom he has seen, cannot love God, whom he has not seen” (1 John 4:20).

A glaringly important life principle leaps out from this verse: How can anyone claim *love* for God Whom we can’t see, if we don’t *love* those who are right before our eyes? You can’t claim anything about your relationship with God if it can’t be seen in your treatment of people here on earth.

Related to this principle: One way we evidence our fear of God is to honor and respect those whom He has given authority over us.

Scripture discusses four authority entities God’s people must honor: **parents, spiritual elders, government leaders, and employers**. If you rebel against any of these, you’ll reap dire consequences in your life.

Authorities in any realm hold the biblical responsibility to:

Include that which is *conducive*...;

Exclude that which is *detrimental*...;

Encourage that which is *conducive*...;

Correct that which is *detrimental*...

Parents

Your first experience with responding to authority comes through your parents. Note the command found in both Testaments, **“Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. ‘Honor your father and mother’—which is the first commandment with a promise—that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth” (Ephesians 6:1-3).** Can you see the connection here to

some of the passages from Proverbs we quoted earlier — **“that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth”?**

Giving in to innate sin is the basic nature of mankind. Because of this reality, God enjoins parents with loving counsel to turn their children away from foolishness so they can grow in wisdom:

“Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far from him” (Proverbs 22:15).

“Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish him with the rod, he will not die” (Proverbs 23:13).

“The rod of correction imparts wisdom, but a child left to himself disgraces his mother” (Proverbs 29:15).

It is critical that parents carry out their responsibility to God and to their children. *All* children need correction, whether by word or by rod (depending on the heart of the child). Can it be that the *reluctance* of harried parents to walk in godly authority has reaped the bitter fruit of ever-increasing rebellion that blankets this culture with ungodliness?

If you neglect your responsibility in this critical arena, not only your children but the generations after them suffer for it. And, it is all the more difficult for your children to submit to the other authorities God has ordained.

Spiritual Authorities

First, let us emphasize that the biblical concept of spiritual authority has NOTHING to do with the Nicolaitan system of religion. God never ordained that a select category of educated men in their “Phallic and Warrior Stages” should occupy a manmade vocation called “the pastorate.” As we have emphasized in many of our writings, God ordained for the older, wise men, the *zakens*, to repre-

sent His care for His children.

If you are an older, wiser man who is reading this and wants to help younger men, always check FIRST to see how they relate to their parents. Our experience has shown that most problems people face later in life are due to failure to honor their parents, regardless of whether they are followers of Jesus or not. Even more detrimental is when the younger people hold bitterness and resentment against the ones who brought them into the world. **The problems they face NEVER disappear until they can completely honor BOTH parents.**

For some, this may take a visit to the graveside, if necessary, to humbly confess these sins, and to ask God for forgiveness for clinging to bitterness and rebellion for so long. Honoring parents is the first step toward respecting the authority of others God has set in place.

True spiritual elders, that is, the *zaken*s or biblical pastors we wrote about in our prior LifeByte, *Blazing A Trail*, walk in recognized authority to impart personal guidance, encouragement and correction as needed. The apostle Paul called for these older men to be held in high esteem as they fulfill their God-given responsibilities: “*We ask you, brothers, to respect those who are working hard among you, those who are guiding you in the Lord and confronting you in order to help you change*” (1 Thessalonians 5:12, JNT).

The writer to the Hebrews concurs: “*Let yourself be persuaded by the ones leading you and submit to them. They watch on behalf of your souls as those who will be rendering an account, in order that they may do this with joy, and not groaning, for this would be profitless to you*” (13:17, translated from Greek).

The followers of Jesus in Crete lived in a culture known far and wide for its corruption. Cretans were a rebellious lot! Yet Paul exhorts the evangelist, Titus, to walk forthrightly in the spiritual authority that his maturity as one appointing elders demands: “*These are the things you should say. Encourage and rebuke with full authority; don’t let anyone look down on you*” (Titus 2:15).

Don’t doubt that the rampant sin paralyzing congregations today is the same as that which plagued Corinthian believers. Their gatherings were fraught with supposed Christians actively engaged in sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, abuse, drunkenness and theft. And those who are walking in obedience are urged to *judge and expel the unrepentant!* (See 1 Corinthians 6:12,13.)

So many congregations teem with unconfessed unrighteousness, yet Paul’s commands to keep their faith community “*set apart for the Lord*” are ignored. (See 1 Corinthians 6:9,10.) The great apostle calls out for *the wise* to step up to the plate to guide and confront the spiritually off-base in their midst!

Government Authorities

No matter how you feel about our political leaders, we are told that the rulers of the world are God’s instruments to correct wrong-doers.

The Roman authorities of Paul’s time were neither just nor godly, yet what did he command in no uncertain terms? “*Everyone is to obey the governing authorities. For there is no authority that is not from God, and the existing authorities have been placed where they are by God*” (Romans 13:1,2).

God has sovereignly placed these authorities for His purposes, and He can just as readily replace them. Twice in

verse 4 of Romans chapter 13 Paul addresses these Roman authorities as “*God’s servants*”, using the same Greek word which is translated elsewhere as deacons! That’s why we’re exhorted in verse 7 to pay whatever is due: taxes, respect, fear or honor!

Paul counsels Titus as well in his work with the believers in Crete to address their relationship with their governing authorities: “*Remind people to **submit to the government and its officials, to obey them, to be ready to do any honorable kind of work***” (Titus 3:1).

Therefore, whoever resists the authorities is resisting what God has instituted; and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves. “*For rulers hold no terror for those who do right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be **free from fear** of the one in authority? Then **do what is right** and he will commend you. For he is God’s servant to do you good. But if you do wrong, **be afraid**, for he does not bear the sword for nothing. He is God’s servant, an **agent of wrath** to bring punishment on the wrongdoer*” (Romans 13:3,4).

Employers

Not many are eager to be identified as a slave or even a servant. Slaves work under the authority of another person — but so do all employees. So let’s look at our responsibilities on the job to those who have authority over us:

“*Slaves, **submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh***” (1 Peter 2:18).

It’s simple: We owe the people in authority for whom we work both honor and diligence to work as if we are working for our Lord (Colossians 3:23).

Summation

All of mankind is bent on sinning and doing wrong. We deserve nothing but wrath in response for our rebellious hearts. Yet our God in His love and mercy has made a way for us to be reconciled to Him, and to live as His beloved servants under the authorities He has ordained.

Our starting point is a holy fear of our Lord. Out of that love and awe come the honor and respect due those He has placed in authority to guide and correct us in righteous living. A man’s humility and deference toward those in authority define him as either a wise person or one of several types of “fool”. We’ll deal with this shortly. But first...

Be Careful Before You Minister to a Younger Man

If you discern that our Lord wants you to help a younger man grow more spiritually mature, then you need to exercise some form of accountability and authority in his life. The Church to which Jesus is betrothed isn’t a free-for-all. Older, wiser men who follow Jesus aren’t supposed to be relegated to just offering “suggestions.” God calls for yielded, compliant hearts on the part of the younger men who seek these men’s involvement in their lives.

Older men need to know that they aren’t offering pearls to “hearers only” who will cast their wise counsel aside. Younger men should be warned that there are serious consequences when they refuse the wise counsel of those who involve themselves as “spiritual fathers” in guiding them.

Older, wiser men, *be careful* in your desire to help. Don’t just rush in to meet an immediate need. First discern the

nature and character of the young man you want to help. If you find his nature bent on self-gratification and sin, be cautious.

For instance, Paul warns the evangelist Titus against helping divisive people. Having just enumerated various forms of disobedience and passions that had once driven him as well as all unbelievers, Paul then points straight to the person of Jesus as the One to emulate.

The older apostle recognizes that the divisive person has no intention of conforming to the goodness of Jesus. Instead, this person will search out flaws in arguments, and rationalize his right to live the way he wants, perhaps with the misused canard that he's not "under the law". When you've determined that this person wants to cling to his old nature more than he wants to follow Jesus, follow Paul's command: "*Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him*" (Titus 3:10).

Don't lose sight of the fact that wicked people influence those who choose to do good according to God's Word: "*Do not be misled: 'Bad company corrupts good character'*" (1 Corinthians 15:33).

Bad character in companions can dampen the zeal of those who yearn to follow Jesus wholeheartedly. That's why God stood so firmly in His command to *purge the evil* from among the Israelites:

*If a man has a **stubborn and rebellious son** who **does not obey his father and mother** and will not listen to them when they **discipline him**, his father and mother shall take hold of him and **bring him to the elders** at the gate of his town. They shall say to the elders, *'This son of ours is **stubborn****

***and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a profligate and a drunkard.'** Then all the men of his town shall stone him to death. You must **purge the evil from among you**. All Israel will hear of it and **be afraid**" (Deuteronomy 21:19-21).*

Obviously, this command was not one that occurred often in Israel. And perhaps that was the whole intent — that the people would be so appalled by the horrific consequences of allowing such rebellion in their midst that they would deal with it before it got that far! A good lesson, to be sure, for families today!

Those who might offer guidance and correction to one whose sin has become public must be vigilant themselves to not get caught up in the same evil. Such a responsibility belongs to those who are mature enough in their walk to not give way readily to either the act or to excuses about it: "*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are **spiritual** should restore him gently. **But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted***" (Galatians 6:1).

When you help someone in sin, picture them with a virus that you too can catch if you're not careful!

Teach the Simple; Cast Out the Rest

We have written in *Restoring the Early Church* (a free download from our website) about the types of fools the early church elders confronted. The first category, the Simple Fool, they could readily help. The other three categories, however, were a waste of effort until they were ready to repent. These were excluded from the gathering.

Turning them over to Satan as Paul

ordered the Corinthian church was a last resort of mercy in the hope that they would turn from their sin and turn to God for forgiveness. *“Hand this man over to Satan, so that the **sinful nature may be destroyed** and his **spirit saved** on the day of the Lord”* (1 Corinthians 5:5). At this point all human help has failed to help the person turn from his sinful nature. So God orders us to let Satan chew on him, and to not offer solace or comfort while he’s still determined to walk in his sin.

A caution is due here: Be careful that you *don’t despise* a person who is turned over to Satan. This response can be hard to avoid because of how much the unrepentant person has resisted God’s grace. No one finds it easy to turn anyone over to Satan. Having to do so indicates just how hard this person has pushed his extended spiritual family. Earnestly pray for him, and welcome him back joyfully when Satan’s painful interaction has brought him to repentance.

Four Types of Biblical Fool

[Adapted from *Our Father Abraham* by Marvin Wilson]

The Bible time and again calls for the people of God to walk in wisdom. When they don’t, they are regarded as fools. Hebrew Scriptures recognize four types of fool. Discern from the following descriptions which type you may be, or if someone you are helping is in one of these categories.

Simple Fool (*peti*)

This denotes an ignorant or immature person who is vulnerable to error but still yielded and teachable. The *peti* [PEH-tee] shows deference to those who help him, and should be welcomed

when he seeks help. The *peti* recognizes that he needs correction and is willing to **learn** and **apply** wisdom to his life. It’s important for all of us who would follow Jesus: **If you can’t be wise in a particular situation, at least be teachable!**

Hardened Fool (*kesil and ewil*)

The *kesil* [KESS-ill] is stubbornly set in his ways: *“As a dog returns to its vomit, so a kesil repeats his folly”* (Proverbs 26:11). The *ewil* [EH-will] adds insolence and anger to his unwillingness to change. No matter how often you try to help this individual, he goes back and repeats the same mistakes. He may appear to listen to your counsel, but when you talk with him later he’s done nothing that you agreed upon as a wise course of action!

Mocking Fool (*letz*)

This fool is described in Proverbs 21:24: *“The proud and arrogant man—“Mocker” is his name; he behaves with overweening pride.”* The *letz* [lehts] disrupts the discussions of righteous men and women and heckles people of wisdom. He can’t see the pit he’s dug for himself, and he always thinks he’s smarter than those who try to help. This person always has an excuse or reason for why your counsel won’t work.

God-denying Fool (*nabal*)

The *nabal* [NAH-bull] denies that God has an influence in his life: *“The fool says in his heart, “There is no God”*” (Psalms 14:1). This person creates a god in his own image, a false god who will excuse his sins. He has no fear of the one true God in his heart. Therefore, he has no reason to obey His commands or listen to sound counsel.

IT IS CRITICAL, IN ORDER FOR YOU TO SERVE GOD PROPERLY, THAT YOU FIRST DISCERN THE HEART OF A YOUNG MAN YOU MAY GUIDE.

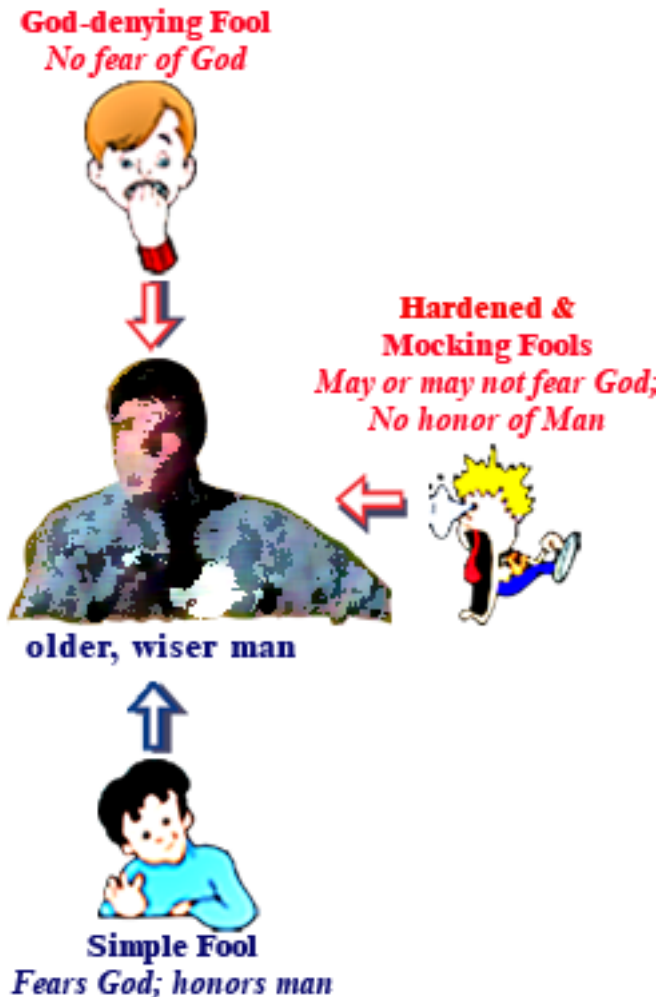
When you help a Simple Fool, you'll find that he gives you deference. There is no strain for you when you share wisdom that may help him.

On the other hand, with the Hardened, Mocking, and God-denying Fools you feel **resistance** and **emotional strain** in your discussions. None of these types of fools give deference to anyone. As a matter of fact, the strain itself should be a warning that you are not dealing with a Simple Fool.

Please, BE CAREFUL!!! So many well-meaning men who have tried to help Hardened, Mocking, and God-denying fools have found themselves becoming *just like* the men they're trying to help. Many wives and families have suffered needlessly as they've watched their husband/father change into the nature and character of the man they're sharing counsel with.

Refer to the pictorial illustration:

- The **God-denying Fool** sees himself *above* both God and older, wiser men. Since he has no fear of God, he will never give deference to men who seek to help him, nor apply their counsel.
- The **Hardened** and **Mocking Fools** put themselves *on par with* the older, wiser man. They *may* fear God, but they give no honor or deference to anyone.
- The **Simple Fool** *looks up to* the older, wiser, man. He both fears God and honors those who deserve it.



Please, BE CAREFUL!!! One thing we learned in our research in Israel: You *didn't* cause his problems. If he won't accept your authority in this situation and your wise counsel, then let him go, or see if Matthew 18:12-20 is in order.

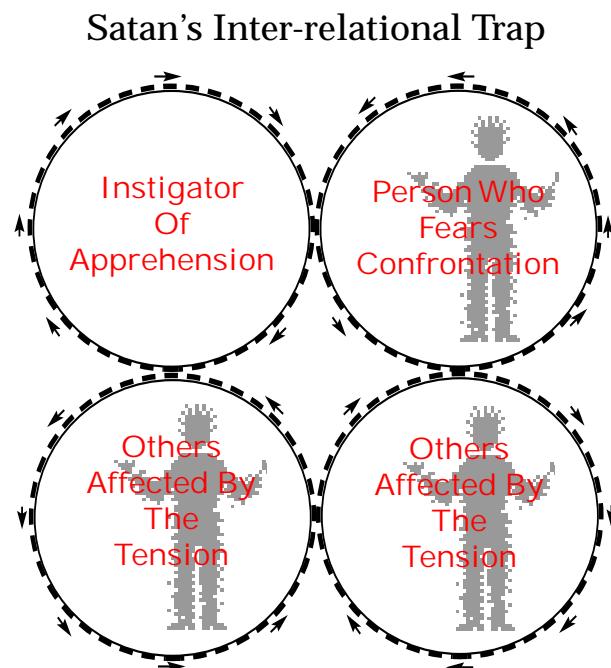
Helping a Married Man

If you are helping a married man, it's important that you discern the relational complexities involved. [If you're married, your wife can be invaluable in helping you with insights from a woman's perspective.] However, even though his wife may not like what she sees in her husband, she may vigorously defend him if she misperceives your involvement as an attack.

During a man's Wounded Stage, some wives switch from being his "wife" into the role of being his "mother". These women have no idea how to respond to a man who was once a warrior but is now confused, indecisive and sometimes plain hostile. Mothering is a role they're familiar with, but that's not what he needs during this painful time of transition.

Mothering can quickly become a control mechanism, one that's hard to give up when her husband finally passes into the Mature Stage. This is especially true if a wife has lived too long in co-dependency to her husband's destructive behavior.

You may want to become thoroughly acquainted with our book, *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation* (a free download). In it you'll find a diagram that depicts co-dependency. As you can see, sometimes the *whole family* needs help.



Co-dependent relationships look like gears meshed together.

The motion of the gears is driven by the dominant person's unconflicted behavior, ideas, or opinions. If you are the co-dependent person, you fear the emotional tension brought about by confrontation. You may then offer excuses and even defend the dominant person's behavior.

Affected by your fear and denial are the significant others, your children or spiritual family who are in close relationship with you. They may want to confront or admonish the one who is hurting everyone else, but they are also fearful of the emotions the confrontation may generate. And if they care deeply about you, they may excuse your defensive actions as a co-dependent person.

We faced such a situation at one of our *Restoring the Early Church* workshops. The participants were seated at tables in "family groupings" of those with whom they already had a relationship or shared something in common.

One older group didn't seem to be making much progress on their group discussion assignment. As Mike talked with them, they revealed that one of their group who had just left for the afternoon had held them all in bondage for years. His overbearing attitude and arrogance had prevented them from addressing the discomfort they felt when he verbally abused them. They had all murmured about the situation but had never gone to the man with the bold love that confrontation requires.

When Mike finally was able to break through their co-dependency with the truth of their disobedience to God and their own unloving cowardice, they repented. After they prayed, two of them purposed before God to hold one another accountable to go to this individual with confession of their own sin and with admonishment and exhortation for him.

In this not uncommon situation, you can't confront only the dominant person and expect that everyone else will breathe a sigh of relief and things will be wonderful. You must also help the co-dependent person and the significant others because their attitudes and behavior have been altered by their response to the dominant person. They, too, may need to repent for their failure to lovingly admonish those who have crippled the purpose of the Body.

In order to stop the gears from turning,
everyone involved must
confront the reality of the situation,
confess their part in it,
repent before God,
and look for God's ways
to relate righteously to each other.

Ask yourself: What relationships do
you need to evaluate to make sure you're
not part of a co-dependent problem?

Final Exhortation

Keep the passage below in mind
when you consider helping someone.
Some types of sin *do* lead to death, spiri-
tual and possibly physical death: "*If any-
one sees his brother commit a sin that does
not lead to death, he should pray and God
will give him life. I refer to those whose sin*

*does not lead to death. There is a sin that
leads to death. I am not saying that he
should pray about that"* (1 John 5:16).

Men, we encourage you to ask those
who know you well:

1. What type of fool are you?
2. What stage of life are you in? (See
LifeBytes 4. *Blazing a Trail.*)

These two pieces of information may
do more for your future development
than you realize. If you're neither Wise
nor Simple, then repent and get help
from older, wiser men!

Through God's grace, staying simple and
ever seeking His wisdom,

Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz

(Colossians 1:28)