



## **Mutually Growing Christ-like Relationships A How-To Guide For Removing Hindrances**

(Sequel to *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation*)



**Restoration Ministries International**

*Mike & Sue Dowgiewicz*

Web: [www.Restorationministries.org](http://www.Restorationministries.org)

## Table of Contents

Chapter 1, Page 3  
**New Wineskins Hold  
the Keys to the Kingdom**

Chapter 2, Page 11:  
**No One is Free Unless  
Everyone You Care For is Free**

Chapter 3, Page 19:  
**Growing in Christ's Likeness Together  
Requires Loving Confrontation**

Chapter 4, Page 27:  
**The Dire Consequences of  
Non-Confrontation**

Chapter 5, Page 30:  
**God's Loving Peacemaker**

---

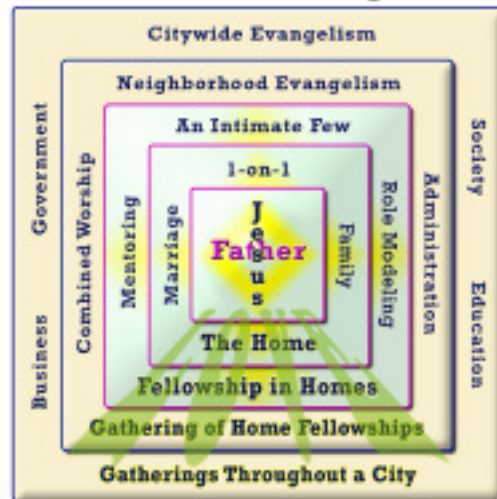
### Introduction

#### MUTUALLY HELPING EACH OTHER BECOME MORE LIKE JESUS

The Kingdom of God is first and foremost built upon *loving relationships*. Kingdom relationships begin with your covenant union with our Father and His Son, Jesus. The Spirit of Christ in you then flows out into all your other relationships. This is the vital understanding our Father is revealing through the Hebraic Restoration (see the *Restoration Diagram*, next column). He purposes that *every* relationship in your life emanate from your love-grounded, obedient trust in Jesus as Lord of your life.

From our Father's perspective, *love* is the powerful motivator that compels you to be transformed into the character of His Son. Out of love for Him and for those in His family, not only do you mutually help each other in this ongoing process of change. You're also impelled by love to be His ambassadors to an unsaved world. This is the nature

### Restoration Diagram



of Kingdom living! And, as you'll see, this way of life calls for steadfast determination not only on your part but on those who are close to you in the faith.

*Mutually Growing Christ-like Relationships* develops a biblical basis for helping one another experience and share with others the sacrificial love of Jesus.

**This is a training workbook that is best used together with your family and/or with those close to you in Christ who are committed to becoming more like Him in character and purpose. Take your time going through each chapter and section. Discuss each pertinent part with the goal of making the information a *way of life*. In each part make sure you're fully committed to the changes you need to make. What you will learn *and apply* is foundational to Kingdom living!**

As a follower of Jesus one of your most crucial roles is to remove spiritual and psychological barriers that hinder Christ-like transformation. If these hindrances are left unconforted within you and those close to you in the faith, they WILL adversely impact your relationship with God and with each other.

**Restoration Ministries International (restorationministries.org)**

*Sharing the Hebraic Foundations of the Earliest Followers of Jesus  
Preparing Today's Followers of Jesus to Fulfill Their Part in His Kingdom*

In the Kingdom of God each of us is called to “*make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual upbuilding*” (Romans 14:19). Peace and edification come from intentional biblical intervention, whether in marriage, parenting or in all other Kingdom-minded relationships. In order to *mutually* be used by the indwelling Spirit to become more like Jesus requires that each of you has:

- **a wholehearted desire to be transformed into the character of our Lord Jesus.**
- **a humble willingness to receive biblically-based constructive criticism from those who deeply care about you.**

Refusal to be fully committed to either of these parameters will *hinder any growth* in personal transformation into Christ’s likeness. And, resistance in these two areas will *curtail removal* of those things that are detrimental to mutually experiencing the love of Jesus with one another.

If you’re following Jesus as your Lord and Savior, the Kingdom of God is *within you* because the Spirit of King Jesus is abiding there. *You* are privileged as His representative to extend His Kingdom both among those you care about and the people you encounter during the course of each day. In this light, you need an *available heart*, mindful that your Lord wants you to help others become His followers and become like Him through His Spirit at work in them.

The Kingdom of our Lord is now at war against satanic powers that are out to destroy relationships and keep people out of heaven. Diabolical battles are being fought in the souls of people—in their mind, will and emotions. Satan uses *demonic strongholds* and the *human sin nature* as his weapons of destruction. But *you* have the Spirit of Jesus Whose Name alone is far greater than all the fiends of hell.

## Chapter 1

### NEW WINESKINS HOLD THE KEYS TO THE KINGDOM

*“No one tears a patch from a new garment and sews it on an old one. If he does, he will have torn the new garment, and the patch from the new will not match the old.*

*And no one pours new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins, the wine will run out and the wineskins will be ruined.*

*No, new wine must be poured into new wineskins” (Luke 5:36-38).*

In this vivid word picture our Lord Jesus was telling all who would put their trust in Him that *something new* was required of them if they were to embrace the “New Covenant” with His Father which He was about to make possible through His shed blood (Hebrews 12:24; 2 Corinthians 3:6). In order to participate in this new covenant, you must become a “*new wineskin*” so that the “*new wine*” poured into you may have its life-giving effect. As Jesus affirmed with another metaphor, you can’t patch a trust in Him or be part of His Kingdom if at the same time you’re relying on the practices and rituals of religion.

To receive the “*new wine*” means that you need to be transformed into a “*new wineskin*” so you can embrace the fullness of the Father/child relationship (Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6) being offered to you in Christ. To be the Father’s child as well as part of the Kingdom Jesus came to establish necessitates a heartfelt commitment to a life of ongoing transformation.

- **Transformation into a “*new wineskin*” calls for total reliance on the power of His Spirit within you to change you.**

- **The Spirit also transforms you by the mutual support of others who have a wholehearted desire to become more like Jesus.**

Ask yourself if what *you* believe about that which our Lord Jesus came to establish on earth is in fact biblical. You may have been taught that He came to establish some form of “Church system” with “sacred” buildings and orderly pews and scheduled services headed up by paid professional clergy. But nothing could be further from the truth! These are the “*old wineskins*” created by man *for* man.

The bitter fruit of man-made religion today finds clergy among the leading occupation for divorce in this nation. Christians in the “Bible belt” have a 50% higher divorce rate than non-Christians, and studies reveal that the moral standards of the “churched” are the same as unbelievers. How Jesus must grieve at this misrepresentation of His Kingdom!

**Religion, with its soul-pleasing traditions and rituals, is the hiding place of those who refuse to deny themselves, pick up their cross and follow Jesus no matter what the cost. Religion allows people to be *like the world*, seeing no need to represent to the lost either our Lord or His Word.** (See Luke 9:23-26; James 4:4; 1 John 2:15-17.)

### The Kingdom of Heaven Is Here

Jesus came to establish a Kingdom in which His followers wholeheartedly represent Him and His Word to others in their daily lives. The Kingdom needs absolutely no religious system. Jesus began His ministry in typically Hebraic fashion by proclaiming, “*Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is near*” (Matthew 4:17). He sent His disciples out telling them, “*As you go, preach this message: ‘The Kingdom of heaven is near’*” (Matthew 10:7). You can’t *see* His Kingdom

at this time because, as our Lord notes, “*the Kingdom of God is within you*” (Luke 17:21).

**His Kingdom is *within* His followers because the *Spirit* of King Jesus is in all who belong to Him** (see Romans 8:9; Galatians 4:6). **When He returns, He will take up His throne and *visibly* reign as King** (Zechariah 14:5-9).

All throughout the four gospels Jesus expands our understanding of His Kingdom, both through examples as to its nature, as well as with our responsibilities as we serve Him in His Kingdom. [We encourage you to reread the Gospels from a *Kingdom* perspective, noting the responsive interaction He calls for between Him and His followers.]

You may be wondering, “What then is the ‘*church*?’” Jesus mentions the church twice, in Matthew 16:18 and again in Matthew 18:17. The word “church” has strayed over the centuries to represent something far different than He intended. The Greek word *ekklesia*, commonly translated “church”, literally means the “*called-out ones*.” What is it that you’re *called-out of* and *called into*? Jesus gives us His answer:

*If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you **do not belong to the world**, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you* (John 15:19).

Think about it. Jesus calls you OUT OF the world’s way of thinking and acting (see 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4). When you lay down your old life to follow Jesus, you begin a pilgrimage of transformation OUT OF the world’s motives, values and goals, and INTO His Kingdom’s values and purposes.

**In the process of your transformation to become more like Jesus, those who love the world’s trappings and values will despise, mock and even hate you. If you don’t have**

**the courage to be a “*new wineskin*” to face this rejection, the world doesn’t mind if you hide out in religion—*any* religion.**

Paul affirms the wonder of the ongoing change Jesus does in you as you love and serve Him as Lord of your life:

*Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with unveiled faces all reflect the Lord’s glory, **are being transformed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, Who is the Spirit** (2 Corinthians 3:17,18).*

Ongoing character transformation is at the crux of being a “*called-out one*” (see 2 Peter 1:5-11). Yet, it’s vital that you realize that this doesn’t involve just you as an individual. Most of the commands in the Newer Testament are in the plural sense, not singular. In other words, you and others close to you in the faith are to *mutually* make God’s commands a way of life together. It’s on the basis of joint participation that Paul exhorts, “*Continue to work out your [plural] salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you [plural] to will and to act according to His good purpose*” (Philippians 2:12). *Together*, not alone, is how *y’all* are transformed into becoming more like Jesus.

#### **Take a close look at yourself:**

1. Do you and those close to you in the faith have an earnest and wholehearted desire to become more like Jesus no matter what the cost? Are each of you willing to change, or, are any of you resistant?
2. When you hear the word “church,” what comes to mind? Does it connote people, or a place where people gather each week?
3. With the understanding that “church” means the ones Jesus has *called out of the world* to become more like Him and do their part in



His Kingdom, how does that change your view of yourself and your relationships with others in your faith family?

## You've Been Given the Keys of the Kingdom of Heaven

Now that we've discussed the importance of *mutual* transformation into Christ's character, let's go back to Jesus' teaching about the "church," the people He's called out of the world. What does our Lord say about His called-out ones?

*I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of the heavens; whatever you **bind on earth** will be **having been bound** in the heavens, and whatever you **loose on earth** will be **having been loosed** in the heavens (Matthew 16:19, literal).*

He Who holds the authoritative "key of David" (Revelation 3:7, apperceiving Isaiah 22:22) is spiritually imparting an authority to you and to your brothers and sisters in Him to "bind and loose" whatever confirms what *He* has bound or loosed in heaven. He is using you and your trust in Him as the Rock to *carry out His purposes*.

*I tell you the truth, whatever you **bind on earth** will be **having been bound** in heaven, and whatever you **loose on earth** will be **having been loosed** in heaven. Again, I tell you that if **two of you on earth agree about whatever they ask, it shall be to them by My Father in heaven. For where two or three having been assembled in My name, there am I with them** (Matthew 18:18-20, literal).*

Along with this authority to confirm His commands and His Father's will as it is known in heaven, He promises to be with you when two or three come together *in His Name*, which represents His authority.

What is the nature of this authority Jesus has given you?

**Jesus is bestowing on you the responsibility to take God's commands in the Bible and apply them individually and collectively to your lives. That is, out of love for Him as your Lord, you make them a way of life as His ambassadors.**

**"To bind" applies to what you don't do that would violate God's commands and will. "To loose" is to make your way of life the Christ-like motives and actions found in the Bible. In this manner you're a living reflection of Christ to others as you personify the Spirit of Jesus Who is within each of you.**

When you put His Word *into practice* you are like the man building his house on the rock (see Luke 6:46-49). It's in the process of applying the Bible to your life that you *bind* or *loose* God's commands as appropriate. A biblical command is mere words to you unless people can see it as your way of life.

**A caution: What you "bind" or "loose" in your own life may be different than for someone else due to differences in spiritual maturity among the followers of Jesus. So be sure you don't judge the actions of others (see Matthew 7:1; 1 Corinthians 4:5). It's more important to your own spiritual transformation that you and those with you have a clear conscience about your own applications.**

God promises to "*show love to a thousand [generations] of those who love Me and keep My commandments*" (Exodus 20:6). This divine assurance of *His love* and *your loving responsibility* to make His commands a way of life is repeated by the Apostle John: "*Whoever has My commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves Me. He who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I too will love*

him and show Myself to him" (John 14:21; see also 1 John 5:2,3; 2 John 1:6).

**Your desire and purposing to make God's commands a way of life is your assurance that the Spirit of Jesus in fact dwells within you. If the One Who inspired the Bible's writers is within you, He will surely prompt you to make God's commands your way of life as He works in you. Think about it.**

Some of God's 613 commands in the Older Testament and the 1,050 in the Newer Testament describe your responsibility to Him as His loving and obedient child. Others explain your commitment to each other as family in Jesus, prescribing for you the basics for Christ-like relationships. Most of the commands in the Bible demonstrate how you are to treat others as Jesus would. In essence, the Bible is our Lord's means of instructing you how to lovingly be His *Kingdom representative*.

Scripture provides God's wisdom and perspective to show you how to *remove* those things in yourself that hinder the development of Christ-likeness. His Word also *affirms* those motives and actions that contribute to becoming more like our Lord. It's important that you learn to see God's Word this way!

### Steps in Binding and Loosing

When you're faced with a situation in which you need to apply God's Word, here are four steps to guide you individually and collectively:

- 1 Prayer.** To establish a *biblical application* for your particular issue, pray. Ask for a spirit of wisdom and revelation (see Ephesians 1:17), entreating Father to convey His will for your issue or concern.
- 2 Bible passages.** Next, ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind any verses that would

apply to your situation. Don't try to apply anything to your situation *until* you are sure that you have compiled all possible biblical references. Some verses will be more pertinent than others. That is, you'll recognize one or more of the verses as more foundational to the issue. Other verses will add understanding to the foundation. When you've taken the extra effort to pursue all the biblical leads prompted by the Spirit, a sense of peace will rest on you and those with you.

- 3 Biblical application.** Armed with the appropriate verses and passages, you can address your problem or concern with "*binding*" or "*loosing*" as appropriate. As Jesus promises: Whatever application(s) you make according to His Father's will confirms what's already recognized in heaven.

Be careful to not get into "if/then" reasoning as you try to apply the Word to the situation. The normal tendency after establishing a biblical application is to *rationalize* about potential outcomes: • What will this decision cost you? • How will this affect others? • What changes will you need to make if you decide to live by this new conviction as a way of life?

No matter how strong the urge is to weigh the personal cost of your decision—don't! You need to first determine in your heart that you *do* have the correct biblical application for your situation. The Holy Spirit will again give you peace if this is what God wants for you.

- 4 Action to take.** Only after you're convinced in your heart that you have correctly applied God's Word to your situation is it time to take the next step, to seek *God's grace* to carry it through. His grace is the *power and desire to uphold His truth* in your life no matter what it costs you.

Remember, you're applying the Bible to your life because of your *love for Jesus*. *God's grace* will enable you to keep your new conviction because of your desire to lovingly obey Him. Continue to pray for grace. And repent of not having known these new truths or lived by them before this time.

The goal is *not* right behavior for its own sake. If you hope that behaving correctly will earn God's favor, you're relying on your works rather than His grace. You may even find yourself disdaining those who don't live or think the way you do.

If this method of applying God's Word to your life hasn't been part of your faith enactment before, it may take a little time for you and those close to you to put it into practice. Be patient with each other! Each of the four steps is vitally important. Go over them as often as you all need until you're "*binding*" and "*loosing*" with the full assurance that the Spirit of Jesus is with you.

### A Follower of Jesus Is God's Ambassador

The Older Testament reveals that God chose the Israelites as His treasured people to serve a particular purpose:

*Observe [My commands] carefully, for this will show your **wisdom and understanding to the nations**, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people" (Deuteronomy 4:6).*

If Israel loved God and obeyed His good and holy commands, they'd represent Him as a God worthy to be feared and worshiped by the nations around them. Our Lord's purpose to reveal Himself to unbelievers through His chosen ones who love and serve Jesus hasn't changed.

If you're one of His "called-out-ones" you have the *indwelling Spirit of Jesus* to reveal to you our Father's heart for the lost. You've been chosen to be your Father's ambassador to an unbelieving world. To seek out the lost with the Good News of Jesus and His Kingdom is a true sign that the Spirit of the Lord abides in you (Romans 8:9). That means you are the Father's child. "*We are therefore **Christ's ambassadors**, as though God were making His appeal **through us***" (see 2 Corinthians 5:14-20).

Through His sacrifice on the cross Jesus made it possible that you could become a child of your heavenly Father. And it's the Spirit of Jesus within you Who compels you to actively and prayerfully seek the salvation of all you encounter. If you neglect or back off from this God-given assignment out of fear of rejection or whatever reason, Jesus warns plainly what will happen: "*If anyone is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be **ashamed of him** when He comes in His glory and in the glory of the Father and of the holy angels*" (Luke 9:23-26).

### A note of caution:

We realize that your Bible instruction may have come from seminary-trained teachers whose method of teaching emanated from Hellenism rather than from our Hebraic ancestors in the faith. As well meaning as they may be, most of these teachers have missed the *obedience* element of the scriptural pattern. Any teaching of God's Word should lead to *application*, with the learner held accountable to *put it into practice*.

The way *males* in particular learn is primarily through *role modeling*, putting into practice the way the teaching is to be enacted. This is the method Jesus used with His disciples, as did Paul as he disciplined Timothy, Silas, Titus, and others. The *discipling relationship* presented in the Bible



is one in which the disciple becomes like his/her teacher through adopting that person's way of life (Luke 6:40). Authentic biblical teaching begins with *role modeling* what you teach, and leads to a *changed life in the disciple*.

The method of role modeling a Christ-like way of life remained a constant among Christ's followers until the pagan Greeks who converted to Christianity introduced their "**academic model**"—the conveyance of content *without* role modeling. This is the basis to seminary instruction today.

When it comes to ministry, the academic model produces either trained pulpit speakers and/or silent spectators. Those who aren't behind the pulpit in a "church building" respond by passive listening—the most common response in western Christendom. Lives aren't changed by a weekly flow of sermon messages. Since numerous studies have shown that Christians and unbelievers are *no different* in lifestyle and practice of sin, what a defamation of God and His Word!

**The disastrous outcome of relying on seminary trained professionals to teach the Bible is that you're perhaps deceived into believing that *you* can't do much for our Lord or His Kingdom until you get more Bible knowledge yourself. This is the hidden pitfall of the "academic model." You keep *learning* more but *doing* little, remiss about putting into practice what you've already acquired.**

#### A note of encouragement:

If you're an authentic follower of Jesus and a child of our Father's, let's look at you from HIS perspective:

*I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to **little children**. Yes, Father, for this*

*was Your good pleasure* (Luke 10:21).

*Brothers, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the **foolish things** of the world to shame the wise; God chose the **weak things** of the world to shame the strong* (1 Corinthians 1:26,27).

Not the kind of description of yourself you'd expect, is it? All our Lord needs from you is to *trust the Spirit of Jesus* within you and *explore God's commands* with the intent of making each command that applies to you a way of life through *binding* (refraining from) or *loosing* (doing it). Then tell someone what you did so they can hear about your Lord and His living Word (2 Corinthians 3:3). This is the way of the Kingdom!

There's one other pitfall of the academic model that not only influences religious education but public education as well. People are seduced into thinking that when their "formal education" ends, they have no more need to learn. It's a false sense that "I've arrived" and that whatever new comes their way can be superficially examined and tossed aside. This attitude has been amplified by "personal technology" (iPhones, Facebook, Twitter) that isolates people from real-life interaction and authentic relationship.

The Hebraic model upon which the Bible, the Kingdom, and all true discipleship is based counts on a person having both a lifelong desire to learn and a willingness to change. Ongoing learning and application of God's Word must be your quest until you stop breathing!

The Kingdom of God is a *lifetime of transformation* into Christ's-likeness. If you feel you have no more to learn and no further changes to make, repent!

## The Commands of God: Mutually Applied, Then Passed Along

The Kingdom of God is founded on building love-grounded relationships in Christ. These relationships are *spiritual family*—brothers and sisters—mutually “one anothering” to encourage obedient trust and to spread the Good News of salvation that through Jesus the Kingdom is in the process of coming.

This means you have God-given *interpersonal responsibilities* to each other undergirded by loving others as you love yourself (Leviticus 18:18; Luke 10:27), and loving your enemies and praying for those who persecute you (Matthew 5:44). (That kind of countercultural living will definitely get noticed and prompt questions!)

Throughout Scripture followers of Jesus walk in His steps of love and obedience, each doing their part in His Kingdom to bring Him glory. This is why you need to apply each of God’s commands to your life, individually and corporately *binding* and *loosing* as appropriate. Grandparents and parents, you need to be *proactive* in making God’s commands a way of life for your progeny. That’s the *intergenerational* heartbeat of our Father behind this next passage. Take note of how *intentional and pointed* each command is:



*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands [referring to what you do] and bind them on your foreheads [referring to your thoughts]. Write them on the doorframes of your houses [what goes on in your home] and*

*on your gates [referring to who and what you allow in as well as what you do away from home] (Deuteronomy 6:6-9).*

## Impress God’s ways, talk about them...

Picture the ancient culture in which these commands were given by Moses. People grew up *relationally woven together* in villages where generations of their families lived and daily interacted with each other. Like their ancestor Abraham who was chosen by God because “**he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD by doing what is right and just**” (Genesis 18:19), the older men and women understood their responsibility to be *intentional* in using teachable moments to instill godly character in the younger generations. Every chore, every meal and every celebration were teaching opportunities!

Those of the Hebraic Stream of Judaism related to God in obedient trust as Abraham did, realizing that godly character far outweighed worldly success. Throughout their history they’d seen how God raised up righteous men like Joseph, second only to Pharaoh in Egypt; David the mighty King of Israel; Daniel, Shadrack, Meshach and Abednego, entrusted with high positions in the Babylonian Empire. Each was influential in his particular society because these men’s hearts were totally yielded to God and His ways.

As with any gathering of older family members, they talked about their children and their developmental needs as a natural part of their conversation. Those in leadership positions in the community understood that they needed to develop younger men to replace them someday in guiding the people. Both the *frequent contact* among the neighbors and the *intentionality* of the older generations to pass along wisdom enabled this to happen.

We today live in a fractured society with family generations often living far apart. Adults often reside someplace other than where they grew up, and frequently relocate. In Part 2 of our Hebraic Article, *Hebraic Home Fellowships Must Produce Godly Generations*, we discuss the *final disintegration phase* of a culture, which is called the “Atomistic Family.” Some of the characteristics sound tragically familiar:

- Ties within the family unit crumble as obsession with self develops.
- Individual rights are emphasized rather than family responsibilities.
- Unabashed selfishness is the norm.
- Religious and moral standards have little effect on protecting the sanctity of the family.
- Commitments and responsibilities are perceived as infringements on personal freedom.
- People become desensitized to the needs or suffering of others.
- Marriage loses its sanctity as a stable, committed practice. Adultery and homosexuality are accepted and even promoted.

This is where this nation now finds itself. And, this is why it’s all the more essential that grandparents and parents who follow Jesus wholeheartedly must be earnest in *instilling a strong faith in Lord Jesus* and in *diligently applying His Word* as a way of life.

We all need to be **intentional** in the ways we use the **limited time we have** when we’re with those we care about, whether family, fellowship family, friends or neighbors. Even the little windows of opportunity available for authentic relationship too often get frittered away through superficial conversations and meaningless activities.

An immediate solution? Deliberately alter the use of your time into **intentional purpose**.

Too often Christian parents train their children to *blend in* with the world’s values and goals, with a little “Christianity” thrown in. But how few parents or young people have the courage to *be different*. Our Father intends His called-out ones to be *set apart for a purpose*: to *intersect the world with holiness*, not parallel its ways!

If you haven’t been diligent in fulfilling God’s requirement to *bind* and *loose* His Word or instill it as a way of life in your children and/or grandchildren, something is hindering you. This hindrance is what we hope to expose and help free you from in the following chapters.

### **Take a close look at yourself:**

1. Do you agree that you’ve been given “*the keys of the Kingdom*” under the authority of Jesus’ Name? How does the responsibility to *bind* and *loose* God’s Word affect your way of life and that of the people close to you in the faith?
2. Do you readily discuss our Lord and His commands with your family and with others close to you in the faith? Would Jesus commend you for diligently applying God’s commands to your life?
3. Are you a proactive ambassador of our Lord Jesus? Does the name of Jesus or any reference to the Bible flow easily out of your mouth when you’re with unbelievers? Do you hesitate to represent your faith in Jesus?
4. If your answer doesn’t strongly affirm the above questions, what is hindering you? The following chapters may uncover your barriers and help you rid yourself of them.

[For more on the authority Jesus has given you to *apply* God’s commands to your life, download a free copy of our book *Christian Halakhahs—Loving Jesus Through the Way You Apply His Word*. It’s also available as an mp3 audio.]

## Chapter 2

### NO ONE IS FREE UNLESS EVERYONE YOU CARE FOR IS FREE

Repeated several times in the book of Exodus is God's command to Pharaoh, "Let My people go, so that **they may worship Me**" (Exodus 8:1). Our Lord wanted the Israelites free for one specific purpose: to worship Him as His own. He needed people who were *free* to do this. Why is freedom so essential? From our Father's perspective, worship is far more than singing songs to Him.

**True worship flows from a free and grateful heart that is filled with the desire to exuberantly express your deepest emotions in praise and thanksgiving to your Father.**

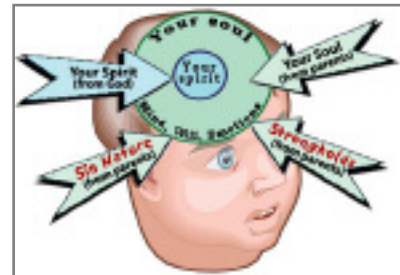
Through the authority of His Name and by the power of His indwelling Spirit, *emotional and spiritual freedom* is what Jesus wants His followers to truly experience. Freedom is necessary for authentic worship. Consider His goal to *free you* in light of the following verses:

- *The reason the Son of God appeared was to DESTROY the devil's work* (1 John 3:8).
- *So if the Son SETS YOU FREE, you will be free indeed* (John 8:36).
- *Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is FREEDOM* (2 Corinthians 3:17).

Demonic oppression and agitation isn't a rare situation, either when Jesus walked the earth or now. The Israelites gave way to *spiritual adultery* by serving demonic entities alongside their worship of God. The Hebrew Scriptures prophesied that Jesus would *free the captives* (Isaiah 61:1), and one of the most impor-

tant freedoms is from demonic influence. God's Word reveals that because of the authority of His Name, Jesus initially sent His disciples out not to share the Gospel but to first *free people* from demonic oppression: "*Calling the Twelve to Him, He sent them out two by two and gave them authority over EVIL SPIRITS*" (Mark 6:7; see also Luke 10:1,17).

When Jesus promises you that you'll be FREE INDEED through Him, what could He possibly be freeing you from? Let's briefly review your life so you can see how from *conception* you were a prisoner to demonic oppression. When you were conceived, you received a spirit from God that longs to return to Him. You also received from



your parents *your soul*, which is your mind, will and emotions. And from your parents you inherited a **SIN NATURE** that goes all the way back to Adam and Eve.

But that's not all. From your parents you also received any **DEMONIC STRONGHOLDS** they didn't demolish in the Name of Jesus. Think of a stronghold as a demonic fortress of THOUGHTS in your soul in any area not controlled by the Holy Spirit. This fortress houses what the Bible calls unclean or evil spirits. These spirits:

- Control and influence the development of unChristlike attitudes and behavior that will negatively impact your response to situations, circumstances, or people throughout your life.
- Oppress and discourage you, keeping you from experiencing your Father's love and truths.

From birth these unclean spirits incline your mind, will and emotions toward attitudes and actions that are unChrist-like and contrary to God's will. They cooperate with your sin nature, and together will do all they can to keep you from cooperating with others in developing Christ-like character. The fiendish aim of your sin nature and demonic spirits is to destroy your intimate relationships, both with God and with others, and to ultimately keep you out of heaven.

These spirits attack every level of relationship: husbands and wives, children and parents, children with each other, neighbors, co-workers, fellow believers. No wonder 1 Peter 5:8,9 solemnly warns:

*Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour. Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that your brothers throughout the world are undergoing the same kind of sufferings.*

One of the "devil's schemes" that Paul warned believers about in Ephesians 6:11 is what we call the "sweaty-body scenario." For thirty years Mike played a lot of pickup basketball. He normally perspires a lot during activity, and he began to notice an interesting trend regarding attitudes toward perspiration: many young men hate to get sweat on themselves. They avoid body contact as much as possible. Realizing this, Mike would purposely come up and slide against them. Sure enough, they'd back off and fail to adequately guard him. He was free to make any shots he wanted!

Satan does the same thing through demonic strongholds. The demons agitate your feelings, prompting you to resent and avoid certain people. He wants any and all of your supportive relationships

severed. An emotionally isolated person is easy prey for him to devour.

*"For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world.*

*On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ" (2 Corinthians 10:3-5).*

In the relational realm, Satan uses strongholds with their accompanying "arguments" and "pretensions" like a sweaty body to create aversion in one person toward another.

**ARGUMENTS: "Reasoning, rationalizations, intentions hostile to God's truth."**

This part of a stronghold involves the **thought processes** and patterns you use to **deny that you have a problem**. When you raise these arguments like walls, **God's love and His truths** are prevented from entering your thoughts. Your **rationalizations and justifications** for your attitudes and behaviors keep the humility that precedes repentance from piercing your heart and convicting you of sin.

**PRETENSIONS: "Pride, self-exaltation, self-preservation."**

This part of the stronghold reveals the **pride and rebellion** that you erect like another wall. They **prevent you from seeking the power of the Holy Spirit** in prayer, or the **help of others** to free you from captivity. You falter in the will or desire to break free from the spirit's influence. Again, the **love and truths of God are blocked** from penetrating your soul.

**Strongholds taint your view of other people and keep you from drawing near**



them. Through arguments and pretensions they will also keep you from receiving the help you need from others. The presence of strongholds in your soul makes it difficult, if not impossible, for you to accept any biblical constructive criticism. You'll perceive it as an attack and defend yourself.

Please take this to heart. You need to understand yourself the way our LORD sees you, beginning with your conception. Take a look at the list of potential strongholds on page 14. Go through it and see if you're being kept from the freedom Jesus promises because of any strongholds in your soul. It's extremely helpful if someone you know well goes through the questionnaire with you.

**A Note of Caution:**

**Take Responsibility for Your Guilt**

Current social trends even within Christendom place great emphasis on a person's right to be happy and self-satisfied. GUILT is considered an infringement on happiness and brings down self-esteem. As a result, in order to minimize guilt many people are trapped in a prison of **blame**. They try to blame anyone else for whatever misery they're suffering.

Know this! Looking for someone to blame will keep you snared in a mire of self-pity and heaviness. If you want to have your emotions healed and to live free, you need to take *full responsibility* for yourself, including your feelings.

Satan is determined for you to feel HELPLESS and HOPELESS. He'll do anything He can to keep you in bondage and unable to experience your Father's love and truth. Hiding behind the pain of rejection, abandonment, betrayal, or whatever toxic memory you have is no solution. DENIAL just lets you be con-

trolled by *arguments* and *pretensions*, keeping you from being healed by our Lord Jesus. You'll further compound your misery by trying to offset your feelings of guilt with BLAME. Let's take a closer look at how this works.

Your sin nature RESISTS taking responsibility for sin. Instead, it tries to blame others. Adam **BLAMED** Eve for giving him the fruit, and Eve blamed the serpent. Notice the consequence of NOT confessing their sin and asking forgiveness, instead choosing blame. They

received a C U R S E from God instead of forgiveness and blessing.

Your sin nature also tempts you to minimize your GUILT by blaming others. Your sin nature



operates like a *balance scale*. For example, let's say you become BITTER because of what someone did to you. In your response to the guilt of bitterness, God would have you REPENT of your attitude and FORGIVE your offender (Matthew 6:14,15; 18:21). Instead, your sin nature causes you to offset your feelings of guilt with BLAME toward your offender—and you cling to your bitterness. If you blame others, you're missing an important biblical truth: God turns over for **TORMENT** those who cast blame and refuse to forgive.



# Do You or Those Close to You Have Demonic Strongholds? *Is Jesus or Satan at the center of your relationships?*

Use the questionnaire below to see if you have demonic strongholds. The **bold words** represent different demonic strongholds. Below each are the symptoms produced when a stronghold is habitually present in you.

Place a number from 0-10 next to each symptom that is **habitually present** in your life. The number indicates the *intensity of influence or control* the symptom has on you. We stress the symptom must be **habitually present**, not just a fleeting feeling or occasional situation. (Make copies of this page if you need to.)

After you've put your numbers down, have someone *who knows you well* go over your answers and put their evaluation number for you in the second space. In this way you'll see how demonically influenced you are.

## DECEIT

- \_\_\_ Lying
- \_\_\_ Fantasies
- \_\_\_ Delusions
- \_\_\_ Rationalizations
- \_\_\_ Wrong doctrine/  
misuse of Scripture

## BITTERNESS

- \_\_\_ Resentment
- \_\_\_ Racism
- \_\_\_ Unforgiveness
- \_\_\_ Anger/Hatred
- \_\_\_ Violence
- \_\_\_ Revenge

## HEAVINESS

- \_\_\_ Depression
- \_\_\_ Despair
- \_\_\_ Self-pity
- \_\_\_ Loneliness
- \_\_\_ Unconfessed sin
- \_\_\_ Suicidal thoughts

## JEALOUSY

- \_\_\_ Spiteful
- \_\_\_ Gossip/slander
- \_\_\_ Betrayal
- \_\_\_ Critical nature
- \_\_\_ Judgmental
- \_\_\_ Suspicious

## CONFUSION (DOUBT & UNBELIEF)

- \_\_\_ Suspicious
- \_\_\_ Apprehensive
- \_\_\_ Indecisive
- \_\_\_ Skeptical
- \_\_\_ Unsettled

## REJECTION

- \_\_\_ Addictive behavior
- \_\_\_ Compulsions
- \_\_\_ Seeks acceptance
- \_\_\_ Unworthiness
- \_\_\_ Withdrawal

## PRIDE

- \_\_\_ Vain
- \_\_\_ Self-righteous
- \_\_\_ Self-centered
- \_\_\_ Insensitive
- \_\_\_ Materialistic
- \_\_\_ Seeks positions

## RELIGIOSITY

- \_\_\_ Seeks activities
- \_\_\_ No spiritual power
- \_\_\_ Spiritual blindness
- \_\_\_ Hypocritical

## INDEPENDENCE & DIVORCE

- \_\_\_ Insensitive
- \_\_\_ Lonely/Aloof
- \_\_\_ Self-determined
- \_\_\_ Devil's advocate
- \_\_\_ Withdrawn
- \_\_\_ Excuse making
- \_\_\_ Lack of trust
- \_\_\_ "Martyr" complex

## STUPOR & PRAYERLESSNESS

- \_\_\_ Distanced from God
- \_\_\_ "Cold" love
- \_\_\_ Distracted
- \_\_\_ Spiritual blindness
- \_\_\_ Laziness
- \_\_\_ Deceived self-appraisal

## REBELLION

- \_\_\_ Self-willed
- \_\_\_ Stubborn
- \_\_\_ Pouting
- \_\_\_ Strife
- \_\_\_ Factious
- \_\_\_ Divisive
- \_\_\_ Anger leads to argument
- \_\_\_ Independent
- \_\_\_ Unteachable

## FEAR & INSECURITY

- \_\_\_ Inferiority
- \_\_\_ Inadequacy
- \_\_\_ Timidity
- \_\_\_ Pleasing people, not God
- \_\_\_ Lack of trust/worry
- \_\_\_ Phobias
- \_\_\_ Perfectionism
- \_\_\_ Dread of failure
- \_\_\_ Inability to set goals
- \_\_\_ "Motor-mouth"

## CONTROL

- \_\_\_ Manipulative
- \_\_\_ Striving
- \_\_\_ Lacking trust
- \_\_\_ Devil's advocate
- \_\_\_ Insensitive
- \_\_\_ Desiring recognition
- \_\_\_ Violent

## SEXUAL IMPURITY

- \_\_\_ Lust
- \_\_\_ Seductiveness
- \_\_\_ Masturbation
- \_\_\_ Fornication
- \_\_\_ Adultery
- \_\_\_ Frigidity
- \_\_\_ Homosexuality
- \_\_\_ Pornography

## IDOLATRY

- \_\_\_ Frustrated
- \_\_\_ Hopeless
- \_\_\_ Greedy/selfish
- \_\_\_ Financial problems
- \_\_\_ Wrong goals/decisions
- \_\_\_ Living a lie
- \_\_\_ Apathetic

## FALSE PROPHECY/ANTI-CHRIST

- \_\_\_ Denies Jesus as God and Man
- \_\_\_ Bondage to Man-made Teaching
- \_\_\_ Manipulation
- \_\_\_ Prophecy for Pay
- \_\_\_ Prey to Cults, Heresies
- \_\_\_ Encourages Lawlessness
- \_\_\_ Counterfeit Miracles
- \_\_\_ Contrives Dreams/Visions

## WITCHCRAFT/FAMILIAR SPIRIT

- \_\_\_ Blasphemy
- \_\_\_ Preoccupied with Evil
- \_\_\_ Psychic Experiences
- \_\_\_ Rebellious
- \_\_\_ Devalues Life
- \_\_\_ Identifies with Sinful Nature
- \_\_\_ Fixated on Future

## INFIRMITY/DESTROYING

- \_\_\_ Physical Manifestations
- \_\_\_ Unconfessed Sin
- \_\_\_ Abuses Body
- \_\_\_ Devalues Life
- \_\_\_ Chronic Grumbling
- \_\_\_ Thoughts of Suicide
- \_\_\_ Drawn to Danger

**For further help in demolishing your demonic strongholds, download our free workbook, *Demolishing Strongholds*, or the shorter version, *Demolishing Your Strongholds*. Also, see our free online video series, *Demolishing Strongholds*.**

*‘Shouldn’t you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?’ In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed. This is how My heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart (Matthew 18:33-35).*

Whenever you experience guilt, our Lord wants you to TAKE RESPONSIBILITY for your sin, and REPENT and FORGIVE as necessary. Consider His mercy when you do this: *“Confess your sins, realizing God is faithful and just and will forgive your sins and purify you from all unrighteousness”* (1 John 1:9).

**When you confess your sin, you create a HEALTHY memory that’s forgiven and cleansed. But BLAME is one of the ways your mind holds onto strongholds. Don’t let that happen!**

### Better Is Open Rebuke Than Hidden Love



Because of the interpersonal responsibility the Bible calls for in our collective ongoing transformation into Christ’s likeness, it’s vital that you not let others blame anyone. Keep this maxim in mind as you endeavor to help others confront their spiritual darkness:

**The person who tries to blame another is either the *cause* of the problem, the *solution* to the problem, or *both*. Don’t let them talk about what the other person did! Rather, help them recognize where they might be in sin themselves through unforgiveness. Aid them in repenting and forgiving as needed.**

**If there’s EVER to be any genuine healing or reconciliation, *blame must cease!* Responsibility for guilt must be taken, accompanied by repentance and forgiveness.**

### How To Hold Onto Your Freedom

When you’re free of strongholds it’s absolutely essential that you make a *lifelong habit* of taking captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (see 2 Corinthians 10:5). Be alert! No one can take your thoughts captive for you. Consistently making your thought life obedient to the mind of Christ—how He would think in that situation—will help you grow in His likeness. Firmly implant this important truth:

**You can’t entertain thoughts Jesus would have and thoughts influenced by demons at the same time; the Lord and demons can’t influence your soul together (1 Corinthians 10:21). You’ll become like whoever you allow to dominate your thoughts. Your lifelong battle will be over who rules your soul. Will it be the Spirit of Jesus in you, or the demons hiding within the strongholds of your soul?**

You’re not alone! The great apostle Paul bemoans his own internal battle between doing what he ought and giving way to his sinful inclinations (see Romans 7:15-25). Science again confirms God’s creation. Recent studies show that past memories stored in the cortex which once had demonic strongholds controlling them still have negative *chemical attachments* called “toxic memories,” even after the demonic stronghold is demolished. After the strongholds are demolished in the Name of Jesus, the toxic chemical composition of those memories must also be replaced if you’re to experience complete freedom.

**Deliverance in the Name of Jesus rids you of the demons and their stronghold control. *But*, transforming toxic memories into healthy ones requires intentional effort and often the help of those who truly care for you. You need to free these memories of their toxic chemicals so the Spirit of Christ can have full reign in your mind, will and emotions.**

All of your memories from birth onward are stored in your brain as either healthy or toxic, with specific chemicals appropriate for the emotion attached to them. In brain scans, toxic memories actually appear as dark and thorny “branches”. They represent an accumulation of past unbiblical, un-Christlike responses to emotionally painful encounters with people or situations.

The chemical attached to a *toxic memory* of bitterness, insecurity, rejection or whatever, will be your default response when similar negative thoughts enter your brain. If an incoming thought is not taken captive and weighed in the light of Jesus, it will seek out a similar toxic memory and form a larger thorny memory. A demonic stronghold will form around it, taking control of that area of your brain.

Look at the series of diagrams to the right.

(1) **Demonic Strongholds.** This diagram reveals what happens within your brain when demonic strong-

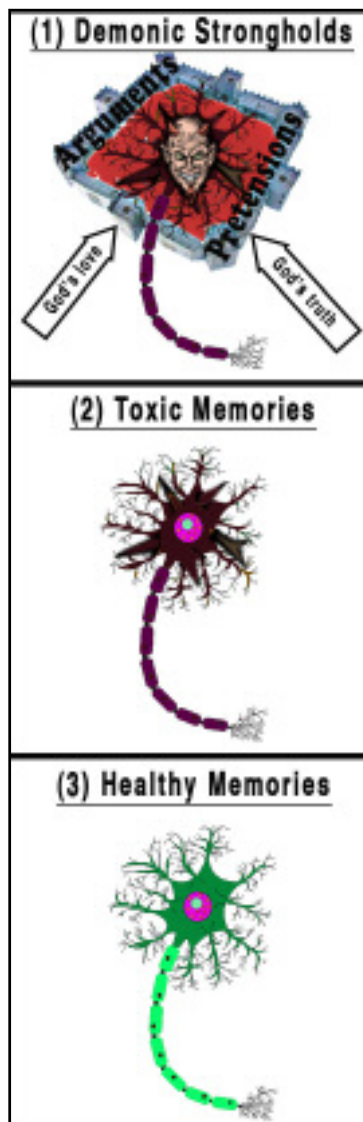
holds are built around your toxic memories. Through the use of arguments and pretensions (see 2 Corinthians 10:5), the demons *block out* God’s truth and love in *those areas of your mind*. You’re not only held in bondage within a *demonic prison*, unable to experience God. You’re also held captive in a *chemical prison of toxicity* which influences your attitudes and behaviors long after the original painful experience created that hurtful memory.

(2) **Toxic Memories** remain even after the demonic stronghold is demolished. It appears dark and thorny, with a specific toxic chemical attached that *still controls your response* to new, incoming thoughts.

(3) **Healthy Memories.** As toxic thoughts enter your brain, they’re captured and reflected on in light of the character of Jesus and the principles of God’s Word. The thought is then stored in your cortex as a healthy memory. And, as you’ll see, this is what a toxic memory looks like after it’s been healed by Jesus.

### Healing Toxic Memories

Long after a negative situation causes a toxic memory to form, just recalling that particular event can release the same painful emotions in you all over again. In fact, any *new* encounter or situation might remind you of a memory in which something unChristlike was spoken or done to you.



**You need to confront each and every toxic memory as it surfaces so you can deal with it according to the Spirit of Christ at work in you. Your toxic memories won't be changed all at once. But your trust that Jesus can *change* these toxic memories into healthy ones will motivate you to face the painful memory and seek His power to make it healthy.**

The moment a toxic memory comes to your conscious mind, you must exercise any *repentance* or *forgiveness* that's needed in the situation. *Forgive* that person from your heart (Matthew 6:14) and *pray God's blessing* on them (Luke 6:28). Praying for and blessing the person who hurt you is also part of His healing process for you!

Cry out to the Spirit of Jesus within you to replace the toxic memory of that past encounter with something good and redemptive in your mind (see Philippians 4:8). He won't erase the memory, but Jesus can *heal the pain* of it—transforming the memory from toxic to healthy. And you may find that the victory you now have over that once toxic memory is a source of hope and comfort to others as you testify to the change Jesus has made in you. (See 2 Corinthians 1:3-5.)

It's in *spotting toxic memories* that the help of others who care about you is vital. As they listen to your words or observe your actions, quite often the people close to you can recognize a toxic memory surfacing in you before you're conscious of it. The difficulty for a lot of people is that many toxic memories have been with them for so long that they've become part of their identity, much like their breath. We call this habitual response "*a knee-jerk reaction.*" When these habitual, negative reactions

and attitudes emerge, they are difficult to recognize without the help of someone who cares.

Don't resist anyone who out of loving concern points out that you may be operating from a toxic memory. The emotional pain connected to a toxic memory has to be acknowledged and confronted if you're ever going to be healed by Jesus. Then you need to replace that memory with healthy memories through prayerfully and purposely establishing thoughts that align with the character of Jesus. Again, the help of others who care for you is essential.

### **Help Each Other Stay Free By Meeting Their Seven God-given Needs**

In our *Demolishing Strongholds* workbook we note that every person is born with seven God-given needs which He has purposed to be filled according to His Word and His ways. From Creation onward He has designed us with a need for:

- **Dignity** — (Genesis 1:26,27)
- **Authority** — (Genesis 1:26)
- **Blessing & Provision** — (Genesis 1:28,29)
- **Security** — (Genesis 2:8,9)
- **Purpose & Meaning** — (Genesis 2:15,19)
- **Freedom & Boundary** — (Genesis 2:16,17)
- **Intimate Love and Companionship** — (Genesis 2:20-25)

**After the strongholds are demolished, your close relationships need to be rebuilt on a new, Spirit-guided foundation. One of the ways to do this is to meet the God-given needs of those you care about in a Christ-like manner that aligns with biblical counsel.**

**Our Lord wants your home to be a refuge and sanctuary of harmony, wholeness and peace. Therefore husbands,**

wives, parents and children who have been freed need to earnestly turn to God's Word and *bind or loose* as appropriate—to put His commands into practice to guide their new way of treating each other. The goal is ALWAYS to mutually develop the character of Jesus.

Helping each other have these needs met in the way our God intended is found throughout the interpersonal commands in His Word. As you mutually aid each other in meeting your needs by cooperatively applying the Bible, you'll find that you're also helping each other heal toxic memories. And the more these needs are met the way our Lord intends, the less likely you'll give way to allowing demonic strongholds to reform in your mind.

**Take a close look at yourself:**

1. On the questionnaire on page 14, were you able to put a '0' on every symptom? If not, use one of the materials we suggested on that page. If you're still listening to demonic voices in certain areas of your mind, you'll never experience the fullness of the relationship our Father offers. And sadly, the demons in the strongholds will use *you* to emotionally hurt others.
2. In your innermost being, do you blame others for the condition you find yourself in? If you don't forgive them, your heavenly Father vows not to forgive you. Without His forgiveness, you aren't His child, for by your own unforgiveness you are dismissing

the sacrifice of Jesus on your behalf. That means eternal separation from Him unless you repent and forgive from your heart.

3. Do you sin through slander and gossip by talking about others behind their back? Do you blame them for your problems? If you do, it indicates you're still controlled or influenced by demonic strongholds and/or toxic memories that you haven't dealt with.
4. List the people who, when you think about them, cause feelings of avoidance, resentment, or other negative responses.

---

---

**Consider the following steps:**

- A. Did the person pain you with malicious intent, or did he or she hurt you unintentionally? The vast majority of hurt feelings are caused by unintentional acts. In fact, your offender may even be unaware that an offense has occurred!
- B. If your offenders are unaware they've hurt you and thus haven't asked your forgiveness, do you have the grace to just forgive them in your heart and never bring it up again? (See Proverbs 19:11; 1 Peter 4:8.)
- C. If you won't be able to let go of it, then you need to go to the person to clear up the matter. If you don't, you'll tell others what happened, causing you and them to sin through slander and gossip. (See Proverbs 17:9, 26:22; 1 Peter 2:1.)

## Chapter 3

### BECOMING CHRIST-LIKE TOGETHER REQUIRES LOVING CONFRONTATION

Do you ever find yourself *dancing around* other people? In other words, are you fearful that if you say something that needs to be said out of genuine love for someone, conflict or hurt feelings may result? Unless you're totally calloused, you'll find yourself having this kind of apprehension every so often.

Generally, the emotional tension and anguish you experience in these situations is part of your *concern for the feelings* of others.

**There's nothing wrong with *concern* for people's feelings unless it turns into *fear of hurting their feelings*. Fear will inhibit you from saying what others need to hear from you as God's conduit. Fear is a self-imposed prison that prevents the authentic love of Jesus from emanating out of you.**

In this psychologically-oriented culture, fear of hurting the feelings of others keeps many relationships from blossoming with Christ-like love. Marriages and other close relationships involve relational responsibilities that lead to accomplishing mutual goals. Because you *won't* always agree, nor will each person involved always be walking in loving obedience to God, the skills of **supportive confrontation** are critical.

It's not enough for you to *confront* differences that hinder your relationship with each other and just leave it at that. You need to *resolve* the differences in such a way that the relationship is improved. In other words, there is *increased Christ-like character development* between you. If the pursuit of Christ-

likeness in the relationship is not your collective goal, you're giving Satan an opportunity to toxify your relationship and ultimately destroy it.

Sources of interpersonal tension that need to be confronted so you can restore a peaceful and loving relationship include: holding on to unconfessed sin; the presence of demonic strongholds and/or toxic memories; actions that are hurting your relationship with others; or any major interpersonal differences that are enticing you to resent this person.



Consider these interpersonal responsibilities:

- If someone you care about is holding on to unconfessed sin, they've broken fellowship with our heavenly Father. The loving thing for you to do is to help them be restored through confession and repentance (1John 1:6-9).
- If someone you care about is beset by demonic strongholds, the demons will prevent that person from experiencing the Father's love and truth. Those "inner voices" will also influence that individual to emotionally hurt you and others. (Toxic memories will have that effect as well.)
- If someone you care about is doing something that hurts your feelings to such an extent that you're resenting him or her, you need to confront and remove the cause of the irritation so that your relationship can be restored insofar as it depends on you.

Through our Father's grace and the commands in His Word that guide interpersonal relationships, He requires you



to confront whatever is hindering someone's relationship with Him and/or with you. Our Father knows that wherever the anxiety and fear that accompany apprehension exist, love will not flourish. *Apprehension destroys love.* On the other hand, confronting someone in love epitomizes a virtue of Jesus that reflects your transforming nature.

**If you're to have viable relationships that continue to grow in ever-increasing Christ-likeness, you must be prepared for biblical confrontation in order for them to flourish with the love of Jesus as their hallmark. Confrontation involves effectively "holding up a stop sign" of biblical truth with someone so they may alter their attitude, behavior or direction.**

Several synonyms for *confront* occur repeatedly in Scripture: reprove, exhort, correct, counsel, rebuke, warn, advise. Effective confrontation is made all the easier if those involved have:

- a wholehearted desire to want to be more like Jesus.
- a willingness to receive biblically-based constructive criticism from those who deeply care about them.

If these two motives are absent, it doesn't make the task impossible, just more difficult.

**The key to biblical confrontation**  
*Focus on the unconfessed sin,  
 or strongholds,  
 or toxic memories,  
 or the harmful behaviors.  
 Don't attack the person.*

**Confrontation** is *not* synonymous with conflict. Biblical confrontation enables a detrimental situation to be changed for the better. (For example,

examine Paul's confrontation of Peter in Galatians 2:11-14.)

When you confront someone you care about, you can use a variety of approaches from discussion to correction or admonition. The goal and process in confrontation is *redemptive*. In other words, you aren't confronting the other *person*. Rather, you confront those things that are hindering the relationship so that harmony between that individual and God or with you can be restored and grow even better.

The goal of confrontation is "win-win." As you gain experience in biblical confrontation, you'll find that the relationship is not only restored but very often improved—filled with greater love and deeper commitment.

**Conflict**, on the other hand, is related to discord, hostility and competition. Its goal is "win-lose" in which one person is the victor while the other goes down in defeat. Although confrontation and conflict may create similar emotions, the goals of each have nothing in common.

**Biblical confrontation is *not* proving one person right and the other one wrong.**

**It seeks to discover and remove anything hindering the relationship.**

Confrontation is made more effective if you view the situation with the attitude that "*We* have a problem" rather than "*You* have the problem." The common approach inherited from ancient Greek philosophers tends to *blame* the



other person. That process looks like one index finger pointing at the other, blaming him or her for causing the problem.

The biblically Hebraic viewpoint of confronting, however, is like putting your two index fingers side by side and recognizing that *we together* have a situation that needs resolution. It doesn't point at either party, but rather to those things in the relationship that are harming it.

### **An Essential Christ-like, Interpersonal Skill You Must Develop: To Lovingly Confront Another Person**

Throughout the gospels Jesus used many ways to confront people. To the proud and arrogant He was pointedly direct, showing them where they were holding a wrong view about His Father's ways. To the humble of heart, He spoke with loving compassion.

Confrontation can take many forms depending upon the willingness of the other person to want to hear. Sometimes you're just trying to clarify where the two of you disagree on a matter. At other times your confrontation may be more intense, compelling you to confront sin or strongholds in him or her.

Willingness to clearly hear what the other person is saying greatly smooths the process of confrontation (see Matthew 18:15-17). Think of how often the phrase "*He who has an ear, let him hear*" appears in the Bible. True hearing entails more than the passage of sounds through your ears. Your brain *interprets* those sounds into words, and then instills *emotional response* into their meaning. If there are demonic strongholds or toxic memories in your mind, at any point you may choose to "shut off" communication, refusing to allow the words to penetrate your understanding.

**When you confront sin or other forms of spiritual darkness, Matthew 18:15-17 instructs you to bring the situation before witnesses "if he refuses to listen..." This is a crucial part of redemptive confrontation: the willingness to bring the matter up before witnesses so that perhaps the individual may then have "ears to hear." Remember, your goal is prompted by love to do what's necessary to restore the relationship on a more biblical basis. If others are needed because the person refuses to listen to you, then enlist their help so that he or she may be brought to repentance.**

Consider these interpersonal responsibilities:

- If you're married, you'd be wise to set in place beforehand other people, preferably an older couple who are mature in the Lord, to go to when you can't resolve an issue that's hurting your relationship.
- In close friendships or within a home fellowship, establish ahead of time a mature person in the Lord whom you each trust to go to when you're unable to resolve an issue that's hurting your relationships. (Later in this article we'll discuss the role of the biblical "peacemaker," someone who intervenes to help restore relationships.)

### **Confronting Interpersonal Differences**

Studies show that over 90% of all relational tensions are caused by *interpersonal differences* rather than any type of sin. In a marriage, family or home fellowship family, the accountability in your walk together with the Lord will be multifaceted. You'll have many areas of agreement as well as some areas of dissent. There are potentially divisive differences that arise in relationships that in themselves aren't sin, just differing views.

If your relationship with someone is close and meaningful, no doubt at some time you'll encounter situations in which a timely rebuke or admonishment is needed. How you handle your differences in these close relationships will be key to enabling love to flourish between you.

**Keep in mind that the value which you and the other person bring to a relationship is your wonderful uniqueness in being made in God's image. In order to confront effectively, you must first learn the skill of *biblical support*. This is the ability to accept one another because you are both made in God's image, and our Lord Jesus died for you. This is why you don't attack the other person but rather uphold his or her dignity!**

Skillful *support* recognizes where you differ with each other, and realizes that you each have a right to your differences. The other person's motives and actions are as much a part of their identity as your thoughts and values are reality for you. To *react negatively* to your differences is to literally sit in judgment of someone, a position reserved only for God Himself: "*Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?*" (Matthew 7:3).

**The more meaningful the relationship, such as marriage, parenting or close friendship, the more critical it is that you support the person you're confronting. You're *not* trying to sever the relationship, but see it prosper in love. In this light, you need to identify workable solutions *and* carry them through so your relationship can continue with health, vitality and trust.**

Throughout the Scriptures the ability to both support *and* confront is the pattern of God's people with each other.

Remember, when you're confronting someone because their action is hurting your feelings, you need to balance your response with support for him or her. Think of the emphasis our Lord placed on treating others as you want to be treated:

*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets* (Matthew 7:12).

*Support* brings encouragement to the other person to speak up, while *confrontation* allows you to express your position that differs with theirs.

When I *support* the person  
I am confronting,  
I am upholding his or her dignity.  
My support encourages them.  
*Confronting* enables me to  
clarify the detrimental actions  
that are hurting me.  
Confrontation gives me hope  
that things can change.  
*Together* we make explicit our  
differences and the resolutions  
that God intends.

Interpersonal tensions usually arise due to one or more of four areas of difference:

- **goals** The *purpose* of the relationship; clarifies each person's aim in maintaining the relationship; clarifies where the relationship is going.
- **methods** The *manner* in which each of you treats one another; clarifies your different approaches in maintaining and growing the relationship.
- **values** The *significant elements* prized by those in the relationship; clarifies what each person considers important or precious to them.

- **facts**      The *accuracy* of information; points that are indisputable after further investigation.

**When you're confronting any interpersonal difference, always take the time to confirm in which of the above four areas you're having your disagreement or misunderstanding. Don't press on until you've done this!**

Identifying the area(s) of difference is like getting all the cards dealt before you begin the game. Too often people rush to force resolutions before clearly identifying and agreeing on the areas of difference. As a result they miss the point of what they are trying to resolve, which results in the same difference(s) popping up again later.

Let's look at a hypothetical case that reveals the interpersonal tension when major differences remain unconfronted:

One of the most common tensions plaguing parenting today is that one parent seems too hard in disciplining the child(ren) and the other too easy. The result is unresolved tension in the parents which affects not only the child(ren) but also the grandparents and others close to the family. Unresolved tension over discipline very often causes other adults to refrain from correcting the kids at all.

The worst fruit caused by the lack of resolution in disciplining the child(ren) is that they grow up learning to be deceitful and manipulative. How did they learn that? As they were growing up, their sin nature caused them to develop a distrust for their parents as their necessary authority figures. Favoring the parent who was easiest on them created agitation between the father and mother, and instilled disdain in the child(ren) for other authority figures outside the family.

**To avoid situations like this, we can't stress strongly enough how important it is for relationships to proactively establish biblically-based mutual goals, methods, facts and values through *binding* and *loosing* God's commands. The more you do set these up in advance of any problems you may encounter, the less tension you'll have when a situation does arise. In fact, if you take the extra effort to biblically establish your mutual goals, facts, methods and values, you'll find that you have far fewer problems that produce relational tension.**

Be alert! When *small* differences spring up, recognize them as opportunities to learn how to work out *big* differences. As you work on identifying differences, other information often surfaces that can help you reach a resolution. Be sure to *clearly identify the differences* in the position(s) that each of you is taking so you'll focus on the *issue* and not on each other's perceived character deficiencies. Avoid words like "You *always*..." or "You *never*..." Your goal is to *resolve the issue*, not raise accusations that lead to a wounded relationship.

**A loving relationship in Christ means confronting or admonishing the other person when differences arise.**

**Confrontation allows both of you the freedom to present your side, and an opportunity for each of you to come before God together in prayer to search the Scriptures and discern a resolution for the situation through "*binding*" and "*loosing*."**

Supportive listening and interaction show that you recognize the other person's position as legitimate for him or her. It meets one of the deepest human needs—to be *loved, understood* and *accepted*. These needs can be met when

you take the time to listen and accept the other person, even if you don't agree with their ideas or beliefs.

### **ALWAYS Take Responsibility For Your Own Feelings**

If the issue you are confronting involves a lot of emotional fervor, be alert to one another's feelings. You are responsible for the feelings that are aroused in you. As much as you may want to blame the other person, no one else *causes* your emotions. You can be angry at other people for their behavior, but it's unrealistic to blame them for what's going on inside you. If you don't take *every thought captive* and bring it to *obedience to Jesus* (to the way *He* would think about it), it's *you* who allows hostile, angry feelings inside yourself.

If you find yourself blaming others, you're trying to evade your personal responsibility. As we mentioned earlier, blame brings heartache and conflict: Adam blamed Eve, Eve blamed the serpent, and they were ejected from the garden of Eden and God's intimate presence.

### **Don't Hide the Intensity of Your Own Convictions**



Don't feel threatened by emotions that are passionately expressed. The stoic approach our society has inherited from the Greek philosophers of old frowns on any display of strong emotion.

Many men in particular are caught in this stoic trap. They hold in their emotions for so long that when they finally do release them, destructive verbal or physical abuse results.

You must firmly grasp your biblically Hebraic roots: Relationships are more important than issues. True faith trusts that, "If on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained" (Philippians 3:15). Emotional expression is biblical as long as it is *not negatively aimed* against another person.

**Whatever goals, methods, values or facts you hold dear, you have emotions along with the accompanying chemical wrapped around that memory in your brain. Allow yourself to fully represent the depth of emotional attachment you have! Whatever you think highly of is your reality and part of your dignity. Whatever you truly hold dear can only be represented to others when it is conveyed with the depth of emotion you attach to it.**

### **Confrontation Is Risky Because Being Different Is Risky**

Your feelings may get hurt when you confront someone out of love for them. As both of you work to solve the difference, you might receive some new information or insight and discover that *you need to change.*

If you *don't* confront someone about a significant difference, you're denying both that person and yourself the value that you bring into the relationship. Thus any resolution that's achieved may be faulty because you withheld your particular insight.

**Take a close look at yourself:**

1. One key element of supporting another person is to *listen*. Ask several people with whom you have a close relationship to evaluate you as a listener. Be sure to ask them to evaluate your facial expressions for responsiveness, your body language for attentiveness, and your willingness to ask questions for clarification.
2. Recall a situation in which you seriously disagreed with your spouse, child or close friend on an issue that was important to you. Replay the conversation as you remember it. Would you have described yourself as *supportive* of the other person? If so, how did you show that? What changes, if any, in your approach do you think God would have you make in any future confrontations?
3. What issues especially arouse emotion in you? How have you responded in the past to someone who not only disagreed with you but whose position seemed unbiblical to you as well? What did you do, and with what kind of attitude?
4. How well do you let yourself reflect your emotional convictions to others? Without threatening them, are you able to make known to people how important something is to you? Do you find you're easily threatened or become defensive when others reflect the emotions underlying *their* convictions?
5. Many who've worked through interpersonal tensions have found that tension came about because a biblical application for that situation was never established. List any situations in your life that are producing tension in you..

---

---

---

Search God's Word for answers, asking the Spirit to give you wisdom and revelation.

**6. Look at the diagrams below.**

**Top diagram:** When a baby is born, his/her life may be viewed as if they were the *hub* of a wheel. Throughout childhood they develop new relationships (seen here as *spokes* of the wheel). Most often these relationships are weighed from the *child's advantage*: Does the person care for me? Do they treat me well? Do I have fun being with them? The presence of strongholds as well as the sin nature in their soul will entice them to go through life always *seeking their own advantage*. Is this you? Ask those who know you well.

**Bottom diagram:** If a child is raised with *biblical character development* in mind, they'll eventually become aware that other people have needs. The child comes to realize that he/she can do something to meet these needs (Philippians 2:3,4). This awareness is where relationships begin to take on a deeper, Christ-like commitment—when a person *considers the needs of others*. Everything in the Bible hangs on the words of Jesus, "*So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets*" (Matthew 7:12). Does this motive define you?





# The Interpersonal Tools Needed to Support and Confront

Remember, your goal is to nurture Christ-like relationships in which each person feels loved, understood and accepted. Without loving, biblical admonishment given by those whose hearts are determined to become more Christ-like, relationships will remain in a quagmire of demonic strongholds, toxic memories, unconfessed sin, and/or unresolved differences. These will produce destructive apprehension in the relationship and block the love of Jesus from blossoming. In time, the relationship will become strained, and perhaps broken.

With supportive confrontation, love and righteousness will be the distinctives in your relationships. Undergirded by this foundation, Christ-like growth can take place, revealing itself in the love you have for one another.

## **SUPPORT**

*Support encourages the other person, recognizing that they're made in God's image.*

### **What to support**

- The other person's anxiety, fear, doubt.
- The right for him or her to feel or think differently.
- The reality of his or her perceptions.

### **How to support**

- Pray together for wisdom and truth.
- Let the other person speak his or her case.
- Listen! Listen! Listen!
- Restate back what he or she is saying.
- Verbalize his or her feelings.
- Ask for his or her preferred solution.

### **Don'ts:**

- Don't rush in too quickly with solutions.
- Don't tell him how he *shouldn't* feel.
- Don't cut him or her off too soon.
- Don't judge — describe instead.
- Don't give unsolicited advice that is irrelevant to the present issue.

## **CONFRONT**

*Confrontation encourages you and gives you hope that things might improve.*

### **What to confront:**

- Problems that are not being solved.
- Differences that hamper the relationship.
- Sins, attitudes, behaviors that are detrimental.

### **How to confront:**

- Treat the issue as a situation you both need to solve.
- Acknowledge the other person's position.
- State your differences clearly and succinctly.
- Check to see if you are being understood.
- Be responsible for your own feelings.
- Fully explore the differences.

### **Don'ts:**

- Don't attack his or her character or imply motives.
- Don't railroad your own solution, even if you are in a position to do that.
- Don't problem-solve until you have both discussed the issues to each other's satisfaction.

A Simple Concept...

***DIFFICULT TO DO CONSISTENTLY  
WITHOUT LOVING AWARENESS,  
PATIENT PRACTICE,  
AND FERVENT PRAYER***

## Chapter 4

### THE DIRE CONSEQUENCES OF NON-CONFRONTATION

Jerry Harvey, a business management specialist, illustrates the consequences of non-confrontation in his book *The Abilene Paradox and Other Meditations on Management*.

One particularly sweltering afternoon in West Texas, Harvey, his wife, and her parents were sitting on the shady veranda playing dominoes. Suddenly his father-in-law piped up, "Let's get in the car and go to Abilene and have dinner at the cafeteria." Abilene was fifty miles away, and their old car had no air-conditioning.

As Harvey inwardly groaned, his wife enthusiastically agreed. He asked his mother-in-law, who also agreed. So off to Abilene they went. The food was lousy and the drive brutal. When they finally returned, his mother-in-law complained, "I wouldn't have gone if you all hadn't pressured me into it."

Aghast, Harvey exclaimed that he'd been content to stay on the porch. His wife admitted she had gone only because she wanted to please her father. The father-in-law confessed that he had suggested the trip only because he thought they might be bored. Four people ended up doing something none of them really wanted to do because no one wanted to speak up.

You may encounter disastrous consequences if you *don't* speak up when you differ with someone, or when you see them headed down a sinful path. In either case the outcome will never be pleasant, because they lacked *your input*.

**After everything has gone wrong and you didn't confront someone with your input, that person may recognize your reluctance or timidity and hold you in low**

**regard. Your value in that relationship may significantly lessen, and you may find him or her treating you disrespectfully.**

As you may have experienced already: If you procrastinate when confrontation is needed, you'll increase your own apprehension as well as augment the other person's resistance. Remember the adage, "*Cowards die a thousand deaths, a brave man dies only once.*"

If you silently go along with everything someone else says or does even if you don't agree, you may find yourself emotionally detaching from him or her. Your relationship will become strained, you'll begin to sulk, and you'll inevitably hold back any emotional support for them. This only makes the situation worse!



**Yes, there are certain risks in confrontation, but even greater risks in non-confrontation. The real issue isn't whether or not to confront, but *how* and *when* to confront with loving effectiveness.**

In close interpersonal relationships you may try to avoid confrontation because you just don't want to face any emotional tension. Avoidance, though, doesn't produce a Christ-like relationship, but instead a "**co-dependent**" one. In a co-dependent relationship, one person dominates everyone else while one or more others who fear the tension of confrontation refuse to voice their differences.

#### Co-dependent Relationships Look Like Gears Turning Together

The motion of the gears is driven by the *Dominant Person's* unconforted behav-

ior, ideas or attitudes. If you are the *Co-dependent Person*, you fear the emotional tension brought about by confrontation. You may even offer excuses and find yourself defending the Dominant Person's behavior to the *Significant Others*.



Trapped by the fear and denial of the Co-dependent Person are the Significant Others, children or other people in close relationship. They may want to confront or admonish the Dominant Person who is controlling and hurting the feelings of everyone else. But they may also fear the emotions that any confrontation may generate. And, the Co-dependent Person may stop them, only prolonging the painful ordeal.

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

It's important to recognize that you can't always categorize by personality type the dominant individual you're

fearful to confront. Some of the most mild-mannered people have a way of inspiring fear, the ones whom people "walk on egg shells" around. A Dominant Person may control others by withholding affection (ostracism), crying profusely, or threatening to withdraw.

These behaviors are actually their way of being "in charge." No one wants to confront the manipulation of a tearful person. And how do you confront someone for what they're *not* doing, such as neglecting the emotional support others need from them? This type of control is more common than you think!

Sometimes people's fears are irrational perceptions that have no basis in reality. This was probably the case in the Abilene paradox for why the man didn't voice his objection to his father-in-law's proposal. The fear of hurting other people's feelings is a deadly trap. That's why we're warned, "*Fear of man will prove to be a snare*" (Proverbs 29:25).

Again, the person who has the *underlying apprehension or fear* when they know they have to confront a Dominant Person is the Co-dependent. They're anxious about having anything said or done that may set off the Dominant Person. They convince the others involved to stifle their input too. The Significant Others who may be willing to confront the Dominant Person are thus kept from speaking up.

**Realize that it's the *Co-dependent Person* and his or her fears that keeps the entire prison of gears turning! Influenced by strongholds and/or toxic memories, they are so desperate to avoid confrontation with the Dominant Person that they actively discourage admonishment by anyone. In fact, they frequently find themselves defending the Dominant**

**Person with the Significant Others. It's as if the demonic strongholds in one person are protecting those in the other.**

The longer discomfort and avoidance of co-dependency are allowed to go on, the more deeply entrenched fear and non-confrontation become. In families and close relationship, two possible responses are likely:

- Others will be entrapped in the co-dependent relationship,
- or
- They will be forced to flee the relationship in order to maintain their own identity, respect, and values.

**As in the case of the Abilene Paradox, interpersonal tension often arises when one person acts presumptuously or has false expectation of other people. He or she doesn't ask questions! Rather than assume the others were bored, the father could have inquired before he proposed doing something no one really wanted to do. *Presumption* and *false expectation* are the usual culprits within the motives of the Dominant Person.**

**Keep in mind too that co-dependent relationships exist wherever demonic strongholds have not been demolished and/or toxic memories still dominate the thinking process.** [For more on presumption and false expectation, see *Discussing How to Restore the Early Church*, Lesson 32.]

**Take a close look at yourself:**

1. Describe any situations you've encountered in which someone inspired emotional fear or apprehension in others by his or her attitude or behavior. Did anyone lovingly confront this person? Did you? If not, why not?
2. How would you handle a situation in which a close friend was pursuing a decision that you sensed from the Lord would hurt his or her Christian walk? What if someone warned you in advance that this person might not respond well to your intervention? Would that information change things for you?
3. What Scriptures would you use to encourage others close to you who are reluctant to confront a Dominant Person? Describe a situation in which you've observed someone skillfully exhort others using God's Word effectively.
4. How could brothers and sisters in the faith encourage one another to "maintain clean slates" in their relationships? How can you avoid becoming nitpicking watchdogs around one another and distinguish the issues or situations that really need to be addressed?

## Chapter 5

### GOD'S LOVING PEACEMAKER

Whenever you're unable to reach a peaceful, Spirit-inspired resolution among yourselves, you need to submit to an outside mature individual whom each of you trusts. Paul exhorts, "Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church!" (1 Corinthians 6:4).

The apostle is certainly hoping that such a need is unnecessary. However, unresolved tension that is truly hindering a relationship must be confronted. Godly outside intervention should not be perceived as failure in the relationship, but as the biblical extension of the Body helping in time of need. It's called "load-bearing."

***"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God"***  
(Matthew 5:9)

***"Peacemakers who sow in peace raise a harvest of righteousness"***  
(James 3:18)

When relationships become co-dependent and filled with such tension that the parties can't resolve their issues themselves, a "peacemaker" needs to be called on to intervene. In other words, someone is needed to not only stop the co-dependent gears from spinning, but to make sure they won't form again.

**The role of the peacemaker is to provide Scriptural direction. A peacemaker is a person whose intervention brings about a resolution that has the aroma of Jesus. Whether you're reconciling adversaries or people whose differing views on a matter creates apprehension that is hindering their love for each other, the goal is the**

**same. The fruit of intervention is a *peace which transcends all understanding*—a peace which improves the relationship and reveals the presence of the Spirit of Jesus in their midst.**

***"I put in charge of Jerusalem my brother Hanani, along with Hananiah the commander of the citadel, because he was a man of integrity and feared God more than most men do"***  
(Nehemiah 7:2).

What a wonderful reputation to have: *a person who fears God more than most people!* Why is the fear of God so important for a peacemaker? Because, as the psalmist declares, "*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow His precepts have good understanding*" (Psalms 111:10). It will take the wisdom found throughout the Bible to help you serve as God's peacemaker.

If you have the kind of holy fear our Lord calls for (Luke 12:5; Acts 9:31), you have already been applying the Bible to your life. In the process of intervening you'll find your acquired wisdom helpful as you guide the others to *bind* and *loose* the Scriptures that apply to their situation.

**When you serve as God's peacemaker it's essential that you make sure that *you're* free of strongholds, that there are no toxic memories that will interfere with your role, and that you have absolutely no unconfessed sin. If any of these are present, you'll find yourself empathizing with the spiritual darkness that is creating the tension among the people.**

**Don't fear hurting people's feelings (Proverbs 29:25). In order to be effective you're going to have to STOP the detrimental attitudes and actions that have**

**kept the gears turning. That won't happen if you're apprehensive that someone will be discomforted!**

Several guiding points for the peacemaker:

1. As God's peacemaker you need to know that He's given you a particular Scriptural authority to use if any of the parties involved refuses to press forward in doing their part to establish a peaceful resolution. That authority is to turn the willful, unrepentant person over to Satan (see 1 Corinthians 5:5; 1 Timothy 1:20). There's no better agent to deal with the sin nature and strongholds in someone's soul than the devil himself.

To reiterate, if an individual adamantly refuses to pursue a Scriptural resolution, turn him or her over to Satan while everyone is convened together. Then dismiss the meeting and ask them all to pray, waiting until Satan does his job. His agitation can bring the unyielding person crying out to God in repentance so they're willing to seek peaceful resolution.

2. A good starting point for the peacemaker is to consider that all the people involved may be guilty to some degree or another. No one is completely innocent. Even the seemingly most innocent of the participants could have prayed and fasted on behalf of the others in order to help bring about resolution.

You'll most likely find that those involved have either undemolished strongholds and/or toxic memories and/or unconfessed sin. Any of these will keep them from humbly pursuing a biblical resolution. And, the presence of these darknesses will prevent those who need to *ask forgiveness* as well as those who *need to forgive* from doing so.

3. As a peacemaker you need to be a *just person*, one who listens to all sides before you give an opinion. A just person refuses to take sides. Always keep in mind this important reality: "*The first to present his case seems right, till another comes forward and questions him*" (Proverbs 18:17).

A just person never loses sight of the goal—a peace that *improves the relationship* and has the *aroma of Jesus* in the resolution. To accomplish this, you can't let yourself turn against the Dominant Person when you hear about his or her destructive attitudes and behaviors. Nor can you let yourself be influenced by the emotional hurts of the Co-dependent Person and Significant Others. It's important that YOU remain unbiased.

4. Begin by bringing to the surface what the Dominant Person has been doing to cause the apprehension. Do realize that they may not take full responsibility for their actions UNTIL they feel the emotional hurt they have caused the others. If they don't feel the pain they've caused and aren't filled with heartfelt sorrow, they *won't change!* And, the others will have no hope.

While you're trying to bring to light the destructive behavior of the Dominant Person, you must also keep the others from attacking him or her. This can be difficult. But you need to bring to light the wrong that's been done while at the same time keeping the accusers from getting their "pound of flesh." This is vengeance, and our Lord won't allow it (Romans 12:19).

5. The Co-dependent Person is often the most difficult to help. Filled with self-deception, they see themselves as the most caring and long-suffering of all the people involved, having hidden their own fears by internally blaming the Dominant Person for all the problems.



It's crucial that the Co-dependent Person be made to realize that their own unwillingness to confront and their hindering the Significant Others from doing so has only prolonged the emotional hurt. If they refuse to repent of holding onto fear rather than acting in love, confront them even to the point of turning them over to Satan so that they may indeed call out to our Lord in responsive repentance.

6. The Significant Others may not have caused the initial tension. But, if you find that they had the opportunity to confront but didn't, they're guilty as well. They too need to accept personal responsibility for their withdrawal which allowed apprehension to continue. They didn't step in when that would have been the loving thing to do.
7. Once you begin your involvement as a peacemaker, you need to be willing to hang in there until either a peaceful resolution is achieved among those who want it, and/or the unrepentant are turned over to Satan so that they may repent. This may take several meetings, so be prepared.

It also may be helpful for the group that you stay involved until binding and loosing God's Word has been firmly established among the parties as a means of growing together in Christ.

8. At no time in the process let any of those trapped in the co-dependent situation speak to you alone about the situation. Potential bias may prejudice the necessary position of justice you need to maintain so that everyone can trust your involvement.

## A Concluding Word of Encouragement

The peace that the Spirit of Jesus produces is *alive with hope* about the future of relationships! When the co-dependent gears are gone, everyone looks forward with hope of what their relationship can become in Christ. The wounds of the past are only recounted as testimonies of spiritual victory, since Jesus our Healer is determined that you replace the sting of painful memories with the grace of forgiveness.

*Confronting darkness and mutually pursuing Christ's character* are foundational relational responsibilities in the Kingdom of God. When your goal is to become more Christ-like day by day, you cherish those who expose anything in you that is hindering that development. Your growing love for our Lord Jesus only increases your desire to *rid yourself of all darkness* so that you can be fully available at all times to serve Him and help others.