

FOREWORD BY
DR. ROY MATHESON

*FREE
TO BE
ME*

*Experience the Freedom
of Uncovering Your
True Self in Christ*

Alfred C.W. Davis
With Diane Talbot-Schoenhoff

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In the early 1990s, there was a group from Chartwell Baptist Church who helped Martha and me listen to the Holy Spirit to see in which direction I should be going. I Had been in business for 28 years and was feeling unfulfilled. Included in this group were Roy Matheson, Connie and John Allardyce, Ross Macdonald and Norman Lea. Collectively, we heard the Holy Spirit leading me to counseling, teaching, pastoring, and shepherding.

With this input, I was led to study counseling under Dr. Brian Cunnington at Tyndale Seminary in Toronto. In the second year of internship, under my supervisor at Chartwell Baptist Church, Peter Roebbelen, I started using the technique of having clients invite Jesus into their pain. I first saw this approach in Dr. Cunnington's class. We had watched a video by Dr. Tan from California showing how it was helpful to involve the Holy Spirit in the healing process.

I subsequently learned about inviting Jesus into memories, and the power of having lies re-interpreted with truth. In addition, I am grateful for the works of Neil Anderson, Leanne Payne, Ed Smith, Mark Virkler and Francis MacNutt, whose insights have greatly contributed to my understanding of the inner healing process.

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I pray that the Holy Spirit will use the collective wisdom that has been gained from all of the above-mentioned people and for the authors who equip others in the ongoing work of healing and wholeness. All biblical quotations in the text were taken from the New International Version of the Holy Bible, which was published by The Zondervan Corporation, Grand Rapids, Michigan (1978).

Foreword

We encounter hurting and wounded people wherever we go in the world. For some, the trauma is so great that it destroys any hope that wholeness can ever be experienced again. Our wounded self creates distorted thinking and a flight from the truth. We buy into the lies of the enemy – lies about ourselves, about God and about the world. To uncover these lies, to reject them and to embrace God’s truth is all part of our healing journey.

In this book, Alf Davis provides us with a process whereby we can reject our distorted self and embrace our true self, as Christ intended it to be. I have had the opportunity of ministering and teaching with Alf in a variety of settings. Some of these have been close to home and others have been far away in places such as Indonesia and Colombia. I have seen people trained to use these principles so that they in turn can minister and bring freedom to others. If you are looking for freedom or want to help others who seek to be everything God intended them to be, I commend this book to you.

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INTRODUCTION

IS THIS AS GOOD AS IT GETS?

Have you ever asked yourself the question: *Is this as good as it gets?* If you have, you're not alone. As a counselor, I (Alf Davis) meet people everyday, including Christians, who ask themselves the same question. Most of the men and women I counsel are living defeated lives. They come because they're losing the battle over addiction, anger, anxiety, depression, fear, troubled marriages, unforgiveness and the list goes on. Their thoughts are plagued with lies, distortions, and negative messages from the past that warp the way they view themselves.

In some cases, the turmoil has been going on for as long as they can remember. Many of these individuals, inflicted with childhood wounds that run deep, often process life through a cloudy filter – one clogged with criticism and condemnation. Each day they look in the mirror, they can't seem to see their **true selves** through the fog of their hurt and pain. Many don't recognize who they truly are. Their thinking has become *distorted* and so too has their perception of reality.

I know what you're thinking at this point: *Sure I may have struggles, but I wouldn't go so far as to say "distortion". And even if that were true, how is reading yet another book going to make a difference in my life?*

What if I told you reading this book can make all the difference in the world. The only catch is that you may need to challenge yourself on the way you think about yourself, and how you see God and the world. This is no small task, but it's the

only way this process will work. If you allow yourself to “*be transformed by the renewing of your mind*”¹, then, you will be able to grasp the “*glorious living*”² that God has planned for each of us.

ARE WE REALLY DISTORTED?

Recent findings from Statistics Canada state that as many Canadians suffer from emotional illnesses, such as depression, as from other leading chronic conditions, including heart disease and diabetes. In the United States, the National Institute of Mental Health reports the number of people diagnosed with anxiety disorders has doubled since the early eighties. Furthermore, the number of doctor’s visits in which U.S. patients received medication for mental problems rose from 32.7 million to 45.6 million over the decade between 1985 and 1994. This is a startling statistic considering only one-third of all those afflicted will seek treatment.

In the foreword to Dr. Grant Mullen’s book, *Emotionally Free*, Dr. Neil T. Anderson says that our society is experiencing a “*blues epidemic in an age of anxiety.*”³ What’s worse is that Mullen says that number is even higher among those in the Christian population: “*Perhaps the greatest shock to me as a young physician was that so many Christians were in emotional pain. Their suffering seemed greater than those in ‘the world,’ since they would not admit that they were in pain and were too ashamed to go for help. Their ‘religion,’ which was intended to be a source of comfort and hope, had become a barrier that prevented*

¹ Romans 12:2, NIV

² Ephesians 1:11, The Message by Eugene H. Peterson p. 2126

³ *Emotionally Free* by Grant Mullen, p. 7

*them from being honest enough to get help, for fear of being condemned and shamed by fellow believers.”*⁴

It is difficult to say conclusively that Christians are in greater emotional pain than those in the general population. Regardless, the reality is that it is quite possible to be a Christian and still be bound in sinful habits and attitudes, with dysfunctional relationships, deep personality scars, addictions and compulsions. Mullen says: *“When believers are so attached to their old thinking patterns and the sin that always accompanies them, they will remain infant Christians.”*⁵ Unfortunately, many Christians never lose their old ways of thinking, feeling and relating. Although they are believers, they remain stuck and are unable to have satisfying relationships, including their relationship with God.

KNOW WHAT YOU BELIEVE

Evangelist Billy Graham identified believers’ vulnerability to distortion and emotional struggles decades ago in his book, *The Holy Spirit*: *“Many of the young people I meet are living defeated, disillusioned, and disappointed lives even after coming to Christ. They are walking after the flesh because they have not had proper teaching at this precise point. The old man, the old principle, the old force, is not yet dead or wholly renewed: it is still there. It fights every inch of the way against the new man, the new force that God made when we received*

⁴ *Emotionally Free* by Grant Mullen, p. 11

⁵ *Emotionally Free* by Grant Mullen, p. 17

*Christ. Only as we yield and obey to the new principle in Christ do we win victory.”*⁶

Graham says many Christians today lack proper teaching about what it means to be a Christian or a *new man*. Without that understanding it is not surprising that victorious living seems so far out of reach for many.

While it's true that 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us: “*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation, the old has gone, the new has come,*”⁷ that doesn't mean we instantly change our old ways of thinking and relating to others.

Becoming a new creation is the work of the Holy Spirit. God's gracious gift of salvation does free us, but not from the requirement of faithful obedience to this *new principle* in Christ. So, to leave the *old man* behind and bring the *new man* in isn't automatic. God initiates the work and we are required to carry it to fruition by living a new life under a new Master. We can't abdicate that responsibility to God and falsely think we have no role to play in the renewing process.

In other words, although you became a *new person* when you accepted Christ, you still need to yield and obey the new thinking that Christ makes available to us in His Word, such as, I am a forgiven child of God. When believers change their negative thinking patterns, partner with Christ and “*take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ,*”⁸ then they are free to truly understand what it means to live the abundant life.

⁶ *The Holy Spirit* by Billy Graham p. 104

⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV

⁸ 2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV

Just as a toddler doesn't automatically learn to walk after the first attempt, Christians have to learn to walk in freedom. Learning is a process – how to use our freedom in Christ under the lordship of a merciful God is grasped over time.

NOTHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

While emotional disorders appear to be a modern-day reality, wise King Solomon spoke of the bewildered and unsatisfied state of the human condition thousands of years ago in the ancient scriptures. *“What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest.”*⁹

In Ecclesiastes, Solomon describes the futility of life without God. Pleasure, toil, power, riches, overindulgence and success – all leave the soul empty and unsatisfied. God alone was meant to fill the void. He alone can bring healing and restoration to the *Distorted Self* and set you free to uncover your **True Self in Christ**.

John Eldredge in his book, *Wild at Heart*, sees the futility of striving to live a life without God and recognizes how it contributes to the creation of a *Distorted Self*. *“The whole false self, our ‘lifestyle’, is an elaborate defense against entering our wounded heart. It is a chosen blindness. Our false self stubbornly blinds each of us to the light and the truth of our own emptiness and hollowness.”*¹⁰

⁹ Ecclesiastes 2:22-23, NIV

¹⁰ *Wild At Heart* by John Eldredge, p. 127

Recognizing that striving is a form of avoidance, we are challenged then to surrender ourselves to the One who created us, in order to discover our real selves, our **True Self in Christ**. He alone can give us salvation, purpose, comfort, wisdom, healing and the abundant life we are seeking.

Eldredge quotes C.S. Lewis in *Wild at Heart*, “*Until you have given yourself to him [Jesus] you will not have a real self.*” Eldredge continues, “*When the Bible tells us that Christ came to “redeem mankind” it offers a whole lot more than forgiveness. To simply forgive a broken man is like telling someone running a marathon, “It’s okay that you’ve broken your leg. I won’t hold it against you. Now finish the race.” That is cruel, to leave him disabled that way. No, there is much more to our redemption.*”¹¹

The answer is to place our **Distorted Self** before God: “*...fix your attention on God. You’ll be changed from the inside out. Readily recognize what he wants from you, and quickly respond to it...God brings the best out of you, develops well-formed maturity in you.*”¹²

WHY THE DISTORTION?

There appears to be a growing soul-sickness in the world around us and in the church as well. While stress and pressures seem to come from an ever faster pace of life, much of the mental and emotional problems are based in a distorted image of God and of self. As Dr. Phil McGraw says in his book *Self Matters*, “*You, like every other living person, get mixed and faulty messages from the world and from all your experiences in it. The result is a distortion of your*

¹¹ *Wild At Heart* by John Eldredge, p. 128

¹² Romans 12:2. *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, p. 2054

personal truth. Failing to confront that ill-conceived personal truth is a crucial betrayal of you ,by you.”¹³

In fact, it’s my understanding that the difficulties many people experience have everything to do with *distorted thinking*. That’s because the battleground takes place in the mind. When your negative view of life, of God and yourself war against the truth, tension is automatically created. Eventually the distorted thinking begins to define who you are and a ***Distorted Self*** is created.

MIND CONTROL

Mullen puts it this way: “*You see, the battle is actually for your thoughts and who will control them. As long as your old thinking pattern is unhealed and active, then your thoughts will be controlled and contaminated by your sinful and painful past.*”¹⁴

While Mullen, who is by profession a medical doctor, takes a holistic approach to treatment, this book will focus mainly on the need for spiritual and mental/emotional healing in the treatment of the ***Distorted Self***. It’s important to point out that some individuals may also require medical treatment for healing to occur.

THE BELIEVER’S MIND

Without a doubt, the Bible is clear that the role of the mind in the life of the believer is key to living an abundant life. If that were not the case, Jesus would not have emphasized it in answering the Pharisee, an expert in the law,

¹³ *Self Matters* by Phillip C. McGraw, Ph.D., p. 23

¹⁴ *Emotionally free* by Grant Mullen, p. 14

who tested him: *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul **and with all your mind.** This is the first and greatest commandment.”*¹⁵

Living the life God intends you to live requires you to engage your mind and your will. Transformation is an active process that takes a deliberate effort as you commit all your heart and mind.

*“Put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.”*¹⁶

Yet the truth is, that no matter how much we want the abundant life, Jesus wants it more for us than we can imagine. *“I am come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*¹⁷ We can take great comfort in knowing that God desires to help us move from captivity into freedom, *“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free.”*¹⁸ God doesn't want us to be prisoners of our old destructive thinking.

A HALF-BAKED CHRISTIAN

After receiving counseling, a former client of mine spoke powerfully of her transformation:

It's as if I was a 'half-baked Christian.' I became a Christian when I invited Jesus into my life nearly 12 years ago. The truth is it had been a battle ever since. In many ways my life got more difficult. After becoming a follower, I was under the impression that to be a good Christian meant going to Bible study, telling

¹⁵ Matthew 22:37, NIV

¹⁶ Ephesians 4:21-24, NIV

¹⁷ John 10:10, NIV

¹⁸ Galatians 5:1, NIV

everyone about God and serving in the church. Being the over-achiever that I am, I just set out to get the job done. Nobody ever told me I was also supposed to invite Jesus into my heart and mind daily to help me do the work. I struggled with guilt messages about not doing enough and this left me frustrated. I was saved but not transformed. No wonder I was frustrated; I wasn't living victoriously. But then I learned the good news. What a relief! I used to think I had emotional problems. The truth is I had thinking problems that were undermining my emotions. Ever since I've been partnering with Jesus, who is the Truth, I've been doing much better. I am better equipped to renounce the lies and distortions that try to rob me of peace and joy. Sure, I have my moments, but now I'm experiencing daily renewal of my heart and mind. It has freed me to serve where I feel God is calling me, guilt-free, instead of doing it out of obligation. Now the Gospel makes sense. The good news is that I am free to be me, as God created me to be.

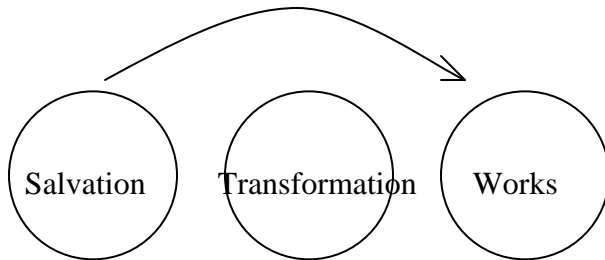
SAVED BUT NOT TRANSFORMED

This story is a witness to the power of Truth in transforming the life of the believer. Sadly, this woman's story of works and performance is common. Individuals accept Christ into their *hearts*, go to church and get busy serving. All the while, they neglect to consciously seek God for "*the renewing of the mind.*"¹⁹ After all, there's lots of work to be done in the building of God's kingdom. We recognize that "*The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.*"²⁰ Of course

¹⁹ Romans 12:2, NIV

²⁰ Matthew 9:37, NIV

I'm not suggesting for a second that serving isn't necessary. The book of James reminds us that faith without deeds is dead. I'm suggesting that in the Christian process there are three steps: salvation, transformation (sanctification) and works. Many Christians jump from salvation to works, bypassing the healing and transforming stage that empowers the works.



Salvation is the initial invitation of Christ into the person where healing of the heart occurs and forgiveness is received, along with the gift of eternal life. *(If you have not yet made that commitment, you can make that invitation today. Invite Jesus Christ into your heart, acknowledge that you are a sinner and He will forgive your sins and give you eternal life.)*

Transformation is about the healing of the mind and emotions, which is referred to as the restoring of the soul. Works are about serving others in love. Too often the Christian life has been conceived as: *Be saved and then go do good works.*

WAKING THE DEAD

Eldredge summarizes the misconception of the Christian life this way in his book, *Waking the Dead*: *“This whole Christian thing is about trying not to*

*sin. Going to church. Being nice.”*²¹ This approach focuses on rules and doing. What has been missed is that the healing and the transformation of the mind and emotions has not been addressed. And yet, Jesus clearly outlined his mission in Isaiah 61 and confirmed it in Luke: *“The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair.”*²²

How can a person serve others in love if he or she is still in captivity or bondage to his or her past? If the **True Self In Christ** has been lost in the tumult of life, and a *Distorted Self* has been developed, then restoration is needed before a person can be who he or she is designed to be.

RESTORING THE SOUL

Psalm 23 refers to transformation when it says, *“he restores my soul.”*²³ This second step of transformation is needed otherwise we tend to do good works in our own strength to earn love instead of being empowered by the truth of love to give selflessly.

Christ-centered inner healing, which is the approach I use in my counseling practice, addresses this second step in the Christian process. Jesus is

²¹ *Waking The Dead* by John Eldredge, p. 80

²² Isaiah 61:1-3 and Luke 4:18, NIV

²³ Psalm 23:3, NIV

invited into the mind to uncover the *True Self in Christ*. In the process, Jesus himself is the healer, Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals. “*For I am the Lord who heals you.*”²⁴ When asked, he comes to meet us in our brokenness and enter into the unhealed places of our hearts and minds.

I have seen His healing firsthand. When Jesus brings His truth to peoples’ minds, the distortion is clarified and peoples’ lives change for the better. When people expose the *lies* that *distort* and receive the *truth* that heals, they begin to uncover their *True Self in Christ* and are free to live the victorious life God promises.

Allow me to borrow a simple illustration from nature. In the process of becoming a butterfly, the caterpillar, hidden inside its cocoon, struggles to become transformed, to break free and fly. So it is with many Christians today who struggle to break free from the confines of their minds, where lies and distorted thoughts hold them captive.

When believers are exposed to the truth, it replaces the lies and breaks its power to oppress. Only then, can they break free and begin to live a transformed life where they experience true freedom and joy.

WHO CARES?

God does. Truly, if it were not for Jesus’ desire to heal the broken-hearted, many would remain troubled. The good news is God understands our plight, “*I will tear off your veils and save my people from your hands, and they*

²⁴ Exodus 15:26, NIV

*will no longer fall prey to your power; then you will know that I am the Lord.
Because you dishearten the righteous with your lies.”*²⁵

God recognizes the connection between lies that people believe and the **truth** that heals a broken heart. He also knows how easy it is for us to become trapped by our negative thinking, “*A man is a slave to whatever has mastered him.*”²⁶

But, if we turn to him he is willing to help. “He will call upon me, and I will answer him.”²⁷ “I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you and watch over you.”²⁸

WHERE IS GOD WHEN IT HURTS?

Remember that God wants to deliver you from the *old, dead life* and free you from the negative perceptions, distortions and lies you’ve been believing about who you think you are – the ones that hold you back from living life more abundantly.

Thankfully, God loves you too much to leave you the way you are. He wants to help you change. His desire is for His people to be transformed into the likeness of His Son Jesus Christ.

“But, whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we, who with

²⁵ Ezekiel 13:21, NIV

²⁶ 2 Peter 2:19, NIV

²⁷ Psalm 91:15, NIV

²⁸ Psalm 32:8, NIV

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.”²⁹

LIVING A LIE

You cannot live in freedom, as long as you are living a lie. Take the story of the young couple on the verge of divorce. The husband's thinking and perceptions had become distorted by the childhood lie that he was stupid. Later when he was married, he perceived his wife's every request as a personal attack on his self worth. When he invited Jesus Christ into his memory, he heard the truth that he is a bright, competent person, which changed how he viewed himself. In this case, neither the husband nor his wife realized how deeply the man's negative childhood thoughts were affecting their marriage. The couple is now living a more satisfying married life.

The process was effective because it dealt with the root issues where both cognitive and emotional transformation occurred. The key to the change was the **truth** of Jesus Christ. Not only was the source of the distortion identified, but the deeply-rooted pain accompanying it was also healed. The power of the lie was lost when he refused to believe it, when he replaced the lie with **truth**. And so he began to live a transformed life.

In other words, he couldn't be free of his anger and relate to his wife as long as he tried to protect himself from the lie that he was stupid.

²⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:16-18, NIV

As Eldredge says, “*You cannot love another person from a false self. You cannot love another while you are still hiding.*”³⁰

STEPS TO FREEDOM

The problem is that coming out of hiding isn’t easy. We just have to think of Adam and Eve. What was the first thing they did once they recognized their sin in eating the forbidden fruit? They hid. It just seemed like the natural thing to do. Stepping into freedom takes courage and a lot of hard work, and healing is a process that takes time.

Yet, the Apostle Paul insists the only way to be free is to stay steadfast to the teaching in the Scriptures: “*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*”³¹

In order to put our old life behind us, we need to make a conscious commitment daily to put on our new life in Christ, our new role. And to head in that new direction, we need to adopt the new way of thinking that only the Holy Spirit gives.

VIRUS PROTECTION PROGRAM

Think of the process from a modern-day perspective. Most households today are equipped with one or more personal computers. It is common practice to install an anti-virus program for your new computer. These filters regularly scan the hard drive for menacing viruses. Without such programs, computers run the risk of crashing. And so it is with believers, we need to be equipped with an anti-distortion program that rids our mind of negative unhealthy thinking that

³⁰ *Waking The Dead* by John Eldredge, p. 88

³¹ John 8:32, NIV

causes us to stumble. The Truth of Jesus, if applied daily to Christian living, is just the anti-distortion protection that we need.

Perhaps you're skeptical about all this. After all, installing an anti-distortion program for the Christian mind? Maybe you believe that inner healing for distortions and hurt may work for others but not for you. No doubt your situation is unique. Or you think there is nothing in your life that needs changing. After all, your perceptions are just fine. But what if change for the better is possible? Perhaps there are aspects of your life where a change of thinking and perception could help. Maybe your current thinking has obscured who you really are and is preventing you from knowing your **True Self in Christ**.

WHAT'S THE POINT?

In his book, *Self Matters*, Dr. Phil McGraw challenges the reader to get real. He urges them to get rid of doubt and distortion and to live an authentic life, “*Wouldn't it be tragic if a very different, vibrant you was buried under a pile of worldly to-do lists, and you were mindlessly accepting the world's expectancies? There is an authentic self within you.*”³²

Similarly, although from a distinctly Christian perspective, we've written this book to challenge your thinking and cause you to question whether you are truly living the victorious Christian life Jesus came to offer. You'll be asked to take an honest look at yourself and see whether your thoughts, perceptions and feelings line up with biblical teaching.

As you read on you'll witness for yourself how God transforms lives with Truth. In the following pages, we will explain the concept of the *Distorted Self*,

³² *Self Matters* by Phillip C. McGraw, Ph.D., p. 29

how it is created and how it interferes with knowing your *True Self in Christ*. We will share stories of how others have invited Jesus into their minds and show how the Truth has set them free. You will find prayers that will help you initiate change, so that you can personally receive healing you never thought possible. After reading this book, it is our desire that you too will know that a transformed life is possible. You will see that the byproduct of this process is clearer thinking, peace of mind and joy.

So let's explore together this concept of partnering with Jesus Christ to obtain inner healing. You will not only find that there is hope for change, but you will experience the transformation God promises.

Maybe your life isn't *as good as it gets* – perhaps it can be a whole lot better. What if it's no coincidence that you're reading this book right now. Could it be a divine appointment – an opportunity for God to teach you something about Himself and who you *really* are in Him? With the help of Jesus, it *is* possible to leave your *Distorted Self* behind and be free to uncover your true identity, as God sees you. After all, “*It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life.*”³³ “*So take your stand. Never again let anyone put a harness of slavery on you.*”³⁴

You may be surprised to learn that you are “*fearfully and wonderfully made*”³⁵ and that your *True Self in Christ* is a whole lot better than you ever imagined.

³³ *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, p. 2122

³⁴ *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, p. 2121

³⁵ Psalm 139:14, NIV

PART ONE:

“Now we see but a poor reflection; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.”¹

UNDERSTANDING THE *DISTORTED SELF*

Have you ever given a person a compliment and the person hears the exact opposite of what you said? I remember once complimenting a woman on her hair. Somehow she wasn't hearing my praise and in her mind she interpreted my comment negatively:

What's wrong with my hair?" she asked.

That's just one of the many ways the *Distorted Self* works inside a person. When words are automatically interpreted negatively, whether they were intended to be complimentary or not, chances are the *Distorted Self* is present, playing havoc with the person's thoughts, perceptions and emotions.

Notice the distorted thinking in both Laura and John's diaries. When they accept false statements as truth about themselves, tension is automatically created. Many of us have fallen into the distorted thinking trap at one time or another in our lives. Like Laura and John, we have an internal dialogue that constantly challenges our significance and identity.

In this section of the book, we will be taking an inside look at the mind of the *Distorted Self* – what it looks like, sounds like, feels like and how it develops in the first place.

¹ 1 Corinthians 13:12, NIV

PROLOGUE

Dear Diary,

What a week! Life seems to be spinning out of control and I don't know who I am anymore. Somehow I've lost my way. I used to think all I had to do was perform to be accepted, but now I'm starting to wonder. I just don't know – the older I get the more exhausted I am trying to please everyone and keep up with all this activity. Like today for instance, when Larry expected me to produce that client presentation at the last minute – who does he think I am, superwoman? I'm in way over my head on this new job. I think Larry overestimates my abilities in thinking I'm so competent. I know I'm not. I mean how does he expect me to manage other people, when I can't even manage my own life. Something has got to change, but what? What's wrong with me? Why do I always feel so stressed and anxious? And I'm a Christian. I'm not supposed to get anxious and depressed. After all, I'm born again. But I'm so busy with work and life that I have no time to help out at church. I feel so guilty. I didn't even want to go back to work. But, I thought being a mom wasn't enough. The girls still need help with homework every night. Oh, I wish I wasn't so impatient with Liz. She must think I'm the worst mother in the whole wide world. Anyway, there's no use wishing I could stay home when we can't afford it now. We never should have

moved into this big house. Who were we kidding anyway? What were we trying to prove? And to whom? Now I'm stuck with a job I hate and a huge mortgage to pay. But what would people say if we lost this house? What's that ringing sound in my head? I should really get a physical. I know I've been packing on the pounds. My weight has never been this out of control. I'm sure if I cooked healthier meals like Doug's mom always tells me, I wouldn't be so fat. Oh, get a grip Laura. Maybe Dad was right all along. Wait, is that him yelling at me again: "You're such an idiot, you're so irresponsible! Just like your mother's lazy sister Sue." Maybe I am like Aunt Sue. Stop. I can't handle him yelling at me like that anymore. He always makes me feel so stupid. I'm such a loser. Nothing is good enough for him. But maybe this time it'll be different. If I just try harder. Hey, I'll show him. I'll work two jobs if I have to, but I'm not going to lose this house. I know I can make him proud of me. Oh, I feel so dizzy...

Laura's diary is a fictional example of a woman wrestling with her negative inner thoughts. As you can see, her thoughts are plagued with lies, distortions, and negative statements from the past that warp the way she views herself. It's as if she continually plays a tape of negative dialogue over and over again in her mind, until she feels herself spinning out of control. The tension builds as she accepts as truth false statements about herself. When the

distortions in her mind are removed and she receives the healing truth of Christ, she's free to uncover her **True Self in Christ** and live a life of freedom.

The next diary reveals the inner thoughts of a married man at midlife. David is unaware of the fact that his current marital conflicts are rooted in lies and negative messages he has been believing since childhood.

Dear Diary,

It happened again on Saturday. I was driving Suzie to the Mall and she went at me again. She started criticizing my driving. So, I just stretched that orange light a little bit and you would think it was a federal case. Who does she think she is anyway? She is such a back seat driver. I have never had a car accident in my life and I've been driving since I was 16 years old. Sometimes her criticism just gets to me and I can't control my anger. I know that God doesn't approve of my behavior, but it's like I can't help myself. I'm so ashamed of myself. Like last night. I came home late from work and missed the dinner hour by 20 minutes. Or should I say, "her dinner hour." It's not as if I planned to be late. My client kept talking and the traffic was worse than normal. And when I walked in she said, "You are so undependable. You make a commitment to be on time and you never deliver. You are never on time." Which is not true. I was early for dinner two nights ago. I flew into a rage. I wanted to strangle her to keep her quiet. The more I told her to shut up, the more she yapped. It sounded just like my mother nagging at me. "David, do this, do that. Clean up your room. Take out the garbage. Cut the grass." It never ended and whatever I did was never good enough. I used to give Mom lip but her sarcasm hurt more than anything I could say. What a bitch! So after shouting and throwing a few things around I would

clam up and disappear. If she didn't appreciate my help then she could damn well do it herself. Well last night, after dinner Suzie said, "When are you going to finish fixing the bathroom sink?" I already told her that I had ordered the part, but the store has it on backorder and they didn't know when they would deliver it. Well, she started nagging, "You always start something and don't finish it. You just leave your tools around. Can't you at least clean up?" Well, that added to the criticism about coming home late and generally having a bad day at work caused me to blow my stack. I know I can get pretty verbal when I'm angry. And I'm supposed to be the spiritual head of the family! Some spiritual leader I am. As I was shouting at her, I was hearing my mother's words in the background. "Can't you ever clean up? You are so messy!" Maybe I am a little messy. Maybe I am not good enough. I just feel that whatever I do is not appreciated. I try my hardest, but it is never fast enough and it never seems to be good enough. I do bring home the bacon and I wash the dishes and vacuum the house. I help the kids with their homework and tuck them into bed, but no – that isn't enough. When the nagging gets to me, I just disappear. Let her do it if she is so great. Sometimes it takes days for us to start talking again. I'm sure nobody at church realizes just how bad things are with us sometimes.

In this story, David is talking about injustice – he is trying hard to please, but feels that he is not appreciated. While he is upset with his wife, the origin of his anger is really further back in his life. The words his mother said to him trigger his angry response in the present. His image of himself is distorted by his mother’s condemnation and criticism. He was wounded by her words and today his anger towards her spills out into his relationship with his wife. When Suzie spoke the words “clean up” she was touching a nerve that triggered the anger. That anger is hurting David’s relationship with his wife but it is as if he doesn’t care. When he accepted the words in his mind, “Maybe I am not good enough,” a wound was created and a distorted self-image became embedded. Now, only the truth that Jesus brings will heal him and set him free from this hurtful distortion of his self. The good news is that there is hope and that truth does heal.

In the next chapter, we are going to look at a definition of the *Distorted Self* and investigate how the mind becomes wounded.

Chapter 1

“The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace.”¹

“Every man’s word becomes his oracle and so you distort the words of the living God.”²

WHAT IS THE *DISTORTED SELF* ANYWAY?

As you can see from Laura and David’s diaries, wrestling with inner thoughts brings tension, turmoil and disruption to life. Consistent distorted, negative thinking can significantly impact a person’s experience. It’s clear from these stories that the words spoken and accepted in early life can have a profound influence on the concept of self.

In Laura’s diary, she began to think of herself as *lazy like my sister Sue*, when she agreed with that characterization. Then, it was as if she couldn’t seem to do enough to prove that lie wrong.

In David’s case, his self-image was also negatively affected when he agreed with his mother’s words by saying, *Maybe I am a little messy*. Then, he began to construct a negative self-image by believing the lies he was told. That’s precisely how the *Distorted Self* develops inside a person.

¹ Romans 8:6, NIV

² Jeremiah 23:36, NIV

DEALING WITH DISTORTION

I've often heard people say: *I am an intelligent person and I am in control of my life. I can make choices for myself and the only thing that is relevant is the present and the future. My past does not control me and I am not a victim of my past, so don't talk to me about the past.*

But, no matter how hard one tries to deny it, living with distortions created in the past impacts the present. Past memories and words accepted do matter to you and they matter a great deal to God. Author James Hollis says, "*Out of the wounding of childhood, then, the adult personality is less a series of choices than a reflexive response to the early experiences and traumata of life.*"³

As I work with clients, I have observed that memories, their accompanying feelings, and the related cognitive conclusions people draw from them, have a very powerful effect on their present story.

In a very real sense, as long as your past is unhealed, you will be negatively influenced by it. You may think it's best to leave the past behind, let bygones be bygones, just be positive and move forward, but choosing the path of healing requires you do otherwise.

In *Wild at Heart*, Eldredge says, "*But you can't do this at a distance; you can't ask Christ to come into your wound while you remain far from it. You have to go there with him.*"⁴

³ *The Middle Passage – From Misery to Meaning in Midlife* by James Hollis, p. 13

⁴ *Wild at Heart* by John Eldredge, p. 129

The process requires you to revisit the hurt and pain and allow God's truth to heal it. That's not to say that you should ruminate over every negative experience, reliving it over and over again. The goal of emotional healing is to revisit the memory so that it can be transformed and healed with God's help.

THE DEFINITION OF *SELF*

Before we begin to understand the *Distorted Self*, let's first define the term *Self*. In this book, we are taking an intra-psychic perspective, which simply means the person's view of his/her own Self. Since perspective is in the eyes of the beholder, an individual can have one understanding of his/her own Self, while others can hold different views, as seen from their vantage point.

Throughout life's many experiences, the Self is developed, defined and understood through the words that are accepted by the person in his/her own *mind* as describing his/her own character, attributes, talents, appearance, behavior and style. Therefore, we see Self as the person's identity that is based on the set of beliefs of his/her personhood, which are accumulated and interpreted over time.

THE DEFINITION OF *DISTORTED SELF*

As the word *Distorted* suggests, the *Distorted Self* is a twisting or distorting of the original image of Self. For the *Distorted Self* to be created, there must be a distortion or a misrepresentation of the truth, so that the person's understanding of Self is inauthentic. As we will see later, it is the truth that comes from Jesus that will clarify the distortion.

Dr. Phil in his book, *Self Matters*, aptly describes the life characterized by distortion: “*Not living faithfully to your authentic self creates a void, an ever-present feeling that you are incomplete. You find yourself wondering whether you should be doing something different with your life. There’s a restlessness, a yearning emptiness that won’t go away. It’s as if there is a hole in your soul.*”⁵

The ***Distorted Self*** starts to develop when the input of life is negative and the individual begins to accept it as truth. Often what happens with the creation of a ***Distorted Self*** is that a negative message can be heard so often and with such powerful effect that the person comes to believe that the distortion is truth.

For instance, although James has a genius IQ, he actually believes that he’s stupid, because he heard hundreds of times growing up that he was stupid and he came to accept it as truth.

Furthermore, when others challenge the untrue statement about him, he’ll say, *But it is true! I am stupid.* It appears that people prefer to talk about what seems “real” and what has become a reality, even if that perceived reality is negative and not factual. It’s as if many are unable to challenge the veracity of negative statements in an attempt to maintain a more positive self-image.

⁵ *Self Matters* by Phillip C. McGraw. Ph. D., p. 31

HEALING FROM DISTORTION IS FOR EVERYONE

But what happens if there is some truth to the criticism that is directed towards someone. Say, for instance, a boy, who repeatedly does naughty things, is told he is bad and starts to believe “I am bad”. We will explore this subject in more detail in Chapter 4, but suffice to say that no matter how many shortcomings a person has, he/she is still made in the image of God.

You can confess your sins and repent of the bad things you’ve done and change. Life does not need to be lived out of the mirror of one’s sin, especially as a forgiven child of God. The fact is that no one does 100 per cent bad things. Life is a mixture of good and bad. To take only the bad events and create an “*I am bad*” story may seem like reality, but it ignores the image of God and the inherent goodness that is in every human being

Even when a person does bad things, Christ is there observing and He has not given up on him/her. His love is greater than any bad things that a person does. That is why healing is for everyone. Jesus wants us *all* to be set free by truth.

THE FIRST DISTORTION

The unique and special goodness that was placed in every person was initially distorted by the sin of Adam. The Bible says, “*Since death came through a man as in Adam all die.*”⁶ When Adam and Eve disobeyed God by eating of the forbidden fruit, sin entered the world and tarnished their original image. This staining of the glory of God

⁶ 1Corinthians 15:21-22, NIV

included all mankind: *“There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”*⁷

The good news is that this original sin was dealt with through the death of Jesus on the cross. When we believe that Christ came and died on the cross to deal “once and for all” with our fallen state, then *“[We] are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement through faith in his blood.”*⁸

By entering the world, *“He has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”*⁹

For those who have accepted Jesus as their Lord and Savior, redemption by faith has removed this distortion of original sin and we have been restored to the glory of God as He created us to be.

THE SECOND DISTORTION

So, if 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV) is true, *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come”* how can there still be a distortion of this glory of God? The answer relates to how the mind works. If each person were born with an owner’s manual or a pre-programmed brain, life would be so much easier. You would have an inherent understanding of your ***True Self In Christ*** and go on living happily being and doing exactly what you were created to be and do.

⁷ Romans 3:23, NIV

⁸ Romans 3:25, NIV

⁹ Colossians 1:13-14, NIV

The reality is that our brains haven't been wired that way. The brain is like a blank sheet that becomes filled with information and data as life unfolds. People absorb knowledge about themselves from those around them and from a fallen world that is still affected by Adam's sin. The words, statements, stories and the messages that parents, siblings, relatives, friends, teachers, school mates, church members and others convey to you, then contribute to your understanding of *Self*.

You may be a new creation, with a new heart, but your mind may also be filled with negative thoughts and memories from the past that are stored in your mind and have not been renewed, recreated or changed.

Therefore, it's entirely possible for you to have different messages stored in different parts of your mind. Because the brain retains what it has recorded, as a Christian, you can have the more recent truth in one place in your mind, that you are born again and that you are a new creation in Christ. Also, you may have recorded in another part of your mind that you are worthless.

In other words, the human mind functions somewhat as a computer. The physical hardware of a computer needs software to function. With people, the physical brain is like the computer hardware and it needs the software of the mind to make it work.

The mind is the programming that the person has accepted to form their personal self-concept. Just as the computer software manages daily inputs, the software of the mind processes daily inputs so that life's experiences can be managed. While a computer uses a pre-programmed software package, people create their own software of the mind. It starts as a blank slate and builds its own programming through the interpretation of life's experiences. The distortion of self is magnified when lies, deceptions, untruths and

false messages accumulate over time and become a program that has power over the person's personal story.

Eugene O'Neill captures this idea in his play "A Long Day's Journey Into Night," when the mother in the play says, "*None of us can help the things life has done to us. They're done before you realize it. And once they're done, they make you do other things until at last everything comes between you and what you'd like to be, and you've lost your true self forever.*"¹⁰

Fortunately the *True Self* is not actually lost forever. It's just covered up. Either the *True Self* may never have been understood in the first place, or it may be covered up with confusing lies, shame, hurt, guilt and fear.

Regardless, the truth still lies beneath the layers of untruth, ready to be revealed. I believe that even with all the garbage that is covering the *True Self*, deep down inside, people intuitively know and can connect with the image of God that is within them.

THE TRUE SELF IN CHRIST--DEFINED

To say that there is such a concept as the *Distorted Self* implies that a *True Self* exists in the first place, so that there is something that can become lost or an ideal image that can become twisted.

Dr. Phil defines authentic self as "...the you that existed before and remains when life's pain, experiences, and expectancies are stripped away."¹¹

¹⁰ *A Long Day's Journey Into Night* by Eugene O'Neill, Complete Plays, p. 212

¹¹ *Self Matters* by Phillip C. McGraw. Ph. D., p. 30

The distinction we make in this book is that the authentic self or the *True Self* is the essence of who God created you to be—hence the term **True Self in Christ**.

This **True Self In Christ**, then, is based on the belief that every individual is a valued creation of God. “*So, God created man in his own image God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.*”¹² The identity of the *True Self* is founded in truth that can be verified, in contrast to the opinions and false messages of the world. The authentic *True Self* is not an idealistic wish or an opinion, but rather an understanding of God’s perfect design for your life. Since God is the creator of life, his image is imprinted in the inner core of every person. “*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*”¹³

Therefore, the **True Self in Christ** flows from the acceptance of the truth that we are worthy because “we are God’s workmanship.”¹⁴ Our identity includes being a chosen child of God whom God “delights in”¹⁵ and whom God values. “Since you are precious and honoured in my sight, and because I love you.”¹⁶

For the Christian, our identity is based in the truth that *Self* is loved, accepted and forgiven, which then frees us to see ourselves as valuable children of God with talents, gifts and unique characters that are appreciated by God.

¹² Genesis 1:27-31, NIV

¹³ Psalm 139:13-14, NIV

¹⁴ Ephesians 2:10, NIV

¹⁵ Zephaniah 3:17, NIV

¹⁶ Isaiah 43:4, NIV

HOW EARLY CAN THE *DISTORTION* BEGIN?

Did you know that in addition to the way we think of our *Self*, we also have an emotional brain that brings feelings and emotions to the concept of *Self*. These feelings and emotions, which connect with certain conceptions of the *Self*, can either be positive or negative, happy or painful.

For instance, when someone is characterized by the expression “little sweetheart” there’s a warm, fuzzy feeling connected to it, whereas the descriptive word “loser” is clearly loaded with pain. These memories stored in the emotional brain also contribute to our sense of *Self*.

In his book, *Emotional Intelligence*, Daniel Goleman indicates that we have two brains – a feeling brain and a thinking brain. Research shows that the feeling brain is fully developed in utero, whereas the cognitive brain only starts to develop after birth. This helps explain why the distortions can start in the feeling brain as early as in the womb.

As difficult as it is to fathom, I have seen this pre-birth distorted concept in more than 90 of my clients. Often the message that the infant feels is *I am not wanted*. If the mother attempts an abortion, suicide or has a fearful experience, the infant can sense the trauma in utero and can formulate a negative conclusion that is stored in the feeling part of the brain.

If not dealt with, this negative message can then affect the person’s story for the rest of his/her life. All the therapy in the world relating to post birth trauma and life experience will do nothing to change the pre-birth conclusion that lives in the mind. In

general, the distortion begins at the exact point at which a person accepts a negative statement as truth in the mind.

Allow me to illustrate. If a five-year-old is told he is stupid and at first he ignores the comment, then the statement isn't accepted and passes him by. If he keeps hearing the same statement over and over again and still doesn't receive it, then there is no wound. But let's assume that when the child turns seven, he hears somebody tell him that he is stupid and for some reason this time it sticks. He says to himself, *I guess I'm stupid*. That is the point when the distortion is created. Anytime a person mentally accepts a negative, untrue statement in the mind as truth, a part of the *Distorted Self* is created.

HOW EXACTLY IS THE *DISTORTION* CREATED?

There are two main ways that a distortion can be accepted. The first way is hearing or reading words initiated by another person. Words have power and negative words have negative power. So, when a person hears the negative words and receives them, the distortion is either created or reinforced.

In one client's story, the parent said to the child, "That was a stupid thing you did." The parent did not actually call the individual stupid, but through the tone of voice and body language, the child interpreted the words and concluded, *I am stupid*. The person certainly was not stupid, yet that negative conclusion worked destructively in his life for more than 40 years.

The second way of creating a distortion is through observing life and then drawing a conclusion. A client of mine told me that she watched how her father treated her mother. He was abusive, unkind, controlling and treated her as inferior. My client

understood, being a woman herself, that women are inferior and are worth less than men.

As a result of her earlier experience, she put herself down in her relationships with men and that belief affected her negatively as long as she believed it. At that time, she made her own interpretation from observing the family dynamic. Nobody told her how to think. She just learned from the situation and made a negative, untrue conclusion about herself.

Whether the *Self* statement is initiated through other people's words or your own, the key to understanding the *Distorted Self* is discovering the untrue words that are living in the person's self concept. Over time, a person can receive and accept a number of these beliefs that contribute to a dominant, negative story that the person is not *OK*.

In one case, someone can hear a repetition of the same statement, leading to a conclusion that is accepted. In another case, a person can hear a variety of different comments and then draw a conclusion from the theme of statements. Examples of distorted interpretations that are formulated in the mind include:

I'm not loved

I'm unworthy

I'm not good enough

I'm stupid

I'm a loser

I'm responsible for my family

It's my fault...

Some of these negative thoughts are so deeply ingrained that the person believes that the distortions are truth. These thoughts may feel like reality but they are not truth.

Perhaps you haven't accepted any of the above negative inner conclusions, but everybody has recorded something on the blank sheet of their mind that comes from the world. Researchers say that approximately 70 percent of all language is negative. That's well over half of the messages you might hear in a single day. So it's not surprising that people accumulate enough negative messages that can become the content of distorted thinking

THE DISTORTED SELF CYCLE

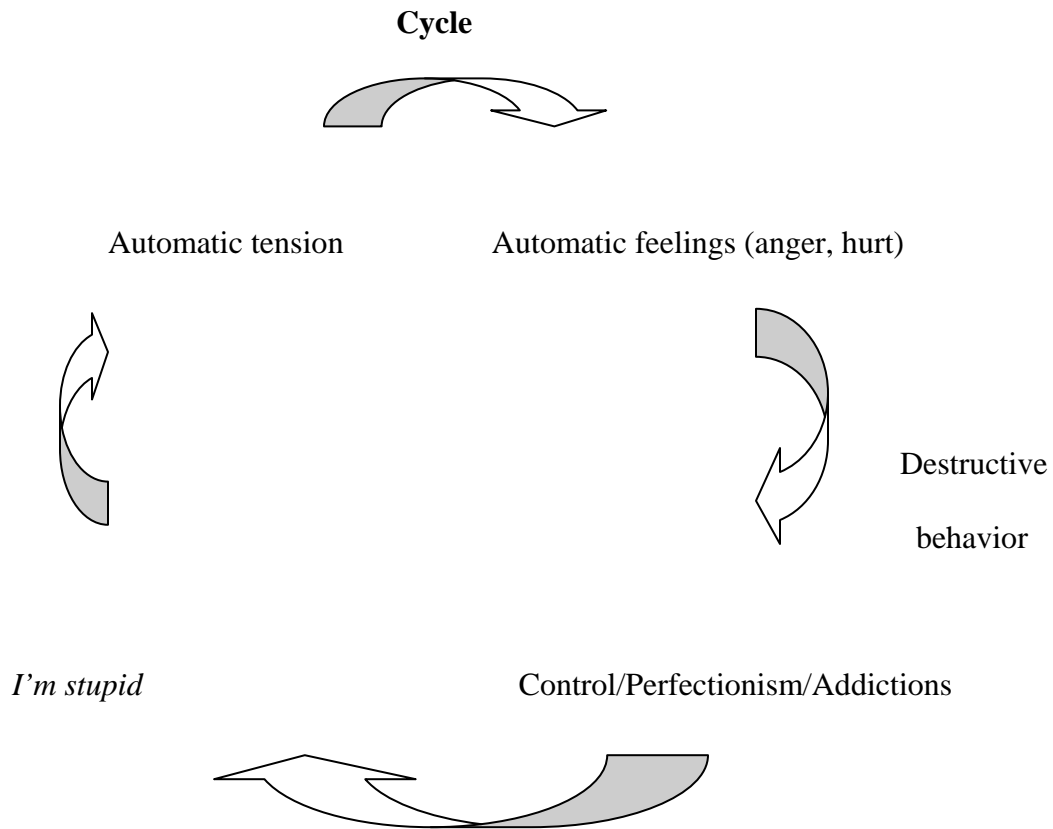
Lastly, let's explain how the *Distorted Self* functions. As mentioned earlier, we all have a *True Self In Christ*. As a person starts to create a *Distorted Self* concept, there is an automatic tension created inside the individual. The tension is generated by the difference between the *True Self* and the *Distorted Self*. For example, when a person knows that he/she is not stupid and yet starts to listen to the "I'm stupid" statement, tension is created between the *I'm stupid*, and the *I'm not stupid* beliefs.

I'm stupid \Longrightarrow TENSION \Longleftarrow *I'm not stupid*

This automatic tension then naturally produces negative feelings, such as, anger, anxiety, fear, worry, shame, pain, etc. These feelings in turn produce destructive behaviors, which get the person into trouble. As a result, the person says: *This feels uncomfortable, so I need a strategy to make these feelings and behaviors go away.* The person puts a thing called "Control" into place to manage the discomfort. The job of Control is to ensure that the person does not feel these feelings again.

Control then is used to change the person's activity so that To give an example, using the *I'm stupid* statement, the person says: *I don't like feeling stupid and having people treat me with disrespect, so I am going to control my study habits and work really hard to get high marks and then nobody can call me stupid again.*

Control then is used to change the person's activity so that he/she never feels the pain of being called stupid again. When Control doesn't work anymore, he/she moves to Perfectionism and when Perfectionism stops working he/she moves to Addiction. You can see there is a cycle that moves from the original lie to the tension, to the feeling of hurt, to the strategy of Control/Perfectionism and back again to cover up the original lie of *I'm stupid*.



Notice that the **True Self In Christ** is nowhere to be seen in this cycle. The mind is focusing on the false message, *I'm stupid* and all the resulting action is trying to hide and cover up the lie. We get into these cycles because the ***Distorted Self*** seems so real that we listen to that message. Then, we function to try to deal with the resulting feelings in the only way we know how, which is through Control, Perfectionism and Addiction.

The good news is that when the lie, distorted or false message is replaced with truth, the tension is automatically weaker. Consequently, the destructive feelings and behavior are lessened and there is less need for the strategies of Control, Perfectionism and Addiction.

When the person knows his/her **True Self In Christ**, there is no need to go through the negative cycle of Control. The sole purpose of the cycle is to hide the false message. When the person is able to connect with the *I'm not stupid* story, self-esteem grows, confidence builds and the person starts to live a more abundant life. The truth really will set you free from the bondage of the ***Distorted Self***.

In the next chapter, we will look at how truth brings freedom.

Chapter 2

“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served things created rather than the Creator.”¹

WHY ARE TRUTH AND LIES SO RELEVANT?

What is truth? Pilate asked Jesus rhetorically. To Pilate all truth was relative. With Jesus, we have one standard for truth and morality. He is the truth, the Bible tells us. *“I am the way and the truth and the life.”²*

In contrast, Satan is *“a liar and the father of lies.”³* And one of Satan’s greatest ploys is to set a lie early in a person’s life and have it work there destructively forever. Words have power. While truth has positive, creative power, lies have negative, destructive power. The battleground is the mind and the war is to see if truth or lies will prevail.

I had a client who accepted a lie in his mind at age three and it was not until he was 73 that he was set free. He lived with the turmoil and the stress of that lie for 70 years. The lie seriously affected his mental health and relationships for all those years.

There is no statute of limitations for thoughts in the mind. And the unconscious mind is just as relevant as the conscious mind. In fact, less than one percent of all our memory is stored in the conscious mind. So, even when our conscious mind does not perceive the early lie, the unconscious destructive words can still work negatively in the mind and have just as much of an influence as a conscious thought.

¹ Romans 1:25, NIV

² John 14:6, NIV

³ John 8:44, NIV

Ever since the Garden of Eden, when Eve and Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, mankind's eyes have been opened to the experiences of both truth and lies. In Genesis chapter 3, we see how God warned Adam about the consequences of such action, "*You must not eat fruit from the tree that is in the middle of the garden, and you must not touch it, or you will die.*"⁴ But the serpent, which was "*more crafty than any of the wild animals,*"⁵ used deception to lead Eve astray. The woman said, "*The serpent deceived me, and I ate.*"⁶

You can see that lies and deception are as old as humanity itself and from the beginning of time, the lie has produced destructive consequences. "*But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil.*"⁷

On the other hand, ***truth is of God***, as you can see from the following verses: "*For the law was given through Moses: grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.*"⁸ And in John 3:21, "*Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God.*"

There is a direct relationship between ***God and truth***. But what *is* truth? In John 8:31-32, Jesus says, "*If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.*" He tells us that his teachings are the truth because they come directly from God the Father. In Colossians 1:5, the writer describes truth this way, "*The word of truth, the gospel that has come to you.*" The gospel

⁴ Genesis 3:3, NIV

⁵ Genesis 3:1, NIV

⁶ Genesis 3:13, NIV

⁷ Romans 2:8, NIV

⁸ John 1:17, NIV

or Word of God is the truth, and belief in the Word of God is the way to be set free from the destructiveness of lies.

The Bible says, “*No lie comes from the truth.*”⁹ What comes from the truth is love. “*Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.*”¹⁰ God is love and “*the fruit of the Spirit is love.*”¹¹ So, truth and love and obedience to God’s Word are intricately intertwined in God’s plan for us: “*Now that you have **purified yourselves by obeying the truth** so that you have sincere love for your brothers, love one another deeply, from the heart. For you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and enduring Word of God.*”¹²

The living Word of God is accessed relationally by loving God with all our heart and soul and mind, and also by listening to the Holy Spirit. “*But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.*”¹³

While we know that God is the source of truth, can he also be the source of lies? In Titus 1:2 it says, “*God, who does not lie.*” And even more strongly in Hebrews 6:18 it says, “*It is impossible for God to lie.*” So, we know that the source of lies is not of God. If God is the source of truth, where then do the lies come from?

“Why is my language not clear to you? Because you are unable to hear what I say. You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father’s desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native

⁹ 1 John 2:21, NIV

¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 13:6, NIV

¹¹ Galatians 5:22, NIV

¹² 1 Peter 1:22-23, NIV

¹³ John 16:13, NIV

language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”¹⁴

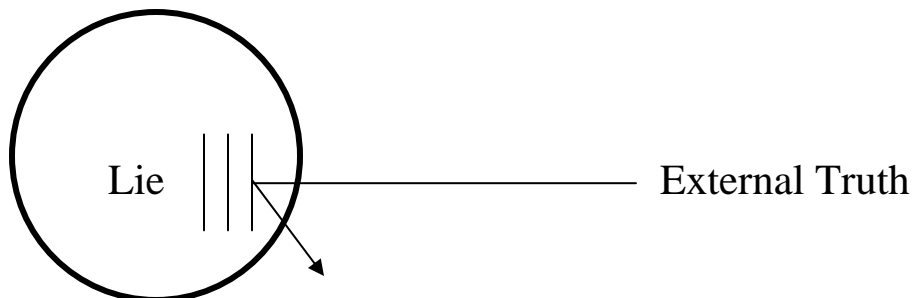
THE FALL

In the Garden of Eden, the way that Satan deceived Eve was by speaking a lie directly to her mind. While I believe that Satan can use his helpers to speak directly to our minds today, I have found that more often, the lies are communicated to us through people around us including: family members, friends, teachers and associates.

An example of such a lie is when a parent continuously shouts at a young child in anger and the child interprets the experience in his/her mind as: *I am unworthy*. The lie feels real and if there is no counterbalancing truth, then the lie becomes the child's story.

THE POWER OF A LIE

When a lie is embedded in a memory, the lie has a power to resist truth because the lie has been accepted in the belief system as tried, tested and true.



People say, *I hear truth and I can even say the truth out loud, but I don't feel it deep down inside of me*. As you can see in the diagram above, when external truth comes along and tries to penetrate the mind, it is deflected. It is almost as if the lie has a defense mechanism that repels the truth.

In my own life experience, I rejected the truth of the Gospel for 40 years and

¹⁴ John 8:43-44, NIV

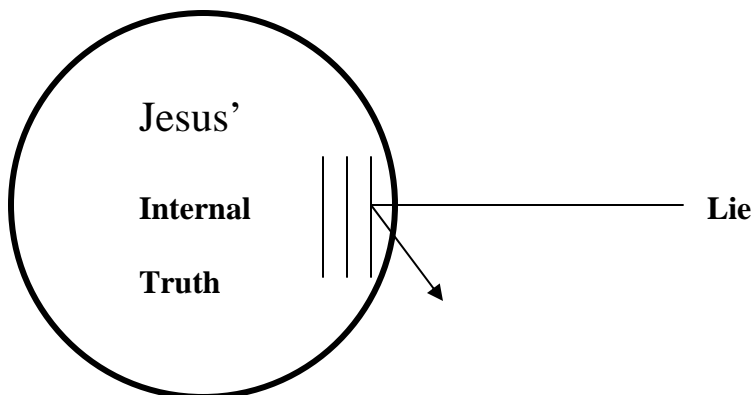
during those years the truth of God's word just bounced off me. In my arrogance and ignorance, I felt I knew better than everyone else and I accepted the world's lie that I needed to be in control of my own life. Lies blind people to the truth, and I certainly was blinded for years.

A contributing factor to the strength of the lie is the fact that the lie is located internally in the mind, and external truth, no matter how persuasively presented to the individual, is still external. A lie that is internal has much more power than an external truth.

REPELLED BY THE LIE

A middle-aged client of mine had been a Christian for 10 years and he had totally confessed his sinful past. He had forgiven everyone who had offended him, and yet he still felt depressed. The truth of his redemption and his freedom from condemnation were overruled by a lie that caused him to believe that he was bad. The truth of the gospel was repelled by the lie, and he continued to struggle doing good works to earn his worth. Guilt and lack of self-forgiveness blocked his ability to hear the truth.

Conversely, when Jesus is invited to bring truth internally into the mind, the positions are reversed. Now it is the lie that bounces off. The lie is now external and the internal truth has the ability to repel the lie.



That is why it says in John 8:32, “*The truth will set you free.*”

LIVING A LIE

Another client of mine, this time a middle-aged woman who had only recently come to Christ, had also lived a sin-filled life. In addition to confessing and renouncing her sinful life and forgiving her parents, her hurtful friends and her ex-spouse, she invited Jesus to reveal the truth related to the lie that lived within her that she was unworthy.

When Jesus spoke to her mind and told her that he had created her, and that she was a precious creation who was worthy, the lie was banished and the anxiety and worry that had plagued her were gone. The truth of her worth as a child of God became real, allowing her to clearly see her *True Self In Christ* – free from the distortion of the lie.

Even more important in this process is the source of truth. If Jesus Christ is invited inside the mind to reveal truth, then the truth is that much more powerful. “*So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*”¹⁵ In fact, my observation is that Christ’s truth received internally within a person is significantly more powerful than truth that is received from any outside source.

WHAT IS A LIE?

A lie is any argument, word or pretension that sets itself up in the mind as a thought that is against the knowledge of God: “*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.*”¹⁶

¹⁵ John 8:36, NIV

¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, NIV

A stronghold therefore is the lie that has taken the place of God's truth. It's a thought, or an argument that we hold in our mind, which is in opposition to God's Word and Jesus' teaching. The lie pretends to be truth and is therefore a deception. The power of a lie is in our believing it. **The more we accept the lie, the greater is its power.**

As we take our thoughts captive to Jesus, He will reveal the truth to us that we need to know. Here again, we see the importance of words. As Leanne Payne says: "*If you and I do not practice the Presence of God, we will practice the presence of another. If we do not listen for the Word [of God], we will be in subjection to the words of the world, the flesh, and the Devil.*" ¹⁷

When we invite Jesus into a memory or thought and we listen to the Spirit of truth, the Holy Spirit will reveal the truth we need to know that will demolish the lie. The "*belt of truth*" ¹⁸ is the spiritual armor that protects us from the lies. The words of truth lead us away from the tree of knowledge of good and evil, where the world lives, to the tree of life, where God lives.

As we live out of the grace, mercy and forgiveness of the cross of Jesus, we are free of the lies that confuse and block our ability to see our ***True Selves in Christ***. When truth is not there to protect us, we cannot see ourselves because of the darkness. Then, Satan uses shame and fear to help us hide the lie. As Keith Miller says in his book, *Compelled To Control*, "*Shame's biggest lie: that keeping everything secret is our strength and security, so we must not share deeply.*" ¹⁹

When we exchange the truth of God for lies, we turn from the creator to the idolatry of the created. As a result we live in a distorted, hidden and false world. Our

¹⁷ *The Healing Presence* by Leanne Payne, p. 73

¹⁸ Ephesians 6:14, NIV

¹⁹ *Compelled To Control* by Keith Miller, p. 130

strength is not in hiding. Our real strength is God. As the psalmist said, “*The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusts in him and I am helped.*”²⁰

Instead of hiding our weaknesses, we need to expose them to God through confession and He will help us. Instead of living with hidden lies, we need to invite Jesus to reveal to us the truth that will set us free. As we confess sin, forgive others and hear God’s truth, Jesus heals us according to his divine will. Jesus’ presence is what we need. “*My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.*”²¹

Larry Crabb, author of *Effective Biblical Counselling*, has theorized that within every human being there are three deep longings: 1) to be accepted 2) to be secure and 3) to be significant. The Word of God reveals truths that we each need to know to satisfy these three deep longings. When these truths reside within us, they function like armor. In this case the *belt of truth* protects us from the lies of the world and helps us to function from the ***True Self in Christ***, as God created us to be.

The truths are not to be kept hidden, but rather we are to dwell on them and receive them in our soul: “*Finally, brothers, whatever is true...think about such things.*”²² Here are some biblical truths for you to think about:

1) I Am Accepted

I am a child of God: “*To those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God*” (John 1:12-13).

²⁰ Psalm 28:7, NIV

²¹ 2 Corinthians 12:9, NIV

²² Philippians 4:8, NIV

I belong to God: *“You are not your own; you were bought at a price”*(1 Cor.6:19-20).

“So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord” (Rom.14:8).

I have been redeemed by God: *“For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins”* (Col. 1:13-14).

I am free of condemnation: *“Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death”* (Rom. 8:1-2).

I am adopted by God: *“In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will”* (Eph. 1:5).

I am accepted: *“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you”* (Rom.15:7).

I am Christ’s friend: *“I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master’s business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you”* (John 15:15).

2) I Am Secure

My outcome is guaranteed: *“ He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put*

his spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come” (2 Cor. 1:21-22).

I cannot be separated from God’s love: *“For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 8:39).*

I am protected: *“He who fears the Lord has a secure fortress, and for his children it will be a refuge” (Prov.15:26). “The Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever” (Psalm 37:28).*

I have an eternal inheritance: *“For this reason Christ is the mediator of a new covenant, that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance – now that he has died as a ransom to set them free from the sins committed under the first covenant” (Heb. 9:15).*

I will not be abandoned: *“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil.1:6) .*

I can be confident in time of need: *“Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Heb. 4:16).*

I am a citizen of heaven: *“But our citizenship is in heaven”* (Phil. 3:20). *“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus”* (Eph. 2:6).

3) I Am Significant

I was created by God: *“For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made”* (Psalm 139:13-14).

I am God’s temple: *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you”* (1 Cor. 3:16)?

I am God’s workmanship: *“For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do”* (Eph.2:10).

I have gifts: *“We have different gifts, according to the grace given us”* (Rom.12:6).

I have been chosen: *“You did not choose me, but I chose you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last”* (John 15:16).

I am salt and light: *“You are the salt of the earth”* (Matt. 5:13). *“You are the light of the world”* (Matt. 5:14).

I am an extension of Jesus: *“I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit”* (John 15:1-2).

I am a priest: *“But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light”* (1 Peter 2:9).

ACCEPTING TRUTH

Truth can be internalized in a variety of ways. We can read the Word of truth and memorize it, so that it abides inside us. We can worship God in song and the words of truth can come to us every time we hear the tune. We can hear the truth spoken to us in a message from the pastor, which we can then accept and believe. We can read or hear personal testimonies about the truth and learn through the example of others. Or, we can invite Jesus to reveal directly to our minds, the truth we need to know, which comes from the Holy Spirit. Whichever approach we use, the truth of God has the power to free us from the destructiveness of lies and set us free, so we can know our *True Self In Christ* and use our God-given gifts to serve others.

HOW TRUTH AND LIES FUNCTION IN THE BRAIN

As we mentioned earlier, Daniel Goleman tells us that researchers have discovered additional findings on the thinking and feeling brains. The thinking brain is the prefrontal cortex, situated in the top front of the brain, and it is the seat of planning, analyzing, organizing and logic.

The prefrontal cortex is then divided into left and right sides. The right side is the

place where negative feelings like fear and aggression reside, whereas the left lobe provides a key “off” switch for keeping the raw and distressing emotions of the front right lobe under control.

Researchers observed the case of the happy husband, whose right prefrontal cortex lobe had been partially removed in surgery for a brain malformation. His wife told physicians that after the operation, her husband underwent a dramatic personality change. He had become less easily upset and, she was happy to say, more affectionate.

In one group of stroke patients, those with lesions that made the right prefrontal cortex lobe dysfunctional were “unduly cheerful.” In short, the left prefrontal cortex seems to be part of a neural circuit that can switch off, or at least dampen down, all but the strongest negative surges of emotion.

Based on this information, I started to work with clients to record their thoughts in a double-sided diary. On the right side, they recorded negative thinking, destructive thoughts and negative emotions. I would have them say out loud, “Stop – Switch” and then have them pray for Jesus to reveal the truth that he wanted them to know about the negative words on the right. They would then record on the left side the words of truth that they heard in their mind. In this way the person was switching from the front right cortex to the front left cortex.

The results were dramatic. The person’s mood changed and the feelings connected to the words of truth were positive and soothing. I have come to conclude two things: 1) the lies reside in the front right cortex and the truth resides in the front left cortex, hence the commonly observed pattern of glass half empty and glass half full thinking, and 2) the spirits of darkness attach to the lies in the front right thinking which

adds to the negative feelings.

When a person is thinking out of the truth of the front left cortex, the spirits of darkness cannot be there, because truth is light and the spirits like darkness.

Consequently, a person can choose to have a positive experience based on truth (front left) or a double negative experience based on lies (front right), plus spirits of darkness that can attach to the lies.

This distinction between the front left and front right cortex is not to be confused with the popular left brain/right brain distinction between logic and creativity. We're referring here to the prefrontal cortex areas of the brain.

This helps explain why Goleman writes: "*Praying, if you're very religious, works for all moods, especially depression.*"²³ So, we see that science is catching up to the Bible and the spiritual *power of truth* is the key to happiness.

In the next chapter, we'll look at the role of the family in forming the *Distorted Self*.

²³ *Emotional Intelligence* by Daniel Goleman, p. 75

Chapter 3

“He must manage his own family well.”¹

“With the tongue we praise our Lord and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God’s likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing.”²

THE INFLUENCE OF THE FAMILY

As the old saying goes, *you can pick your friends but you can’t pick your family*. There is certainly some truth to that expression, as there are some things in life over which you have no control. You don’t select your family of origin. By God’s grace you are conceived and it is God’s design that you are born into a family.

The Bible says, *“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number,’”³* and later *“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,”⁴*

In the nature versus nurture debate, both sides argue biological or environmental factors as having a greater influence of the shaping of the *Self*. On the nature side, inherited biological factors such as intelligence, height, skin color, hair color, eye color, blood type, body type are said to have a profound impact on the shaping of the *Self*.

On the nurture side, environmental conditions such as: your country of origin, position in the family, where you grew up, language, family culture and traditions, urban versus rural setting, and the socio-economic position of your family, (e.g. education, finances and role in the community) are said to be more significant in shaping the *Self*.

¹ 1 Timothy 3:4, NIV

² James 3:9-10, NIV

³ Genesis 1:28, NIV

⁴ Genesis 2:24, NIV

Certainly how a person receives all of this information is significant in shaping his/her concept of *Self*.

FAMILY SYSTEMS AND CULTURE

While both biological and environmental factors affect a person's mental landscape, in this chapter we are going to take a close look at the influence of the family system and culture on the individual.

First impressions come from family members. Parents and family members play a huge role in the development of the child's self concept, because they are the first and closest people to the child. They contribute the initial input into the individual's story. How parents convey in words and action to the child his/her place in the family significantly affects the child's self-concept.

Children learn by listening, watching and feeling the experience of life as it unfolds around them. The words, actions, touch, and even the smell of others provide the raw material for the creation of the *Self*. As a result of this family dynamic, the words that the child accepts are formative in the development of the Self Concept.

Other factors, such as birth order, number of siblings, family dynamics, all produce beliefs about the *Self* that last a lifetime. As you will see, the influences can start as early as conception.

As discussed earlier, Goleman indicates that researchers have discovered that the "feeling brain" is fully developed in the womb and a person is able to feel and make conclusions in the womb that affect the Self Concept. For example, if the baby's conception is unexpected, inconvenient or controversial, the child has the ability to feel the lack of acceptance and can come to a conclusion that: *I am not wanted*. That

conclusion can have a profound influence on the development of a *Distorted Self*, if he/she goes through life with the basic understanding that he/she has not been wanted from the very beginning.

I have worked with more than 60 clients where the inner healing has gone back into the womb and discovered a conclusion similar to the *I am not wanted* statement. I had one 55-year-old client who went back to a womb memory. As difficult as it may be to believe, this client claimed to still hear her grandfather's voice shouting at her unmarried mother and telling her that she was bad for becoming pregnant. The infant heard her angry grandfather's voice from within the womb and concluded that she was not wanted. That feeling and interpretation was instrumental in creating a distorted view of her *Self* and worked destructively in her life until that belief was transformed.

The expression: '*The apple doesn't fall far from the tree*' does not just refer to genetics. One of the most powerful ways of learning is through imitation. Children speak with the same verbal accent as their parents, because they imitate the sounds that they hear. Cool and aloof people tend to come from families that do not hug, touch or show much physical affection. If anger is a common household experience, then anger is viewed as normal.

The language, behaviors and style of interacting are initially learned in the home. In most cases, the first touch normally comes from the mother, who receives the child shortly after birth and holds her newborn in her arms. If the baby is separated from the mother, the newborn can conclude that he/she has been rejected or abandoned. I have had more than 18 clients who were experiencing rejection and abandonment in the present.

Through the inner healing process, we discovered that the feeling went back to an incubator experience where the conclusion was made: *I have been abandoned.*

How parents treat their children, either intentionally or unintentionally, can have positive and negative repercussions on the child's Self Image. Negative words, abusive language, repetitive put downs, criticism, sarcasm, lack of acceptance, neglect and fear of punishment contribute to the child's *Distorted Self*.

On the other hand, love, caring attention, respect, consideration and kind regard contribute to the development of the *True Self In Christ*. The parents' presence is so crucial that even the absence of a parent can create a powerful wound in the soul. The death of a parent, loss through divorce, absence or willful neglect can all create a wound that can have a devastating effect for life.

Gary Smalley and John Trent write the following in their book *The Gift Of The Blessing*: "*All of us long to be accepted by others. While we may say out loud, 'I don't care what other people think about me' on the inside we all yearn for intimacy and affection. This yearning is especially true in our relationships with our parents.*"⁵

In their book, *The Power of Blessing*, authors Terry & Melissa Bone expand on the subject of blessings. They teach that a person's "*identity and destiny*"⁶ are learned through the blessings that are received from his/her parents.

In the same way, Jesus was blessed at different stages in his life. The principle is described in Genesis where, after having blessed Adam and Eve, God then said, *Go rule.*

⁵ *The Gift of the Blessing* by Gary Smalley & John Trent, Ph.D., p. 1

⁶ *The Power Of Blessing* by Terry & Melissa Bone, p. 14-15

*“God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air.’”*⁷

Their identity was established first through the blessing and that empowered them to go out and be the best that they could be. In addition, in Genesis it tells us that all families are to be blessed: *“And all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.”*⁸

God created man and woman for more than procreation. As Craig Hill says in his book, *The Ancient Paths*: *“I believe that it has always been God’s intention to impart, especially at specific junctures in life, His message of identity and destiny. He has appointed special agents on this earth to ensure that His message of identity and destiny is revealed. Those agents are called **PARENTS**.”*⁹

God delegated the job of blessing the children to the parents. It is the responsibility of the parents to speak God’s favor over each child so as to know one’s identity and destiny. In Genesis 27, we see the example of Isaac giving his son Jacob the blessing and how that blessing had power. Later in Genesis 48:9, there is the example of Jacob blessing his grandchildren, *“Bring them to me, I pray you, that I may bless them.”*

A blessing is more than just words, however, it is the transmitting of God’s favor through words, deeds and ceremonies from a person of authority to another. The blessing is a spiritual event, which confers honor and instills value through the laying on of hands and the commending of a person through spoken words. When a parent places a hand on his/her child and speaks words of loving encouragement, the child is receiving powerful information that relates to his/her identity and destiny.

⁷ Genesis 1:28, NIV

⁸ Genesis 12:3, NIV

⁹ *The Ancient Paths* by Craig Hill, p. 13

Hill defines the blessing as follows: *“To empower the one being blessed to thrive, succeed, do well and have a pleasant, fulfilling journey through life.”*¹⁰ According to these descriptions, the parents have a significant role in preparing their children for life.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS’ BLESSINGS

Before Jesus’ conception, his identity and destiny were communicated to Joseph: *“An angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, ‘Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.’ ”*¹¹

At Jesus’ birth, the angels confirmed his identity to the shepherds: *“Do not be afraid, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you: he is Christ the Lord Mary treasured up all these things and pondered them in her heart.”*¹²

Then at 12 years of age, Jesus’ destiny was being revealed: *“When he was twelve years old... they found him in the temple courts... Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers. When asked he said, ‘Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?’ His mother treasured all these things in her heart.”*¹³

At the beginning of Jesus’ ministry he was blessed with these words when John baptized him: *“At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God*

¹⁰ *The Ancient Paths* by Craig Hill, p. 20-29

¹¹ Matthew 1:20-21, NIV

¹² Luke 2:10-19, NIV

¹³ Luke 2:42-51, NIV

descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.' ” ¹⁴

The word blessing refers to the honoring, instilling of value and empowering to prosper. When the parents place a high value on their children, communicating worth and importance, the children are blessed. When the opposite is communicated, either through neglect or through intentionally hurtful words or actions, a person is wounded. This type of communication devalues, invalidates, disables or disempowers a person. Parents can either speak life or death into their child, depending on their words and their tone of voice. Below are examples of blessings and hurtful words:

	Blessings	Hurtful Words
Identity	You are valuable to me. You are a child of God.	You are a worthless mistake. You were never wanted.
Purpose	God has a plan for you.	You will never amount to anything.
Destiny	You have a special future You are going to be a really good ... You never do it right.	You will never be a success.

Once again, Terry & Melissa Bone describe seven essential times in a person's life when God intends the blessing to be revealed. It is the job of the parents to impart the empowering message so that the individual can know his/her identity and move with strength into his/her destiny. These seven stages of blessing in a person's life include: ¹⁵

- 1) Conception Am I welcome in this world?
- 2) Pregnancy Is there a safe place for me in this world?
- 3) Birth Will my needs be met in this world?

¹⁴ Matthew 3:16-17, NIV

¹⁵ *The Power Of Blessing* by Terry & Melissa Bone, p. 16

- 4) Early Childhood Who can I trust in this world?
- 5) Teen Years Do I have what it takes to make it in this world?
- 6) Adulthood What am I called to do in this world and who will share my journey?
- 7) Senior Years Am I still needed in this world?

If the person does not receive the parental blessing, Hill says, there are two primary reactions:¹⁶

- 1) A mental agreement is created to isolate from the parent(s) and write them off.
- 2) A commitment is made to continue to strive for the blessing no matter how long it takes or whatever it costs.

In either case, the child has developed an unhealthy, distorted view of *Self* that affects relationships and behaviors. The good news is that Jesus can, if invited, bring truth that will transform the *Distorted Self* by replacing the wound with a blessing, even after the fact. The inner healing that occurs, when the person receives Jesus' blessing, frees him/her from the emotional turmoil connected to the wound.

Let us look at ways that the *Distorted Self* can be created at each of these seven stages in a person's life.

Stage 1 – Conception

There are two identity issues that are foundational at the point of conception: 1) How was I conceived? 2) How was the news received? If the child was planned and

¹⁶ *The Ancient Paths* by Craig Hill, p. 40-41

everybody was joyous, then the child was blessed. In addition, at conception, protective walls of blessing are created when the conception occurs between two people who have chosen to place themselves under God’s authority through marriage and when the child is wanted, accepted and received. A wound is created if the couple is unmarried and the child is unwanted. Examples of wounding are listed below:

Family Experience at Conception	Commonly Observed Life Patterns
Not planned	Must earn right to be, striving to perform
Conceived out of wedlock	Shame, lack of belonging
Parents too young	I am a burden.
Bad time financially	I am a financial burden.
Child of rape	Violent and angry
Born after previous miscarriages	Over serious, overachieving

Stage 2 – Pregnancy

Inside the womb, the infant is already starting to perceive the world. Over the period of nine months, the mother has many experiences, both good and bad, that can influence the emotions of the child. A loving and caring family celebrates the baby, strokes it through the mother’s abdomen and talks to it in soft and gentle ways.

Conversely, the child can experience trauma that produces negative emotions in his/her soul. The question is: *How do the mother and family treat the infant in the womb and how does the child receive his/her mother’s experiences?*

Family Experience in the Womb	Commonly Observed Life Patterns
Fighting in the home	Fear, nervous, uptight
Mother a heavy smoker	Predisposition to anxiety

Mother an alcoholic	Baby absorbs mother's negative feelings
Mother drinks too much caffeine	Low activity and poor muscle tone
Mother afraid of gaining too much weight	Insatiable hunger, anger, shame
Mother attempts an abortion	Rejection, abandonment – I am not wanted.
Mother attempts suicide	Fear, anxiety, worry, panic
Father dies or leaves	Guilt, self-blame, anger, unforgiveness
Mother has poor health	Guilt for being/emotionally over responsible

Stage 3 - Birth

When Jesus was born, the angels announced his coming and declared his identity, “*He is Christ the Lord.*” As well, his destiny was proclaimed, “*A Savior has been born to you.*”¹⁷ His birth was celebrated and three wise men came bearing gifts. On the eighth day, Simeon dedicated Jesus and blessed his family, once again declaring his identity and destiny.

Another important time for blessing is the way in which the birth is received. Either the child is wanted, celebrated and received with enthusiasm or not. The child experiences the joyful blessing or the absence of the blessing and the resulting perception has profound implications for the person's life.

Family Experience of the Birth

Commonly Observed Life Patterns

Wrong gender for parents	Wrong from start/sexual confusion
Child not wanted	Insecurity, rejection
Premature and put in an incubator	Abandonment and rejection
Mother's inordinate fear of delivery	Fear, insecurity, fear of childbirth
Unusually painful delivery	Anger, depression

¹⁷ Luke 2:11, NIV

Position in the family

Oldest – overly responsible

Middle – fighting for position

Youngest – avoids responsibility

Stage 4 – Early Childhood

The terrible twos is a description of the stage when little children start to express their own personhood and the emergence of the “will” occurs. The child has learned the word “no” and uses it regularly. How the parents and family accept the child’s need for a growing identity is an important stage in the child’s development. A wound is created when the child is neglected or controlled so that his/her “will” does not have a chance to become established.

Family Experience of the Toddler

Commonly Observed Life Patterns

Parents annoyed with the child’s will

Stubborn, rebellious

Child to be seen but not heard

I am not accepted, passive

Insufficient emotional connection with mother

Distant, aloof, cool

Insufficient verbal affirmation

I am not good enough.

Neglected physically

I am unworthy.

Stage 5 – Teen Years

Puberty is considered the second most critical stage next to conception. The human body goes through physical changes that relate to the person’s sexuality and prepares the person for adulthood. In addition, ideally there should be a transfer in roles for the parents. Up to puberty, the primary role of nurturing belongs to the mother. However, at puberty the roles shift. The mother lets go and the father takes over as the primary blesser of the child’s career and destiny. Puberty is a milestone that marks a key

transition from childhood to adulthood. The father's job is to recognize and acknowledge the child's potential and point him/her in that direction with encouragement and support. A wound is created when puberty is ignored and the lack of blessing inhibits emotional growth into adulthood.

Family Experience in Puberty	Commonly Observed Life Patterns
No ceremony celebrating transition to teen years	Extended childhood
Avoided recognizing sexual changes	Sexual ignorance and confusion
No bonding with father	Remains tied to mother
Social and spiritual maturity unrecognized	I am alone in this growth process.
No mentor in directing towards one's destiny	Lost and constantly searching
Lack of acceptance as an independent person	Rebellion, self-centred

Stage 6 – Adulthood

We need to be blessed before we work, otherwise we will work to receive the blessing. In Genesis, mankind was blessed before being given the job to rule. Adulthood is about fulfilling the destiny. If the person has not been released into his/her destiny with a blessing, then life becomes a task of earning acceptance instead of being fulfilled and bringing glory to God.

Family Experience of Adulthood	Commonly Observed Life Patterns
No recognition of gifts and talents	I don't know what I should do.
No dedication to mission	Aimlessness, trying to please others
Absence of releasing into destiny	Emptiness, unfulfilling striving
Contributions not recognized	My life has not amounted to much.

Wedding and Honeymoon

The wedding is a special occasion when the whole family supports the child in the leaving and cleaving process. It is a time for the children to be celebrated publicly as mature adults and to leave home with support and encouragement to set up their own household. The parents have a special task of releasing the child to the new spouse and blessing the new union. The honeymoon is the physical consummation of the union when the couple becomes one flesh.

Family Experience of the Marriage

Parents not happy with marriage partner

Children not honored and blessed in ceremony

Parents absent from wedding

Married couple live with parents

Unfulfilling honeymoon

Commonly Observed Life Patterns

Walls are built in marriage

Anger, disapproval

Emptiness, regret

Humiliation, bondage

Avoidance, detachment, frigidity

Stage 7 – Senior Years

In the senior years, performance is replaced with wisdom. As it says in Proverbs 31:23, *“Her husband is respected at the city gate, where he takes his seat among the elders of the land.”* In biblical times, the senior male would move from working in the field to sitting at the gate dispensing wisdom. Also, in Proverbs 31:28 for the wife it says, *“Her children arise and call her blessed.”* Honoring the mother and father is an important biblical principle, especially as they become elders.

Family Experience of Seniors

No retirement ceremony or 65th celebration

No recognition of life’s accomplishments

Commonly Observed Life Patterns

I need to keep working.

My life was not worth while.

Seldom sought out for wisdom

Feeling of purposelessness

Not honored as a senior

I am not important.

If the blessings were absent in your life, you can use the prayer method at the end of this chapter to invite Jesus back into the appropriate stage, so that He can replace the wound with a blessing, even now.

THE EFFECT OF GENERATIONAL SIN

As we can see, the impact of missing the blessing at different stages in a person's life can contribute significantly to the creation of the *Distorted Self*. But, what about parents who have missed their blessings? What is the impact of "generational sin" and missed generational blessings? The Bible talks about generational sin in Exodus 34:7: "*Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished; he punishes the children and their children for the sins of the fathers to the third and fourth generation.*"

Sin needs to be dealt with by confession. If the ancestors never confessed their sin, it can still have a trickle down effect on the next generation. The *Distorted Self* of the parent, created in part by the lack of receiving his/her own blessing and the unconfessed generational sin, can contribute to the wounding of his/her own children.

As children imitate their wounded parents, the cycle continues and the children develop their own *Distorted Self*, which can then be perpetuated as they parent their children. To break the cycle, we need to confess the sins that our ancestors did not confess and then do the inner healing work to heal the wounds that have helped lead us away from the knowledge of our **True Self In Christ**.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BIRTH FATHER

The birth father is not just a parent. He is also, whether he knows it or not, the model of fatherhood. This role can have profound implications on how a person views God the Father. There are many people who cannot distinguish between the image of their earthly father and God the Father. If the father you live with is angry, vindictive, violent, punishing and hurtful, then many people transfer those qualities over to God and see their Heavenly Father as angry, punishing and one who wants them to suffer.

There are two distortions that significantly affect a person's view of life. The first is the *Distorted Self* and the second is a *Distorted Concept of God*. While this book is mainly focusing on the *Distorted Self*, it is equally important to realize any *Father God Distortions* that are created through the experience of a wounded birth father.

In all the work of inner healing that I have done, the image of God that I have had the opportunity to observe has been loving, kind, gentle, caring, healing, supportive and transforming. I want to encourage you to separate your experience of your birth father from your Heavenly Father, and then get to know the character of God so that you may know the depth of his love for you. The basis of this book is that God is the healer and he wants to heal you with his love. Let's look at Ephesians 3:16-19: "*And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know that love that surpasses knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.*"

HOW CAN THE FAMILY HELP?

There are four main ways that the family can help. **The first step is to love** each other unconditionally. Often families offer conditional love. If you do “this” then I will love you. If you don’t do “that” then I will love you. We need to learn to accept and love each other as God’s creation and forgive each other for our differences.

The second step is to speak life into people’s lives. We need to look for what is good and lift it up. We need to find ways to praise and encourage and support instead of criticize. We need to laugh more and tease less. We need to play together more and work less. We need to say the positive words out loud instead of just thinking them.

The third step is to seek truth and affirm truth in a person’s life. If God made a person creative, then we need to see that truth and confirm it in the person’s life. Opinion, judgment and gossip tear down, but truth builds up. We need to work at finding the truth in each person’s life and then support it and encourage it. As it says in 1 Corinthians, 13:4-6: *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.”*

The fourth step is to bless the identity and destiny of family members at the various stages of their lives. We need to celebrate and touch and speak God’s favor into family members’ lives as we see the truth of how God made each person unique and special and wonderful.

PRAYER PROCESS

Find a quiet place to sit and close your eyes. Select the stage where you missed receiving a blessing.

Select one at a time (You can repeat this process for as many stages as you have need.):

- 1) Conception
- 2) Pregnancy
- 3) Birth
- 4) Early Childhood
- 5) Teen Years
- 6) Adulthood
- 7) Senior Years

What are the words that you have been living with that relate to that stage? Write them down.

Now, invite Jesus into the process by praying as follows:

Dear Jesus, I invite you into the memories of my life related to:.....

Please come and replace my woundedness with your blessing. I renounce the lies that I have been living with. Lord, what is the truth you want me to know? What is the picture you want me to see? What are the words that you want me to hear? What is the feeling you want me to feel? Come now, Lord Jesus, give me your blessing now.

Record the picture, words and feelings that come into your mind.

Lord, I receive this blessing that you have revealed to me. Thank you for your love and your transforming truth.

Now, think on this truth and allow it to become your new story. In the next section, we will see just how important this new story can be in developing your *True Self in Christ*.

PART TWO:

“It’s in Christ that we find out who we are and what we are living for. Long before we first heard of Christ he had his eye on us, had designs on us for glorious living, part of the overall purpose he is working out in everything and everyone.”¹

UNCOVER YOUR TRUE SELF IN CHRIST

The Bible says the only way to uncover your **True Self in Christ** is to know God and to discover who He created you to be. In *The Message* it says “*You know me inside and out, you know every bone in my body; you know exactly how I was made, bit by bit, how I was sculpted from nothing into something.*”²

After all, who better knows your identity than the one who created you. That’s why in this up-coming section, we are going to challenge you to take an honest look at yourself and invite Jesus Christ to expose any distortion that may be covering your true identity in Christ.

But remember for this process to be effective, you’ll have to let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. In so doing, you’ll be able to “*grasp the immensity of this glorious way of life he has for Christians, oh, the utter extravagance of his work in us who trust him – endless energy, boundless strength.*”³

¹ *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, p. 2126

² *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, p. 1081

³ *The Message* by Eugene H. Peterson, p. 2127

Chapter 4

“Each remembered event constitutes a story, which together with our other stories constitutes a life narrative, and, experientially speaking, our life narrative is our life.”¹

HOW IMPORTANT IS A PERSON’S STORY?

“I guess you could say I’ve always been a strong student. School seemed to come easily for me and I was the kind of kid who loved homework. Some nights when I didn’t even have any homework to do, I’d create my own assignments. To me learning was fun. I was the super-keener who sat in the front row just to make sure I didn’t miss a beat. I especially loved to write poetry and was always asked to read my latest masterpiece of creative genius in front of the class. It just came easily for me. I loved words and expressing ideas on paper. It should come as no surprise to anyone that I’m a successful writer today.”

It’s interesting to listen to the words people use to describe their life stories. Over the years, every person has many more memories than stories. In other words, we have many life experiences to draw upon but we tend to synthesize, summarize and draw a small number of conclusions that become our perceived reality. Consequently, we choose to privilege certain words and certain memories and give them greater importance in our self-concept and in the story we come to believe about *Self*.

As a person tells how his/her life started, how it evolved and how it got to where it is today, there are themes, patterns and sub-stories that come together to produce the life narrative.

¹ *Narrative Therapy* by Jill Freedman and Gene Combs, p. 32

While the above writer seemed to recall only positive memories of her academic and writing ability, the tendency for most is to hear more negative feedback than positive. In fact, studies show that more than 70 percent of communication is negative. Just think of it – more than half the messages you hear in a day are negative. For many people, the force and frequency of these powerful negative messages can be so strong that the destructive words become privileged in the life story. When this happens, the person’s narrative is colored by these experiences that dominate the life story and the *True Self in Christ* becomes lost.

In my counseling practice, I have met numerous clients who as children were repeatedly told they were stupid. Unknowingly, the negative feedback they received and accepted as truth completely masked the reality of a very high IQ. So whether we realize it or not, we are the authors of our own life story. And these stories we tell play a significant role in shaping our reality.

So what’s your story? Let’s take a closer look at how Narrative Therapy can help you identify the existence of a *distorted life* story and provide a way for you to rewrite a more accurate story of your life.

DECONSTRUCTIVE LISTENING

The initial role in Narrative Therapy is listening to the person’s story. If you are applying this technique to yourself, you can write down your story and analyze it afterwards. When a person seeks out a friend, a counselor or a therapist, normally the individual has been ruminating on a problem for a period of time. This “presenting concern” tends to be a story that has been repetitively thought about

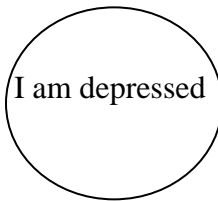
internally and expressed externally over and over, until the vocabulary and themes of the plot are strong and well developed. This problem-saturated story often feels stuck with no place to go.

For many people, the need is to just be heard, because they have been living alone with the story in their own mind for a long time. When asked the simple question: *What's going on?* the story tends to tumble out and the helper's initial role is to listen, reflect and validate the story. For some people, just being heard is therapeutic. The initial task is to attend to the person, listen with empathy and without judging. Then it's important to build a rapport and establish a trusting, caring relationship.

THE COLLAPSED *DISTORTED* STORY

As a person tells and retells the same negative story, all the other life stories get pushed away and the problem story emerges as the dominant story. In Narrative Therapy, this is called a collapsed story, because the negative words have crashed down onto the person and the person now defines him/herself by only those selected words. When this happens, there is no mental space to move and the person feels stuck with no place to go.

Let's look at an example. When a person says, *I am depressed* the word depression is defining the person. That is to say, "I" equals "depression". When this statement exists in the mind, the person cannot separate him/herself from depression, because he/she has accepted depression as the description of the *Self*. As this word "depression" collapses onto the *Self*, the person cannot get away from depression because he/she and depression are one and the same thing. To picture this, look at the circle below where *I am depressed* is inside the circle where the person's being is located.



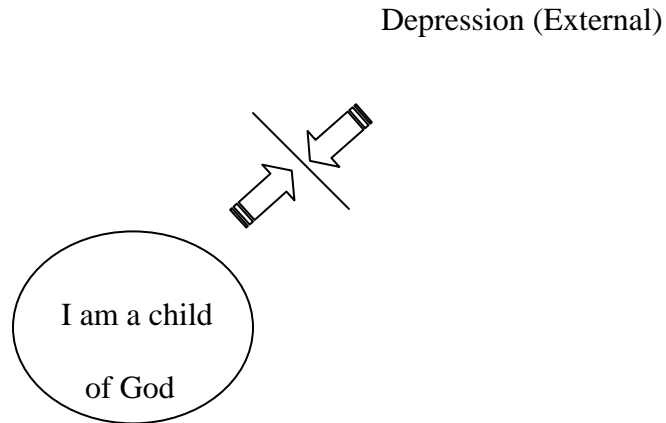
In this scenario, the more the person talks about being depressed, the more he/she is depressed. With repetition, the story becomes stronger, tighter and smaller until depression is the only thing the person can think about. As the story collapses down onto the person and is received as the definition of his/her *Self*, the words and the story then become the person.

When a person receives and accepts a distorted message about his/her *Self*, this *Distorted Self* story can collapse and become the description of the *Self*. In this way, many people are living with a negative, distorted view of *Self* and that belief has become the dominant narrative that limits their life. For example, the *I am stupid* story, or *I am a failure* story can take over the person's life, influencing all aspects of his/her existence.

EXTERNALIZING THE PROBLEM

One of the first tasks of Narrative Therapy is to help the person use language to externalize the negative problem. This externalization is accomplished by asking questions that position the “negative thing” outside of the *Self*. To use depression as an example, you ask questions such as, *How does this thing called depression try to attack you?* or *When is this thing called depression trying to get you and when is it not trying to get you?* You can see that as soon as the “thing” is outside of the person, it no longer is the person. Then, the person can separate his/herself from that “thing”

and start to see an alternative *Self*. For example, in the illustration below, the person can now see him/herself as a child of God who can stand and fight against that thing called depression. Now, this different concept of *Self* can stand against that thing that is trying to get control of him/her. The person now has a choice to accept “it” or fight against “it.”



The “I” is no longer depression. The “I” now has space to be something other than depression. In this example, the “I” is a child of God and that is significantly different than depression.

DECONSTRUCTIVE QUESTIONING

By being curious and asking non-judgmental questions, the helper encourages the person to talk about the *Distorted Self* story. The purpose of deconstruction is assisting the person in understanding how he/she constructed the *Distorted Self* story in the first place. To use “anger” as an example, here are some of the typical questions that help deconstruct and externalize the problem:

When did you first notice “anger” trying to affect your life?

What made you vulnerable to “anger” so that it was able to dominate you?

What kinds of things happen that typically lead to anger taking over?

What has anger convinced you to do that is against your better judgment?

When anger has its greatest influence on your life:

- a) what does “anger” direct you to do?
- b) how does “anger” direct you to think about yourself?
- c) how does “anger” influence your life and relationships?

When “anger” has the least influence on your life:

- a) what do you find yourself doing?
- b) how do you find yourself thinking about yourself?
- c) what do your relationships look like?

When “anger” has its greatest influence on your life:

- a) how does “anger” talk to you?
- b) what does “anger” tell you about yourself?
- c) what does “anger” tell you about others?
- d) how has “anger” led you into the difficulties you are now experiencing?
- e) what does “anger” steal from you?
- f) what does “anger” conceal from you?
- g) what does “anger” not want you to notice and pay attention to in yourself and others?
- h) how is it important to “anger” that you not be aware of/notice/ pay attention to what it conceals from you?
- i) in what contexts does “anger” most likely take over?

When anger sabotages your life:

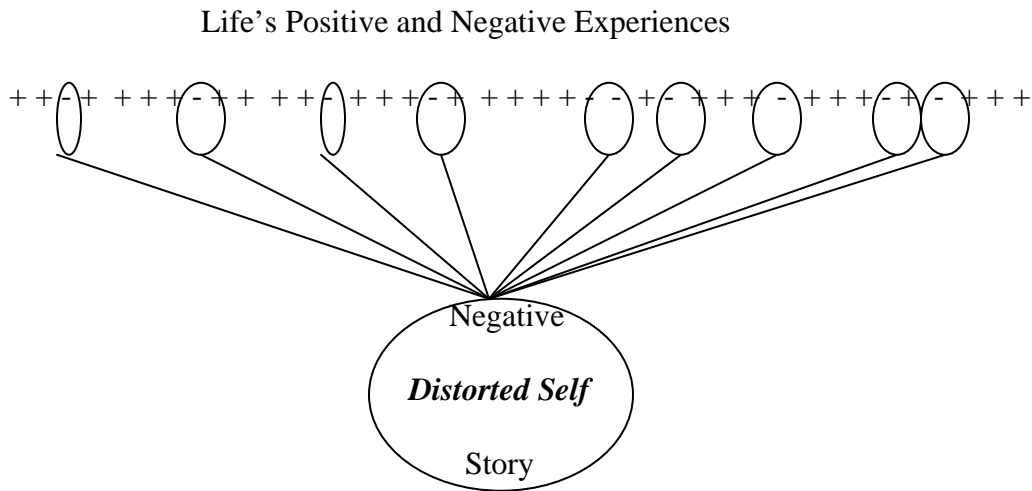
- a) how does “anger” convince you that it is helpful?
- b) how does “anger” most likely try to divert you from changing?
- c) how does “anger” seduce you/recruit you back into your old ways?

These questions expand your understanding of what contributed to the shaping of your story, what the story invited you to do to cope and what effect the story had on the *Self* and other people. The deconstruction process helps develop a consciousness of the realities of the *Distorted Self* story and the meaning of the story in your life.

As you develop a relationship with the problem, the *Distorted Self* story can be seen as a construction that can be interpreted differently. As the deconstructive questioning invites you to see the story from different perspectives, you are able to see new possibilities. This expansion of alternatives creates space and frees you to explore options that have preferred outcomes.

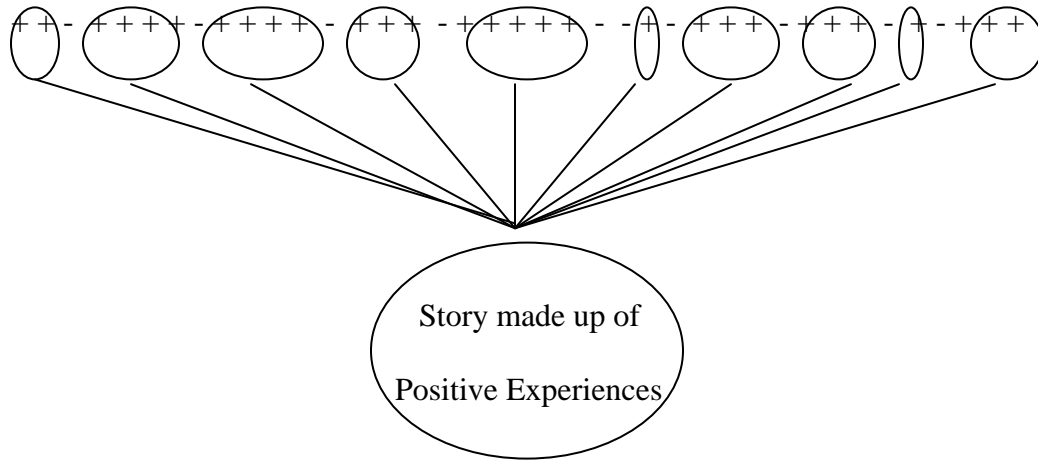
THE PERSON’S “LIVED EXPERIENCE”

Narrative Therapy is more interested in discovering the times in a person’s life when the problem is not there than when it is there. In helping the person move away from the old *Distorted Self* story, it is helpful to find the times when the person was able to overcome the problem, resist the problem or have mastery over it. Every person has recorded many “lived experiences,” both positive and negative.



As you can see in the above diagram, the negative life experiences have been selected out of all the life experiences to create the negative *Distorted Self* story. Many positive stories are there, but they have been disregarded. Once the negative experiences have been accepted and the *Distorted Self* story developed, it is difficult for the person to even see the positive stories that are there. Often the pain and hurt from the negative experiences overpower the positive memories, causing the person to think about and focus on the negative.

By asking questions about all the person's lived experience, the person can start to see that there really were some positive memories in his/her life. An additional way of opening up the story is to help the person look at the lived experience of other people who might be going through similar situations. Learning from others is what group therapy is all about. For instance, when alcoholics get together to share and talk about how they are coping, members of the group are learning from each other's lived experience.



The story that is authored from the positive life experiences creates a very different narrative from the one that selects only the negative experiences. When these positive experiences are left out of the person's story, the person does not have an opportunity to connect with the reality of his/her *True Self in Christ*. The movement away from the *Distorted Self* towards a more preferred *Self* is the goal of the therapy process.

THE TRUE SELF IN CHRIST

Reframing is a helpful technique used in counseling to help people develop a more positive life story. A counselor will analyze a person's story and help the person move from a negative thought to a more positive thought. Here's how reframing works. Say, for instance, a man comes for counseling and talks about the constant criticism that he hears from his mother. In an attempt to *reframe* his experience, the counselor may suggest that the criticism is really proof that his mother loves him and that she only wants him to be the best that he can be.

Sometimes *reframes* like this work and sometimes they don't. The problem with a counselor creating a reframe is that the words are external information and not part of the person's internal belief system.

In Narrative Therapy, the movement from the *Distorted Self* story will only be successful if the new story is true and connects with the *True Self In Christ*. Wishful thinking, sheer optimism and positive thinking will not work if it does not connect with truth.

The real problem is when the *True Self In Christ* has been covered over and lost under life's hurtful and traumatic experiences. It's not that the *True Self* has disappeared. It's still there. But, the lies, the false messages and the *Distorted Self* story are so strong that it blocks the person from knowing the *True Self*. Deconstructive questioning, while helpful in reconnecting with some of the positive life experiences, is often blocked by the memories that contribute to the *Distorted Self* story. These memories often need to be addressed before the truth can be received. This work is described in Romans 12:2, when it says, "*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind*" (See chapter 6).

I believe that, in many cases, the healing and transforming of the early memories of the mind is the key to the transition from the *Distorted Self* to the *True Self In Christ*. When a person invites Jesus into a specific memory or thought and Jesus Christ of Nazareth reveals his "truth" through the power of the Holy Spirit, it is that truth that sets the person free. "*So, if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.*"²

Negative *Distorted Self* stories can start with memories from as early as the womb, at birth or early in childhood. The related beliefs and conclusions can have a powerful impact on the life story unless they are transformed with truth. Deconstructive

² John 8:36, NIV

questioning is helpful in that it can reveal truth that helps the person connect some of the positive dots from life. But, inviting the presence of Jesus Christ into the earliest *Distorted Self* memory can be even more beneficial, if the early story is blocking out the ability of the person to receive the positive experiences that come later.

THE TYPICAL UNWORTHY STORY

Sadly, many individuals who have been sexually abused have a *Distorted Self* story that includes the belief, *I am unworthy*. A counselor can help that person explore all the incidents of worthiness in the person's life and sometimes that helps. However, far too often it's ineffective because the *I am unworthy* belief is embedded in an earlier memory that is so real that it overrules the later positive experiences. When Jesus Christ brings words of truth into that earlier memory similar to, *You are my creation and you are precious to me*. Or *You belong to me and I don't make junk*, it is this truth that frees the person from the old story.

It is my experience that some memories and stories carry more weight than others. It appears that the experience of an infant or child can be much more powerful than the same experience for an adult. For example, one client had a memory of being left alone in a baby carriage. Probably the mother had something to do and the child was left out in the fresh air for a period of time. We do not know the exact length of time, but what seemed like a short time to the mother appeared to be a long time to the child. After a while, the baby started to feel lonely and at some point the child made a conclusion that it had been abandoned.

This abandonment feeling worked negatively in that person's life until that memory was healed. I am sure the mother thought nothing of the incident, but to the child

it was monumental. It appears that the most significant wounding of the soul often occurs earlier in life rather than later.

Therefore, the most helpful way to move away from the *Distorted Self* story is to invite Jesus into early memories to transform the negative, false beliefs with truth. This process called Christ-Centered Inner Healing will be explained in more detail in Chapter 6. Suffice it to say, it appears that early negative experiences have the ability to cancel out later positive ones. This explains why Inner Healing goes back to heal the earliest memories, so that the person can then receive the positive experiences that come later in the life story.

THE POWER OF AUDIENCE

In his book, *On Being A Client*, David Howe noted that all therapies and counseling styles involve “talk” because dialogue is the “stuff of relationships.”³ Dialogue needs a speaker and a listener, which points out an important principle. Every story needs an audience. A story does not exist in a vacuum. A novel needs a reader. A movie needs people sitting in the theatre. And every person’s story needs an audience.

Part of the job of the helper, pastor, counselor is to be the person who hears the old story and, more importantly, who listens to the new story that the person is authoring. If the old story is strong and resilient, that is because it has been told often and in many different ways. If the new story is to become strong, it also needs to be told to many varied audiences.

Churches understand this when they ask new Christians to stand at the front and share their testimony of when and how they invited Jesus into their lives. The congregation is the audience and the person’s faith is stronger for having told the

³ *On Being A Client* by David Howe, p. 3

story. Other modes of expression include: 1) God as audience through prayer, 2) diary as audience, as a person writes about the meaning of the new story, 3) spouse/partner as audience, as the good news is shared, 4) fellowship groups as audience, as changes in one's life are communicated, 5) counselor as audience, as the person explains how the changes are affecting his/her life, 6) trusted mentor or favorite grandmother or aunt, etc. as audience, to extend the circle of communication.

In the beginning, the new story is fragile and the audience needs to be safe and trustworthy. As you follow this process, start slowly with people who will accept your new story and encourage you by listening with care.

For some people, the truth is heard and the transformation is instant. The lie disappears, the truth is received and the person's story starts to change immediately. Then they typically say, *I was in bondage but now I am free.*

On the other hand, some people hear the truth and the lie seems so real and believable that they have trouble receiving the truth. For these people, the choice between living with the new words of truth versus the old words is a huge dilemma. The new words don't feel comfortable and it is easier to just return to the old story. That's why the new words need to be expressed and received by an affirming audience. As the person takes ownership of authoring and expressing the new story, the emerging narrative becomes a viable alternative to the words that have previously dominated his/her life.

As Christians, we have the unique opportunity to co-author our life story with God. We can turn to Jesus as a loving friend and invite him to confirm truth for us. We can check our story with him and find out if it is accurate. He knows us better than any human being on earth. As it says in Psalm 139:3-4: "*You are familiar*

with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely.”

Since we are His creation, He knows our ***True Self***. We can turn to Him and invite Him into the process and He will help. He is ready and willing to reveal truth so that we can be the best that we can be. He wants us to have an abundant life and not live in the negativity of the ***Distorted Self*** story.

Read on and see just how you can uncover your ***True Self in Christ*** through the process of Christ-Centered Inner Healing.

Chapter 5

“Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.”¹

WHAT ROLES DO SALVATION AND SANCTIFICATION PLAY?

Testimony after testimony proclaims the transforming power of the salvation experience. From John Newton, who wrote the classic hymn *Amazing Grace*, to the alcoholic, who invited Jesus into his/her life, experience shows how Jesus comes and changes lives.

SALVATION

The Good News is that Jesus was sent to earth with a purpose. John 3:16 describes his mission: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.”*

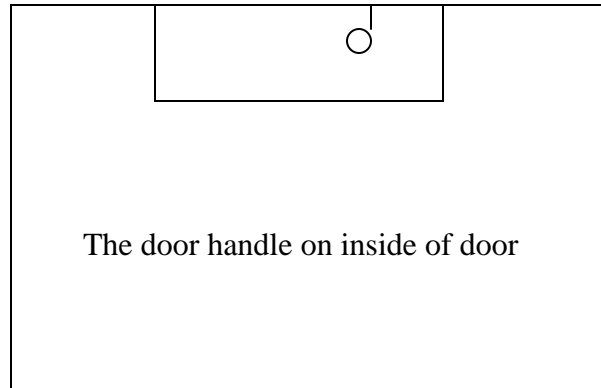
He came to save the lost. He came to remove the curse of Adam and restore mankind so that we again have *“the right to eat from the tree of life.”²* His grace, mercy and forgiveness were offered so that our relationship with God could be restored through his righteousness. Jesus’ death on the cross was the sacrifice that was offered so that we could be free. The only condition to claim this gift is to believe in him. *“That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”³*

¹ John 17:17, NIV

² Revelation 2:7, NIV

³ Romans 10: 9, NIV

House



The door handle on inside of door

The above metaphor of a house helps explain the salvation process. Jesus stands at the door of our house and knocks indicating that he wants to come into our lives. *“Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in.”*⁴

In the picture above, you can see that the door handle is only on the inside of the door. There is no handle on the outside for Jesus to use, so he is dependent on our opening the door for him to come in. This picture illustrates that our “free will” is involved in the process. Jesus respects us so much that he will not save us against our own free will. The salvation process involves our choosing to invite him into our hearts.

And when we choose to invite Jesus in, it only takes a second for Him to move from standing outside to residing inside and when he comes, he brings his Spirit and deposits it into our heart. *“He anointed us, set his seal of ownership on us, and put his Spirit in our hearts as a deposit, guaranteeing what is to come.”*⁵

In addition to guaranteeing eternal life with him in perfect love, he transforms our heart from one of depravity to love. The renewing of our heart from one of sin to love is the first step of healing. *“I will give them an undivided heart and put a new spirit in them;*

⁴ Revelation 3:20, NIV

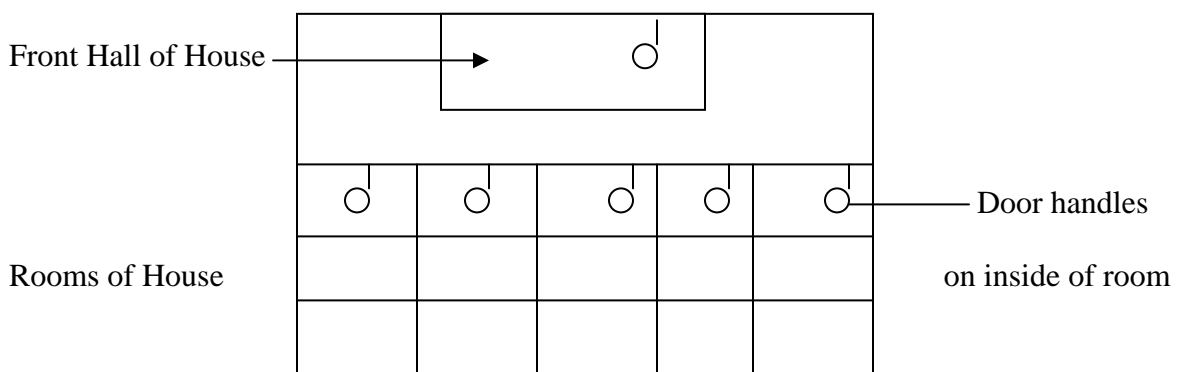
⁵ 2 Corinthians 1:21-22, NIV

I will remove from them their heart of stone and give them a heart of flesh.” ⁶We are then able to see things differently and our attitudes and motivations change. John Newton did not want to be a drunk and a slave trader anymore. He had love inside him and he wanted to change his life.

Salvation changes our story. Now we belong. Our worth is clear because the Son of God paid a ransom for our lives. We are OK inside knowing that we are loved. In the core or heart of our being, there is a security in the present and into the future. We are forgiven, beloved and eternally safe.

SANCTIFICATION

But salvation is only the first step. While salvation enables Jesus to move from outside the house to the inside, he is now standing only in the front hall. But each person’s house has many rooms. These rooms represent the different places of the mind where memories and thoughts are stored.



As you can see from the diagram, each room in the mind has a door handle only on the inside. Jesus will not enter any of these rooms unless he is invited. It is the same principle of “free will” that you see in the salvation process. Jesus respects our “free will”

⁶ Ezekiel 11:19, NIV

and he will not enter into any of those rooms of the mind without an invitation. He patiently waits in the front hall until he has been asked to come into the different rooms. As we've mentioned several times, the process of transforming and renewing the mind is called *sanctification*. "*Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.*"⁷

Christ's presence in the mind changes the story because he brings truth. Also, he is the healer. So Jesus, when invited, heals the mind and emotions by bringing truth. It is that truth of Jesus that sets people free from the bondage of the lies and false messages that they have been living with. Jesus wants us to be free. In fact, his second reason for coming to earth is described in John 10:10: "*I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*"

Jesus does not want us to live with anger, depression and mental turmoil. In Galatians 5:1 he says: "*It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.*"

So, Isaiah 61 describes Jesus' mission of sanctification: "*The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners.*"

Unfortunately, hearts are broken by cruel and hurtful words. Eldredge in his book, *The Sacred Romance*, refers to these damaging and wounding words as "*arrows in the heart.*"⁸ Words have the ability to penetrate a person's soul and hurt his/her feelings. Jesus does not want us to be burdened with inner pain.

⁷ Romans 12:2, NIV

⁸ *The Sacred Romance* by John Eldredge, p. 27

Jesus also knows that Satan and his helpers use these wounds to create further turmoil and destruction. So, Jesus tells us how to deal with emotional and mental trauma in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5: *“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.”*

We often hear about taking thoughts captive, but what does that really mean? I believe that inviting Jesus to come into the specific room in the mind is the process. When you say, *Dear Jesus, I invite you to come into this specific place in my mind where I am thinking this thought or where I am dwelling on this memory*, He will come. In Psalm 91 it says: *“He will call upon me (Jesus), and I will answer him. I will be with him in trouble.”*

If you call out to Jesus, he will hear you. In Psalm 139, it says: *“Before a word is on my tongue you know it completely.”* Jesus is so loving and caring that he does not want us to live in mental and emotional pain. He created us to be free, but our experiences in the world have created strongholds and wounds that we carry around in our minds. He knows that Satan can use those strongholds, so he is divinely willing to help heal our souls. We are the captives when our minds are bound up in lies. We are the prisoners when we have mentally taken ourselves to a dark pit where we are all alone. He wants us to be free from despair, mourning, grief, shame and disgrace.

As a counselor, I have the unique privilege of encouraging people to invite Jesus into their minds each and every day. I have observed that He comes every time when asked. He does not hold back or say, *I will come if you meet these three conditions*. He is

so keen to help that He rushes in just as the father ran to his son in the Prodigal Son story (Luke 15:11-32). I have also observed that when Jesus comes into peoples' memories, He is always gentle, kind, friendly, caring, loving, helpful, and healing.

When a person hears Jesus' truth, the result is inevitably described as peaceful. Over thousands of hours of doing Inner Healing work, I have never observed Jesus come into a client's memory to criticize, condemn, rebuke, fight, mock, hurt, or create pain. In every case, His very presence and the truth that He brings are healing and helpful.

Jesus refers to this process as follows: "*The Counselor, I will send him to you.*"⁹
"*When he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.*"¹⁰

I believe that Jesus uses the Holy Spirit to communicate the truth and it is that specific truth that helps transform memories and thoughts.

MORE THAN LIES

While some rooms of the mind contain lies, there are other rooms of the mind that also need the transforming power of Jesus for sanctification to occur. These rooms contain:

- 1) unconfessed sin
- 2) unforgiveness
- 3) mental agreements that are against the knowledge of God
- 4) lack of forgiveness for self

Unconfessed Sin

When a person sins, the natural instinct is to close the door, keep it a secret and not admit to anyone that it is there. The result is that the sin, when not dealt with, gets

⁹ John 16:7, NIV

¹⁰ John 16:13, NIV

bigger and darker. Examples are: infidelity, pornography, gluttony, pride, idolatry, envy, hate, lust and judgment. If the person opens the door to Jesus and invites him in through confession, Jesus will cleanse the room and forgive the person. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”*¹¹

This purification process involves the use of “free will” where confession and repentance are involved in the healing. Confession enables light to shine into the darkness and obedience to Jesus’ truth cleanses the soul.

Unforgiveness

Another type of room where the door remains shut is unforgiveness. When a person has been hurt, the natural instinct is to fight back and repay the offender in like kind. If you hit me, I will hit you back. As long as a person holds onto the unforgiveness, the emotional anger builds and the bitterness grows stronger. The only way to be free is to invite Jesus into the pain through forgiveness and let go of the desire to repay. As Christians we are commanded to forgive and leave the revenge up to God.

Mental Agreements

The third type of room that needs cleansing is any place where the mind is committed to holding onto a fixed belief that is against God’s will. This category includes vows, curses, covenants, and all the ways that the mind gets set against God’s truth.

Lack Of Self-Forgiveness

The fourth category is any room holding all the self-condemnation, self-hatred and self-punishment that blocks the person from receiving the forgiveness of Christ. In this type of room, people turn from God and verbally abuse themselves with

¹¹ 1 John 1:8-9, NIV

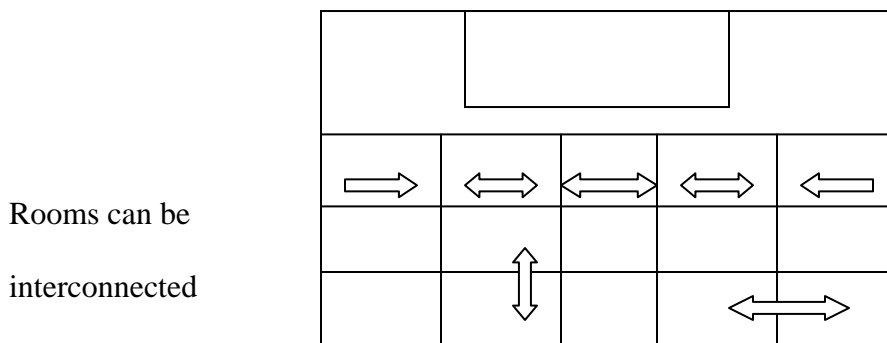
self-judgment and critical self-talk. Self-forgiveness is needed to let go of all the ways that the person blocks God’s love so that he/she can receive the love of Jesus and heal these self-imposed wounds.

Interconnected Rooms

One important principle is that any or all of these different types of rooms in the mind can be interconnected. To deal with just one room may be helpful, but if there is interconnection, the person will need to work through healing in all the interconnected rooms for total healing to occur. An example of interconnection is shown by the story of a sexually abused female.

- 1) lies could include: *I am unworthy, it was my fault*
- 2) sin could include: *judgment and malice*
- 3) unforgiveness could include: *bitterness towards the perpetrator*
- 4) mental agreement could include: *I cannot trust all men*
- 5) lack of self-forgiveness: *I hate myself, I need to justify myself*

When all these are interlinked, the person is bound up in a way that simple healing prayer does not comprehensively address.



In the next chapters, we will explore how the healing power of Jesus works to sanctify the mind in each of these rooms of the mind.

Chapter 6

*“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind”.*¹

HOW DOES INVITING JESUS INTO THE MIND HELP?

Mark was sexually abused as a child. Every time the memory came back into his mind, it felt like the attack was happening all over again. He relived the pain every time he remembered the event and he believed the words that were attached to the memory that it is happening now and that it is his fault. He lived with those thoughts until the day that he invited Jesus into the memory and Jesus said to him, *“It is over. That happened to you years ago and now you are free.”*

It was the transforming truth of Jesus Christ that released Mark from being stuck in the past. From a narrative perspective, inviting Jesus into his memory allowed for a co-authoring with Jesus, as the truth not only transforms the words that had been accepted, but also changes the emotional feeling in the memory. The pain is removed and the person is left with a feeling of peace. I call it “The Prince of Peace factor.” It’s amazing how many clients, after hearing Jesus’ truth, say that the feeling in the memory is now *“peaceful.”*

SALVATION AND TRANSFORMATION

Inviting Jesus into the heart is the step of **salvation**. Inviting Jesus into the mind is the process of **transformation**. Jesus heals or cleanses any part of the mind when he is specifically asked to come into the mind and reveal his truth. He respects our choice. He

¹ Romans 12:2, NIV

honors our free will. But when He is invited to come, He is faithful and willing to heal both the emotional pain and the cognitive distortions of the mind.

The good news is that healing from distortion truly is possible. Lies and their associated distorted interpretations can be changed because they are perceived realities. Inner Healing does not change facts, such as a lost job or a death in the family, but the truth of Jesus can transform the interpretation of the experience. What changes is the person's perception and interpretation in his/her mind.

Since the battleground is for the mind, the issue is whether all parts of the mind have been surrendered to Jesus' truth. Whenever a door of the mind is shut to Jesus, the possibility exists for a stronghold to be created that will only darken and deteriorate with time. We are told in Ephesians 6:12 that "*Our struggle is not against flesh and blood,*" but, it is a struggle between truth and lies.

Inviting Jesus into the mind helps us with the struggle: "*My prayer is not that you take them out of the world, but that you protect them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of it. Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth.*"²

HOW DOES THE MIND FUNCTION?

The mind works like a computer storing every memory since conception. In fact, more than 99 percent of all life's experiences are stored in the unconscious mind while we function mostly out of our recent experiences. However, a thought, interpretation or belief that is stored in the unconscious mind can be just as relevant and powerful as a recent thought.

A person may have become a new creation in Christ at age 30, but still have many rooms of the mind from before 30 that have never been surrendered to Jesus. While living

² John 17:15-17, NIV

a clean and pure life in the present creates new rooms of the mind that are healthy, any unsundered rooms of the past life remain in the mind as memories that can still hold hurt and pain.

SOME MEMORIES GET STUCK

Most memories are uneventful and they just exist in the mind, creating little impact or recall. A small number of memories, however, are truly significant in a person's life. That is why Dr. Phil in his book, *Self Matters*, asks the reader to explore 1) "ten defining moments", 2) "seven critical choices" and 3) "five pivotal people."³ Identifying these defining moments is a helpful tool used in the inner healing process.

What I have noticed in working with my clients is that certain key memories are visited, revisited and talked about, but often they are not dealt with or resolved. In some cases, the memory sits in the unconscious mind and is not even recognized as significant. Consequently, the memory continues to influence the person in ways that the person does not even realize.

What happens is that the memory of the experience is stored in the brain and the words that were accepted at the time and the related emotions are attached to the memory. The memory is recorded in the present tense, as if it is happening now, and the person's age in the memory stays the same as when the experience happened. So, the experience, the words and the emotions become stuck and remain unchanged, negatively affecting the person forever or until the memory is transformed.

THE TRANSFORMING POWER OF JESUS' TRUTH

What is it that takes the sting out of the memory? It is the truth that Jesus brings that changes the feeling in the memory. The process is not hypnosis, guided imagery or

³ *Self Matters* by Phillip C. McGraw, Ph.D., p. 90

mind control. It is the person using his/her own free will to ask for and listen to the truth that Jesus reveals as the person invites Jesus into the process.

When the truth is received and accepted, the pain departs and the person is set free. Often people will say, *I am no longer little in the memory. Somehow I seem to have grown up.* The block that was created when the memory became stuck is set free by the truth. The cognitive words are altered by the truth and the emotional attachment is released at the same time. Somehow the words and the feelings are intertwined. When the words change, the feelings change as well. It is this experience that is called the transformation of the mind.

JESUS HELPS FIND THE RIGHT MEMORY

Inviting Jesus into the process is helpful in getting back to the right painful memory, because He knows all about us. He knows our story since He has been with each of us from the beginning, from even before we invited him into our hearts. He created us. He is omniscient (infinite awareness) and omnipresent (Present in all places at all times). So when one prays for Jesus to take a person back along the path of a bothersome feeling to the earliest memory, the Holy Spirit knows exactly where to go.

It is amazing how the Holy Spirit will bring the right memory forward, even if it does not seem to be a particularly meaningful recollection. There have been times with a client where a memory comes into his/her mind and I say to myself, *There does not seem to be much pain in that memory, or how can that memory be the source of the pain?* But, Jesus knows the person.

In fact, this is a key point. A counselor or therapist may go on a fishing expedition looking for the trauma, and the right memory may come forward and be overlooked

because it does not look bad enough. So the client and the counselor continue to search in vain looking for something that they think in their worldly wisdom is the cause of the problem.

It is important for the counselor to get out of the way and allow Jesus and the Holy Spirit to locate the right memory. Inviting Jesus to locate the right memory is one of the significant ways that Jesus helps in the process.

Let me give you an example. A client of mine was experiencing a persistent feeling of abandonment. When we prayed for the Holy Spirit to lead him back to the key memory, the client said, "I am little. I am in bed in my dark bedroom looking out the slightly opened door at the light in the hall."

Now, when you look at that story, it does not appear very traumatic. It would have been easy to pass that incident by and go looking for a more traumatic memory. But this was the significant memory for this person and the Holy Spirit knew it. What happened was that his parents did not tuck him into bed and he felt frightened and abandoned. He needed the assurance of his parents' touch at that time and they were not there for him because something else was going on in their lives. That memory became stuck inside him at that early age and he accepted the words: *I have been abandoned*. The feeling of pain was connected to the memory and whenever he felt abandoned in present situations, he would be flooded by the feelings from that memory of his childhood. The Holy Spirit helped bring that early memory forward and the client was able to invite Jesus into it and be set free.

JESUS HELPS IDENTIFY THE LIES AND HURTFUL WORDS

When the memory has been located, the person chooses, with his/her will, to invite Jesus into the memory. Every person is different. Some people are visual. Some are auditory and others are kinesthetic. When Jesus is invited, visual people will see him in the memory. Auditory people will hear his words and kinesthetic people will just feel a sense of his presence. There is no right or wrong way. Since this process is not guided imagery, it is not important how Jesus reveals his truth. The key is that His truth is healing.

When Jesus has been invited into the memory, the next important step is to identify the exact words that the person accepted in the memory because these words are the key to the wounding.

When you pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal the precise words that were accepted in the memory, Jesus helps by bringing the words to the person's mind. These lies, their destructive conclusions and bothersome words are the key to the transforming experience.

It's important to know which words are connected to the memory first before praying for truth. For example, if you just pray for truth without knowing the hurtful words, the person may well hear truth, but it may not set him/her free, because it does not relate to the specific negative words that were embedded in the hurtful memory. So, accurately identifying the negative words is the first step and Jesus helps by bringing back to the person's mind all the negative words attached to the memory.

JESUS BRINGS THE HEALING TRUTH

The **Distorted Self** story is often formulated out of the lies embedded in early memories that have been stored and forgotten. The process of sanctification is inviting Jesus into these rooms of the mind, where old memories hold the lies that help create the dominant negative story.

When Jesus is invited into these old memories, the lies that have covered over the *True Self In Christ* are removed when His truth is revealed. It is the truth that Jesus brings into the mind that sets the person free. It may be the same truth that a pastor, counselor or friend tried to communicate to the person with no effect. The difference is that Jesus' truth is internal to the mind.

Furthermore, Jesus' presence is helpful because he brings the exact truth for the lie or lies that have been embedded in the memory. Once the lie or negative words have been identified, the prayer is for Jesus to reveal the truth that will offset those words. Since the destructive words are specific, the truth needs to be specific and Jesus knows which words are right for that person and that situation in the memory.

Let me give you an example. A woman was living with the belief that she was worthless. Jesus brought words that said she was his creation and that he did not make junk. He told her that she was precious in his eyes and that he loved her. This truth was the precise message that she needed to hear to banish the lie that she was worthless. It may seem like it is just words, but that, in fact, is the point. It's the positive, healing words of our creator that have power. He is the healer and He heals with the right truth for the person's specific situation.

So you can see that Jesus is not only helpful in the process, He is the key to transforming the mind. When invited, He helps find the right memory, identifies the precise negative words attached to the memory and brings the exact truth that is needed to set the person free. Praise God that we have such an intimate, caring and loving redeemer.

In the next chapter, we will look at the significance of confession of sin and fellowship with God through Christ in uncovering the *True Self in Christ*.

Chapter 7

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”¹

WHAT DO SIN AND CONFESSION HAVE TO DO WITH IT?

When Mary came into the clinic, she confessed that she was a broken person in every way. Her life was in shambles. Her health was bad. She was at the end of her rope and she said, *“I will do whatever God wants me to do. I am broken financially, physically, spiritually and emotionally. Help me Lord!”*

The truth is God wants to help us, but because He has given us free will, He cannot redeem us unless we extend the invitation. The responsibility to ask for help is entirely ours. When we come to God with a sincere desire to change, as Mary did, He will begin the process of healing.

Yet confession is not simply about admitting wrong doings or thoughts according to some moral standard. It is about getting our relationship right with God. If sin within the soul is seen as merely a psychological imbalance or illness, the predicament of good and evil at the core of man’s being is never addressed.

Contrary to secular psychology, the Christian perspective on personhood is different. Christian therapy considers how pride, rebellion from God, prayer, grace, mercy, the truth of God’s Word and the healing power of the Holy Spirit connect with the human spirit. In Christianity, sin is not merely a politically incorrect word, it is a significant issue that needs addressing.

¹ 1 John 1: 8-9, NIV

Humans are spiritual beings, as well as rational and emotional. The place where the spiritual realm and the phenomenal world intersect is the mind. Payne writes: “*The mind of man, including his spirit and entire soul, are either cleansed and wise (in balance), or evil and darkened (unseeing), depending whether or not there is confession of sin and fellowship with God through Christ.*”²

Let’s build on the metaphor of the house we spoke of earlier. When a person invites Jesus into the front hall of the house, the heart has been redeemed, but that does not mean that all the rooms of the mind have been surrendered to God and his truth. Transformation of the mind is a choice of the will to ask Jesus to come into the rooms where he has never been previously invited. In most of us, there are rooms where Jesus is Lord and there are other rooms where we keep the door tightly shut and Jesus is not welcome there. These are the rooms where our sinful mind chooses rebellion and disobedience over truth. Typically, these rooms house addictions, secret lust, and other sinful thoughts that we do not want anyone to know about.

The Book of Romans speaks to the sinful mind: “*Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires. The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace, because the sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so.*”³

What adds to the confusion is that a person can have some rooms of the mind submitted to God and other rooms where Jesus has never been invited. This duplicity of mind explains how a person can go to church and live what appears to be a holy life on

² *The Healing Presence* by Leanne Payne, p. 162

³ Romans 8:5-7, NIV

one level, and yet choose at other times to make decisions that are in total rebellion against God's will.

These rooms, which we choose to keep separated from the love of God, need light. The act of confession is the process of bringing the thoughts and mental agreements captive to Jesus and allowing Him to purify us through forgiveness. As C.S. Lewis said, *"We have a strange illusion that mere time cancels sin. But mere time does nothing either to the fact or to the guilt of sin. The guilt is washed out not by time but by repentance and the blood of Christ"*⁴

THE PROCESS OF CONFESSION INVOLVES THE FOLLOWING STEPS:

1. Recognize your condition of sinfulness
2. Choose Jesus and the cross
3. Name the sin
4. Renounce personal involvement
5. Bind the sin to the cross and receive forgiveness
6. Repent
7. Experience the freedom to function from the *True Self in Christ*

1. Recognize Your Condition Of Sinfulness

The first step of confession is the realization that we are separated from God and living a life of spiritual poverty. Often pride insulates us from understanding how God wants us to be. Luke 18:11-14 describes this condition: *"The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself; 'God, I thank you that I am not like all other men – robbers, evildoers, adulterers – or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.' But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to*

⁴ *The Problem of Pain* by C.S. Lewis, p. 61

heaven, but beat his breast and said, 'God, have mercy on me a sinner.' I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God."

In psychology, pride is not considered an illness or a sickness and, therefore, is not diagnosed as pathological. But in the scriptures, the pride of the Pharisee does connect with the predicament of good and evil that is at the core of the human heart. The tax collector is aware of his brokenness and is struggling with the pain of his sin, as he asks for help in the form of mercy. Like the tax collector, our need is to look inward, see our shortcomings and humble ourselves in prayer. The proper attitude is described in Psalm 51:16-17, *"You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart."*

2. Choose Jesus And The Cross

Confession and repentance entail more than not doing something wicked. They involve turning to God in faith because we recognize that without Him we are empty, lonely and broken. As we understand that our rebellious pride and our separation from God is our first big sin, we are brought to the point of choice between truth and lies, life and death, freedom and bondage, healing and ongoing pain.

Understanding our sinfulness involves two steps: 1) recognize that all our efforts to save ourselves are meaningless, so we need to invite Jesus into the front hall, and 2) recognize that controlling and hiding our fallen selves grants evil an opportunity to sow destruction in our lives, so we need to invite Jesus into the rooms of our house.

Step 1- Invite Jesus Into The Front Hall

Jesus is all sufficient and He is our only hope. No matter how hard we try, we will never receive salvation through our own good works. Because of Jesus' obedience to follow His Father's will and sacrifice Himself as an atonement for us on the cross, we have the promise of salvation. He assumes our sin when we turn to him and confess it. He bears our sin so that we will no longer be burdened by it: *"This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Jesus Christ. God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood."*⁵

The key to the above verses is *"to all who believe."* For as it says in Romans 1:17, *"The righteous will live by faith."* We need to turn to Jesus and by faith invite him into our lives as the Son of God who died for our sins: *"For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved."*⁶

Confessing that we are sinners and inviting Jesus into our lives are the first two steps of healing. The immediate fruits of the Sinner's Prayer are the indwelling of the Holy Spirit within us and a restored heart.

Step 2 - Invite Jesus Into The Rooms Of Our House

For those of us who have received salvation by faith and are reborn in the spirit, we still have the task of transformation – the purifying of the mind from sin, unforgiveness and lies. As it relates to sin, there are two areas to consider: 1) past sin and memories hidden away in secret rooms with the door locked, and 2) current sin and

⁵ Romans 3:22-25, NIV

⁶ Romans 10:10, NIV

thoughts that result from our living in a fallen world, where we constantly struggle with daily unrighteousness such as: pride, judging others, envy, disrespect, the lack of acceptance of others, etc.

The same principle that we used in inviting Jesus into our house is used when we invite Jesus into these unsundered rooms, where past and current sin reside and where lies and wrong agreements of our mind hold us in bondage. We need to come to God, or before another trusted person, and confess to God that we have fallen short. Just as He justified the tax collector as a sinner, He will come in, cleanse us from sin and forgive us.

3. Name The Sin

We need to take responsibility for the ways that we have lived an unrighteous life. Naming the specific sins is an important step. *“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy.”*⁷

As we disclose our guilty offenses with a contrite heart, we lay before God the specific ways that we have been rebellious, separated ourselves from righteous living and caused ourselves to pursue evil rather than good. Naming our sins in confession is the way that God knows our heart and is the condition for working his divine healing of grace, mercy and forgiveness in our lives. Confession is how the darkness flows out of us into the Crucified One.

4. Renounce Personal Involvement

As Proverbs 28:13 says above, renouncing is integrally related to confession. After naming, admitting and expressing the sin, we need to reject and renounce it before turning from it in repentance. *“Renounce your sins by doing what is right.”*⁸

⁷ Proverbs 28:13, NIV

⁸ Daniel 4:27, NIV

Renouncing is not passive acquiescence. It is an active determination to give up the error of our ways and a declaration to refuse to participate in the wrong agreements of our mind again. It is an act of obedience to repudiate the destructive thoughts and behavior. Renouncing precedes repentance with an act of “will” that stands against the old way and it produces commitment that strengthens the effectiveness of turning from the wrongful ways.

5. Bind Sin To The Cross And Receive Forgiveness

Jesus died on the cross for our sins: *“For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.”*⁹

We can take our sins to the cross and bind them there: *“He forgave us all our sins, having cancelled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.”*¹⁰

The good news is that Jesus has the authority to forgive, *“...that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins.”*¹¹ As we accept the forgiveness of Jesus, we need to allow that forgiveness to actually reach our hearts. In chapter 11, we will see how receiving forgiveness is a real challenge for some people.

6. Repent

Repentance is defined as turning toward God in all aspects of one’s life. *“Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord.”*¹² Repentance requires a change that proves one’s desire to be

⁹ Colossians 1:19-20, NIV

¹⁰ Colossians 2:13-14, NIV

¹¹ Luke 5:24, NIV

¹² Acts 3:19, NIV

obedient to God. *“I preached that they should repent and turn to God and prove their repentance by their deeds.”*¹³

Repentance requires action. With the change in heart comes the fruit of change – a new desire to be obedient to God’s will and new behaviors. Change is never easy and change from slavery to sin is even more difficult. As we move from the mind that is set on sin, where it is impossible to please God, to the mind that is set on what the Spirit desires, He will help, if we invite Him into the process.

7. Experience The Freedom To Function From The *True Self in Christ*

What is the result of confession? **Freedom!** There is freedom to function from the *True Self in Christ* with less confusion and interference. Sin clouds our ability to know ourselves as God created us to be. The following list outlines some of the main sins that people encounter: pride, idolatry, sexual lust and fantasy to adultery and fornication, envy/jealousy, sinful anger, sloth/laziness, gluttony and greed. Dr. William Backus in his book, *What Your Counselor Never Told You*, offers further insights into these sins. If you would like to come before God and confess, here is a prayer that you can use.

Prayer Of Confession

Dear Heavenly Father, Sovereign God, I come before you on bended knee as a sinner in need of mercy. I bring to you the sacrifice of a broken spirit and a contrite heart. I proclaim my faith in the True Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth as my Lord and Savior and I invite Jesus and the Holy Spirit to reveal to me all the sins in my life, known and unknown, that are keeping me separated from you. I know that I have fallen short and I lament my thoughts and actions. I now ask Jesus to help

¹³ Acts 26:20, NIV

me identify all the ways that I have dishonored you by being rebellious, prideful, idolatrous, self-centred and by living outside of your will.

List the sins that you hear:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

Four Steps for addressing each of the above sins:

I now humble myself and confess with my mouth that I have fallen short as follows:

- 1) ***I acknowledge, confess and take full responsibility*** for sinning against you and for transgressing your holy ways by:

- 2) ***Lord, I renounce*** the wrong agreements of my mind and ***I renounce*** my participation and personal involvement with:

3) *I **bind** this sin of _____ to the cross of Jesus Christ, and I now receive the forgiveness that only Jesus has authority to give on earth (Luke 5:24). Purify me now Lord from my unrighteousness. Set me free by your grace and mercy.*

4) *Lord, clean out this room in my mind and remove from me any further desire to sin. I now choose to **repent** from this sin of _____*

I now commit to change in the following ways:

Take my pain away now and give me the strength to follow through on this declaration.

God, you are awesome. Thank you for your gift of forgiveness. Heal me inside.

I release all my guilt and shame to you and I accept your forgiveness. I loose any wrong agreements of my mind and I now choose to accept myself as cleansed,

free and ready to serve you. Thank you for your loyal love. I choose to be

obedient to your Word and I place my confidence in you.

I pray this in the wonderful name of the True Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Amen.

In the next chapter, we will be looking at the importance of practicing forgiveness in the process of uncovering your ***True Self in Christ***.

Chapter 8

“Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant as I had on you?”¹

“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”²

WHY SHOULD I BE THE ONE TO FORGIVE?

As Christians, we are commanded to forgive and yet we seem to have just as much difficulty forgiving as non-Christians. When I used to lead a Christian through Neil Anderson’s *Seven Steps to Freedom in Christ*, I found that he/she would spend more time on the forgiveness step than on all the other six steps combined. How is this possible if we are new creations in Christ? The answer lies in our humanness. We feel pain just like any other person and it is the feeling of pain that leads us into unforgiveness.

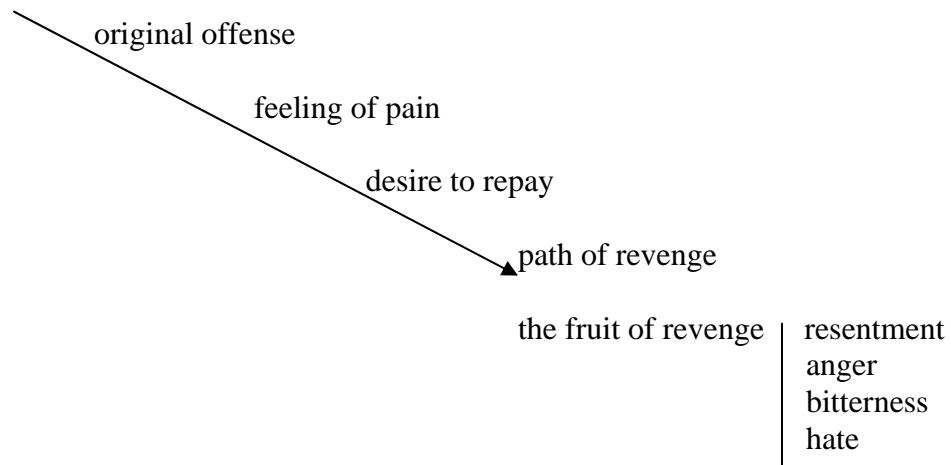
HOW DOES UNFORGIVENESS WORK?

It begins when somebody offends you. The insult, the offense, or the wounding causes hurt and as a result, pain is felt. The incident may be something that breaks the law or not. In the case where a civil or criminal law is broken, the justice system provides a process where there is legal recourse. But often the offense is of a personal nature and there is no legal process for seeking justice. So we take things into our own hands. We say to ourselves, *that person is causing me pain and yet he/she is not experiencing any pain. This is unfair. That person is getting away with something and I am going to make sure that he/she does not get away with it. I am going to make that person pay. And the pain I inflict will be repayment for the pain that was inflicted on me.* So what may start out sounding like justice quickly transforms into revenge and causes the person who was

¹ Matthew 18:33, NIV

² Ephesians 4:32, NIV

originally affronted to become emotionally connected to the offender. This emotional enmeshment produces a variety of negative fruit ranging from resentment and anger, to bitterness, hate and even rage. I call this the path of revenge.



One client I worked with explained how she had spoken words of forgiveness to her husband for an indiscretion he had committed against her. Yet a year later, she was still talking about how she was punishing him. I asked her what she was doing and she said, *“I am making him feel as much pain as he made me feel.”* I asked her if that was forgiveness and when she reflected on it she realized that she had abandoned the forgiveness and was actually seeking revenge. You can see how the pain misled her into revenge.

The problem is that pain is a real feeling and it causes a person to want to strike back. We may have been told to turn the other cheek, but the natural response is to give back to the person what he/she has given to us.

WHERE DOES REVENGE FIT IN?

The Book of Romans offers insight into the Christian response to revenge: *“Do not repay evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Do not take revenge,*

*my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written, 'It is mine to avenge. I will repay,' says the Lord. On the contrary, 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink.'"*³

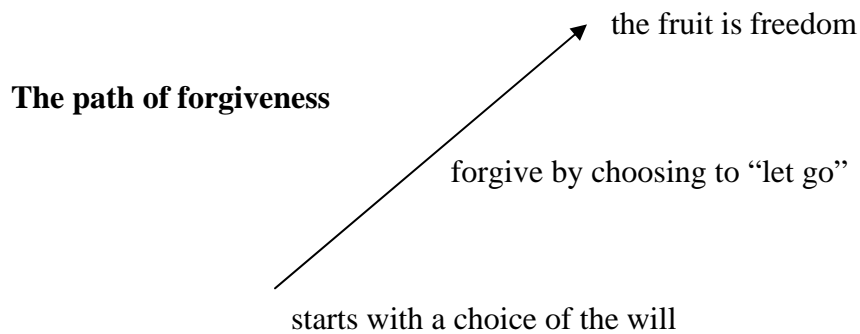
So, the Bible says that revenge is God's job. In my experience the reason why we should not seek revenge is that we would not be fair. Our pain and emotions cloud our judgment and our response is not objective and probably not even reasonable. If we are to leave revenge to God, then what are we supposed to do?

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

The Greek word for forgive is "aphiami", which means *to let go*. God's direction for us is to let go of our anger and bitterness toward others. He has a better plan for us. That plan is the fruit of forgiveness, which is freedom and peace. He wants us to be emotionally free and the way to attain this freedom is through forgiving. Forgiveness is not a feeling, it is a "choice of the will" to overlook the pain and let go of one's own efforts to make the other person pay. In my work I have consistently observed how the act of forgiveness allows the person to disconnect emotionally from his/her offender and the result of the forgiveness is often described as "*freeing*".

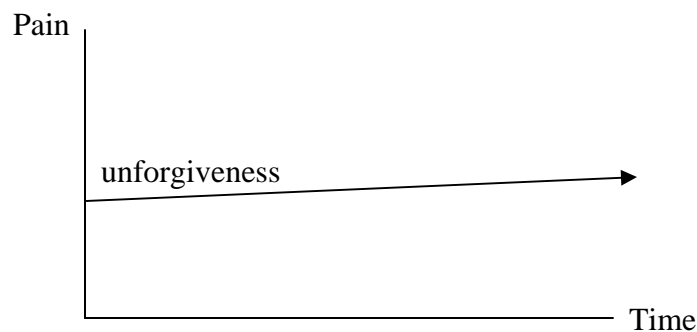
Jesus did not ask us to repay for our sins. He took what we deserved upon himself on the cross. Similarly, we can lay our judgment of others at the cross and allow the grace and mercy of Christ to flow into our lives so that we can choose to forgive others.

³ Romans 12:17-20, NIV



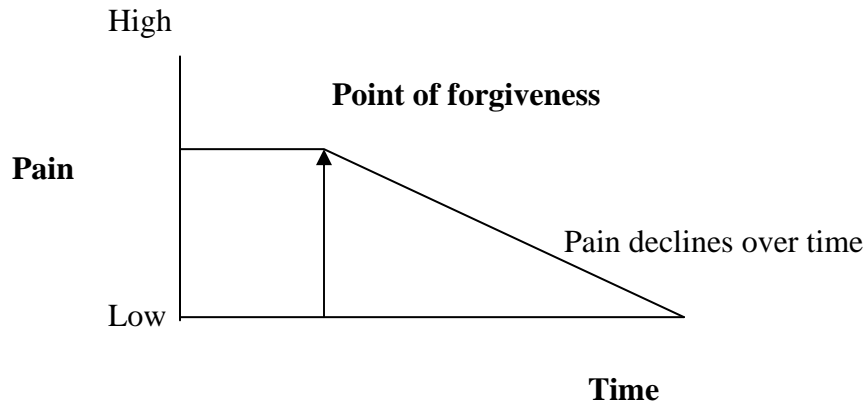
There is a spiritual principle here. You cannot be on the path of revenge and the path of forgiveness at the same time. God empowers us to seek the path of forgiveness by assuring us that he will take care of the path of revenge. The real problem in choosing forgiveness is coping with the pain that was caused by the offense. Often a person will forgive one day and then feel the pain the next day and return to the path of revenge.

That’s what happened to the lady in the story above. The pain caused her to return to the desire to punish her husband. So the challenge of forgiveness is to choose to live with the consequences (i.e., the pain caused by the other person’s sin). The good news is that with forgiveness there is immediate emotional freedom. The challenging truth is that it takes time for the pain to lessen in intensity and eventually the pain will subside.



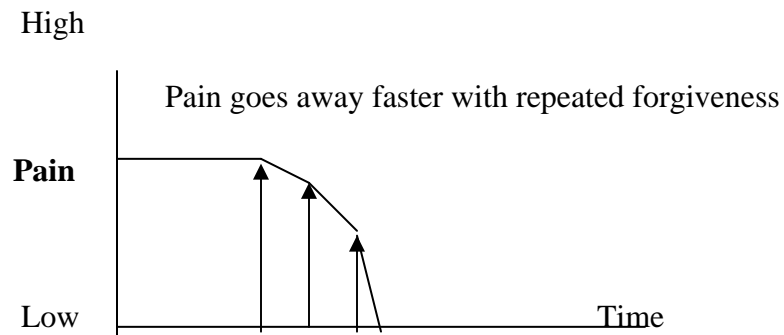
In the graph above, you can see that, if forgiveness is not offered, the pain will stay the same in intensity and maybe even increase over time. Conversely, once

forgiveness is truly offered, the pain will begin to decline and over time the pain will diminish and eventually go away.



As you can see in the above graph, the turning point in the feeling of pain is when forgiveness is offered. However, just because you truly forgave does not mean that the event did not happen. The pain of the offense may take considerable time to go away. However, if you choose to repeat the forgiveness again the next day, there appears to be an acceleration in the speed with which the pain will go to zero. This observation helps explain why the Bible says, “*Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times? Jesus answered, ‘I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.’*”⁴

If you forgive more than once, the benefit is that the pain will go away more quickly.



⁴ Matthew 18:21-22, NIV

So we are told that Christians are to be a forgiving people. Forgiveness is not something that is done once a year or once in a lifetime. It is an ongoing and active process that we are to practice daily. When a person cuts you off on the highway, what is your response? Do you raise your finger in anger or do you say, *Bless you! You go first and have a good day!* Jesus wants us to become habitual forgivers, whereby we make forgiveness a way of life. Most people do not have the problem of forgiving too quickly. I find that people hold onto unforgiveness for years and the result is constantly living with emotional turmoil.

As a counselor, my job is to help the person see the difference between the negative fruit of unforgiveness, which is bondage and anger, and the positive fruit of forgiveness, which is freedom and peace. Then I ask the question, *How do you want to live your life? Do you want to be angry all the time or do you want to be free?* It is important to know that we can choose between the two.

CAN'T WE JUST FORGET THE MEMORY?

It would be nice if we could just forget a painful experience, but that is impossible because the mind records every memory, just like a computer. We can try to suppress the painful memory, but eventually it will come shooting up like a beach ball that is held under water. Usually, it will appear at the most inopportune time. On the other hand, we can learn from how God handles it? The psalmist says, *“He forgives all my sins ... as far as east is from west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us.”*⁵ With grace, mercy and compassion, God chooses to let go of the transgression and not hold it against us. In 1 Corinthians 13, it says that *“[Love] keeps no record of wrongs.”* God does not forget, but instead chooses to offer mercy instead of punishment. It is a gift like

⁵ Psalm 103:3-12, NIV

the cancellation of a debt. Once the debt is forgiven, it does not need to be addressed again.

Similarly, we can choose mercy over judgment and let go of the anger and the desire to seek revenge. We can set aside the commitment of the mind to repay the other person and instead offer love. It is a choice of the will, an active decision to not hold the offense and the pain against the offender.

Forgiveness is the opposite of forgetting. It is a conscious choice to cancel the debt and choose to hold the sin against the person no longer. The benefit of this choice is emotional healing and eventual elimination of the pain. Isn't it great that God knows how he designed us and wants us to learn from him how to be free?

WHO DO YOU NEED TO FORGIVE?

The people who are most likely to hurt you are those with whom you spend the most time and who are closest to you. They simply have more opportunity to offend you. So when a person reflects on the past, parents are usually the first people who come to mind needing to be forgiven, by virtue of the fact that they have had more opportunity to cause pain. The siblings are the next closest people. As the circle extends out, others who may have caused pain are: friends, relatives, teachers, peers, boyfriends, girlfriends, spouses, bosses at work and lastly casual acquaintances.

To be free, we need to forgive every person who has hurt us or caused us pain. The spiritual principle is that God heals in a divine way through forgiveness and whenever we feel bitterness and anger towards a person, we need to forgive that person.

DO WE NEED TO FORGIVE THE PERSON FACE-TO-FACE?

Since forgiveness is a choice of will to let go of judgment, anger and the right to punish another person, you do not need to meet with the person to forgive. In fact, you can choose to forgive a person who is deceased. How is this possible? Because the act of forgiveness is not between that person and you, it is really between you and God. Are you going to choose to continue to sin and go against God's decree to forgive, or are you going to be obedient to God's will?

Often, one of my clients will choose to forgive a person in a counseling session and afterwards tell me that a big weight has been lifted and yet the offending person has not been present. In some cases, the other person may not even know that he or she offended you. So you can see that all the turmoil and anger is only in your own mind. To meet with that person would cause confusion when really the issue is *how you think* and *how you choose to deal with the situation*.

DO WE NEED TO BE FRIENDS WITH THOSE WE FORGIVE?

There are two issues here: the first is forgiveness and the second is boundaries. Often people are afraid to forgive because they do not want to have anything to do with that person again. They think that by forgiving, it means they have to befriend the person after the forgiveness. While God asks us to love others, we are also to use our intellect and wisdom to protect ourselves.

For example, if I have been sexually abused by a person, I need to go before God in prayer and choose to forgive the person, so that I can be emotionally free from that individual. That is also the only way that I can heal from the pain of the abuse. But in no way am I going to put myself at risk again by being in that person's presence, so that the

abuse can be repeated. The later is called managing my boundaries. I need to protect myself so that I will not be hurt again.

So, forgiveness is important because that is how internal freedom and peace can be achieved. Good boundary management is also needed to ensure that the internal peace and freedom is maintained. Wisdom requires us to determine how to relate to an individual after forgiving and that does not mean opening the door and freely welcoming the person into your life again. There may need to be some restrictions and confidence-building steps that must occur before trust can safely be offered again.

THE LAW OF SOWING AND REAPING

In the middle of the Garden of Eden, the Bible tells us there were two trees: the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. God wanted Adam and Eve to eat from the Tree of Life. After Adam and Eve disobeyed God's will by eating from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, they were not allowed to eat from the Tree of Life again. *"After he drove the man out, he placed..... a flaming sword flashing back and forth to guard the way to the tree of life."*⁶

It wasn't until Jesus came to earth and died for our sins that humanity had the right to eat from the Tree of Life once more. *"Let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to eat from the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God."*⁷

So, today we have the choice again as to which tree we will eat from. What is the difference between these two trees?

⁶ Genesis 3:24, NIV

⁷ Revelation 2:7, NIV

Tree of Life	Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil
Grace	Justice = good and fair
Mercy	Judgment
Forgiveness	Accusation
Humility	Pride
Love	Punishment
Life	Death

John Arnott in his booklet, *“What Christians Should Know About The Importance of Forgiveness”*, calls the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, the tree of judgment. He says, *“In our pride and self-sufficiency, we think we have enough understanding and information to make fair and honest judgments in every situation. We instinctively judge much of the time and when we judge, we are usually negative, biased and unfair.”*

It may be true that justice is good and fair, but nobody ever went to heaven by justice. One goes to heaven by grace. When you choose to judge a person, you need to gather information, but James 2:13 says, *“Mercy triumphs over judgment.”*

The wisdom of the Bible tells us to turn away from judging. *“Do not judge, or you too will be judged. For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.”*⁸

This reference is to the law of sowing and reaping. What we sow, we will reap. If we judge, we will be judged. Similarly, if we accuse, we will be accused – and in like measure. When we accuse and blame others, we are acting out of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. Jesus tells us to forgive and not accuse so that we will reap

⁸ Matthew 7:1-2, NIV

forgiveness. “*Forgive, and you will be forgiven..... For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*”⁹

In other words, we have a choice. We can seek justice, judgment, accusation and live out of worldly pride, or we can seek grace, mercy and forgiveness and live in humility and love. Whichever we sow, we will reap. The possibility of eating from the Tree of Life exists because Jesus offers us grace, mercy and forgiveness. His example leads us to the Tree and Life. The Tree of Life will give life to others as we bless and curse not, forgive and accuse not. So forgiveness is more than personal healing from pain and a way of achieving individual freedom. It is a decision about which tree we choose and how we want to sow and reap as we live in this world.

What is your choice? Do you choose the path of revenge or the path of forgiveness? Do you choose to live from the Tree of Life or the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?

If you want to “*Forgive as the Lord forgave you,*”¹⁰ here’s a prayer to help you forgive:

PRAYER OF FORGIVENESS

I proclaim my faith in the True Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth as my Lord and Savior.

Lord, you have asked me to forgive others as you have forgiven me. Give me now the grace, mercy and strength to forgive those who have hurt me.

Holy Spirit, please reveal to me now the names of all the people whom I need to forgive.

⁹ Luke 6:37-38, NIV

¹⁰ Colossians 3:13, NIV

For each individual pray:

Lord, I choose to forgive -----(the person's name)-----

I place before me now a big, white cloth sheet and I place on it all the ways that this person has hurt me.

I forgive (the person) for (Describe in detail every painful and hurtful offense that the Lord brings to your mind and place each one on the sheet).

When everything is out and on the sheet, pray:

Lord, I give up my right for revenge against (the person) and I now release him/her to you. I also choose to let go all of my resentment, anger, bitterness, hate and rage that I have been holding against (the person). Please heal me now and help me experience the peace and freedom that can only come from you – the Prince of Peace.

I now gather up in the sheet all these memories in one big bundle and, Jesus, I ask you to come now and take the bundle away.

Lord, I choose now to live from the Tree of Life and offer love and life to others.

In Chapter 9, we will see the importance of your willingness to be set free to uncover your *True Self in Christ*. As you will discover, *Where there's a will, there truly is a way*.

Chapter 9

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*¹

AM I REALLY WILLING TO CHANGE?

A TALE OF TWO WILLS

Carol had been sexually abused a number of times when she was younger. Although she was a Christian, she was still deeply troubled by the memories of the abuse and, as a result, feared people in general. The trauma significantly affected her well-being. She was angry, depressed and unable to work or even apply for a job. Carol was also unhappy with the fact that although she was a Christian she was still living a defeated life. She sought me out to work on the healing of these memories, which were affecting her so negatively.

After developing a relationship where she trusted me to help her, we chose to first work on a safe memory that would not be too painful. In a one-hour session, which included her inviting Jesus into the memory, she found that the memory had been transformed and it felt different. She checked it out and a week later when she visited the memory it was still changed.

As a result of the positive first experience, she came back to address one of the sexual abuse memories. In a one-hour session, she deliberately chose with her *will* to go to the memory and then invite Jesus to come into that specific memory. By the end of the session, the memory was transformed and she felt infinitely better. The abuser was no

¹ Matthew 22:37, NIV

longer in the memory and she felt safe inside. She went away for a week and tested the abuse memory.

The next time we met, not only was the memory still positively changed, but she reported that the last session had also transformed all the other sexual abuse memories at the same time. She had a big smile on her face and she told me how her life was changing.

Previously for instance, if she visited her mother, they would be fighting within 15 minutes of seeing one another. After the inner healing, she reported that things between her mother and her had changed. After a recent visit with her mother, where they visited for an hour and a half, she was able to hug and kiss her mother.

In addition, Carol no longer feared people. She had already been out and applied for a job with nine different organizations. Furthermore, her partner was pleased with how happy she was and people around her could see the difference.

The key to this story was that Carol was willing to do the work. She engaged her “will” to invite Jesus into the specific memory to heal it and to listen to the truth that he brought to her to set her free.

Conversely, I worked with a man who was evidently unwilling to change. He had invited Jesus into his life when he was younger, but had strayed from his faith. Brian felt that having Jesus in his life had not made things any better, so he returned to his secular lifestyle. As I listened to his story, it was clear that he had been mistreated as early as two years old and that he had experienced much rejection and emotional neglect.

Whenever we talked about Jesus, he explained that he was angry with God because he felt that God had never helped him. If we tried to work on forgiveness for

what his parents had done to him, his *will* was not engaged and he would half-heartedly try and then give up on the process saying, “*This is not working.*” He believed that God would not help him and he could not hear truth and would not believe any truth when it was presented to him. He said that there was nothing good in life and that everything he tried failed and there was no hope. When we tried to do inner healing of a memory, he made a bet that it would not work, just as nothing had worked previously.

In my observation, this man’s mind was set against God and his will was committed to nothing changing. With his *will* not open to hearing or believing truth, he continued to live in the words that he had previously accepted, which continued to lead to depression and hopelessness.

In both these cases, the human *will* was instrumental in the person’s story and the final outcome. In the first case, the openness and the *will* to invite Jesus into the process combined to enhance faith and belief in the truth. In the second case, the closed attitude, the unbelief and the lack of faith produced a block that inhibited the healing process.

When I observe the fruit of the two outcomes, I am impressed with Jesus’ desire for each of us to live an abundant and full life, whereas I see the opposite when Jesus is not involved in the process. The challenge is in the aligning of the human will with God’s will. If a person is able to discern God’s will and truth, then one can bring one’s own will and knowledge into agreement with the Lord. That is because, “*Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.*”²

² Matthew 18:18, NIV

KNOWING GOD’S WILL

So, how then is it possible for us to know God’s will? The answer relates to our being spiritual beings, having been given the Spirit of truth. “*He will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth.*”³ The Bible tells us that “...when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth.”⁴

As spiritual beings, we have the ability to access God’s will with the help of the Holy Spirit. When we invite the Spirit of truth into our minds, we have the ability to see pictures, hear words or feel feelings that communicate to us God’s plan, truth and intentions. As we receive these truths, including the truths of the Holy Scripture, the challenge is to be obedient to the truth and live our lives in accordance with these truths. This step is the function of our *will* where we combine our spirit and our mind to wish, choose, desire and intend to seek truth and live out of that truth, especially as it relates to our *True Self In Christ*.

The Gift of Free will

Free will is a gift that was given to mankind in the very beginning. We see this in Genesis 2:16 where Adam and Eve were told, “*You are free to eat from any tree in the garden.*” You see, God gave Adam and Eve minds that they were free to use. However, God then went on to reveal knowledge that not all the world was safe and He told them how they could protect themselves. “*But you must not eat from the tree that is in the middle of the garden (the tree of the knowledge of good and evil), and you must not touch it, or you will die.*”⁵

³ John 14:16-17, NIV

⁴ John 16:13, NIV

⁵ Genesis 3:3, NIV

Unfortunately, Adam and Eve did not listen to God's warning; and instead they used their wills to choose to do something that was opposed to God's truth. As a result they experienced consequences. God kicked them out of the Garden of Eden and would not allow them to return to eat from the Tree of Life. They forfeited their freedom and were separated from God.

A Christian client, John, knew God's teaching, but he chose to use his will to stray into pornography. Before long he found himself addicted to pornography and it was controlling his life. He would spend four to five hours on the Internet every day and it was ruining his ability to be intimate in relationships. The consequences were severe as Satan trapped him in bondage to lust and in an all-consuming addiction to sexual impurity. He had been living a pure life before. Then, he made some bad choices that jeopardized his freedom and, just like Adam and Eve, found himself full of shame and struggling to exist.

We are told to, "*Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding.*"⁶ Otherwise there will be consequences. "*But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil (such as Adam and Eve), there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil.*"⁷

When we use our minds to lean on God's wisdom, our minds will be free from distress and we will be able to think more clearly and know our ***True Self In Christ***. But, if we choose to accept information about ourselves that is not aligned with God's knowledge and truth, then we will be confused and blinded by trouble and distress.

⁶ Proverbs 3:5, NIV

⁷ Romans 2:8-9, NIV

THE IMPORTANCE OF SALVATION

The subject of human *will* is central to the discussion of the *True Self In Christ*. When we use our wills to invite Jesus into our lives, we respond to His desire for us to know His truth in the first place. *“The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”*⁸

If the Spirit of God is not living inside us, we are going to have great difficulty knowing our *True Self In Christ*. But, as Christians, the Spirit of God is living inside us and that frees us to be able to seek truth and gain knowledge about our *True Self In Christ*. *“We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given to us.”*⁹

God wants us to know our *True Self In Christ*. He wants us to understand that we are His creation and that He made us good. That is why He gives us the gift of His Spirit. At the moment of conversion, when we invite Jesus into our hearts, He places his Spirit in us so that we can know spiritual truths. So, the choice of inviting Jesus into our lives is an important act of our will that leads to our being able to know our *True Self In Christ*. He has always loved us and has always wanted to restore our minds. We need to be open to His desire for reconciliation. *“Once you were alienated from God and were enemies in your minds because of your evil behaviour. But now he has reconciled you by Christ’s physical body through death to present you holy in his sight, without blemish and free from accusation.”*¹⁰

⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:14, NIV

⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:12, NIV

¹⁰ Colossians 1:21-22, NIV

THE IMPORTANCE OF RENEWING THE MIND

Just as God revealed truth to Adam and Eve to protect them in the Garden of Eden, God has revealed a key truth to us to help us be safe as we live in the world. *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”*¹¹

In the fallen state, we lean on the wisdom of the world or our own wisdom, which is darkened and lost. *“For the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom.”*¹² Instead, we are to turn to God and with the help of the Holy Spirit align ourselves with his mind and will. *“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.”*¹³

The challenge we face as rebellious and prideful people is the choice of using our wills to invite Jesus into our minds. Are we going to use our minds to draw near to God and know his truth for our lives or are we going to be captains of our own ships? Too often we turn from God and try to live life in our own strength. We try to self-justify and prove our worth through our own performance. We use the knowledge that we derive from the world and then we set our wills to try to succeed at whatever task we select. We try our hardest then to make it happen. This is the pattern that leads to workaholism, materialism and trying to find our identity in our jobs and the things that we own. One Christian client was young, very successful financially and yet totally lost. He was working 80 hours a week, even though he was financially independent. His marriage was in a shambles and he was depressed and fearful. He was not living out of the victory of the Cross. The successful business that he had built was now running him. His employees

¹¹ Matthew 22:37, NIV

¹² 1 Corinthians 1:25, NIV

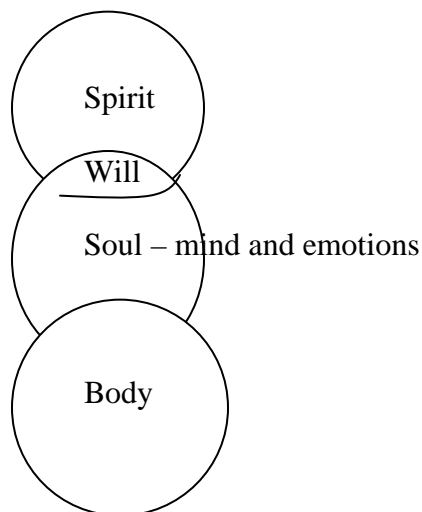
¹³ Romans 12:2, NIV

depended on him and he was afraid that he might not be able to keep the winning game going. He accepted the expectations of his employees and was living to meet their goals rather than going to Jesus and finding out what his will was.

How do we break out of this trap that the world sets for us? The answer is in the Lord's Prayer. "*Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*"¹⁴ Knowing God's will and following it would have saved Adam and Eve a lot of grief. Our knowing God's will for our lives, and being obedient to Him, will save us much grief too. "*Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.*"¹⁵ As we turn to God and search his Word and pray for truth to be revealed, we too can know His will.

WHAT DOES "WILL" REALLY MEAN?

To help us understand God's will, we really need to know what we mean by the word "will." Webster's Dictionary describes "will" as: "*the power of control over one's own actions and emotions.*" Aiko Hormann, a Christian brain scientist, describes "will" as the overlapping of the Spirit and the Soul.



¹⁴ Matthew 6:9-10, NIV

¹⁵ Ephesians 5:17, NIV

The soul is made up of mind and emotions. In essence, the “human will” is a coming together of the mind and emotions with the Spirit in a way that enables the person to wish, choose, desire and intend.

THE IMPORTANCE OF “WILL” IN THE SPIRITUAL REALM

Conversion is a choice of the will. When a person chooses to invite Jesus into his/her life, the individual makes a decision to respond to God’s love by asking Jesus to come and reside inside, instead of leaving Jesus standing outside the door where he has been knocking. Jesus respects the human will and will not enter without an invitation. So, He waits patiently until the day when He is invited by the person’s will, choice or decision. Similarly, Satan needs the person’s will to access the individual. As spiritual beings, we participate in the spiritual realm through the combination of our mental, emotional and spiritual choices. As Jessie Penn-Lewis says in her book *War On The Saints*, “*God needs the fullest liberation of the faculties of the man, and his active and intelligent co-operation in will, for the working out of all these spiritual truths in experience.*” ¹⁶

Similarly, Satan needs the human will to be able to access the person’s humanity. Penn-Lewis also writes; “*Let it be emphasized again: deceiving spirits are obliged to get the consent of the man’s will before they can enter and as to how far they enter. This they do by counterfeit and deception. Deliverance, therefore, requires the active exercise of the will, which must, in reliance upon the strength of God, and in the face of all beguilements, and suffering, be steadily set against the powers of darkness, to nullify previous consent to their working.*” ¹⁷

¹⁶ *War On The Saints* by Jessie Penn-Lewis, p. 66

¹⁷ *War On The Saints* by Jessie Penn-Lewis, p. 111-112

If will is the power that comes from combining the human spirit and mind to control and make decisions, then the human will is the force that contributes to a person seeking truth verses lies and God's knowledge verses the knowledge of the world. In the uncovering of the *True Self In Christ*, the human will is needed to seek the truth and reveal the lies.

With the Holy Spirit living inside, an individual can choose, as an act of the will, to listen to truth and learn. What words a person chooses to accept will have power in defining the person's identity. The choice of the will to commit to truth verses lies is the key to living out of the **True Self In Christ**. God has been initiating this process from the beginning. He created us, calls us, loves us and is a force of healing that is available for us to access. He wants us to be whole. It is our failure of will to respond that leaves us in the wilderness. Let's not live like Adam. Let's live like Paul, who heard Jesus on the road to Damascus and chose to follow him with his will fully engaged.

In the next chapter, we will see how the committing of our minds through mental agreements significantly affects the *True Self In Christ*.

CHAPTER 10

*“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.”*¹

*“For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned.”*²

WHY ARE NEGATIVE MENTAL AGREEMENTS SO DAMAGING?

As we’ve mentioned several times throughout the book, the battleground is the mind and the words that we hold in our mind have power. Words of truth set us free and words that are against the knowledge and will of God hold us in captivity.

The subject of mental agreements leads us beyond the importance of words themselves to the commitment given to the words. Mental agreements engage the human will and declare an intensity of commitment. When a person says, *“I agree with”* the person is making a choice and is taking a position related to the words in the statement. In the business world, an agreement is a contract that is duly executed and legally binding. Similarly, a mental agreement involves the making of a commitment that has the power to bind, either for good or evil. On the positive side, God asks for intensity of commitment when He says in Matthew 22:37, *“Love the Lord your God with **all** your heart and with **all** your soul and with **all** your mind.”* He wants us to be totally committed to Him and His truth - even legally bound to him for our own good. He knows the power of truth in our lives and He wants the best for us. On the other hand, God knows that if

¹ Matthew 6:9-10, NIV

² Matthew 12:37, NIV

we commit and bind ourselves to thoughts, attitudes and actions that are against the knowledge of God, that there will be negative consequences.

Mental agreements are the way we, as human beings, choose to set our will for or against the will of God. Negative agreements are so damaging because they not only block our ability to know God, but also our ability to know our *True Self In Christ*. The blinding stubbornness of a mental agreement can keep us in bondage for years until finally we see the light of truth.

In the Lord's Prayer, we hear God directing us to do His will here on earth. He knows that a full commitment to what He wills is good for us. But as self-centered, fallen human beings, we have a tendency to focus our wills on our own desires and then we proceed to act out in our own strength. We actually make many more mental agreements than we realize and these mental agreements have power and consequences in our lives.

It is interesting to observe that agreements function with what seems to be a law and force of their own – (wrong mental agreements bring forth the power of darkness and bondage, and right mental agreements bring forth God's power and freedom). Just as words can have a spiritual power to set us free or hold us in captivity, mental agreements seem to have an even stronger power for good or evil.

As we discussed in the previous chapter, the human will, which combines the spirit, the mind and the emotions, is free to bind itself to God and His truth or to bind to the wisdom of the world. The following examples explore different ways that we can use our minds to make negative mental agreements.

EXAMPLES OF UNHEALTHY MENTAL AGREEMENTS

Unhealthy mental agreements can include: vows, curses, covenants, spirit-ties, soul-ties, guardian lies, and generational curses. These mental agreements are present more often than we realize and can even be hidden to the person's perception. When mental agreements are consciously aligned with God's will, there is spiritual freedom. But when mental agreements protect attitudes, patterns of thinking and beliefs that are against God's will, then strongholds are created that produce a spiritual vulnerability. Strongholds are defined in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 as, "*Arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God.*"

Let's take a look at the different types of mental agreements:

Vow –A vow is a selection of a person's own internally generated words that the individual believes in strongly. As such, a vow can be positive or negative. An example of a positive vow is a "marriage vow" where a person commits to making a marriage work. You can hear the energy and resolve in this personal statement as the person says to him/herself, *I agree with myself that I am going to do whatever is required to make this marriage successful.* You can also hear Jesus applauding this commitment.

On the other hand, a negative vow is illustrated by the statement, *I vow that I will never speak to that person again.* This unloving attitude and firm commitment produces a mental "stronghold" that becomes a place for spirits of darkness to attach and help keep the enmity and hostility towards that person in place. In essence, the person in this case is saying to him/herself, *I agree with myself that I will never speak to that person who is the focus of my negative emotion.* When a self-created vow is functioning, the anger and the

negative emotions contribute to the person not knowing their *True Self In Christ* and from even knowing God's will.

Curse – A curse is created when another person selects words and strongly speaks those words into our lives. The source of these words is external and the curse only has power if you accept the words in your mind and then come into agreement with them. The harsh, evil and hurtful words of a curse can only land if you accept them. For example, if a man speaks a curse of sickness on a woman, the curse will only have power if the woman comes into agreement with the belief that she is going to become sick. Fear and worry are tools that Satan then uses to keep the focus on the curse and away from truth. A curse is like a lie. It is not true, but if the person believes it and agrees with it, then the words have power and the spirits of darkness can use the words for destructive purposes. An example of a curse is, *You are never going to amount to anything.*

Covenant – A covenant is a contract where two people or two sides come together in a binding written agreement. The strength of a covenant is in the belief that it is unbreakable. For example, the covenant God made with his people is the unbreakable promise that if they believe in His son Jesus, they will be saved and receive eternal life in heaven. In the world, people covenant when they agree with each other to behave and think in a certain way. When two young boys cut their fingers and in a ceremony become blood brothers, they are making a covenant to think and behave like brothers. Another example is Freemasons who covenant to secrecy to protect their ceremonies, rituals and practices. In the covenant, both sides agree in words to be committed to a certain action or fulfill a certain promise.

Spirit-tie – A variation on the covenant is the informal mutual agreement between two people who intermingle their minds and spirits to the point where they share the same deception. When two people reach a unity of belief and the belief is coming from their unsundered souls, then a spirit-tie can be created. A spirit-tie is the result of a wrong agreement between two people, which usually appears to hold some benefit for each person involved. A spirit-tie can exist between a husband and wife when they mutually agree that one spouse has an unequal responsibility for meeting the other's needs. Co-dependency can result from both agreeing that one partner is the strong one and the other needs to depend on the partner instead of being an equal.

Christian prayer partners can create spirit-ties when they pray together out of mutually held negative agreements. An example is praying to have a minister removed from a church, as opposed to praying for God's will to be done in the situation. Friendship is good, but a spirit-tie involves the co-dependent state of two people sharing one misperception. God made each individual unique, special and distinct. We were given minds to know God's will and discern truth. It says in 1 Thessalonians 5:20-22, *"Test everything. Hold onto the good. Avoid every kind of evil."* As we bind ourselves to the will of God, we can discern the subtle ways that spirit-tie agreements have infiltrated the mind.

Soul-tie – The most common way for a soul-tie to be created is when two consenting unmarried people agree to become involved in sexual intercourse with each other. Through this agreement to participate in sexual intimacy, which is not condoned by God's truth, a soul-tie is established. Where a spirit-tie is a verbal agreement to think,

pray and share spirits together, a soul-tie requires personal action and deeper involvement. There are several other ways where an ungodly soul-tie can be created without both parties necessarily agreeing to the process. These include: sharing the same drug needle, sharing blood in ceremonies, rape and ritual abuse ceremonies where a person is taken close to death as part of a ceremony.

Guardian Lies – I have noticed that some clients are blocked from receiving the benefits of inner healing by an overriding mental agreement that can be called a guardian lie. Such a mental agreement is often general in nature and affects the person's thinking, so that the individual is unable to address the trauma that is deeply embedded in the person's mind. An example of a guardian lie is a self-agreement such as, *God will heal others but He will never heal me. Or, I will never get better.*

For addictive individuals, the mental agreement can be, *I am going to fall again in a few days.* The mental agreement is like an assumption that has been accepted so forcefully that the person believes it to be true without question. These types of mental agreements block out all truth and stop the inner healing process even before it begins. Such a guardian lie needs to be uncovered, renounced and broken, before inner healing work can proceed.

Generational Curses – Family characteristics and sinful behaviour, such as hurtful anger, unforgiveness, impatience and abuse, produce thought processes, which are passed on from one generation to another. When families live together, the daily exposure of one unsundered person to another produces a thought pattern that is, in effect, a spirit agreement. One of the most powerful ways that people learn in life is to look at a model

and copy it. These family experiences become thought processes and, similar to curses, cannot land unless the person gives them a home by coming into agreement with them. An example is a child experiencing emotional, mental or physical abuse and then accepting that this is normal. Another is a girl seeing her father abuse her mother and the little girl then comes into agreement with the thought that women are inferior. While the spirits of darkness may use these generational thought patterns as a stronghold, the problem is not the spirits of darkness. The problem is the mental agreement, which is not aligned with the will of God. It is the mental agreement that gives the spirits of darkness an opportunity to confuse the person and mask the knowledge of their *True Self In Christ*.

Summary – Mental agreements, whether agreeing with self or two people agreeing with each other, can either be bound to God’s will or be bound to an unsundered mind and will. God’s command is that our will on earth be aligned with His will in heaven. When Abraham heard God and *believed*, then he was in conformity with God’s will in His every purpose, thought and action. To believe is more than just mental assent to the words of the Bible. It is a commitment that all your body, soul and spirit be in agreement with what you believe and do.

As Christians, we need to identify any wrong agreements so that we can renounce them, break them and surrender our wills to God’s will. The renewal of the mind includes confession of sin, forgiveness, transforming lies with truth and coming into right agreement with God’s beliefs, values, patterns of thinking and will. Believing the truth of the Word, agreeing with it and committing to it with intensity is how a person appropriates the keys of the kingdom of heaven.

HOW TO KNOW GOD'S WILL

Even though Christians are justified by faith, often we live out of the results of the Fall rather than the victory of the Cross of Jesus. If the soul is not totally transformed by the renewing of the mind, and if all the rooms of the house have not been surrendered to Christ, then God's will may be difficult to know. Sin, unforgiveness and lies that have been accepted, wrong mental agreements, pride and negative mental attitudes can create confusion.

This is why it's so important to work through confession, forgiveness and self-forgiveness. Only then are we able to clear our minds so that we can hear the will of God. In addition, learning how to invite Jesus into our mental processes will help us be able to take thoughts captive to Jesus.

Other ways to know God's will include: being still, reading and contemplating Holy Scripture, praying and listening for God's leading, consulting with mature Christians and praying with members of the church who have the gift of discernment.

PRAYER FOR BREAKING A MENTAL AGREEMENT

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, I renounce the following mental agreement.....(describe the agreement)

It is a lie. I declare this lie to be null and void.

I declare that I will no longer live under the authority and power of this mental agreement.

I declare this mental agreement to be broken now!

In place of this mental agreement, I ask Jesus Christ to reveal to me now what the new Godly mental agreement is that He wants me to accept.

Record New Agreement:

.....
.....

I now choose, as an act of my will, to come into agreement with this new agreement that God has directed me to accept.

I pray this in the name of the True Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

In the next chapter, we will look at the subject of self-forgiveness and see its relationship to uncovering your *True Self in Christ*.

Chapter 11

“Love your neighbor as yourself.”¹

WHY CAN'T I SEEM TO FORGIVE MYSELF?

Mary had been in counseling and had received considerable healing through confession of sin, forgiving others and inner healing prayer. Yet, she reached a place where she was blocked and stuck. I introduced the possibility of the need for self-forgiveness and her response was, “*No! Self-forgiveness is not an issue!*” Mary really believed that she didn’t have a problem forgiving herself. Yet when we talked further, the subject of abortion came up. It turned out that she had gone through an abortion and the guilt related to the abortion was so strong that she felt God would never forgive her. She knew God’s forgiveness on a cognitive level, but when it came to the reality of daily living, the “feeling” of guilt related to the abortion was so overpowering that it inhibited her ability to receive the freedom that God wanted her to have.

While lack of self-forgiveness is not an issue with every individual, where it is an issue, it can be very significant. As you can see from this story, Mary was not even aware that it was a problem. What I have learned is that there is a direct relationship between the perceived enormity of the sin and the tendency within the individual to choose to withhold self-forgiveness. The greater the sin, the more difficult self-forgiveness becomes.

This principle applies both to forgiving others and forgiving ourselves. People seem to be able to cope with smaller sins, but some bigger sins can appear so great that

¹ Matthew 22:39, NIV

forgiveness seems an impossibility. In the example above, the abortion was perceived as an unpardonable sin. God could forgive other people and other sins, but Mary thought her sin was so immense that even God's love could not help. Initially, it appeared that self-forgiveness was not an important issue, but as it turned out, for this woman, self-forgiveness was the most significant aspect of the healing process.

WHY IT'S SO IMPORTANT TO FORGIVE YOURSELF

[Forgive your neighbor as you forgive yourself.]

The second commandment of the New Testament tells us to love others as we would love ourselves. So the logical conclusion is that we are expected to love ourselves. Can that really be true? Haven't we all thought that loving one's self was called narcissism? Well, there is a big difference between narcissism and the Christian concept of love. Narcissism describes a person who holds an exaggerated sense of self-importance, whereas Christian love embraces: humility, acceptance, caring, forgiving, respecting and nurturing growth. Christian love for self is not about self-aggrandizement, but rather about valuing the truth of who God made us to be. It relates to self-esteem and healthy growth versus self-worship. Support for this is found in Philippians 4:8-9, where it says that we are to think about what is good about others and ourselves: "*Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable - if anything is excellent or praiseworthy - think about such things.*"

Once again we see that the battleground is for the mind. What we think forms the image of our selves. The thoughts we hold about ourselves are central to our mental health. Therefore, if a person's self image is distorted, that person's self esteem will be as well. So how does self-forgiveness fit into the picture? To help understand, try to

imagine how a person feels when he or she thinks in the following way: “*For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you are proved right when you speak and justified when you judge.*”²

The truth is that, by Jesus’ sacrificial death on the Cross, God has removed all the believer’s sin and He looks at it no more. The problem in Mary’s case is that she doesn’t believe the sin is gone because it is still in her mind. She can’t get it out of the mind, because it is “*always before me.*” God is not the one dwelling on the transgression. As Mary ruminates and wallows in the sin, her mind is occupied and consumed with guilt and remorse. In essence, she doesn’t really believe the following truth: “*This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him [Jesus] as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood.*”³

The truth is that Jesus’ death atones for the believer’s sin. The Christian is forgiven. The problem is that the feelings of guilt, shame and remorse make the person feel unforgiven. This feeling misleads the person into thinking that some punishment is needed in order to be free from the sin. We are so used to receiving consequences for our behaviour that grace and mercy seem beyond comprehension. But, if God loves us, and we are told He does, and if Jesus forgives us, and the Scripture tells us that He does, then who are we to stand against that truth. Yet many people do just that. They intervene in the process of receiving God’s forgiveness and block the love they are meant to have by

² Psalm 51:3-4, NIV

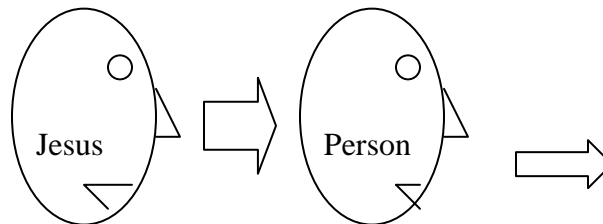
³ Romans 3:22-25, NIV

not forgiving themselves. In the *Healing Presence*, Payne calls it “our *failure to receive forgiveness from God.*”

TURNING FROM JESUS

In some ways, the solution offered by Jesus is too easy. The mind wants to complicate the matter. The truth is: “*For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.*”⁴ But, as human beings, we want to use our brains to make the subject more difficult than it needs to be. We look at the gracious gift of mercy and forgiveness that Jesus offers and say, *But you don’t get it Jesus. I am really bad, and I need to be punished. If you are not going to punish me, then I guess I will have to take over the job and punish myself.*

In essence, this turning from Jesus is a function of pride. The individual looks at his/her sin and says, *My sin is bigger than other people’s sin and it is so big and bad that your death on the cross does not cover this one.* So the person turns from Jesus and begins to deal with the sin in his/her own way.



This is described in Jeremiah 2:13: “*My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken me, the spring of living water. And have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns*

⁴ John 3:17, NIV

that cannot hold water.”

Choosing to turn your back on Jesus and trying to deal with it on your own is described as “guilt” by David Benner and Robert Harvey in their book, *Choosing the Gift of Forgiveness*. They define “guilt” as follows: “*Essentially a self-punitive strategy to attempt to atone for one’s own sins.*”⁵ If a person does not believe that Jesus’ death will atone for the sin, then one needs to find another way to be absolved or justified.

Our culture contributes to the problem. We learn at an early age that, if we make a mistake, we will be punished. There are consequences for wrong behaviour. In our legal system, we learn that if we break the law then we will be fined or sent to jail. The punishment must fit the crime. As responsible citizens, we must take responsibility for our actions. Also, our culture is performance oriented. We are expected to be independent, strong, take charge and solve our own problems. So our culture helps us to believe that we need to be punished if we do wrong and if Jesus is not going to punish us, then we need to take over and perform the punishment ourselves. This dynamic is what I call Satan’s game because it is not logical that God would use guilt to remove our feelings of guilt. Condemnation is not God’s way. “*Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.*”⁶

The truth is that God is in the business of removing guilt. He wants us to be free. If that’s true, then how are we so misled? One explanation is moral masochism. For some Christians, suffering is interpreted as spiritual maturity. If feeling badly about oneself is viewed as a mark of humility and spirituality, then focusing on one’s guilt is a dependable means of achieving such a false spiritual goal.

⁵ *Choosing The Gift Of Forgiveness* by David Benner and Robert Harvey, p. 86

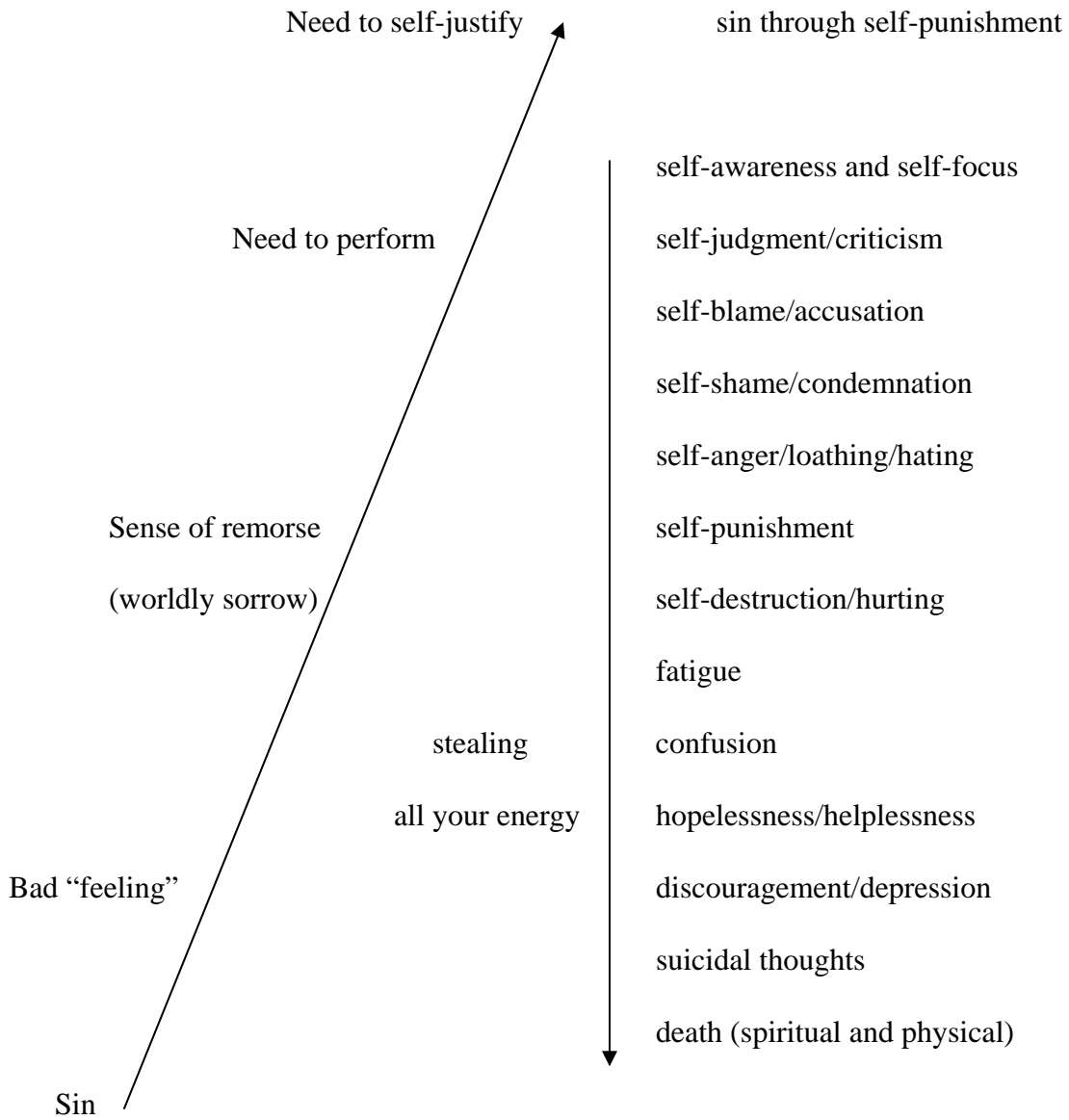
⁶ Romans 8:1, NIV

Also, in our performance-oriented society, working harder and serving more is seen as a good thing. Value is conditional. We have learned from our parents, teachers and friends that acceptance and achievement are founded on what we do. Therefore, we intuitively believe that we must “do something” to make amends. This distorted activity of self-punishment is the fruit of false guilt and it only makes the person feel worse.

God does not require performance. He accepts us on the basis of what He did, not on the basis of what we are trying to do. God’s forgiveness is free. Denying His forgiveness is a self-imposed punishment that is the opposite of what God wants for us. The following model shows how this unbelief and prideful self-justification works.

Guilt – Satan’s Game (unbelief & pride)

Definition: choosing to atone for one’s own



The process starts with a bad “feeling” that misleads the person into guilt. The feeling may be remorse or just a bad feeling as a result of what happened in the person’s life. Then the person turns from the forgiveness that Jesus is offering and begins to take

charge of the process. The performance orientation causes the person to take action to self-justify.

The activity of guilt is described as atoning for one's own sin through self-punishment. It starts with being aware of one's own sin, fault or failure. This self-centred activity is inwardly directed as the self-talk becomes negative, critical and self-judging. The self-criticism flows into blaming and self-accusing, such as: *I can't do anything right. I am so stupid. What an idiot. It's my fault.*

The next step is shame and condemnation, as the person receives the words and absorbs the feelings of not being good enough. As the internal dialogue turns to self-anger and loathing, the person starts to sin against his/herself with punishing and hurtful words, such as: *I am such a jerk. I hate myself. I am worth nothing.* The person at this point can even get into destructive behaviors that hurt the physical self.

As Satan leads the person downwards into the lies and negative thinking, the person's energy is stolen away and the person starts to feel tired and fatigued. The mind begins to become cloudy and confusion sets in along with the fatigue. At these lower stages of the process, the person feels useless and thoughts of hopelessness and helplessness emerge. *I just can't do it. Nothing works. Why try? Nobody cares and I am all alone.* This thinking leads to discouragement and the darkness of depression.

For the more extreme cases, the thinking becomes suicidal. Spiritual death occurs and sometimes even physical death. Some people look at the above chart and say, *That describes me!* Others can identify with the top half and some say, *All those things down to depression describe my life, but I am not suicidal.*

As you can see, guilt is not a force for constructive change. More often than not,

guilt immobilizes the person and keeps the focus on the pain rather than on the helpful change that is required. As Screwtape says in C.S Lewis' book, *The Screwtape Letters*, "*Turn his shame into despair.*"⁷

Judas is a good example of how guilt affects a person. After his betrayal of Jesus, Judas did not seek forgiveness from Jesus and he did not forgive himself. Instead he chose to exact the ultimate self-punishment. "*When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. 'I have sinned,' he said, 'for I have betrayed innocent blood.'* 'What is that to us?' they replied. 'That's your responsibility.' So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself."⁸

In Mel Gibson's movie, *The Passion Of The Christ*, you see Judas in torment wrestling with his thoughts. As Judas focused on what he had done, his worldly, self-centred sorrow led him in a downward spiral until he finally took his own life.

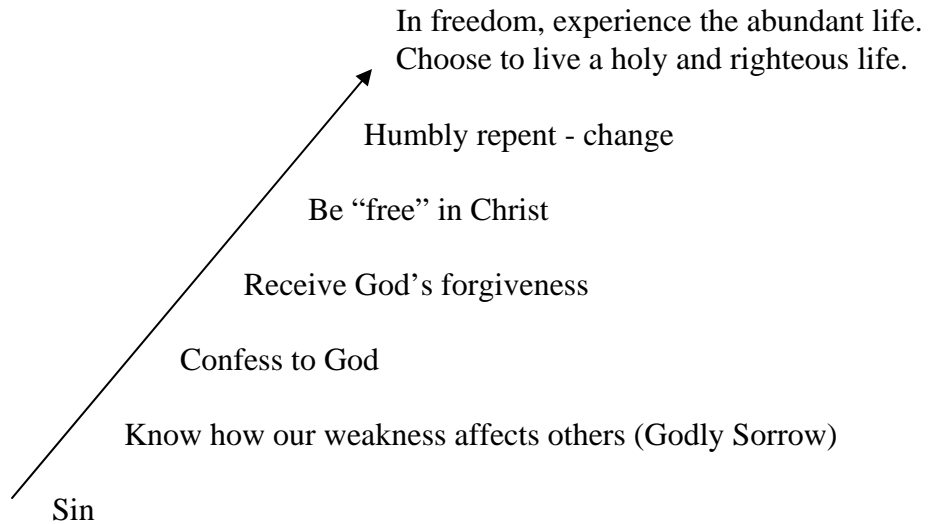
In contrast, Peter, after he denied Jesus three times, also felt sorrow. It says in Matthew 26:75: "*Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken: 'Before the rooster crows, you will disown me three times.'* And he went outside and wept bitterly."

When Jesus rose from the dead, he met with Peter and they talked. Jesus asked Peter three times, "*Do you love me?*" Peter three times confirmed his love for Jesus. In this way, Peter repented and Jesus forgave him. The two approaches to dealing with feeling bad are described in 2 Corinthians 7:10: "*Godly sorrow brings repentance that leads to salvation and leaves no regret, but worldly sorrow brings death.*"

⁷ *The Screwtape Letters* by C.S. Lewis, p. 149

⁸ Matthew 27:3-5, NIV

God's desire for us is not punishment. It's repentance. The graph below explains how the Lord wants us to deal with the feeling of sin.



God's plan is superior to Satan's game of guilt, because God's goal is to set us free. It sounds fantastic, but that is the truth. As outlined above, we are to know our sin and be convicted of its wrongness. But, we are not to turn inward and just focus on our own sin. Godly sorrow is "other" focused. We are to look outside of ourselves and see what effect our sin has had on other peoples' lives. As we grieve for others and grieve for how we have let God down, Jesus wants us to come to him the way Peter did. He wants us to bring that sin to Him in confession so that he can deal with it.

When God has removed the sin as far away as east is from west, he wants us to dwell on it no more. He sets us free. It's the opposite of Satan's plan. Satan wants to keep us in bondage to the sin and in the process he steals our energy. God, on the other hand, wants to set us free and energize us so that we can overcome the sin.

In our freedom, God asks us to sin no more and to seek to change whatever was causing the sorrow in the first place. This freedom and repentance is what brings about the life of no regret and empowers us to be able to live the abundant life. Repentance is a

love-motivated desire to change, which is rooted in concern for the offended person and in one's relationship with God.

THE KEY ISSUE

Often we know our sin, feel remorse, and even take it to God in confession. But instead of receiving His forgiveness, we stop there and move right back to Satan's game of guilt. After confession, many of us do not follow through with receiving the forgiveness that Jesus offers. When a person rejects God's forgiveness and moves to guilt, the person tends to end up in a place that is dark, lonely and disconnected from God. Some describe it as a prison. Some see it as a dark pit. Others describe it as a box. While each person's experience may be visually different, the feeling is the same – lonely, beaten down, dark and unable to hear or relate to God.

The result of putting the burden on ourselves, instead of giving the burden to God, is self-imposed bondage. While we mentally create the prison and put ourselves into captivity, Satan helps keep us there by continuously replaying the destructive messages that God has already forgotten. Charles Stanley describes this process in his book, *The Gift Of Forgiveness*, Every time we think: “ ‘I know what the Bible says about forgiveness, **but** . . . ’ every time we include a **but** (in the sentence), we put one more bar in our prison of guilt.”⁹

The alternative to guilt is grace. Guilt produces bondage, grace produces peace. Unforgiveness for self requires huge amounts of energy, as attention is diverted from the real issue of repentance to punishment. Grace frees a person to seek productive change.

⁹ *The Gift of Forgiveness* by Charles Stanley, p. 149

Guilt creates a debt where the only way to get out of the hole is to earn your way out with excessive compulsive behaviour, or as Judas did, seek to end the despair with death.

Once again, in Isaiah 61:3, we recognize the good news that Jesus came to set the captives free: *“He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted to proclaim freedom for the captives and release for the prisoners to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favour, and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion – to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of despair.”*

RECOGNIZING SELF-DIRECTED UNFORGIVENESS

There are three possible symptoms or characteristics to help us recognize this condition:

- 1) rigid, logical, dichotomous thinking,
- 1) numbness plus self-destructive behavior; and/or
- 3) feelings of self-disgust, self-hatred, and low self-esteem.

The first characteristic results in the person’s story getting stuck in a collapsed, negative state. The rigid logic says that if you are not good, then you are bad. This inflexible dichotomous thinking blinds the person to other options. Inside the mind, it looks or feels like immovable walls. This type of rigid belief system makes it particularly difficult for the person to hear and know God’s truth of forgiveness.

The second characteristic of “numbness” can be a response to the inner pain he/she is feeling. The lack of feelings results in the pain being expressed through self-

destructive behavior rather than being communicated verbally. Self-inflicted pain is a sign that the individual has taken over the job of making him/herself pay for the sin.

The third indicator of unforgiveness towards self is a wallowing in feelings of shame, self-loathing and self-deprecation. These negative expressions of inferiority and low self-esteem indicate that the individual has not received the freedom that is God's divine gift through confession and forgiveness.

HOW TO HANDLE GUILT

1. Recognize the difference between Godly, other-oriented sorrow and worldly or self-centered sorrow.
2. Acknowledging the problem of unforgiveness of self
 - confess the sin of pride that separates one from God's grace
 - acknowledge the bondage of self-punishment
3. Renounce all efforts to atone for one's own sin
 - give up all efforts of self-justification
4. Repent of everything that separates you from God
 - repent of the unbelief that caused the guilt
 - seek action that would please God
5. By faith, choose to forgive one's self and accept God's forgiveness

PRAYER FOR SELF-FORGIVENESS

I proclaim my faith in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

I confess that I have not lived out of the freedom of the Cross of Jesus Christ.

Instead, I have allowed my pride to lead me into a belief that I could justify

myself and atone for my own sins through works and performance. As well, I confess that my feelings of guilt have led me into acts of self-criticism, self-hatred and self-punishment.

Lord, I renounce my failure to receive your forgiveness through my misdirected efforts to earn my forgiveness. I want to be free from this self-imposed bondage today.

I bind my sin to the Cross of Jesus Christ and I repent from all my efforts at self-justification and I choose now to receive your gift of forgiveness.

Holy Spirit, reveal to me now all the ways that I have not allowed the forgiveness of Jesus Christ to reach me.

(Examples: self-criticism, self-judgment, self-anger, self-hatred, self-accusation, self-belittlement, self-cursing, self-punishment, self-destruction, others _____)

Lord, I choose to forgive myself for:

- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <i>a)</i> | <i>b)</i> | <i>c)</i> |
| <i>d)</i> | <i>e)</i> | <i>f)</i> |

I now give up the right for revenge against myself and I choose to release myself from the prison of guilt that I have made for myself. Lord, please take away the pain that I have brought upon myself, so that I may be free to love

myself and love others. I accept myself as forgiven. Lord, come now and lead me out of this dark place where I have been living. I pray this in the precious name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Chapter 12

*“The soul, with its new center in Christ, radically changed and redirected, is to be accepted. Until this redeemed self is acknowledged and accepted, we live out of the immature, unaffirmed self, and we cannot hear God aright.”*¹

*“When I express my true reality in a non-judgmental, non-punishing, non-manipulative way, and I am accepted, then it means that the real I, the precious wounded but maturing Person inside, is accepted. This sense of being accepted affects almost everything in a positive way.”*²

*“What will their acceptance be but life from the dead?”*³

WHY DOES IT MATTER THAT I ACCEPT MYSELF?

When Amanda came to see me for counseling, she described herself as *a piece of garbage*. She felt useless, disposable, redundant and worthless. The picture she held of herself was so low that she saw herself at the bottom of the heap. She did not value herself because all the words she had heard about herself created the impression that she was a thing to get rid of, not a precious creation of God. She didn't believe that she was *“fearfully and wonderfully made.”*⁴

If God accepts us unconditionally, however, even though we have sinned, then why is it that we have so much trouble accepting ourselves? One answer is our sin. Because we see and know our own sin, it blocks us from seeing ourselves the way Jesus sees us. *“For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.”*⁵

Jesus' perspective is different. He sees us as holy and righteous because he has

¹ *The Healing Presence* by Leanne Payne, p. 54

² *Compelled To Control* by Keith Miller, p. 169

³ Romans 11:15, NIV

⁴ Psalm 139:14, NIV

⁵ Psalm 51:3, NIV

taken our sin from us: “*For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the Kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.*”⁶

Jesus accepts us as holy and blameless in his sight because the sin has been removed. As Andy Comiskey says in his book, Living Waters Program, “*One greater bears our shame and dishonor; one greater heals and restores wounded hearts in a way that grants us a fresh opportunity to accept one’s true self.*”

WHY IS IT SO DIFFICULT TO ACCEPT OUR *TRUE SELF IN CHRIST*?

Accepting our *True Self in Christ* is difficult because we have been living in the darkness with the old story of the Distorted Self for a long time. We have experienced our own sin and because of the feeling of pain, we choose to function out of guilt and self-criticism.

But there is a second reason why this opportunity to accept our **True Self** is difficult and that relates to the words and actions of others. We have watched how people treated us and we have listened to people around us use negative and destructive words that we have come to believe and accept.

Our brains have recorded and stored the memories, including our own sin, and other people’s words. Unless transformed, these memories and words don’t just go away. Even if one memory is transformed, the interpretation of the incident may not change the bigger story that has been accepted over time.

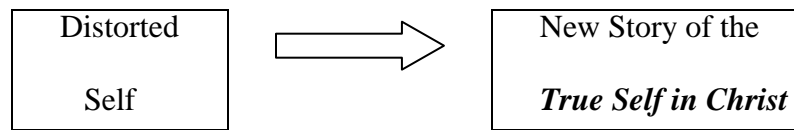
Since God did not give us an owners manual with a clear description of our *True Self in Christ*, we have created and lived with a story we have accepted that is often

⁶ Colossians 1:13, NIV

based on lies, the confusion of our sin and the world’s distorted and false messages that we have accepted as reality.

STRENGTHENING THE “*TRUE SELF IN CHRIST*” STORY

This part of the healing process involves the important principles of Narrative Therapy where the new story needs developing.



The transition from the **Distorted Self** to the *True Self In Christ* story involves the removal of the lies and false messages that have misled us for so long. Helpful steps include: confession, forgiveness, self-forgiveness and the truth of Jesus discovered through the inner healing process. But once the truth has been uncovered, there remains the important steps of self-acceptance and acceptance of the new story. The story of the *True Self in Christ*, which has been covered up and lost in the distorted story, needs to be accepted so that one can function out of the new reality as a wonderful creation of God.

OVERCOMING UNBELIEF

In Webster’s Dictionary, we find that the word “accept” is given the following meaning: “**to recognize as true: believe.**” So acceptance means that one must believe the truth.

The first issue is that unbelief keeps a person from receiving God’s forgiveness. People hear and read that God’s grace is all-sufficient and that they should tear up the

IOUs and lay them at the Cross. However, the old distorted story is so strong that it has an ability to overpower the truth. **While God’s forgiveness is assured, it must be appropriated.** Similar to the repentance and guilt discussion in the previous chapter, before self-acceptance can be meaningful, the individual must believe that forgiveness really applies to him/her.

Grace is a most difficult concept for someone who believes in justice. At the end of the play *Les Miserables*, the police officer, who had been unmercifully chasing Jean Valjean, was unable to receive mercy for himself and chose to take his own life. He could not receive mercy for himself. *“Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.”*⁷

This principle applies to ourselves as well. If we believe the gift of Jesus’ mercy applies to us, then we can be merciful towards ourselves and we will receive mercy. But, we must accept the gift. Helping people move from unbelief to belief regarding God’s grace, mercy and forgiveness is crucial to experiencing self-acceptance.

The second issue of unbelief is that the story of the *True Self in Christ* feels unbelievable. If a lie has lived in a person for a lifetime, the lie can seem more real than the truth. If you accept the lies that make you feel bad, then you will live in a state of low self-esteem, because what you accept about yourself defines who you are.

As Virginia Satir says in her book, *The New People Making*, *“If I do not like myself, I devalue and punish myself. I meet life from a position of fear and impotence, creating a state in which I feel victimized and act accordingly. I punish myself and others blindly. I become interchangeably subservient and tyrannical.”*⁸

⁷ Matthew 5:7

⁸ *The New People Making* by Virginia Satir, p. 31

If the words we hold within us produce such powerful results, as described above by Virginia Satir, then it is critical that we know and retain the words that reflect the truth of whom we really are.

Christ-Centered inner healing is very helpful in reinterpreting the lies with the truth that is revealed by the Holy Spirit. However, the truths that heal the past wounds are not a complete picture in themselves. We need to work at clarifying and expanding the story of the **True Self** by listening further to God and by re-authoring the story with audiences that are trustworthy and encouraging. As Payne says, “*Healing prayer is not the “instant fix,” nor the bypassing of slow and steady growth. It is that which clears the path and makes such progress possible.*”⁹

As we look at ourselves through the eyes of Jesus, we are able to see the gifts, talents, strengths and competencies of this wonderful child that God has created. The slow and steady progress, referred to by Leanne Payne, is made possible by the healing that clears the mind and enables the individual to see and comprehend the ***True Self in Christ.***

Too much of the Christian movement comes out of the coaching/sports mind set that emphasizes: encouragement, exhortation, admonition and the keeping of promises. Such an approach focuses on “better techniques” to fix things or deal with shortcomings, which often increases the shame and guilt. As Andy Comiskey said in Appendix # 9 of the *Living Waters* material, “Gordon Dalbey, who wrote *Healing the Masculine Soul*, followed the lead of Leanne Payne in believing that **healing the male soul must precede exhortation.** It is through healing prayer that God heals men and allows them to receive and act on exhortation.”

⁹ *The Healing Presence* by Leanne Payne, p. 63

I agree with this thesis that healing, for men and women, precedes a clear understanding of the *True Self in Christ*. Freedom from sin, freedom from lies, freedom from guilt and freedom from self-punishment enable a person to see the truth of whom they are more clearly. This healing paves the way for self-acceptance and accepting the new story.

The subject of acceptance brings to the forefront the distinctive difference of the Christian experience. When an individual knows and feels the unconditional acceptance of Christ in his/her life, it is much easier to accept him/herself. “*Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you.*”¹⁰

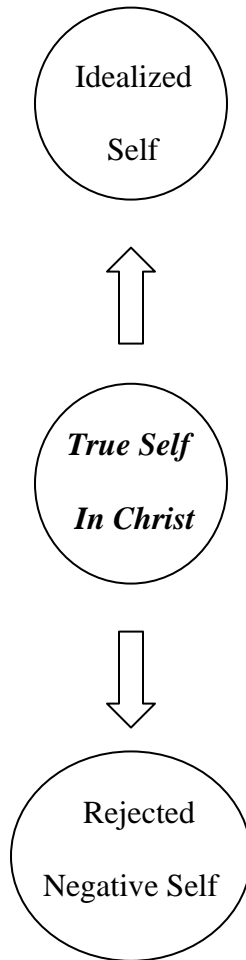
This is not the secular self-help concept of accepting yourself, but rather the belief inspired by the Holy Spirit that brings with it the blessing of belonging as a child of God, who is free, redeemed, forgiven and without condemnation. “*Blessed are they whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man whose sin the Lord will never count against him.*”¹¹

ACCEPTING SELF

We have spent a lot of time explaining the **Distorted Negative Self**, but distortion can go in two directions. A person can have a negative distorted Self or a positive distorted self, both being equally removed from the *True Self In Christ*. William T. Kirwan describes this in his book, *Biblical Concepts for Christian Counselling*, when he talks about the Idealized Self and the Rejected Self.

¹⁰ Romans 1:5-7, NIV

¹¹ Romans 4:7-8, NIV



Just as a person can accept a Self that is based on rejection, negative comments, fear and terrible life experiences, a person can also unrealistically establish a concept of false self that is based in pride, overdriving ambition, perfectionism and goals that are beyond reach.

The delusion and fantasy of the Idealized Self creates disillusionment and anger as the person is unable to achieve the perfection desired in the ideal. Society places pressures on us to live up to the idealized image and then, we pour our energies into

trying to actualize and maintain the false idealized Self.

Christians are not immune to the development of a false idealized Self, because the church has a tendency to view righteousness as a matter of ritual, rules and regulations. The Pharisees gained spiritual status by living up to the ideal of fulfilling every detail of the law.

On the other hand, Jesus stressed the spirit and the heart rather than the letter of the law, and the real self rather than the idealized self. As Kirwan says, “*Jesus in effect told the Pharisees that God will never accept us on the basis of our struggle to achieve the idealized image, since that struggle necessarily involves false pride, alienation from self and God, and hypocrisy.*”¹²

Paul struggled with this as a Pharisee: “*If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: in regard to the law, [I was] a Pharisee; as for legalistic righteousness, [I was] faultless. But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him.*”¹³ Paul was a classic striver who was living according to the law, but after his conversion, he realized that his true self was found in Christ.

Similarly, Payne talks about this when she says, “*In **accepting myself in Him**, I am no longer trapped in the mode of trying to win my own righteousness.*”¹⁴

In this amazing condition of Christ’s acceptance, the individual is set free to see the truth of whom God made him/her to be. The big question is, *OK, so if the Idealized Self is not the true me and the Distorted Negative Self is not the true me, then, how do I get to know my **True Self In Christ?***

¹² *Biblical Concepts for Christian Counseling* by William T. Kirwan, p. 182-183

¹³ Philippians 3:4-9, NIV

¹⁴ *The Healing Presence* by Leanne Payne, p. 54

KNOWING AND ACCEPTING THE *TRUE SELF IN CHRIST*

In essence, the process of knowing and accepting the *True Self in Christ* is asking Jesus for the truth, listening to Jesus' truth and accepting His truth. As we take our thoughts captive by inviting Jesus into past memories and current thoughts and ask Him to reveal truth to us, He will answer. The Spirit of truth that has been given to us will guide us into all truth. This process is spiritually based as our spirit and mind come together to discern truth. In addition, we have Holy Scripture to guide us and we have mature Christians with whom we can consult.

We are not alone in this journey. Christ is with us and so are members of His church. But once we have learned the truth, we need to accept it and apply it in our lives. *“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice.”*¹⁵

Earlier we learned that acceptance means “to recognize as true and believe.” When a lie is displaced with truth, we need to accept the truth by believing it. In 2 Corinthians 10:5, it goes a step further when the Bible says, make the thought “obedient to Christ.” Obey means “to conform or comply with and follow the command or guidance.” Obedience means “willing to obey”. So here we see that our will is involved as we no longer conform to the world, but listen to God's transforming truth and allow ourselves to be guided by it. When a person hears that he/she is not a failure, but a precious child of God, the next step is to receive that truth and live out of what that means.

¹⁵ Philippians 4:8-9, NIV

WHAT DOES A *TRUE SELF IN CHRIST* STORY LOOK LIKE?

A *True Self In Christ* story will sound and feel: real, honest, safe, loving and comfortable. The truth is that we really like who God made us to be and when we connect with that truth, it feels good.

In my own life, when I analyzed a number of my success stories, there was a consistent theme that I was a good listener. Now being a good listener is not exactly the macho characteristic that men like to hold up as a major attribute. Yet, I observed that it was my ability to listen that helped me succeed in situation after situation. It helped me to learn and understand other people and their situations, which in turn created opportunities in my life. As I reflected on my skill of listening, as part of my *True Self In Christ*, it felt good. It was true. As a result of becoming consciously aware of this characteristic, I chose to change my career, leaving business to go back to school to become a therapist. And what is one of the main qualities of a therapist? The ability to listen! As I implemented that truth in my life, my career thrived and I loved the work that took advantage of whom I am. It felt more comfortable to empathize and care for people than my old business experience of competing and fighting for market share and bottom line earnings. Life for me now is more congruent as I live with the knowledge that I am a good listener and that I can be myself. And that is OK

ACCEPTING AND DEVELOPING THE NEW STORY

As truth is revealed and received, the next step is to incorporate the information in the life narrative as the new story is accepted. What does the truth mean and what will that truth allow you to do? These are key questions as you start to apply the truth to your life. If I am no longer unworthy, then I become free to live life without fear of judgment.

If I am accepted by Jesus, then I don't need to organize my life around trying to impress people to gain their acceptance. The purpose of acknowledging and accepting the *True Self in Christ* story is helpful because it allows the individual to consciously function out of the *True Self* instead of remaining in bondage to the old lies and false images.

In the next chapter, we will see how the spirits of darkness distort the *True Self in Christ* and discuss a strategy for dealing with them.

Chapter 13

“There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear.”¹

HOW DO THE SPIRITS OF DARKNESS DISTORT THE *TRUE SELF IN CHRIST*?

Talking about spirits of darkness is a scary subject for some people. Fear causes some people to avoid the subject. Fear causes others to not even want to consider the possibility that spirits of darkness may exist. But, we are told: *“You, dear children, are from God and have overcome them, because the one who is in you is greater than the one who is in the world.”²*

We have the assurance that, as Christians, we do not need to fear because God lives in us. *“Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you.”³* As spiritual beings, we have the ability to use our wills to invite Jesus into our lives and receive the protection that only he can provide. *“Praise be to the Lord, the God of Israel, because he has come and has redeemed his people ... to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear.”⁴*

We are to live in this dark world and serve God without fear. But, fear is one of Satan’s main tools. If he can convince us to be fearful, then we will back off and Satan can have his way. So instead of leaving this chapter out, we will fearlessly look at the biblical insights regarding ways that Satan and his helpers try to distort and block our ability to know our *True Self In Christ*.

¹ 1 John 4:18, NIV

² 1 John 4:4, NIV

³ 1 Corinthians 3:16, NIV

⁴ Luke 1:68-74, NIV

DO SPIRITS OF DARKNESS REALLY EXIST?

We are told in Revelation 12:7-9 that Satan and his angels lost a major battle in heaven to Michael and his angels. As a result, they lost their place in heaven. *“The great dragon was hurled down – that ancient serpent called the devil or Satan, who leads the whole world astray. He was hurled to the earth, and his angels with him.”*⁵

Since then, Satan has roamed the earth. In John 16:11, he is called the *“prince of this world”* and in Ephesians 2:2 *“the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient.”*

Satan’s mission statement is described in John 10:10, *“to steal and kill and destroy.”* In his anger with God, he wants to destroy anything Godly. He uses his dark angels to try to lead us astray and deceive us just as he deceived Eve in the Garden of Eden. *“The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons.”*⁶

I had one client who, when reading the Bible out loud, would insert the word “not” into a sentence so that the resulting meaning would be the opposite of the written Word. I have had numerous clients who would be pushed aside in their head and a spirit of darkness would take over and say something like: *She/he is mine. You cannot have her/him or I control her/him.* I have had numerous clients who have described manifestations in their bodies, including headaches, that would go away after prayer. I have worked with many people who describe confusion in their mind and then after prayer can think clearly. I have worked with a number of clients with DID (Dissociative Identity Disorder) who have internal parts or personalities that have been committed to

⁵ Revelation 12:7-9, NIV

⁶ 1 Timothy 4:1, NIV

Satan. They describe the black angels that they see around them and share with me what those black angels say to them.

In my own life, discerners told me that they could discern spirits in me from Africa. I had lived in Johannesburg, South Africa in the late 1960s for two years and that was the time when I started having blackouts and dizzy spells. The doctors x-rayed and checked everything out and there were no tumors. After five years of medical investigation, they diagnosed me with dizzy spells and put me on an anti-epileptic drug, which I took for over 20 years. While I faithfully took the medication, the dizzy spells did not go away. A week before my deliverance, I had a massive dizzy spell even though I was taking the medication. So, I know whatever was causing the dizzy spells was still with me just before the deliverance. After the deliverance prayer session, the dizzy spells were not there, so I stopped taking the medication. Since the deliverance, I have not had one dizzy spell.

I was not a Christian when I lived in South Africa and I do not know how the spirits became attached to me, but I do know that I was taking medication for 20 years for a spiritual problem, not a medical problem and that now I am free thanks to Jesus Christ. Even though I became a Christian in 1980, the spirits of darkness were still there causing havoc until the deliverance occurred.

Ok, maybe fallen angels do exist. So what? Why does that concern us because we are new creations in Christ? If Christ's Spirit is living inside of us, how can spirits of darkness affect us in any way? Well, we see that Satan uses strategies, such as temptation, to lead people astray, including Christians. Satan even tried to tempt Jesus to lead him astray, so I am sure he is willing to try to lead us astray as well. *"The devil led*

him [Jesus] to a high place and showed him in an instant all the kingdoms of the world.

And he said to him, “I will give you all their authority and splendor, for it has been given to me, and I can give it to anyone I want to. So, if you worship me, it will all be yours.”⁷

Derek Prince in his book, *They Shall Expel Demons*, describes it this way: Spirits of darkness are “the lower echelon of the ‘spiritual hosts of wickedness’ (Ephesians 6:12) that Satan directs against humanity. They have three main purposes assigned to them by Satan: first to torment and afflict us; second, to keep us from knowing Christ as Savior; and failing that, third, to keep us from serving Christ effectively.”⁸ Their typical activities include:

- 1) to deceive
- 2) to entice
- 3) to harass
- 4) to enslave
- 5) to compel
- 6) to encourage addictions
- 7) to defile
- 8) to torture
- 9) to attack the physical body

Just as Satan wanted Jesus to worship him, Satan wants us to worship him. It infuriates Satan when we choose Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. The result is that he sends his helpers to try to destroy whatever is good in our lives using the above tactics.

⁷ Luke 4:5-7, NIV

⁸ *They Shall Expel Demons* by Derek Prince, p. 165

We are warned that, even though Jesus won the battle by dying on the cross, as described in Colossians 2:15, “*And having disarmed the powers and authorities, he made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them by the cross,*” we Christians are still to expect to struggle with the spiritual powers of this dark world. “*Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.*”⁹

The struggle described here is a spiritual battle between humanity and the dark spiritual forces of this world. And where will this battle take place? As we have said many times throughout the book, the battleground is the mind. That is why we are told to “*take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ*”¹⁰

The battle is for the mind and Satan’s strategy is to help us embrace sin, worship idols and accept lies in our minds. One of Satan’s greatest achievements is to help a person receive a lie early in life and then have that stronghold affect the person’s life in perpetuity.

THE STRONGHOLD IS THE PROBLEM

To be able to access the mind of a human being, spirits of darkness need the person’s “will” and a stronghold to be there. If the “right or ground” of a stronghold does not exist, all you need to do is command the spirit of darkness to leave in the name of Jesus Christ and it has to go. But, if there is a “right or ground,” then a stronghold exists

⁹ Ephesians 6:11-12, NIV

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 10:5, NIV

and the spirit of darkness may not leave easily. The real problem, then, is not the spirit of darkness. **The real problem is the stronghold.**

I have seen deliverances where the spirits of darkness have gone but the stronghold was not broken and within days the spirits were back again.

WHAT ARE STRONGHOLDS AND HOW ARE THEY CREATED?

The simplest way for a spirit of darkness to gain a stronghold is when a person uses his/her will to directly invite Satan or his helpers in to help in some way. Some people get upset with life and in their search for a solution to their problems, they turn to Satan and say, *I invite you to come in and help me because all my other options are not working.* Satan is more than willing to oblige and he sends his helpers to meet the need. In this way, the spirits of darkness may even look good as they gain a foothold in the person's life.

Sinful living is another way that spiritual access is created. When we choose with our minds to believe and do things that are against the knowledge of God, we create strongholds. These include: sexual sin, idolatry, pride, envy/jealousy, sloth/laziness, gluttony and greed. These sins may be generational or personal, but either way, if they have not been confessed, a right is created for spirits of darkness to be there.

Another entry point is **unforgiveness**. When we become emotionally attached to another person with unforgiving anger, a stronghold is created. This unforgiveness may be directed at others or at oneself. Either way, spirits of bitterness and anger find a home in the thought processes of unforgiveness.

As we see in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, strongholds are words and thoughts that are against the knowledge of God. *“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.”

Any lie that is against the knowledge of God creates a stronghold in the mind. Arguments are words. Thoughts are words in the mind. Any pretending, falsifying, mocking, or just plain thinking that is against the knowledge of God’s truth is a stronghold. The lie can be as simple as, *I am unworthy*. God doesn’t make unworthy people so that statement is a lie. Once that lie has been accepted in the mind, the spirits of darkness can attach to it and lead one astray by helping the mind to focus on the lie rather than on truth.

HOW DO STRONGHOLDS DISTORT AND BLOCK THE TRUTH?

The first type of stronghold is being enticed and lured into sin. I see so many Christians who are totally blinded by Satan when it comes to making choices that are against the knowledge of God. Whether it is sexual sin, pornography, drinking excessively, smoking, judging others, gossip or plain old pride, it seems that Satan is having a free hand at enslaving Christians. And when these sins are in place, the stronghold of the thought in the mind seems to justify the sin. Truth is pushed aside and the person willingly embraces behaviors that are destructive. Then the darkness of guilt, self-criticism and self-loathing start to block the image of God within and the rationalization of the Distorted Self takes over as the person accepts the lie that this is whom s/he really is.

Another type of stronghold is the compelling deception that it is my job to seek revenge against another because of what I perceive as an offense committed against me,

my family and friends. Unforgiveness pulls us into the vengeful feelings of bitterness, anger, hate and rage which darken our souls and cause us to lose touch with the fruits of the Holy Spirit – love, joy, peace, patience, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness and self-control. Our *True Self In Christ* is covered over by the negative emotions and these emotions cause us to not think clearly. We then lose touch with our destiny as people who are to love others, especially our enemies.

A third type of major stronghold is our willingness to believe lies. Satan is the father of lies and he will use any opportunity to help us believe lies that are against the knowledge of God. For example, spirits of darkness will lure and entice us to believe the lie that an addictive activity is OK. People who smoke deceive themselves with thoughts such as: *I need a little break. This cigarette is my friend. One cigarette won't hurt. I will stop tomorrow. My friend smokes*, etc. etc. With the mind firmly focused on the lie, the truth, that cigarettes kill, is hidden from view and is unknowable.

More importantly, Satan helps establish lies early in a person's life with the hope that the lies will work destructively in the person's identity forever. Here are some examples of lies that people accept:

1) Unacceptance

- I am not wanted
- I am unlovable
- I am rejected
- Nobody likes me

2) Insecurity

- I have been abandoned

- I am unsafe
- Everything I do is wrong
- I am worthless

3) Incompetence

- I will never amount to anything
- I am no good
- I will never succeed
- I am a failure

When lies such as these are received, the *True Self In Christ* is covered over and the person lives in confusion and darkness. These lies are strongholds because they are against God's truth:

The truth is that we are:

- chosen
- forgiven
- loved
- honoured
- children of God
- accepted
- cherished
- secure
- gifted
- wonderfully made

A fourth stronghold is based in the curiosity that misleads many people into wanting to know the future. This need to seek out occult answers to learn about the future causes people to invite the spirit of divination in to help answer questions such as: Will I marry? Will I get a good job? How many children will I have? Will I be happy? Instead of seeking God's will, the person invites a spirit of divination to help and when divination is listened to, instead of God, the answers can lead the person into a career choice that can waste years or into a relationship that leads to disaster. The ensuing turmoil keeps the mind occupied on all the wrong issues and the truth cannot be seen.

WHAT POWERS DO WE HAVE?

As Christians, we have the power of the Holy Spirit to sanctify us with truth. We can invite Jesus into our minds and He will reveal truth to us so that we do not continue living in the darkness. If spirits of darkness try to keep us in bondage, we have the authority of Christ to send them away.

Let's take a look at some verses that speak about the authority Jesus Christ has:

*"All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me."*¹¹

*"Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord."*¹²

"For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold

¹¹ Matthew 28:18, NIV

¹² Philippians 2:9-11, NIV

*together. And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy.”*¹³

Jesus passed his authority on to his apostles and then the authority was passed on to the members of his church. As it says in Mark 16:17: *“And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons.”*

In addition to commanding spirits of darkness, Christians have the power to put spiritual boundaries in place so that we have protection from spirits of darkness. We do not need to fear, for as it says in John 17:15, *“My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.”* Christians are not supposed to cloister themselves in Christian communities or hide from the world. But we do need to protect ourselves as we live in the world.

Let’s see how we can do that:

*“So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.”*¹⁴

*“Clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ.”*¹⁵

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God so that you can take your stand against the devil’s schemes. Stand firm then with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with

¹³ Colossians 2:9-11, NIV

¹⁴ Romans 13:12, NIV

¹⁵ Romans 13:14, NIV

*which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.”*¹⁶

The more I learn about spiritual freedom, the more I understand the importance of truth. I think the armor of light is the truth of Jesus Christ. When we take up the belt of truth, when we put on the armor of light, we accept the Word and knowledge of God as truth. If Jesus is “*the way and the truth and the life*”¹⁷ and if He brings “*the truth [that] will set you free*”¹⁸, then I believe that the truth that we receive from Jesus has not only power to heal, but also the power to spiritually protect us.

So in this mental battle between truth and lies, Jesus’ truth is light and the spirits of darkness hate the light. If we submit to God’s truth and resist the devil (James 4:7), I believe that the spirits of darkness will flee. We do not need to wage spiritual warfare. We need to remove the strongholds by embracing the truth of Jesus Christ in our lives and then leave the battle to Jesus. He has already won the victory. We need to live in it.

In addition, the Bible tells us that there are different types of angels in the heavenly host. There are herald angels and ministering angels. As well, there are guardian angels: “*For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all your ways.*”¹⁹

We have the ability as Christians to ask, in the name of Jesus, for guardian angels to protect us from the evil one and his fiery darts. We are to live in this dark world, but we are not alone. We can ask for and have His guardian angels guard us in all our ways.

¹⁶ Ephesians 6:10-17, NIV

¹⁷ John 14:6, NIV

¹⁸ John 8:32, NIV

¹⁹ Psalm 91:11, NIV

So Satan and his helpers may be there, but we can win this struggle by embracing Jesus' truth and by asking his helpers to protect us.

PRAYER OF PROTECTION

Father God, Jesus Christ of Nazareth and Holy Spirit,

In the name of the Holy Trinity:

I submit my will to the will of God the Father.

I align my mind with the mind of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

I join my spirit to the Holy Spirit.

I bind my body to the cross and blood of Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

I commit my soul to the truth and righteousness of Holy Scripture.

In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth,

I declare that it is my will that all spirits of darkness be taken away from me now as I clothe myself with the Lord Jesus Christ of Nazareth. (Romans 13:14)

I ask that the cross of Jesus and protective spiritual barriers be placed around me now, including:

The armor of light,

A hedge of guardian angels, and

A wall sealed with the blood of Jesus Christ.

Lord, fill me with your light of truth and grant me your peace.

Amen.

In the next section, we will share with you stories of real people whose lives have been dramatically changed through Christ-Centered Inner Healing.

PART THREE

DOES THIS PROCESS REALLY WORK?

*“He forgives all my sins and heals all my diseases.”*¹

*“It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you completely healed.”*²

It says in the Bible that these things happened two thousand years ago, but what about today? My experience in the clinic is evidence that Jesus heals today, just as he did in Biblical times.

In the thousands of hours of Christ-Centered inner healing work I have facilitated, the truth of Jesus has consistently set people free and the results are so compelling that we want to share some examples with you.

Some experiences are so amazing that I thought you might not believe them, so we have tried to include some of the more run of the mill experiences as well.

When I first started my inner healing work, my wife, Martha, was pretty skeptical, but even she came around when she had her own personal experiences of healing. We were once in India teaching Christ-Centered Inner Healing to pastors and Martha was acting as a client for demonstration purposes. She thought that, instead of role-playing, she would pick an insignificant but real issue and use it for the demonstration. Within about 15 minutes, tears were streaming down her cheeks as the Lord revealed an insightful truth.

¹ Psalm 103:3, NIV

² Acts 4:10, NIV

The pastors who were observing looked at her and said, *“This really works!”*
Martha, the skeptic, said, *“Those words were not mine. I would never say that. It really was from Jesus.”*

Even today the words of scripture are true:

*“I will instruct you and teach you in the way you
should go. I will counsel you and watch over you.”*³

³ Psalm 32:8, NIV

Chapter 14

*“I will exalt you, O Lord, for you lifted me out of the depths.
O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.”*¹

*“Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it.”*²

WHY IS HEALING PAST MEMORIES SO VITAL?

A man I knew used to say, *I am an intelligent person. I am in control of my destiny. I don't care what happened in the past. That is the past. I live in the present and the future. I am responsible for my choices and the future is up to me.* It all sounded great, but when you looked at his behavior and how he treated people, something was wrong. He was mean, hurtful, vindictive and his anger created a lot of turmoil and stress for those around him. If he was so in control of his present and future, why did he behave the way he did?

In my experience working with clients, I have come to learn that past memories can have a profound influence on present circumstances. People will say, I have always been angry and I don't know where it comes from. Or, I have always felt anxiety and I don't know what causes it.

The truth is that the conscious mind works out of a very small portion of the brain – probably less than 1 per cent of the mind. To put it the other way, over 99 per cent of all our human experiences are stored in the unconscious mind. What we are coming to learn is that a past memory residing in the unconscious mind can significantly affect present feelings. Something can happen in the present that triggers the feeling in a past wound and that feeling can flood up into the conscious mind and take over. If the past

¹ Psalm 30:1-2, NIV

² Isaiah 43:18-19, NIV

wound is never dealt with, the destructive feeling can keep coming up every time it is triggered by something in the present.

Another counselor who works with wounded souls says it this way, *“Every person has a wounded child inside because we live in a fallen world and every person has been emotionally wounded in some way or other in their childhood.”* The good news is that inner healing is possible. We do not need to live with these bothersome feelings that affect the quality of our current life.

BUT ISN'T THIS PAINFUL AND SCARY WORK?

The truth is that for healing to occur, one needs to go back to the source of the pain. I have undertaken confidential research with my clients on this subject. A number indicate that the work is not painful at all. Others say it is moderately painful and a small number have said it was very painful work. But, then they all say that the work went faster than expected. One client came to deal with a lifelong feeling of anger and after one session, the anger was gone. Yes, he went back in his mind to a childhood memory, but when he invited Jesus into the memory, the truth that Jesus brought to him set him free. Not only did Jesus transform the memory but, his presence made it easier for the man to address the pain in the memory.

In Medellin, Colombia, I trained a group of therapists and one psychologist, Diana Romero, returned to her church in Bogota and trained nine other people to use this approach to help set the captives free. A year later, I interviewed her and this is what she said about her experience using Christ-Centered Inner Healing:

“I have been a Christian for 18 years and a counselor for six. When I went through my own personal healing process, before I learned of this

method, I remember it was long and drawn out and there was a lot of pain. It was too hurtful. This new method is a lot easier. I tell my client, 'This isn't going to last a long time. Yes, it will hurt for a minute and then it is all over.'" As she told us about her counseling experiences she said, *"In this method, the presence of Jesus completely changes the vision and the perspective that the person has about his/her own life. Jesus is the counselor and He brings comfort. When He presents himself, the memory is immediately healed."*

The experience is the same with my clients. Jesus heals quickly and there is more pain in the anticipation than in the actual work. I remember an older client who worked through a number of memories and then said, *"I know what it was. I was three years old."* I asked him if he wanted to go to that memory and he said, *"No."* It appeared to be too painful, so we did not go there. He went away for four months. When he was ready, he came back and when he went to the memory at age three, the inner healing session only took 15 minutes. Afterwards he was a changed man. It was as if the transformation of the childhood memory had changed his whole life.

CAN THIS REALLY BE TRUE?

The answer is yes. But to prove this fact, a number of my clients have agreed to share their stories so that others can learn from their experiences. To help provide you with some insights into how some people have received emotional healing, the following stories come from real people and these are their real stories.

Introduction To Real Life Stories

Each healing experience in this section is based on a true story. The people want their stories to be heard, so that others can learn from their experiences. In each case, the counseling process covered more ground than what is shared here. We've left out personal information such as family genogram, medical history and any other information that does not directly pertain to the healing session.

In the initial stages of counseling, the person or couple shares their story and through this interaction, a relationship of trust is developed between the counselor and the client. As the story unfolds, the client and the counselor jointly establish goals, which are the basis of the counseling work. An example of a goal is a female client wanting to be free of the fear that has been plaguing her. The signal to the counselor that Christ-Centred Inner Healing might be helpful is the presence of a "feeling" in the client's story that reflects a deeper wound.

For example, if the client has been feeling anxious for a long time, there is an earlier memory in which the feeling is held. I will explain the inner healing process to the person and ask if he or she would like to do the work of going to the place where the feeling is stored. Inner healing follows the feeling back to the original memory where the feeling was first experienced. I have the person make a verbal invitation for Jesus to come into that original memory. Then we pray for the Holy Spirit to reveal two things: first, the lie or negative conclusion that is associated with the memory and secondly, the truth that relates to the specific lie. When the person hears the truth in the thoughts of his/her mind, the power of the lie diminishes and the truth replaces it. At the same time

the negative emotion that is connected to the lie departs and the person is set free of the feeling that was the original concern. A number of Christian writers have documented this process, including Leanne Payne and Neil Anderson in his book *Christ-Centred Therapy*. I can confirm the truth of this process through thousands of hours of using this process in my clinical work.

The stories recorded hereafter are a distillation of the process, so that you can see for yourself the types of thoughts that disrupt lives and create wounds deep inside. When Christ is asked to bring truth that will set the person free, you will see how each person heard that truth and what the impact was on his/her respective life.

“You will know the truth and the truth will make you free.”¹

If the results in the following stories seem miraculous, the fact is: they are! If this process seems simple, it actually is. Just as you see in the New Testament, whenever Christ healed, He healed quickly.

¹ John 8:32, NIV

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STORIES FROM REAL LIFE

1) AN EXAMPLE OF “DISTORTED THINKING”

John was the youngest of five children. His father had spent time in a European prisoner of war camp where the father’s brother had died. While the father lived to old age, he [the father] was plagued with mental illness and John worried that he might end up like his father with the same disease. The presenting emotion John exhibited was fear. In fact he had multiple fears. He feared judgment and lived with the question, “*Am I good enough?*” He also feared loss of life. John was into martial arts and worked as a fire fighter.

Inner Healing Work

When we began the inner healing process, we started to deal with John’s feelings of fear. John was led back to a memory in a friend’s swimming pool where he was struggling to stay above water. He invited Jesus into the memory and listened to the words attached to the memory, “*I don’t want to die. Let this not be the end,*” John said. When we prayed, he heard the following words, “*There has to be more to life than this.*”

Then, John was led to a connected second memory where he was sparring in the gym and he was choking on the mouth guard; the more energy he exerted, the more panic he felt. “*I don’t think I can do this. I don’t want to die,*” John cried. As he listened to Jesus he heard the truth, “*I don’t have to do anything. I just have to find peace by finding Jesus.*”

As he shared openly about his life, John explained that, although he had been attending church for some time, he had never accepted Jesus into his heart because he had doubts about some of the stories of the Bible.

I didn't see John for two weeks after our session, but when he returned he said he felt lighter. He had made some decisions and found that they were not as scary as he thought. As we talked, he returned to the discussion about his father. Before the inner healing process, he increasingly feared becoming more like his father.

As we dialogued, we discovered the statement that he lived with in his mind, "*I am going to end up mentally ill just like my father.*" But, the truth set him free. John invited Jesus' truth into that thought and this is what he heard, "***Fear will make you mentally ill!***"

As we reflect back on John's story, there were two fears that were interlinked. The one was fear of death and the other was fear of mental illness, similar to his father's. The two fears came together in the thought, "*I don't want to die of mental illness.*" The initial inner healing work dealt with the fear of death, so that the more significant fear could be seen clearly.

When Jesus revealed truth to John, he realized that his thinking was backwards. He thought he was mentally ill like his father and that created fear in him. When he realized that it was the fear that was causing him to be mentally ill, he could stand against the fear and be free.

In narrative therapy when a person says, "*I am afraid*", the story collapses fear into the person and the person becomes one with fear. It is the truth of Jesus Christ that

enabled John to see that “fear” was a thing that was outside of him that was trying to get a hold of him to cause turmoil in his life. With fear externalized, he could see it for what it was – a thing that was not him. Now he could reject it and stand against it, so it would not cause him any more grief. He could now see that there is more to life than this fear.

Today, John is not afraid of fear. He is making decisions for himself and finding that life is not so difficult. He is seeking peace by finding Jesus and he says that he feels peace when he attends church with his wife. The Prince of Peace set him free with the truth.

If you identify with John’s story of fear, there’s hope for you. As you invite the Lord into your mind, ask him to reveal truth to you and the truth will set you free as well. We do not need to live with fear because scripture says, “There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment.”¹ Jesus is perfect love and when you invite him into the fear, his love and truth banish the fear.

¹ 1 John 4:18, NIV

2) STORY DEALING WITH “ANGER”

John, a 53 year old businessman, was married with three children. He was experiencing anger and he felt he had trouble controlling and managing this feeling. After learning about his family system, where he was the middle child of three children, we explored the subject of inner healing. Just like a typical businessman, he wanted to get right down to business and address the issue of anger with inner healing.

He started by closing his eyes and bringing the feeling of anger forward. I prayed for the Holy Spirit to lead him back to the memory that was the source and origin of the anger and this is what he said:

“I am very young and I am shopping with my mother in a big shopping center in Vancouver. Somehow I have become separated from my mother and I am feeling panic stricken, very fearful and with a hollowness in my stomach.”

He invited Jesus into the memory and, as we prayed for the negative words that were attached to the memory, he said:

“I don’t think she really loves me because she didn’t panic over my being lost.”

So, his interpretation was that he was unlovable. It was not fear of being alone, or anxiety of being lost. The meaning that he took out of the event went to the core issue of

being unloved. When I prayed for Jesus to reveal truth, these are the words that he heard in his mind:

The Truth That Set Him Free

“I am dearly loved by the Father and that is all I need. Human love is not the only objective. All that really matters is that I am loved by God.”

He started laughing spontaneously. He said, “It’s funny now. The memory has changed and the sense of separation no longer a problem. What’s to worry? Now the separation from my mother is fine. I feel comfortable.”

Counsellor’s Comments

The anger rose up any time that he felt unloved or unappreciated in the present. The mental conclusion, that he was unlovable, was triggered by things that happened in the present. The transformation of the memory gave him the ability to accept God’s love because now he felt worthy of God’s love. Instead of his bullfight metaphor, where he was fighting with anger, he was now free and he did not have to dance with anger anymore.

3) STORY DEALING WITH “FEAR”

For some people, a health related worry can be the symptom of a deeper problem. It has been shown in many instances that physical disease can have a direct correlation to underlying emotional issues. This story describes a situation which appeared to be about anger, but turned out to relate to a deep fear that was created early in life.

Grace came to me wanting to deal with what she perceived as a great deal of anger and resentment towards her husband. She saw her marriage as very unhealthy and she was extremely unhappy. Grace presented as a committed Christian who was determined to become “transparent and real for God”. Her hope was to address and hopefully resolve her feelings of anger and resentment towards her husband. Although Grace had many unresolved issues, she was someone who wanted to be upfront with her “baggage”. She hoped that a change of attitude and new insights into herself, her husband and their marriage might lead to an eventual solution that was livable. She admitted, however, that her primary goal was to move forward in her relationship with God. As we began the session, we were in agreement that for Grace to travel such a road would necessitate the journey beginning with her own “walk” with God.

As we prayed, Grace asked Jesus to reach deep into her mind and inner spirit to help her deal with the anger she felt towards her husband. We asked Jesus to reveal to Grace the exact emotion that He wanted her to deal with, which was causing her unhappiness. Jesus surprised us when He revealed to Grace that “fear” and not anger was the real difficulty.

Grace told me that Jesus spoke the words “fear and rejection” into her mind.

Counsellor’s Observations

The outer feeling or secondary feeling is often the emotion that is presented first in counseling. It covers the primary feeling that is deeper and more significant. In this case “anger” was the secondary feeling that was covering the primary feeling of “fear”.

Inner Healing Work

With my prompting, Grace connected with the feelings of fear and rejection and we prayed for God to reveal the earliest memory that held these feelings.

Jesus showed Grace a picture of what looked like a boulder sitting squarely on her shoulders. The feeling associated with this image felt like “armour” - cold, hard and unbending. It seemed to cover her entire torso and the weight from it made breathing difficult. She described each breath as bringing on a feeling of great anxiety that caused her increased physical and emotional stress. In the midst of looking at this picture, Jesus showed Grace a picture of her earthly father. At this point, Grace began to cry. In between sobs, she tried to explain her discomfort, and how the experience was taxing her both physically and emotionally, draining her energy from the enormity and weight of the boulder. This increasing uneasiness, combined with her growing fear, made breathing difficult. At this point, I intervened and commanded the spirit causing the difficulties to stop interfering. She visibly relaxed.

It is important for the reader to note that Grace had a history of severe asthma in her family. Grace had been diagnosed with asthma as early as two years of age. As we

continued with the session, Grace explained to me that fear and anxiety had become an unwelcome focal point of her world as long as she could remember. Many of her childhood memories were filled with the fear of illness, of being alone, and ultimately of death. In the center of her anxious state was the weight caused from a lack of acceptance by her family, especially her father. Her father's disapproval coupled with the daily nagging fear of being alone had haunted her continuously. This feeling of fear had been with Grace most of her life, beginning at childhood and continuing throughout her adult life.

The Lie That Was Connected To The Memory

I prayed that Jesus would reveal the lie or words that were attached to this memory. Grace then said, "My father does not accept me or love me".

The Truth Of Jesus That Set Her Free

Jesus assured Grace that God, her Heavenly Father, could more than compensate for her earthly father's rejection and lack of acceptance. But, Grace heard that before Jesus could do anything, **Grace had to forgive her father.**

With tears pouring down her face, she chose to forgive her father. I then directed her to ask Jesus to confront the spirits that were holding her back from a total healing. With God's authority, Grace rebuked the spirits of fear, rejection, lies, and deception.

The Reported Change in the Memory

Now, Grace described to me a new picture in her mind. She saw Jesus standing in between her father and her. All three were smiling. Jesus now gave Grace new words to live by: acceptance, approval, love, belonging and wholeness.

Counsellor's Comments

The truth of God's love set Grace free from the father's rejection and lack of acceptance. However, the truth did not deal with all the pieces of the memory, including the weight of the boulder and the issue of asthma. There was more work to be done, so we continued.

Memory Number Two

A second picture then came into Grace's mind. This time, Grace saw herself at night as a small child, sick with asthma, crying in a bathroom, afraid to sleep and afraid to ask her parents for help, because it would interrupt their sleep. This profound feeling of loneliness left her devastated. As a young child, she remembered forcing herself to stay awake all night long because she was afraid that, if she fell asleep, the asthma attack would kill her. Her anxiety was heightened by an underlying feeling that the illness inconvenienced her parents and that the extra attention she gained created resentment among her siblings. These feelings just seemed to compound Grace's insecurities, fearfulness and anxieties.

The Lie That Was Connected To The Memory

Grace prayed and asked the Lord for an understanding of the lie connected to this memory. The words that Jesus presented to her included: “I am sick, alone, near death, unloved and resented”.

The Truth Of Jesus That Set Her Free

She indicated that Jesus had now entered the bathroom and had lifted the young Grace onto his lap for comfort and reassurance. She could see the little girl smiling as she sat with Jesus and she could sense her peace and serenity. At this point Grace could not hold back the words that Jesus gave her: She told me that Jesus spoke these words of truth:

“Every hair on your head is counted. You are loved, you are accepted, you are one of my children, called forth and blessed. I have plans for you, says the Lord - plans to prosper and not harm you my child. Seek me out and I will be there for you. I will protect and love you as no one else can. Your days are numbered and your name is etched on the palm of my hand. I love you like no one else can or will and your name is written in the book of Life. Behold you are healed. See what I have done and will do for those called to love and obey me. Oh my child, I have so much to give you. Receive and trust. I will never leave nor abandon you....ever.”

The Reported Change In The Memory

Tears began to fall down Grace's cheeks. I asked her to tell me what she was now seeing and experiencing in the memory. She said that two angels were on either side of her and they were lifting the boulder off her chest and flying away with it. She said she could actually feel the weight coming off her chest. She and I thanked the Lord and prayed together. As we sat talking to each other, she told me that her breathing felt different. She explained to me that she had been experiencing breathing problems whenever she felt anxious and, that as her marriage fell apart, the asthma episodes had multiplied.

I asked her how she felt. She assured me that not only was she at peace, but that both her spiritual and physical self were changed. There was lightness to her physical body that she had never experienced.

Counsellor's Comments

The evidence of the healing is the change in the picture. When Grace described the angels taking away the boulder, the picture was changed forever. The Holy Spirit directed her to forgive her father first so that the healing of the fear and loneliness could proceed. When she heard the words, "Behold, you are healed," it was done and that was confirmed at the end when she said, "I feel at peace". Very often when healing occurs, the client refers to peace and I have concluded that this explains why Jesus is called the Prince Of Peace. He wants us to feel peace inside, not turmoil. The fear in this case was a combination of the fear of dying from asthma while sleeping, along with the fear of not

being loved if she woke the parents up. The poor little girl was boxed in by this dilemma and it created a feeling of fear that was stuck inside of her.

Four years later, Grace continues to see me for the occasional counseling session. Her asthma seems to be a thing of the past. She has to occasionally deal with new issues of fear and isolation, but now calls on Jesus to intervene. She is the healthiest she has ever been. It is interesting to note, Grace was always considered the worst case of asthma in a family plagued by the disease. One of her younger brothers recently died of asthma. She now looks to the Heavenly Father and his Son as her healer and physician.

4) STORY DEALING WITH “ADDICTION”

When I met Maggie, age 40, she was a struggling drug and alcohol addict who did not expect to live out the year. She was living with an addict and together they encouraged each other as they sank further into the depths of darkness. Maggie came from a religious family and she had accepted Jesus into her life at an early age, but was living an increasingly defeated life. The youngest of six children, she had been kicked out of the family home at sixteen years of age and lived with an ever-increasing feeling of rejection and hopelessness. She had three children, whom she seldom saw as her addiction increased, and her ex-husband was lost in a trail of men who passed through her life. About a year earlier, she tried to give up crack and, after looking at a picture of an old dying, root-exposed tree, she wrote this poem:

My Heart Tears

Roots of this dying tree
Just a vision of an uprooted life
It feels like me
Bent and bare, with a history only it can tell
My life is wounded, I've been in hell
This tree will fall, when not grounded
My struggles in life, always seem well-founded

Hope is the answer in this place
For today is new, thank God for His grace
He's kept me alive, I am not sure why
Maybe the answer will come in the Heart Tears I Cry!

My Heart is clean, in which **YOU** reside
My head is full of addictions, hate and false pride
Please take a new residence, and move to my head
Only **YOUR SON** had it all, He will save us from the dead
Maybe just a dream, but to be perfect has never been me
I know only **YOU** understand all the good and bad **YOU** see
For that is the pure love that keeps me going on
Even in the dark days sometimes never a dawn

Please catch my every Heart Tear, and **FATHER** you'll see
Your new daughter is grounded with water **YOU** pour over me
So for all who know of me and my past
Know I want not just memories of me lost to last
Think of me in the good, not only the bad
For **HE** has Heart Tears that also cry sad

Maggie, 14 days clean

When Maggie agreed to meet, the process started with the family gathering to confess generational sin. She then agreed to come to counseling. While she had been clean from cocaine for 6 weeks, she was still drinking daily and her life was on the rocks. Her abusive boyfriend did not help as he kept drawing her back into the addictions. While she had forgiven her family for past events, she could not forgive herself. Every day she woke up wishing to not be here. She admitted that she has never wanted to be straight, but her body was failing and her depression was deep.

Maggie agreed to see if inner healing would be helpful. We started with the feeling of “pain” and the Holy Spirit led her back to a theme of memories that included the following words: “They hate me. I am not wanted. Stay away from them. Do not be near them. Try not to be seen or noticed.”

As we prayed for Jesus to bring truth, Maggie said, “I want to die so bad to get away from this Then, she heard Jesus reveal the following truth, “**He loves me anyway. He doesn’t want me to die this way.**” When she went back to the memories, the pain was gone. The feeling was blank.

The next thing we did was have Maggie invite Jesus back into her conception and birth and she heard Jesus bless her with the words, “**You are special**”. This truth then freed Maggie to go through a prayer of self-forgiveness. When she was finished forgiving herself, she said she felt lighter.

In the next session, she said, “the committee in my head has been quiet”. She was ready to do further inner healing, so the next thing we addressed was the feeling of failure. As she went back in her memory, it was a theme again and connected to these memories were the following words: “Not good enough. Idiot. Disgusting. Can’t do anything right. Go away. Stay away from people. Be quiet and disappear.”

When we prayed for truth, these are the words that Jesus brought into her mind, “**Keep trucking. Stand up again. Keep fighting. Not true.**” With the truth came a calm within and Maggie explained that something inside was really different.

As we talked about her old story, she gave it the title, ‘I can’t believe I made 40!’ Now as she authored the title of her new story, she gave it the title, “I hope I make 50!” Some of the chapters she wants in this new story are, “Learn to stop running. Deal with my addictions. Learn to like and then love myself.”

As we continued to meet, Maggie got herself out of the abusive live-in relationship and her 14 year old daughter started coming over to visit and build a relationship. Her daughter could see the changes and wanted to be with her mother. Today, Maggie is drug free and has cut back her alcohol. There are days when she doesn’t have one drink. She is starting to become her own “best friend” and she is looking to the future with hope. Reconciliation has happened with her father and now healing is occurring in all three generations of the family. She is coping with her loneliness and looks forward to spending the upcoming summer with her daughter. She can now see living until 50 and

has developed a mission to become a caregiver to crack addicted prostitutes who need help getting out of their dark and hopeless situations. She is starting to feel grounded.

5) STORY DEALING WITH “GRIEF”

Conventional wisdom is that every person processes grief differently and that it may take one or two years for the feelings of grief to subside. Elizabeth Kubler Ross talks about the five stages of grieving which include: 1) denial, 2) anger, 3) bargaining, 4) depression, and 5) acceptance. Those may be the stages of processing grief, but that does not address the feelings of pain and the feelings of loneliness that the person experiences. This case is an example of how Jesus can help a person deal with the pain of grief through inner healing.

John was a pastor who experienced the loss of his wife and shortly thereafter, the death of his father-in-law. Life had been good, then his wife died from cancer. He was having a difficult time surviving as a single parent after her death. When I met John, he felt distant from God and his confidence and self-esteem were low. John had stopped his daily prayer times and his negative thoughts were diminishing his relationship with God.

A Mental Agreement/Lie Based On Current Thinking

As we talked about his relationship with God, we discovered that he was living with a lie. He had said to himself, **“You have not met with God daily, so that condition disqualifies you from meeting with him now.”** You can hear the discouragement in that statement. Since this sounded like a mental agreement, I asked John if he would be willing to renounce this conclusion in his mind. He expressed a desire to do so and he spoke the following words, “I renounce and refuse the lie that I have not been measuring up, and as a result I have been shelved. I refuse the lie that I have fallen

and that I have been disqualified, so I might as well give up.”

Inner Healing Work

After saying this prayer, John said that he felt like he was in a deep, dark cave or pit. I encouraged him to work through a prayer of self-forgiveness. As he proceeded, he shared the following vision that he was seeing in his mind. *“There is a rope ladder. I am trying to get up on the ladder but a dragon keeps pulling me down. I am always looking up, but I cannot see an opening at the top. Now, I am seeing it from the other direction – from the top down. It is as if a different aspect of me is coming out. I am coming through a tunnel and it is opening up into a nice valley. I can begin to see the light. Jesus is the one who reached down and pulled me up out of the pit. He greeted me when I came out.”*

John cried at this point. With his eyes closed he continued by saying, *“I feel so unworthy.”*

Counsellor’s Comments

John was expressing the typical symptoms of false guilt and self-punishment. He described himself as being all alone, in a dark place and detached or separated from God. He had given up and agreed with himself that God had rejected him. The reality is that he had rejected himself and he had created a story that he was now sidelined with no hope of recovery. He felt tremendously lonely without his wife and now he felt lonely without God. But, the Lord knew what John was thinking and met him in his place of need.

Vision Provided By God

Then the vision continued and he shared the following picture that he was seeing in his mind: *“Now, I am running hand in hand with the Lord – stride for stride. I have a*

feeling of strength. Jesus is like a lion form of man. He has majesty and strength. It seems like we are running on a path. He has my right hand and he seems to be saying, 'Come on. Let's go see it all.' Aslin is good. Instead of fearing his strength, he was sharing his strength."

Counsellor's Comments

In this picture, Jesus is providing companionship to a person who was all alone and he was giving energy to a man who had lost his strength. Often when a client is led away from the pit or a dark place by Jesus, He leads the person to the meadow. We call it **"the meadow experience"**. I thought Jesus was taking John to the meadow, which would have meant that the healing was completed. The meadow is usually peaceful and filled with flowers, sunlight, a stream and even nice perfumes. But, Jesus is creative and he works with each individual in a way that is best for that person. Jesus knew that the healing was not completed and that there was still more that needed to be done.

Throne Room Vision

As John continued talking, the picture started to change. He said, "It is a run of freedom, but we are going over a rise. It is like Jesus is my best friend and he is taking me home. We are going into this room and He is asking me to take off my clothes and He is asking me to put on these really neat clothes. We are now coming to a palace. What a friend to take me there. Jesus is excited. We are going to have a blast. My clothes are white linen - robes of righteousness. He is leading me into a big room in the palace. The doors are so high. We are walking in. There are so many people there. There is a long aisle down the center. All the people are happy to see me. They are cheering. Jesus is at

the door saying, 'Go, walk down the aisle'. The room is so big and warm. It is infinitely bigger at the front. I sense God the Father seated at the end of the aisle. He is running down the aisle towards me. He comes to me and he is hugging me. It is like an opera house. People are all around. He does a 360 degree circle with me and puts his arm up to promote their cheers. His other arm is around my shoulder."

Counsellor's Comments

This prodigal son message for John was needed so that he would know that God had not given up on him. Jesus knew that the healing was not complete yet, so the meadow was not appropriate. Jesus brought John to the throne room and then encouraged John to take the walk down the aisle by himself, because there was further healing needed related to grief.

Continuation of the Vision

*"God the Father wants me to go to a room off to the side of the big room. My wife and her Dad are there. **The loss is lost in the joy! The glory is greater than the grief.** They are encouraging me. I am resting in my Father's arms. It is like a sundial where time is divided by the darkness and the light. The sense is that my wife and her father are in the shadows and God the Father is in the light. It is a sense of a new beginning and that I have to come to the end of the shadow and move into the light."*

The Post Vision Dialogue

As we reflected on the vision, John said, "**The grief had separated me from God**". What made this a particularly powerful experience was that God initiated the

contact. John said, “He set it up. I couldn’t think that or dream that up myself. He cleansed me, He dressed me up and He invited me to the celebration. It told me that He really cares for me. He really does love me and He took the first step. It is not just about me. I now realize that I am not doing this on my own.”

Epilogue

Nine months later, John was much stronger and growing again. His self-confidence was higher and he was looking for new opportunities [which he has now found]. His relationship with the Lord had been restored and he was moving ahead with his life. By inviting Jesus into the pain, Jesus took the initiative to transform the grief into joy and led John out of the darkness into the future. The key for John was that Jesus communicated this divine vision, so that John would know that Jesus had not left him and that John was not going to be alone as he moved into the next stage of his life.

6) STORY DEALING WITH ‘PAIN’

It is the job of the parents and family to bless their children. Some people are fortunate to have both parents who love each other and who in turn love their children. Wouldn't it be nice if every family functioned this way. However, today we have a divorce rate of over 50% and there are many single parent households. As well, there are many dysfunctional families that do not bless their children. Instead, many parents abuse, neglect and treat their children with judgment and condemnation. The emotional pain for these children cannot be calculated. Each person's experience is different. However, when family mistreatment is compounded with abuse from outside the family, the pain is multiplied. This is a story of such a case.

Sharon's Story

Sharon was given up for adoption at a young age. After a short period, her adoptive father passed away and the adoptive mother could not cope. So, Sharon was given to a new set of parents. The stress of being separated from a birth mother often causes a wound in an adopted child, but Sharon had the experience of being separated from two mothers early in her life. In addition, the family that finally adopted her was dysfunctional, with her adoptive Dad being an alcoholic. She was treated with disrespect. For example, even a recent adult visit to her adoptive mother resulted in her hearing the words, "You are an idiot!"

In her adult life, Sharon is married with three children. She experiences symptoms of depression and often says that things are “out of control”. Sharon has panic attacks, she says that she hates herself and that she feels pain when she touches water. She also feels that if she makes an effort she will get slapped down and that she cannot handle anything. Sharon had seen psychiatrists, psychologists, therapists and counselors for years with little benefit. She just seemed to be circling in her pain and inability to cope with life.

In this particular counseling session, after previously having done extensive work on family of origin issues, we addressed the issue of “pain”. Sharon revealed that she had been raped by a boy friend and that the rape occurred in a bathtub. Ever since Sharon has had a fear of water.

Counselor’s Comments

While her family abuse was significant, the strongest pain was coming from an experience of sexual abuse. The Holy Spirit showed why Sharon had such pain related to water.

As we prayed, the Holy Spirit led Sharon back to the actual rape experience in the bathtub and the words that were attached to this memory were: “No one can love me. I am dirty. Water is not safe. Water causes pain.”

The Truth From Jesus That Set Her Free

Sharon reported that Jesus was in the memory and that he was emptying the water from the bathtub. When we prayed for truth to be revealed, Sharon said, **“I hear - refiner’s fire..... the Holy Spirit makes us clean.”**

After praying a healing prayer based on these words of truth, I asked Sharon to go back and look at the memory again. As she revisited the memory, she said, “I am not in the memory now. Only the guy is there. The picture looks lighter and I do not feel any shame.”

I then asked Sharon to get up out of her chair and go to the sink and run her hands under the water. In a few minutes, she came back with a smile on her face. She said, “There was no pain when I put my hands under the water. It feels different now.” As we talked about what this meant, Sharon explained that she would now be able to do the basic household chores and bathe regularly because now the water would not hurt.

Counsellor’s Comments

This was a huge breakthrough in Sharon’s life. The transformation of the memory freed her of the pain that was connected to the belief, “Water causes pain”. Jesus’ presence in the memory and His truth set her free. Now, Sharon was able to undertake activities that most people never think twice about. This pain of water had limited her life and caused her to not be able to function in ways that were basic to living. Now, Sharon was less overwhelmed and more able to cope. She felt clean and she did not need to avoid the pain of water any longer. This change did not mean that all of the memories of her

mind were totally healed. We still needed to do other inner healing work related to other feelings, but, for this feeling of pain, there had been a significant transformation.

7) STORY DEALING WITH “GUILT”

For some people, guilt is not a problem. They have confessed their sins, received the forgiveness God extends and now they are living in freedom. However, for other people, the subject of guilt and lack of self-forgiveness can be a major issue. It is interesting that some people are totally unaware that guilt and unforgiveness for self even exist. Unaware is how I would describe Sarah’s story. When I first started to hear words of guilt, I asked her if there was any unforgiveness for herself and she said, “*Absolutely not!*” Her words were, “*Unforgiveness for myself is not an issue!*”

Sarah’s Story

As the sessions unfolded, Sarah said that she had attended a healing session at a church and heard that it was God’s desire to heal her. But, she said, “*I don’t know how to receive healing.*” You can hear that she was blocked in some way. She continued with comments about feeling dumb, disappointed, sad, shaken and confused about how many bad choices she had made in her life. She said she felt an emptiness related to the loss of years and how she had hurt so many people. Then, she dropped the bomb. She started to express her feelings about her abortion and talked about the shame of what had happened. She said she was aching in her life. In addition, there was fear and self-judgment as she said, “*I murdered my daughter.*” These were powerful words. She expressed her belief that God would never forgive her for such a terrible crime and she was afraid that she would be unable to see her child in heaven. As it turned out, lack of self-forgiveness was a key issue in Sarah’s life, but she just did not recognize it because it was so close and constantly circulating in her mind.

Inner Healing Work

We talked about lack of self-forgiveness and how words of self-criticism are used as a form of self-punishment. When Sarah realized how she had been beating herself up inside her mind, she agreed to work through a prayer of self-forgiveness. In the middle of the prayer, she started to see a picture. She said, *“I am in a prison cell and I am hanging from the neck in the cell.”* Then, the picture switched and this is what she reported: *“It is the night before the abortion and I know that I am going to go through with it. I am in the shower in the bathroom. I am on my knees, crying and asking God for forgiveness. I am asking God if there is any other way out.”* (The next day Sarah went through with the abortion.)

As Sarah was seeing the scene in her mind. I asked her to invite Jesus into that specific memory in the shower. Shortly after inviting Jesus into the memory she said, *“Jesus is standing behind me.”*

The Destructive Words That Were Connected To The Memory

I then prayed for the Lord to reveal the words that Sarah had accepted in her mind that were attached to this memory. Within moments Sarah said, *“I am a murderer who does not deserve God’s forgiveness. I deserve the death penalty.”* You can hear how Sarah agreed with herself that the forgiveness of the cross of Jesus Christ did not apply to her.

The Truth Of Jesus Christ That Set Her Free

I then prayed that the Holy Spirit would reveal truth to Sarah and this is what Sarah saw and heard in her mind, *“Jesus is on his knees beside me in the shower and he is*

asking God to forgive me. He is turning to me and putting his face in my hands. He is saying, “I died for this. It is my desire for you to have eternal life with me.” Now, he is showing me his hands and he is saying, “Look, I have taken your pain. Give me your pain.”

The Reported Change in the Memory

She said, “The picture has changed. A hole opened up and a dove came out of the hole.”

Counsellor’s Comments

At this point, I thought the significance of the dove was that the healing had been accomplished, but Jesus knew better. He knew what was going on in Sarah’s mind. He knew her thinking. So, knowing Sarah’s concern about seeing her child in heaven, on his own initiative, Jesus did the following.

Further Change in the Memory

Sarah reported it with these words: “Jesus is bringing my little baby boy to me and he is placing him on my lap. The baby is hugging me and he is so beautiful. Jesus is carrying a little cage with baby doves in it. The peace of Christ is on the child.”

Additional Truth That Set Her Free

Then Sarah reported that Jesus said to her, “***Your baby has been made perfect in love and he loves you Sarah.***” This truth was absolutely critical because Sarah had believed that when she got to heaven, her baby would reject her. Jesus proved to Sarah

that her belief was a lie by letting Sarah see for herself that her baby was happy and that he loves her right now with perfect forgiving love. More importantly, she learned that her son will love her when she gets to heaven. As a result of this experience, Sarah was able to forgive herself and let go of the words that she had been using to hold herself in bondage.

Counsellor's Comments

Although she did not realize it, the lack of self-forgiveness had been blocking Sarah in her healing process. Sarah was now free to proceed in her counseling work secure in the knowledge that she was forgiven by both God and her son. As a counselor, I did not guide the thinking or make suggestions other than have her invite Jesus into the process. I was just a recorder of what Jesus was doing and saying as Sarah reported the scene to me.

The creativity of Jesus far exceeded anything I could have imagined and his knowledge of Sarah's needs was beyond my comprehension at the time. For those people who suffer from guilt, lack of self-forgiveness can be a very significant piece of the healing process. Many Christians suffer from this condition because of a legalistic upbringing which makes them believe that, as a Christian, they are not good enough. This self-wounding activity results from a belief that the forgiveness of the cross does not really apply to them because their sin is too great.

8) STORY DEALING WITH “SEXUAL ABUSE”

Mary was a 21 year old, single woman from western Canada who had moved to Ontario. She had become a Christian, but she was still living a defeated life because she could not get over the impact of the three rapes that she had experienced. Whenever she talked about the abuse she would cry. She was plagued with unhappiness, an inability to sleep, plus she could not work since she feared eye contact. Whenever she visited her mother, who also now lives in Ontario, they would fight and it seemed like Mary was unable to relate to people. She was discouraged, depressed and extremely unhappy.

Mary was referred to me because she heard that inner healing might help her deal with the rape memories. When we first met, I learned about her family of origin and she advised me that she was not taking any medication. She said that she was living with a boyfriend, who was not a Christian, and he had encouraged her to get help. I explained the inner healing process to Mary and suggested that it might be beneficial for her to learn about the inner healing process by trying to work through a non-traumatic memory, just to see how the process worked. I felt it would be helpful for Mary to gain confidence in the process by first working on something that was not too heavy. If she were able to see change in a less serious memory, maybe she would have the willingness to address a more painful rape memory later. We continued to build a trust relationship and Mary felt ready to address an initial memory related to the feeling of fear. As we worked through a memory related to fear, Mary had the following words attached to the memory, “I am scared. I am confused. I cannot trust people.” We prayed for truth and Jesus brought the following words to her mind: “Don’t be scared. I am with you and you can trust me.”

When she now revisited the memory, the fear was gone and she saw herself sleeping peacefully with Jesus standing at the door guarding her. When asked how it now feels, she said, “*Safe!*” She described Jesus as “*soft, gentle and comforting.*”

When Mary returned, two weeks later, she said that the fear memory was still transformed and that she was surprised that it still felt so good. I asked her if this gave her encouragement to address the rape memories and she said that she had the desire to proceed. So, with Mary’s will involved, I suggested that Mary begin with the earliest of the three rape memories – for the reason that working on the earliest memory can sometimes heal subsequent memories at the same time. She closed her eyes and went back to a memory when she was 16 years old. As the memory came forward, she invited Jesus to be in the apartment memory with her. As she reviewed the memory, these were the words that were attached to the scene: “*I shouldn’t be here. This shouldn’t be happening. I am supposed to trust him. (The mother’s boyfriend). I loved him and viewed him as my father. I can’t stop this. I want it to stop. I should have done something. This is my fault. I am dirty. Nobody will believe me. I must keep it quiet. I am powerless. I am hurting.*”

After praying for Jesus to reveal his truth to Mary’s mind, this is what she heard.

Jesus’ Truth That Set Her Free

“*It’s not my fault. I have to stop blaming myself. It’s not true that I am good for only one thing. I have plenty of gifts for a lot of things. I am not powerless. There are people who can help me.*”

When I asked Mary to now go back and look at the memory, she said, *“I can’t see the apartment memory anymore. Jesus and I are in a field of red roses. The sun is shining, and the birds are singing. I hear a burbling brook and we are skipping in the field. I feel happy and there are no worries.”* When asked to describe Jesus, she said, *“He is happy, smiling, soft, gentle, warm and playful like a kid.”*

Counsellor’s Comments

As you can see, the inner healing process did not take very long (one hour) and it was not particularly painful for Mary to revisit the memory because Jesus was with her in the memory. One of the signs of healing is the meadow experience. When Jesus takes a person to the meadow, the healing is done. It is interesting to note that when Mary came back two weeks later, she said that all three rape memories had been healed at the same time, even though we had only worked on the first memory. She told me that we did not have to go back and deal with the second and third rape memories because they were already healed. When I asked her to revisit the first rape memory, all she could see was herself and Jesus in the meadow playing. When Jesus transforms the memory, it is permanent and complete.

But, what was the benefit of the inner healing? First, Mary said that she had visited her mother recently and they spent 1 ½ hours together. When Mary left, she gave her mother a hug and told her that she loved her. This ability to be with her mother was a complete change and bode well for future visits. Secondly, Mary told me, that in the two weeks since we last met, she no longer had no fear of eye contact. As a result, she had been out job hunting and reported that she had interviews with nine different companies.

Before she couldn't even leave her apartment and definitely couldn't handle an interview. In Mary's words, *"I am not cloudy now. I can think clearly. I have not been depressed in the two weeks since our last session. I was afraid of people, but now I am more confident. I can handle interviews. I am worth it. I can do the job. I feel like a totally different person. My boy friend says I am glowing. I am bubbly and more playful. I have the freedom and the desire to do more things. Before, every time I talked about the abuse, I would cry. Now, I am able to have friends and go to church."*

In my last session with Mary, she had three jobs and was looking at moving out and living on her own. She had a new relationship with her mother and was attending church. Her final words were, *"I am happy."*

9) STORY DEALING WITH “HURT”

It is helpful to work through an understanding of the person’s family of origin as part of the process of hearing their story. The influence of the parents, the birth order, the family rules and patterns provide insights that help in the counseling process. In this particular case, we worked together for 20 sessions before discovering the deep place where inner healing was needed.

Initial counseling

John was the eldest brother of three boys. When he was young, he had been very jealous of the other siblings coming along and stealing his privileged position. As we worked through his family systems issues, we discovered that John was a “do-aholic”. In his Christian walk, he kept trying to get closer to Jesus, yet when it came time to take thoughts captive to Jesus, he became resistant and rebellious. At the same time that he tried to get close to Jesus, he continued to work at earning love from others by being a high performer. The closer he got to God, the more he realized that he wanted to be God in his own life. As you can see John was being very vulnerable in these disclosures.

Defense of a Wall

John had accepted a mental agreement that he needed to be independent and at some point in his early years he had built a wall around himself for protection from hurt. If others were not going to protect him from being hurt, then he needed to protect himself. As we talked, he visualized himself cocooned inside an invisible dome. We

discovered that he would not let Christ's truth penetrate inside the dome and he would not come out from under the dome to hear truth either. We talked about the possibility of allowing Jesus to build a new spiritual wall inside the wall of the dome – a wall that would have the blood of Jesus in it for protection. We talked about how this new wall would keep him safe from evil, but that it would allow love to flow in and out. Then, with this new Jesus wall in place, he could invite Jesus to help him take down the old protective dome that kept everything out – including love. John resisted this idea and said that he was afraid of risking love. I asked John if he would be willing to take the thought “of taking down the dome wall” captive to Jesus and he agreed. As he listened to the Lord, he heard the Lord say to him that he wanted John to take down the invisible barrier because **“He wanted a relationship with John where they would do things together.”**

In the next session, John reported that the invisible shield was still in place. He said, *“I need to protect myself and I will not let Jesus come in to be my protector.”* He explained how he had a strong need to be right. As he talked about his extreme sensitivity to criticism, he said, *“I fear getting hurt.”* Obviously he had been seriously hurt by some of his life experiences.

Inner Healing Work

The strong feeling of hurt in John indicated that inner healing work might be helpful. After explaining the inner healing process, I asked John if he would be willing to try the Christ-Centered Inner Healing type of therapy. With his affirmation, I prayed that the Holy Spirit would lead John to the source and origin of the feeling of hurt.

The Memory

What came to John's mind was a memory of his childhood where he threw a snowball at a boy and the kid picked up a stick and chased him. At the time he was afraid he was going to get hurt. But, this memory quickly was replaced with a second memory. Since the process is to work with whatever memory is presented, we moved to this new memory. He now saw himself on the farm during a lightning storm. He was out in the field and there was a tractor there. He was afraid to stay with the others who had climbed under the tractor for safety and he ran off crying for help. At this point he started to clarify his thinking. There appeared to be two different aspects to this issue of hurt: 1) fear of being hurt is terrorizing, and 2) fear of "others" being hurt is terrorizing. He then remembered previous counseling where the counselor identified that there was a problem in the third trimester of his gestation in the womb. He also said that he felt all wrapped up emotionally and that he thought his issues were pre-verbal.

Counsellor's Comments

We seemed to be making some progress in clarifying the origin of the hurt. Since a number of my client's had previously worked on memories in the womb, it seemed likely that we were dealing with a pre-birth issue. As I prayed for the Holy Spirit to lead John back to the source of the hurt, the next memory turned out to be in the womb.

Next Memory

John said that he could see an umbilical cord wrapped around him. I then prayed for the Lord to reveal the words that he had accepted in his soul when he was in the womb.

The Destructive Words That Were Connected To The Memory

As he looked at the memory in his mind he said, *"I can't escape. This is hell."*

Counsellor's Comments

This information helped explain why at times in the counseling process John's body would contort and twist itself into positions that looked like he was tied up. As well, John had previously revealed that from time to time, he would secretly tie himself up with cords and render himself helpless. He would trap himself in masochistic ways. Since these incidents had sexual overtones, we had previously tried to address the subject through confession and spiritual prayers, but the self-torturing behaviour had not gone away. Now it was becoming clear that the cause of his secret life related to literally being tied up in the womb.

Listening For The Truth

When we prayed for truth to be revealed he said, “*I have a willingness to hear what Jesus has to say.*” He then described that he could see himself reaching out of a hole in the cocoon to touch Jesus. But then we ran into a roadblock. He said, “*I am having an argument with myself. A debate is going on. If I step out of the cocoon, that is risky and part of me is afraid to do that – at least right now.*” Our session ended and we met two weeks later.

Counsellor’s Comments

The healing did not occur at this time because he was only at the point of being willing to hear, but he was at the point where he was willing to accept and embrace truth. You cannot rush the process. You can only work with the person’s will and when he/she is ready, that is when the work can be done.

Return To The Womb Memory

When we prayed two weeks later, the Holy Spirit took John back to the exact same memory where he was tied up in the womb. John reported, “*I am tied up with the umbilical cord. I am choking. I can’t get away. I can’t get out.*”

The Destructive Words That Were Connected To The Memory

As John listened for the words that were embedded in this memory he heard, “*I am going to die. My mother is going to die.*”

Counsellor's Comments

Now we see the reason for the double fear of terror. He was not only afraid for himself, but he was afraid for his mother as well. His terrorizing fear of being hurt personally related to his own legitimate fear of dying because the umbilical cord was strangling him and he felt there was no way of escaping this hurt. In addition, his terrorizing fear of others being hurt related to his birth mother's fear of death because her own mother died in childbirth with one of the younger siblings. When John's mother was only six years old, her mother died in childbirth and as she approached the birth of John, her first child, she was terrorized.

The Truth Of Jesus That Set John Free

When we prayed for truth related to the above words, this is what John reported, *“Jesus is untying me and is removing the choking. He is unwrapping the umbilical cord and now everything is bathed in blue.”* As John listened for truth he heard, *“I am not supposed to get out of the womb yet.”*

The Reported Change In The Memory

When I asked him to look at the memory now and tell me if anything had changed he said, *“Jesus and I are now dancing in the womb. It feels free.”*

Counsellor's Comments

For 52 years of John's life, the situation in the womb had been the source of his problems. The previous counselor had been right, but the memory had not been

transformed nor the mind renewed, so the womb trauma continued to plague John. Now that Jesus had come and healed the memory, I asked John if he was ready to ask Jesus to build a new wall around him and then choose to take down the old invisible dome. He agreed. He was now ready. He asked Jesus to first construct a new spiritual wall inside the old wall and when that was done, he asked Jesus to have his angels deconstruct the old wall. When the old wall was down, John was now ready to start experiencing emotions and begin a new journey of emotional stability. In the following weeks, John felt much freer. The compulsion to physical bondage was gone. More importantly, he was turning to Jesus and submitting to His Lordship in every aspect of his life. He said, there are still old emotions to deal with, but now, “*No longer on my own.*”

Part Four:

Healing a Community

Can a community be healed? If you have seen the “Transformation” videos, you will see evidence of complete cities being transformed with the love of Jesus Christ. In South America, Africa, the USA and even in the Arctic, communities have completely changed when Jesus Christ was invited to be Lord and Savior. Crime dropped. People started treating each other with more respect.

What happened that enabled the transformation to occur? Love replaced hate and the Christian principles of humble confession, forgiveness and truth replaced hard hearts, pride and lies, and the environment changed. Similarly, in a local setting, the love of Jesus Christ and inner healing can transform a community.

This part of the book will share with you the unique story of Prince Charles Place, a low-income housing community in Oakville, Ontario and the attached Christian ministry called KSM (Kerr Street Ministries). Over the last 10 years, many people have benefited from this special place. Poor people have been fed. Low income people have been housed. Hurting people have found acceptance and love. Wounded souls have healed and wounded people have, in turn, become wounded healers. It is a unique story

of how people can help each other with the love of Christ in their hearts. A number of people in the community have agreed to share their stories. Here is the story of Prince Charles Place and its related Kerr Street Ministries.

Chapter 15

“I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.”¹

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.”²

THE KERR STREET STORY

In 1992, leadership at Chartwell Baptist Church saw a need for reaching out to the low income community in Oakville by co-operating with the Provincial Government to build affordable housing. The vision was to create an apartment building, called Prince Charles Place, where caring Christians could live side by side with low income tenants and share their lives together. As a result, some low income Christians and some high income Christians joined others to live in this unique setting. One of the driving forces behind this project was Norman Lea, a visionary who had traveled the world, studying Christian communities to see how people could live and support each other in ways that would manifest Christ’s love.

¹ Matthew 25:40, NIV

² Galatians 5:22-25, NIV

In the first two years, there was a social committee that helped create opportunities for tenants to get together and relationships started to develop. In the third year, Ron Shantz became the Executive Director of Prince Charles Place with a mandate to foster and encourage a more effective ministering to the poor. Activities that were introduced included: prayer walks for the building and related neighborhood, a Bible study group in the common room, increased benevolence for those in need and a summer day camp for the children of tenants and kids who lived in the neighborhood.

At that time the Provincial Government was cutting back support and Lori Godfrey, a single mom on disability pension cried out to the Chartwell leadership, “*What is the church going to do for the poor?*” The leadership responded by forming a committee to address that question. Within a week of coming together, the committee took the previous idea of opening a tuck shop and replaced it with a plan to open a food co-operative where families could buy groceries at cost.

In March 1996, the food co-op opened and it was made available to not only tenants, but any family who wanted to participate and benefit from the lower prices. In the next year, the food co-op proved to be economically unviable. At that time Norman Lea called all the churches in Oakville to come together to pray about what should be done. This involvement of other churches was the first step of what would become a multi-denominational outreach now called KSM (Kerr Street Ministries).

Over a period of time, the concept evolved from a retail/cash type of operation, to a pay what you could afford, and eventually it ended up as a free food bank. Along the way, Christian volunteers were recruited to help evaluate the respective family and individual needs, to manage the voucher system and to come along side and pray into the

deep felt needs of those who came for help. These activities required listening, understanding each person's situation and, over time, established one of the main principles behind Kerr Street Ministries: *"To model the love of Jesus Christ by standing in the gap in the present and providing hope for the future."*

In March of 1997, the center where people came for food, transitioned into a meeting place and a drop-in center for tenants and the community at large. Churches in Oakville were invited to use Kerr Street Ministries as an extension of their outreach to the poor and soon various activities emerged.

For example, church members would bring and serve community meals to people who were accessing the food bank. Then, to our surprise, members of the Canadian Mental Health Association, Oakville Chapter, started noticing that *"consumer survivors"* that participated in the Kerr Street Ministry experience, were in crisis less often than others.

In their assessment, it was the spiritual component that made the difference. As a result of this encouragement, Kerr Street Ministries started an opportunity for people to worship on Thursday night, which included: music, interactive discussion about Biblical truths, fellowship and prayers for healing. Through the listening and caring at the drop-in center and the support shown on Thursday nights, trust was developed and participants started to share their deeper needs beyond food, clothing and housing.

On Thursday night, a key component was called *Announcements and Offerings*. This was a time when people could share their positive experiences and the results of prayer started to be shared. People talked about the many ways that prayers were being answered with a job here and better housing there, health improvements here and better

relationships there. Not only were there success stories related to physical health, but positive changes in mental and emotional health started to emerge.

THE LAMBERTS' LOVE

Bill and Eleanor Lambert, a Christian couple, became the superintendents for the building. As well as praying in the halls for Prince Charles Place, they were adopted by a number of tenants as parents or grandparents because of their caring attitude and sense of call. Eleanor would take a tenant, who was too embarrassed to go for help, down to the food market outside of regular hours, so that the person would not go hungry. Bill would go above and beyond the call of duty to repair kids' bicycles or small appliances when broken. They were both approachable and extended themselves relationally and pastorally.

Over the past 10 years, Kerr Street Ministries evolved and today there are 250 volunteers from over 40 churches who support and help in the many and various activities including: the drop-in center, a group that supports physically and/or mentally challenged individuals, a computer lab with 15 computers, an eight week summer day camp with 200 kids and 24 paid staff and 40 volunteers, a junior high and teen after school drop-in and an evening program of 50 youth with a youth director and 25 volunteers. The free food market now distributes over 200,000 lbs of food annually, there are three hot meals offered per week and there are free Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners served on site for those who have no family. There is free professional counseling (200 hours per year) and unlimited pastoral counseling.

KSM now has a fulltime pastor, Rich Chambers, along with his wife Cathy, and an associate director for volunteers, Marion Pengilley. There is a church service every

Sunday morning as well as the Thursday evening worship. On Monday nights, there are Alpha and Beta groups to provide discipleship for those who want to go deeper in the Christian walk, and life skill opportunities for those who want to learn about cooking and crafts. Today the majority of the people living in the 52 units are Christian believers.

But these statistics do not even partially tell the human story of how the love of Christ has changed lives and relationships within the Prince Charles Place/KSM community.

JOANNE'S JOURNEY

Joanne started coming to the drop-in center and volunteered to help stock food shelves. It became apparent that she was highly wounded from childhood abuse and she had huge needs herself. Joanne was able to access low cost housing at Prince Charles Place and she was offered safe housing with a mature Christian lady named Marlene, whose ministry was to come along side abused women.

As a sister-in-Christ, Marlene helped manage Joanne's medication, protected Joanne from hurting herself, was a comfort to Joanne during her mother's passing, and genuinely cared for, listened to and helped her with lifeskill challenges. The first time I met Joanne, she was in a state of high distress as she was kneeling on the floor, bowing, praying and frantically worshipping Satan. While Joanne appeared overwhelmed with life, she had the will to get better and she chose to come for counseling help. Her condition of Dissociative Identity Disorder was complex because of the spiritual manifestations. Nevertheless, she was willing to invite Jesus Christ into her thoughts and memories, and step by step, she was progressively being set free.

Others in the community supported her and prayed for her along the way. She battled with thoughts of worthlessness, and yet Jesus came to console her. In one counseling session, she could see Jesus standing right in front of her in the counseling office. She got out of her chair and went to Him and touched Him and felt his warmth. Without His tangible and visible love, Joanne would never have been able to come out of the depths of despair that she was experiencing. For a woman who used to freak out at the mention of Jesus' name or who used to attack if you read the Bible, today Joanne is now able to attempt to sit through worship services, read the Bible, and she loves to listen to Christian worship music. Huge progress has been made. Joanne now holds a part time job and is able to participate in community activities. Joanne has even become a caregiver to other people at Prince Charles Place, where she has helped friends through moments when they were in crisis. Joanne used to be frequently admitted to the mental health ward, but in the last two years, since she has been at Prince Charles Place, she has only had one short visit to the hospital, and that was triggered by the death of the superintendent, Bill Lambert.

As Joanne continues to progress, her goal is to be a volunteer helping with kids at the Kerr Street summer camp. Already she is starting to give back to those around her with her beautiful smile and her willingness to be there for other people.

LAURA'S LIFE LESSONS

Another member of the Prince Charles Place Community is Laura. I first met Laura at Chartwell Baptist Church where we attended the same service and belonged to the same fellowship group. As I started to get to know Laura, I learned that she was attending church solely as a result of experiencing and knowing God's love and

forgiveness. But, what I did not know was that Laura was highly wounded and was hiding her pain. She did not trust others and was afraid of being judged or criticized if she shared her feelings and story (She had experienced judgment when some people did not understand her story).

It was not until later that I learned that Laura had previously been in and out of hospitals, struggling with suicide for approximately 30 years and that the drugs and shock treatments had no lasting benefit. On Cathy Chamber's recommendation, Laura moved into Prince Charles Place, which enabled her to have her own space and start meeting people in the community. As Laura says, "*God put me here so he could prevent me from running.*"

For the first time, Laura found herself with people who had faith and who demonstrated real love without judgment. But there were other wounded people in the building and words would cause Laura pain. She would retreat to her apartment where she would numb herself out with pharmaceutical painkillers. As well, Laura was experiencing pain from extreme fibromyalgia and she had great difficulty sleeping at night. She would stay up all night doing puzzles and watching TV and sleep during the day. Work was impossible. While she had experienced healing and deliverance from alcohol and sexual dependency, her self-worth was still based in relationships rather than in God.

At this point, Laura sought counseling help and she started to address her fears, shame, self-loathing and her intense anger. This counseling work was not easy or fast and she had many setbacks, but step-by-step she made progress.

Each time Satan took Laura back into the darkness and pain, it caused her to fight harder to regain the peace, love and joy of God that she had been experiencing. Initially, she did not even know what needed fixing, but through the inner healing process, God revealed to her what had happened in her life that had been so traumatic. As memories started to be healed, she allowed herself to accept some of Ron Shantz's requests to get involved and she became a part of the community.

At first, she helped out in the store. Over time, Laura assumed more responsibility and in her third year, Bill and Eleanor recommended that she become an Assistant Superintendent. This step was huge as Laura felt their trust and acceptance and it contributed to a change in her self-concept: *"I must be OK because they trust me with all the keys to the building."*

During these formative years, Laura started praying for others in their needs and as God answered those prayers, she was surprised because she had a distorted image of God. She feared God and was still extremely angry with God because of her previous life experiences. *"Why didn't he stop the abuse in my life?"* Answered prayers produced a deepening trust in God and her inner healing work re-inforced the knowledge of his love. What started out as a feeling relationship grew into a more mature relationship of heart and mind. As Laura continued to heal, it revealed itself through hospitality, personal gifts, cards, rides, hugs, encouragement and not going off the deep end when a problem occurred.

Today, the relapses are further and further apart and the pain of fibromyalgia is ninety percent gone. Recently, Ron asked Laura to lead worship at the Sunday morning church service at Prince Charles Place and Laura's beautiful smile, her infectious

enthusiasm and her love of God are winning souls and helping to heal others. When people see Laura working consistently in the food bank, and praying for, listening to and loving those who drop in, and then hear her amazing story, they have hope!

Laura wanted to share one of her inner healing experiences. The Lord revealed to her the memory of childhood sodomy and in the session she was feeling the physical pain as well as fear, emotional stress and demonic attack. The words that Laura was living with were, *“I am scared. I can’t make the pain go away. It hurts deep inside.”* We prayed for truth and Laura heard, *“I don’t need to pretend that it didn’t hurt. I don’t have to be afraid because nobody is going to do that again.”*

As Laura looked at the memory, in her mind appeared the word **LIFE** in big glowing gold letters. *“Then Jesus’ hands formed the word LIFE into a crown and he put the crown on my head”* in the picture. Then Laura and Jesus danced and laughed in the memory and Laura started laughing out loud. The pain was gone and the memory was healed and Laura was free. She explained that she felt so precious because Jesus did this for her and now the fear of God punishing her was totally eradicated. Jesus did it personally. *“He didn’t send an angel. He did it himself. That is what made it so important to me.”*

THE CHAMBERS’ CALLING

Cathy Chambers, pastor Rich Chamber’s wife, first heard about Kerr Street Ministries when she signed up as a member to buy groceries at the food co-op. Since Cathy is a Chartered Accountant, it wasn’t long before she was setting up the financial books for Kerr Street and helping out with the accounting. Both Cathy and Rich have big

hearts for hurting people and it became apparent to them that Kerr Street Ministries was a unique place where marginalized people were being nurtured and helped. Cathy said, *“It was a safe place where people held each other up in high regard.”*

At the time, Rich was still working at one of Chartwell’s congregations and Cathy started to meet people at the drop-in. One day, she met Liane who, as Cathy explained, was not in a good place in her life. Liane was living alone in a nearby apartment and she came to the drop-in when she was not doing well. Cathy and Liane would do what came naturally to them – they talked and prayed. As Cathy said, *“Liane was one of God’s people who had more challenges than most. My heart went out to her. I loved her. We would talk about books that we had read. We would go out for coffee and talk hockey. I loved the Toronto Maple Leafs and she loved the Montreal Canadiens. We kidded each other a lot. We would go to movies and talk on the telephone. As I learned about her life, it seemed unfair. She hadn’t been given much chance to develop and I let her know that she was accepted and acceptable.”*

When Rich came over to Kerr Street to pastor the Sunday service, he and Cathy worked together as a team. Rich was the visionary and Cathy was the practical one who helped make things happen. Rich would get the idea and Cathy would tie up the loose ends. While Rich preached, Cathy started a Sunday School for the children. She would teach them Bible stories and try to build some fun into the experience. As Cathy said, *“The one thing I wanted them to learn was God’s love, because if they could feel God’s love at Sunday School, that would be the biggest lesson.”* Once a month, Rich would prepare the elements for communion and Cathy would handle the communion message and presentation.

Later, Cathy led a Monday night group where she taught about the women of the Bible. As she worked preparing dinners on Thursday nights, she marveled at how some of the so-called marginalized participants contributed. She was amazed at Claudette, who could not read, and Brian who never went to school, but they helped out, cleaned up, baked tourtieres and consistently were unbelievably helpful. She saw how Kerr Street Ministries was having an impact on not just Kerr Street, but on the greater Oakville Community.

Then one day in 2004, to Cathy's profound surprise, she learned that she had cancer and the helper became the one who needed help. Breast cancer was confirmed and Liane, who now lived in Prince Charles Place, was the first to be told. The community responded with a range of reaction from shock, kisses, hugs, and support to not knowing what to do or say. One woman prepared a bristol board of well wishing and Liane began calling to find out how Cathy was doing and not to talk about Liane's life. As Cathy said, *"Liane calls to tell me jokes and include me in her life."*

Kerr Street had become a safe place for Cathy where she is held in high regard and where she can be nurtured. *"I have an infirmity the way many others do at Kerr Street and now I am accepted and acceptable – just like them. And I can still minister, even though I am wounded."* Kerr Street Ministries has come full circle. Now, the giver is receiving and the receivers are giving.

MARGARET'S MOVE TO KSM

Margaret was probably affluent Oakville's first homeless person. She had been working at Ford where new technology caused the elimination of her job. At that time, she experienced a number of setbacks including divorce, deaths in the family and physical afflictions of high blood pressure, diabetes and M.S. Being fiercely independent, Margaret had no place to go, so she chose to live on the street. Her home became her Dodge Caravan, which she slept in at Coronation Park for three years. She survived on bread, packaged bologna and pop. Every day she would go to a different Tim Horton's coffee shop to use the washroom to clean up and have a tea. She realized that she needed help and she sought out a Christian doctor who diagnosed her with Dissociative Identity Disorder from a family background of Satanic Ritual Abuse.

Margaret had heard about Ross Macdonald, one of Chartwell Baptist Church's pastors, who was also a counselor, and she gave him a call. She joined Ross's Chartwell congregation and started regularly attending the service at Oakville Trafalgar High School. Her willingness to volunteer showed as she helped by running the soundboard and the Power Point.

Margaret applied for low-cost housing at Prince Charles Place and was told that there was a long waiting list. After three years, she was accepted in a co-live arrangement with Marlene. Within two months, she went to Ron Shantz requesting her own place and several months later she had her own apartment. Margaret started to attend a Saturday morning prayer group and soon she was volunteering at the food co-op and doing bread

pick-up runs in the evening. She said that the Prince Charles Place apartment complex was a community. *“Kerr Street Ministries provided groceries that really helped you get along and if somebody was sick, you would find somebody there with a pot of soup.”*

Then, the Chambers’ daughter, Emily, who was the first summer camp director, recommended to Ron that Margaret be asked to help the kids’ summer camp by shopping and preparing meals for the campers. Margaret undertook this challenge and, as a result, prepared breakfast, lunch and dinner for 80 kids for eight days. That is 1,920 meals over the duration of the camp. Here was a homeless woman who had been living on the street with barely enough food for herself, making and serving 1,920 meals to the kids from the community. And this volunteering was just the beginning. Margaret has handled all the meals for the camp as it grew for all but two years. In addition, Ron had a vision to bring the Oakville churches together over a meal and Margaret has prepared the meal for the pastors’ lunch every second month. Her ability to cook and serve has also included preparing for communion and cooking Christmas and Valentine lunches for the Oakville seniors’ group. More recently the seniors’ lunches have been catered, but Margaret has become the leader of the committee for the seniors’ group arranging speakers, events and editing the seniors’ newsletters.

I came to know Margaret when I was a leader of the Chartwell Stephen Ministry group. We trained volunteers to become Christian caregivers and Margaret was a member of our team. Subsequently, Margaret has used these skills to be a caregiver at Prince Charles Place. From time to time, people appear on her doorstep with tears. She opens her door and listens to their stories. She now has from 5 to 7 regular people to whom she regularly offers comfort.

Margaret has a wonderful sense of humor as she dryly says, *“My square footage significantly increased when I moved from my van to Prince Charles Place.”* She works as a part-time assistant to Bev Hadland, who has an international ministry to teenagers called “Straight Talk”, and she uses her creative gifts to produce banners for churches. She has given three beautiful banners to Ross Macdonald’s new Chartwell at King’s congregation. The banners celebrate: Wisdom, Forgiveness and Joy. Margaret’s own counseling has continued and she has established a life for herself that is making a difference. As she says, *“With all my infirmities, which now include fibromyalgia, I am going to be active for as long as I can.”*

JOAN JOINS IN

Joan is a 57 year old single woman who lives at Prince Charles Place on a disability pension. She and her husband first heard about Prince Charles Place when she was healthy; they moved in and paid full price for the rent. Her husband then left her, her mother passed away in July 1996 and she developed osteoporosis and osteoarthritis. She then started having migraine headaches and the muscle spasms and pain contributed to depression. Up until 1998, Joan worked at the Salvation Army where she was the cashier in the retail store, but the combination of factors forced her to stop work. In 2000, Joan was accepted into the Ontario Disability Support Program and now pays an income appropriate rent. Eleanor, the superintendent’s wife, noticed Joan depressed and alone in her room, so she encouraged Joan to come down to volunteer at the food Co-Op. As Joan said, “At first I used to keep to myself, but when I volunteered, I found that I liked meeting people.” Joan has consistently worked the cash since then at Kerr Street Market

and today she is the head cashier. “It’s my way of giving back to Prince Charles Place for all they have done for me.” And what has Prince Charles Place done for Joan? She started going to the Saturday morning breakfast as a way of getting out. Over time, she added Thursday night worship, the Sunday morning church service with pastor Rich and more recently the Monday evening Alpha group. Now, Joan is a member of the Wednesday afternoon “disability group” which helps get others out to embark on excursions and to hear guest speakers. While the osteoarthritis pain is still there in her knees and back, she no longer languishes in her apartment. She volunteers Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Saturday and she has even made a best friend through the drop-in center. Joan’s healing came not through counseling, but from contact with people. She sees Kerr Street Ministries reaching out to more people and in so doing, Joan has found that it has helped her be free of her bouts of depression. She said, “Bill and Eleanor were like extended family and I felt the friendliness of the community.” Joan is an example of how the people at Kerr Street Ministries help each other by being in community.

PETER’S PAIN

Peter was a happy child who was a consistently high achiever in the lower levels at school. He was told that he was gifted in creative writing and through high school he was an excellent student. But in grade 13 things changed. He fell into a deep, profound depression. For some reason, his brain chemistry altered and he found that he had trouble concentrating. As well, an acquaintance committed suicide.

In 1987, he was accepted into Toronto’s Ryerson Polytechnical Institute in Toronto to study journalism, but even though he valued education, he would stare at his

class schedule for 45 minutes and could not figure out how to get to class. He was admitted to hospital that October and, around that time, he swallowed 45 antidepressant pills. The Doctor said that it was a miracle that he survived. He was then diagnosed with a brain disease and made a second suicide attempt.

Peter was in and out of hospitals for several years and, in between, he lived in group homes. He tried a Continuing Education course in English, but pulled out after 2 classes. He credits his survival in those years to a positive attitude, some new medications, the love and support of his family and the influence of the English musical group *Eyeless In Gaza*. While he was not a Christian, he had bought a crucifix and the music of *Eyeless In Gaza* filled him with joy, helping him come to his Christian faith.

While living on a disability pension (ODSP), his support worker heard about Prince Charles Place and helped Peter get an interview with Ron Shantz. The support worker had heard that it was a Christian Community and thought it might be a good place for Peter to live. Peter moved in four years ago at age 32 and, as he said, *“I started slowly. I was wrapped up in my own world and troubles.”* Members of the community would go over to St. Aidans church on Thursday evenings for a dinner and a casual service. Peter started to join them and *“One night Ron Shantz and I were driving back from St. Aidans and he asked me if I would be interested in being baptized. My parents had told me at an early age that they would leave it up to me to decide if I wanted to be baptized. Subsequently, I attended Chartwell Baptist Church’s Sacred Assembly and, as the evenings progressed, I would look around at those people near me and wonder – what is this great thing - Jesus Christ - that can bring smiles upon their faces? Their joy? Their rapture? I had seen the way people helped out at Prince Charles Place. People*

there were happy, kind, very nice to each other, benevolent. I told Pastor Rich that night that I wanted to be baptized. (I was baptized last summer in Ron Shantz' swimming pool and I felt cleansed, renewed and changed). Previous to the Sacred Assembly, I started getting involved with Saturday breakfasts where I helped by taking out the garbage after it was over and then it evolved to joining in on Sunday mornings where I helped by making the coffee."

Peter described Christian Community as: *"we are the body of Christ helping each other. We are friends who interact together and help each other. If I have any questions about my Christian faith, Ron, Pastor Rich, Marion or Laura are there to help me and they pray for me too. For the last two years I have been in the Alpha group on Monday evening and this year I brought a friend."*

Peter is now putting his writing skills to use on a quarterly newsletter for Kerr Street Ministries. He has a part-time job at Sheridan College and he is living in a *"lively, happy place"*. The main change he notices is: *"I am less concerned about myself and I try to live a life that is more selfless."*

Peter has not only grown in his faith, but he is hoping to continue to grow in other areas in his life. *"I notice that I am doing much better since coming to the Christian faith. As a Christian, I try to do something nice for someone else every day. It can be as innocuous as holding the door for someone or picking up something from the ground. My musical choices now reflect my faith. I believe that when we wake up every day and the sun shines on us, it is God giving us the gift of another brand new day, and the thing is, what gift can we give the Lord in return. When we sleep at night, can we honestly say we*

pleased Him during the day? Even if the answer is no, He is so great and mighty because He always gives us one more chance. I know. I would not be here without Him!”

CONCLUSION

The past and present words that we accept about ourselves, in our minds, have a profound influence on our self-concept and our mental health. Norman Vincent Peale understood this fact when he wrote the book “*The Power of Positive Thinking*”. **Words have power.** What we think affects: how we know ourselves, how we feel, how we behave and how we relate to others and to God. The problem is that we live in a fallen world and, since conception, our minds have been programmed by life’s events and experiences in a way that have contributed to a distorted image of ourselves and of God. We looked at how the Distorted Self is created when hurtful things happen in our lives and we interpret the events personally and negatively. We may accept other peoples’ words, or create our own words that we accept, and these words become attached to memories. Painful “feelings” that were experienced become attached to the words, and together, the words and emotions remain embedded in the memories, which are stored in the brain. As a result, we live in the present with a collection of data that contributes to our current belief of whom we are. We may not even be aware of past mental agreements or past mental conclusions that we have made which affect our lives today. The problem is the subtle and persistent acceptance of lies and false messages that hide our True Self In Christ. In addition, the presence of an unloving, hurtful birth father, and damaging experiences of worldly power and authority, contribute to a distorted image of God as angry, judging and punishing. When we come to know truth about God and about ourselves, we have the opportunity to remove the false messages and begin to discover the words that describe our True Self In Christ. Once we are aware of the Distorted Self,

we do not need to live with it any longer. When Jesus Christ is invited to bring His truth into the painful memories, the inner healing produces a transformation of the mind. Here are some of the benefits of this type of cognitive and emotional healing.

The Benefits Of Inner Healing

The first benefit is the **removal and elimination of the inner pain** that has been embedded in memories. When the memory is transformed with the truth of Jesus, people say things like, *“The pain is no longer there”, or “ it doesn’t matter now”, or “ I feel peace and calm”*.

The second benefit of Inner Healing is that the elimination of pain **frees the mind to think more clearly**. Without the pain, mental torment and confusion, the mind is now free to focus on life. One client said, *“Now I can see the danger coming and I don’t let it hit me, whereas before the arrow would pierce my heart before I even knew it was coming.”* Others say, *“I can read the Bible now and understand what it is saying.”* or, *“I just seem to be able to think more clearly now.”*

The third benefit is that a healed soul is **able to know the True Self In Christ**. With the lies gone and the false messages removed, the transformed mind can receive and accept the True Self In Christ. Then, clients often say, *“Now I am free to be me!”*

The fourth benefit of Inner Healing is a **renewed understanding of the love of Christ and His character** as a kind, gentle, loving friend. When Jesus personally comes and brings the transforming truth, faith is strengthened and the relationship with Jesus grows stronger. To know experientially that **Jesus lives today and is willing to come and heal today**, is affirming.

“O Lord my God, I called to you for help and you healed me.”¹

The fifth benefit of Inner Healing is **improved relationships**. Fewer walls are needed because the pain inside (which is now gone) does not need to be protected. You do not need to keep people away because what they say and do will not hurt as much as before. In addition, inner peace increases the ability to be tolerant and patient with others. Clients often say, *“I don’t react the way I used to with frustration or fear.”*

The sixth benefit is an **ability to be emotionally intimate**. Most troubled relationships lack emotional intimacy. A healed soul can get close, connect emotionally and share love. With the walls down and love flowing in and out, a healed soul is able to be there for another with care, gentleness, nurturing and giving. Clients say, *“I don’t need to run away anymore. I can stay and talk.”*

The seventh benefit of Inner Healing is the **freedom to love more easily**. It is difficult to love when you are in hiding, wounded or in captivity. Inner healing is the way Jesus frees the captives, releases the prisoners and binds up the brokenhearted. Clients have said, *“The anger is gone,”* or *“I don’t need to defend myself,”* or *“I can forgive now.”* In addition, inner healing releases the fruits of the Holy Spirit of *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.”*²

Jesus is just waiting for the person to use his/her own will to invite Him into the painful places of the mind, so that He can heal the memories and restore the soul.

¹ Psalm 30:2, NIV

² Galatians 5:22, NIV

*“He restores my soul.”*³

I encourage you to invite Jesus into your life and into your mind, so that you too can be free.

*“I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.”*⁴

Two Changes I Observe

The New Testament tells us that there are two main commandments in the new covenant:

- *“Love God with all our heart and soul and mind,”*⁵ and
- *“Love your neighbor as yourself.”*⁶

It is interesting to note that, as my clients’ souls are transformed and healed, they start to tell me, on an unsolicited basis, how they want to love God and help or serve others more. It is truly amazing to hear my clients start to talk about these two subjects as they become free. It is my conclusion that God designed us to love Him and to love others and that, as people become free, they naturally want to do what they were designed to do.

The stories of Real People, while they provide examples of how individuals change, they don’t show the multiplier affect that naturally flows from the inner healing. That is why I included the Prince Charles Place/Kerr Street Ministries’ story. It is interesting to see in the KSM story how highly wounded people can be transformed by the love of God through Christ-Centered inner healing and, as well, by living in a loving

³ Psalm 23:3, NIV

⁴ John 10:10, NIV

⁵ Matthew 22:37, NIV

⁶ Matthew 22:39, NIV

community. The willingness to accept and treat others with respect and goodwill has a positive circular effect. To love others from a healed soul helps heal other souls. And a soul that receives love is then more willing to be friendly and offer love to others. The Kerr Street/Prince Charles Place community demonstrates that a loving environment can help in the healing process. When a person is cared for, nurtured and supported, it is easier to make the decision to come out of hiding, to receive truth, to heal and, in turn, offer love to others. As Peter said in his story, “I try to do something nice for someone else every day.”

When a person is healed inside, there is a peace and calmness. The turmoil is gone and the mind can relax. Pain no longer clouds the mind and the anger and bitterness depart. As the soul receives the love and the healing truth of Jesus, the individual now, to exist, does not need to seek love, attention and affirmation from others, but can freely offer love without a need for something in return. That is to say, it is very difficult for a self-centered, wounded, pain-filled soul to be “other” oriented, but it is possible for a soul that has been healed and filled with love to offer unconditional love to others.

So, my hope is that this book has opened your eyes to the existence of the Distorted Self and that, as you invite Jesus into your mind, you will discover and come to know your True Self In Christ. May the words that you choose to accept in your mind be not just positive thoughts, but words that will free you to be yourself in Christ.

