

## GOD'S TRAINING: Beyond David, 6<sup>th</sup> of 6, part 2 of 2, 22 pgs

### PRINCIPLES TO LIVE BY & things to ponder

**God's training is not easy** – it's not meant to be. He is both training us for war (2 Cor.10:3-5; Col. 2:8) and preparing us for heaven, *The Lord will rescue me from every malicious work and will bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom, 2 Tim.4:18.* [Paul was expecting to die soon (v.6) so he is not referring to physical delivery, but to deliverance from wicked spiritual attacks that might prevent him from finishing well.]

**The disciples knew Jesus Christ as The Holy One of God (Jn.6:69) and as Jesus Christ, the Righteous One, 1Jn.2:1.** We saw in GT#1 that *God reckoned Abraham's faith as righteousness [which means that God counted or construed his acting in faith as obedience], Gen.15:1-6.*

**The Westminster shorter catechism** states that Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy him forever. I had a friend who formulated it this way, Man's chief end is to glorify God, by enjoying him forever. *There is a parallel construction to this, Love God by loving each other, an inability to love God is the inevitable result of hating a fellow Christian. If anyone says I love God and yet hates his fellow Christian, he is a liar, because the one who does not love his fellow Christian whom he has seen cannot love God whom he has not seen, 1 Jn.4:20.*

**Always give God the benefit of the doubt.** Interpret all things in his favor. In other words, place a positive construction on the events and circumstances of your life because God is good, he cares for you, and does what is right > always, Eph.5:20; 1 Thes.5:18. The circumstances are not the problem, it's what you make of them that counts. Develop a mindset **beyond** merely resolving your own difficulties or taking care of your own affairs. Relabel problems as opportunities to serve others. Convert them by an act of your will [decide, choose to do this]. There is much joy in helping other people work out their issues and achieve their dreams [p.9 & 12 below].

### the 3 Tiers of the Framework of Truth

I conceptualize the **truth** as having **3 tiers**. The **first and most basic tier** is knowledge and understanding of the origin and propagation of various life forms, and the creation and population of the contents of the universe and laws by which it operates or INTELLIGENT DESIGN. [this is addressed in 8 videos entitled **Intelligent Design vs. Scientific Naturalism.** cf discussion of the 2 chairs in a sealed room, p.128-131, Death in the City] *I recommend that these videos be presented twice, once for children and adults (age 15+) before or during their first year of high school and again before the end of their senior year.* Upon this rests the **second tier**, New Covenant Theology [cf **New Covenant Church & Baptist Distinctives**] – the correct theological perspective and system for organizing and interpreting Scripture **The tier 2 approach to Scripture** suggests that there are at least 3 steps necessary for correctly handling Bible passages:

- (1) What does the passage **say**? [requires an accurate translation and definitions]
- (2) What does the passage **mean** by what it says? What am I to understand from it? [requires an accurate interpretation and definitions of both the passage and its logical implications]
- (3) Examine yourself by asking what does this passage call me to believe, do, avoid, or stop doing? For example, what is an **appropriate response** to (attitude toward) this passage and its logical

implications? [requires that we believe in & trust God, and act accordingly]

**Implication:** We are responsible for **understanding and believing the truth, command, or promise and its logical implications** [which are inextricably bound to it] as well as **implementing the task** we are given by it.

### The 3rd Tier of TRUTH – the practical development of YOUR salvation

This series of essays is about **God's training [conditioning] program** for his people. **Tier 3** is based on a mix of **knowledge** [accumulation of facts] and **understanding** [integration of facts] modified by **wisdom, common sense, and experience** [application of understanding to real world situations] **within the Christian framework**. Like everything else in the Christian life, these qualities [positive traits, characteristics, abilities] are not meant to stand alone, but practiced as elements of faith.

*Wisdom [personified] calls aloud in the street, she raises her voice in the public squares ... in the gateways of the city she makes her speech [wisdom is commonly available everywhere to all who will pay attention], **Prov.1:20-21; 8:1-4; 2:6; 23:12.** [cf **SELF-AWARENESS IN THE PURSUIT OF TRUTH, BEAUTY, & WISDOM, p.5-9**]*

*... may your love abound even more and more **in knowledge and every kind of insight so that you can decide what is best**, and thus be sincere and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ ... **Phil.1:9-11.***

**The focus of these essays is to set the framework for unpacking the subjects, means, and purposes of God's training** ... *the exhortation is addressed to you as sons ... **My son**, do not **despise the discipline** [lit, child training] of the Lord, **nor be discouraged** when you are being **reproved** [or rebuked, lit, whipped] by him; for whom the Lord loves he **disciplines**, and **chastises** [not punishment but correction as necessary to bring us back to fellowship with himself, **TS p.98-102, 105, see p.18 below**] **every son** whom he receives, **Heb.12:4-6** Phillips.*

Discouraged, demoralized, disheartened by failure? Disappointed & ashamed of yourself, defeated, dejected, frustrated with your life? Christians don't have to be.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r0U0AILVqpk> **Welcome to My Life.**

*These may certainly happen, but we don't have to constantly live that way because **nothing is able to keep us separated from the love of Christ.** In all these kinds of things **we are more than conquerors through him who loves us, Rom.8:37-39.***

### **Tier 2 instructions from the Scriptures** - to live a new life in the Spirit!

*Rejoice always. Pray without ceasing. **In everything give thanks** . For this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus. **Do not extinguish the Spirit ... 1 Thes.5:16-19** .*

*Rejoice in the Lord always ... Let everyone see your sweet reasonableness. **The Lord is near** [meaning our redemption is at hand] ... **in every situation, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving** , **tell your requests to God** , **Phil.4:4-6** .*

*... **be filled with the Spirit** [active passivity] by speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs (singing and making music with your hearts to the Lord), by **always giving thanks for everything to God the Father** , in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, **Eph.5:18-20** .*

**Do not be slothful in zeal** , be **fervent in spirit** , serve the Lord. Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer , **Rom.12:11-12** .

... all of creation is groaning with birth pains right up to the present time ... also we ... who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while **we eagerly await our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body** . Indeed, it was for this hope we were saved ... we eagerly wait for it with patient endurance ... the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we should pray for, but the Spirit himself ... intercedes for the saints, according to God's will. We know that **God works** [*orchestrates, coordinates, arranges*] **all things together for good** for the ones who love Him, for those who are called according to his purpose ... **Rom.8:22-28**.

### The Spiritual Battle

The world of thoughts distinguishes me as a man ... **People are unique in the inner life of the mind** – What they are in their thought world determines how they act. The real battle for men is in the world of ideas ... The spiritual battle, the loss or victory, is always in the thought-world ... People have **presuppositions** [*the basic way one looks at life, our foundational world view, the grid through which we see the world*] and they will live more consistently on the basis of them than even they themselves may realize. **Presuppositions rest upon** that which one considers to be the truth of what exists ... To understand today's world – we must trace three lines in history, the philosophic [*seeks intellectual answers to the basic questions of life*] , the **scientific** [*the makeup of the physical universe and then the practical application of what is discovered in technology*] , and the **religious** [*the supernatural universe next door*] ... Francis Schaeffer, How Should We then Live , 1976, **p.19** .

### Tier 3, working out your salvation

Finally **the third tier** [usually described by the terms “practical” and “application,” of **Implications the depth and nuances of Scrip.**] representing **God's training program** for his people explains his reasons and methods for accomplishing his goals. Approaching teaching this way is not new. Usually a few Scriptures define the subject in terms of what one should or should not do, leaving the wisdom of how to proceed, why, what to avoid, and other important details unspecified. **It is these details that comprise the third tier**, the working out of our own salvation, **Phil.2:12-13**.

OPERATING PRINCIPLE: **Equity** – As a matter of maintaining a good conscience before God, always work out **how to thoughtfully implement** what you know IN YOUR HEART to be right, good, just, or according to God's will, even if you don't have a specific command or directions as to how to proceed [cf **p.5** below], and do not let fear hold you back from taking the appropriate course of action, **Gen.18:19; 1 Pt.3:16-17; 4:19; Gal.6:9-10; Jas.4:17**.

*Do not be conformed to [molded by, pres. impf. pass.] this age, but be transformed [from within , pres. impf. pass.] by the renewing of your mind*, so that you may discern what is the good, pleasing, and perfect will of God, **Rom.12:2** .

Have done with impurity and every other evil which touches the lives of others, and humbly accept the message that God has [*supernaturally*] sown in your hearts and which can save your souls ... The man who simply hears and **does nothing about it** is like a man catching his reflection ... in a mirror ... he goes on with whatever he was doing without the slightest recollection of what sort of

person he saw there. But the man who looks into the perfect mirror of God's law, the law of liberty (or freedom), and **makes a habit of so doing**, does not see and then forget. He puts that law into practice [tier 3 obedience] and [is blessed], **Jas.1:21-25** (Phillips).

**Hearing the word** involves **tier 2, working through the passage** to get at its meaning, the TRUTH, WHAT to DO or AVOID. That's why I insert bracketed material and include notes of commentary. **Dialog** with the passages, look things up, cross reference them, etc., meditating, clarifying and teasing out the implications. **Going from hearing to doing is a tier 2 to tier 3 motion** working out the HOW to best proceed, WHAT to avoid, and WHY. It involves recognizing clues and formulating principles, all of which go toward remembering what I saw in the mirror, **Jas.1:23-25**, and keeping up **the discipline of working out my own salvation ... [as a matter of obedience, discipline yourself to] continue to work out your salvation [tiers 2 > 3] with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose, Phil.2:12-13 . [ Mt.7:24-27; cf p.3-5 in Self-Awareness]** This means that we are to apply ourselves to discover, understand, and implement tier 3 knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and experience. My objective here is not to give you another set of do's & dont's, but **to get you started thinking this way so you can begin filling in the gaps yourself**.

*In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ ... In him we have also obtained an inheritance, because we were predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in keeping with the purpose of his will ... you also were included in Christ when you heard the message of truth , the gospel of your salvation . When you believed , you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession ... Eph.1:5, 11-14 .*

### **What's Going on in Christian Churches?**

This three tiered approach to truth and knowledge is part of my solution to **why the Christian churches are bleeding young people**, and not just young people. I suggest that a major reason for this loss, especially among young people, is due to a MISSING GOAL-DIRECTED PURPOSE. **The absence of the drive that a Gospel oriented focus lends to one's life leads to stagnation: listlessness, boredom, laziness, entanglement in the affairs of the world, and ultimately leaving Christianity.** I think this is mainly the condition and fault of the parents for not coming alongside their children to help them develop a sense of spiritual MISSION by MENTORING them and TRAINING TOGETHER with them in the pursuit of God. [cf **Chronological approach to teaching the whole Bible**] For an example of a well thought-out and organized program to integrate children into a church's community life, see <https://www.zionwego.org/life-at-zion/christian-catechesis> **We cannot pass on nominal Christianity and expect it to result in true spirituality in the next generation.**

Many churches have a mission statement declaring their goal to evangelize the world [cf **Great Commission, p.2**]. I think this is too grand and unrealistic. **GT#1 & 2** testify to the centrality of training with our kids to follow Jesus. They emphasize that a more sensible and rewarding effort is to work with our families and expand them to include others that all of us might live a spiritual, supernatural life [cf **GT#2, p.5 & 9**] *For each of us as Christians, the important thing is that there are some people who can be thankful that we have lived and that God has worked through us , NLP p.152*

*I've been saved since 1969 and I've had a lot of exegetical and exhortation type sermons. Frankly I'm tired of the reading and listening to the same **tier 2** type materials, book studies, and approaches recycled over and over again. [Though I still enjoy and learn from some **tier 2** books and presentations.]*

The whole top **tier (3)** representing God's training and much of the bottom **tier (1)** on intelligent design have been under-emphasized. **From here on** we will looking at a small incomplete **sample** of teaching on forgiveness from **tier 2 & 3** perspectives framed by the **life studies** in the three essays.

### **TIER 2 Instruction: our treatment of one another**

There are a lot of passages that belong to this category. I'm only quoting this one before moving on to forgiveness, which falls under this topic.

**Love must be sincere** [MOC p.19, 27]. *Hate what is evil; cling to what is good. Be devoted to one another in love. Honor one another above yourselves. Never be lacking in zeal, but keep your spiritual fervor, serving the Lord. Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. Share with the Lord's people who are in need. Practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn [suffer heartbreak] with those who mourn. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud [aloof], but be willing to associate with people of low station. Do not be conceited. Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone [Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God, Mt.5:9], If possible as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone [your enemy may not want peace]. Do not take revenge ... but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord (Dt.32:35). On the contrary: If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink [gesture of friendship]. In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head [not as a matter of retribution, but in the hope that his burning conscience will bring him to repentance. Prov.25:21-22 adds: and the Lord will reward you] Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good, Rom.12:9-21; Eph.4:25, 28-32.*

**You Raise Me Up** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aJxrX42WcjQ>

God supplies some detailed instructions and illustrations for what his words mean, and HOW TO implement them, but he leaves much **for us to think about** because he wants us to do just that! [the key to living as a Christian is to work out our own salvation by bringing the Scriptures to life] That is what **tier 3** is all about, exercising and applying ourselves to giving birth to God's words as LIVING REALITY in this poor world. The perspective from **God's training** purpose has led us to a tier 3 rescue mission for a church suffering from **tier 2** repetitive theological malnourishment, like people *who have no clothes or food, to whom we say Go, I hope everything turns out fine for you? Keep warm. Eat well ... Then what good have you done? It is the same with faith. If it doesn't move us to do something, it's dead [useless], Jas.2:15-17; 1 Thes.1:3.*

**Romans 1:5 and 16:26** contain a phrase from which a personal principle of conduct may be derived. *Obedience of faith* is a technical phrase that refers to evangelizing Gentiles. I've **repurposed** it and adapted it to use as a nontechnical general principle for living as a Christian with **equity**: **Acting**

as your faith in Christ inspires you to, is appropriate, and in accordance with the Scriptures [p.3 above].

### Tier 3: LEARNING TO RECOGNIZE CLUES AND FORMULATE PRINCIPLES

**Principles** can be found all over Scripture connected to specific contexts. By its very nature, a principle can be applied to many contexts besides the one you discover it in. Scripture is also loaded with **hints** to biblical characters and to us, the readers. Sometimes the **clues** are stated outright like David's recognition that God sent **Abigail** to warn him from avenging himself and ruining his reputation, **1 Sam.25:2-35**. Other times we can see them, but the actors couldn't, like David's attempts to conceal his sin with Uriah's wife, **2 Sam.11:1-13**. Sometimes the revelation is more **subtle**, suggesting to us that the actor's understanding of something having to do with God's purposes was foreshadowing future events like the way **Moses** thought of himself, was thought of by his parents, and that eventually turned out to be God's mission for him, **Heb.11:23; Ex.2:1-2, 11-14; Acts 7:25; Ex.3:2-10**. In all cases God is active in the world, working with his people.

In life we also are given clues not as prophesies, but as warnings and to give us a "heads up" to something that needs attending to, like noisy brakes that should alert us to replace the break pads before something more serious and expensive happens. Often things we already knew or had been given hints of would have kept us from trouble had we listened at the time. One day I was in the right lane riding a kick scooter down hill at about 20 mph on a newly paved 2-lane highway. There was a pickup truck coming up behind me so I looked ahead to see if the other lane was clear so I switched lanes. As I did, I violated a basic principle that I knew, *always keep your eyes on the road surface directly in front of the front wheel*. On this beautiful, smooth recently paved road, I hit a shallow unpaved depression the road crew had missed that completely surprised me, jerked my front wheel to the side causing me to over-correct to the other side and I went down hard! You can ride through all kinds of small obstacles if you see them first. I have since learned to formulate principles from clues before (and after) incidents like this and verbalize them to myself. Saying principles to yourself [hearing them] and teaching them to others reinforces them in your mind and makes them a lot harder to ignore.

### TIER 2 TRAINING: The Imperative of a Clear Conscience

The effectiveness of conscience depends upon the condition or health of one's conscience and his knowledge of and adherence to the truth. Maturity involves developing a good (**Acts 23:1**) and clear (**Acts 24:16**) conscience. Neglect results in a damaged conscience: seared, **1 Tim.4: 2**; weak, wounded, **1 Cor.8:12**; guilty, evil, **Heb.10:22**; or a corrupted and defiled conscience, **Tit.1:15**.

*herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men, [how is unspecified here] Acts 24:16.*

*our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves in the world ... in simplicity and purity from God; and not in fleshly wisdom, but in the grace of God, 2 Cor.1:12*

### Tier 2: LEARNING FROM THE REPROOFS OF LIFE

CONFESSION & REFUSAL TO CONFESS SIN: *Oh, what joy for those whose disobedience is forgiven, whose sin is put out of sight! Yes, what joy for those whose record the LORD has cleared of guilt, whose lives are lived in complete honesty! When I refused to confess my sin [to make an*

*effort to clear my conscience, it took its toll on me] , my body wasted away, and I groaned all day long. Day and night your hand of discipline was heavy on me. My strength evaporated like water in the summer heat ... Finally, I confessed all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide my guilt. **I said to myself, I will confess my rebellion to the LORD. And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone** ... Therefore, let all the godly pray to YOU while there is still time, that they may not drown in the floodwaters of judgment [word picture], **Ps.32:1-6**.*

## **TIER 2 Strategy for The Age of the Persecuted Church**

**Essential Weapons for the Day of the persecuted Church:** *Our sole defense, our only weapon, is a **life of integrity** ... **2 Cor.6:7** (Phillips).*

*I ... sent you out to battle for the right **armed only with your faith and a clear conscience** [ lit. in order that by them you might war the good warfare]. Some, alas, have laid these simple **weapons** contemptuously aside [violated their consciences by **not** doing what they knew or believed to be **right** or by doing what they knew or believed to be **wrong**] and, as far as their faith is concerned have run their ships on the rocks, **1 Tim.1:18-19** (Phillips).*

**Our conscience serves as a moral compass that may be calibrated.** It is educatable which means we must take extreme care of the sense of right and wrong we impart to others as it will serve to **bind their consciences**. As we have seen in the life stories, **the chief duty** of parents is raising children. Passing on a living faith is **generational, Gen.18:19** [cf **Great Commission, p.2**]. Having a close-knit family and raising competent, considerate, and conscientious kids, as rewarding as that is, is spoiled when they turn away from the faith. **Christianity is not primarily about effort and moral improvement** [The God who is there by D.A. Carson, **p.188**] ... Biblically faithful Christianity does not present itself as a nice religious structure that makes happier parents, well-disciplined children, and good taxpaying citizens [p.210; **GT#2, p.5**]. **Training in the reality of supernatural living and true spirituality is the goal.** The prerequisite is that parents (and anyone who has a position of teaching or leadership in the family or church) know something of this as well.

*Train a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it, **Prov.22:6** .*

*Fathers ... raise your children up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, **Eph.6:4** .*

Looking at the current state of the children raised in Christian homes and churches among my relatives, my wife's, and many friends leads me to the conclusion that their exposure to Christianity has been **detrimental** to some of them with respect to obedience to the faith.

## **TIER 2 INSTRUCTION: Forgiving One Another**

**We are to be Known as Sons of God:** *peacemakers, **Mt.5:9**.*

**Importance of Forgiveness:** *Father forgive us our debts [The parallel passage, **Lk.11:4**, uses the term **sins**, to fail to measure up, miss or fall short of the target, followed by as we forgive everyone who is indebted to us; And when you stand praying, **if you have anything against anyone**, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may forgive you your **trespasses, Mk.11:25**], as we have forgiven our debtors [who failed to love us as Christ does]. And lead us not into temptation [a rhetorical way of asking for God's protection from sin], but deliver us from **the evil one** [ **Gen.4:1-8** ]. For if you forgive people [not just other Christians] their trespasses [false step, blunder, devia-*

tion from the right path], *your heavenly Father will also forgive you [reason and motivation to forgive others]. But if you do not forgive people [continue to hold a grudge against them], your Father will not forgive your trespasses [against him: **overstatement** to emphasize the **seriousness and importance of forgiveness in living spiritually, supernaturally unto God**. It is not adding a condition to salvation nor is it giving help about how to go about this], Mt.6:12-15.* The Gk NT has 10 different words that refer to some form of **wrongdoing**. Here the 3 parallel passages mix three different words which suggests that everything in the **category of wrongful treatment** is in view.

**What does the Bible say one has to do to be saved? Jn.1:11-12; 3:36.**

**Just as I am** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duTpgGI4sTU>

**v.2** - *Just as I am, and waiting not to rid my soul of one dark blot [cleaning up my life is not a prerequisite to being saved], to Thee, whose blood can cleanse each spot, O Lamb of God, I come.*

**v.5** - *Just as I am, Thou wilt receive, wilt welcome, pardon [forgive sin], cleanse [remove guilt], relieve [remove their burden]; because Thy promise [of salvation] I believe ...*

### TIER 2 INSTRUCTION & TIER 3 IMPLEMENTATION

*Bless those who **curse** you, pray for those who **mistreat** you, Lk.6:28; Rom.12:14.* Jesus makes it clear that we are to love every person, including those who hate us and treat us as enemies, Lk.6:27; Mt.5:43-45. **To do so is our warfare**, to avoid being **overcome by evil ourselves** and instead to **triumph over evil with good**, Rom.12:20-21.

*Do not hate your brother IN YOUR HEART [forgive him]. **Rebuke** your neighbor frankly [earnestly, without reservations, Acts 8:9-24] so you will not share in his guilt [it's wrong not to correct someone who needs correcting, to practice tough love for his benefit and yours, Ez.3:17; 33:6] Lev.19:17. **Do not seek revenge or bear a grudge against anyone** among your people, but love your neighbor as yourself, v.18. [By having compassion enough to do something – to speak to his conscience. Confront him in love with the truth (Mk.10:21; Eph.4:25) and refuse to ignore his sin, Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth, 1 Cor.13:6.] If your brother [a fellow believer] sins against you, go and **reprove him** just between the two of you. If he listens to you [repents], you have regained your [lost] brother, Mt.18:15.*

**What is an appropriate response to your brother who sins against you, Lk.17:3; Mt.18:15? Repri-mand him, call him on it to correct him and to repair the damage.** Is your forgiveness of someone who wrongs you **contingent upon their repentance** and asking for forgiveness? Don't forget, **God is actively training you!** Holding a grudge is never appropriate, justified, or wise <sup>Apdx.11</sup> [cf comment on Rom.12:2, p.4]. **Lev.19:17-18** is telling us to go the extra mile. If you wait for someone else to make the first move, you will miss your opportunity and blessing that comes with **peacemaking**. Remember Schaeffer's words quoted in **GT#2, p.7**, *When I have sinned, I am to be sorry for it ... How to let my sin break my heart so I am able to forgive is a tier 3 matter.*

What assumptions does forgiveness FROM THE HEART imply? *I will not dwell on this incident or bring it up again to use against you, or talk to others about it, or allow it to interfere with our friendship. Love Keeps no record of wrongs, 1 Cor.13:5.*

brothers, if anyone among you **errs from the truth** and someone turns [returns] him will cover a multitude of sins [interrupt the chain of misconduct from being fully expressed], **Jas.5:19-20**.

Brothers, if a person is **caught in some trespass**, you who are spiritual [Christians] should restore him [his failure to initiate reconciliation shows that he needs you to jump-start the process] in a spirit of humility, carefully watching yourself so that you are not also tempted [how is unspecified]. Bear one another's burdens, and in this way fulfill the law of Christ [love, **p.1 & 12**], **Gal.6:1-2**.

### the Apostles Testify to the Jewish High Council

The high priest and his officials, Sadducees, were filled with jealousy ... We must obey God rather than any human authority [the apostles insisted on holding to this over-riding principle]. The God of our ancestors raised Jesus from the dead **after you** [and the Romans] **killed him** by hanging him on a cross. Then God put him in the place of honor at his right hand as Prince and Savior. He did this so the people of Israel would repent of their sins and be forgiven. We are witnesses of these things and so is the Holy Spirit, who is given by God **to those who obey him**. When they heard this, the high council was furious and decided to murder them [jealousy matures into anger and leads to hatred that ends in murder ], **Acts 5:17, 29-33**; see **Acts 7**, the stoning of Stephen.

**FORGIVENESS** looks at the wounds of the offense as God's way of drawing attention to the offender's needs and giving us the opportunity to work with him in his life [cf **Partnership** in **GT#1, p.5**]. On Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, a girl possessed by the devil continually disrupted Paul's meetings, he could have become angry and frustrated by her disturbances. Instead her disruption made him keenly aware of her spiritual needs and resulted in her healing and the authentication of Paul's Gospel to the glory of God, **Acts 16:16-18**.<sup>a</sup> Likewise, in accord with **ways to love others**, taking a support role in helping them overcome obstacles will result in joy, satisfaction, and fulfillment for us, **Phil.2:3-4**.

The **tier 2 instruction** for this situation suggests the following **tier 3 steps** elaborated elsewhere:  
**1)** forgive the offender by considering God's forgiveness of your trespasses, **Mk.11:25; Mt.6:14-15; Col.3:13**. Allow your meditation on Christ's sacrifice to soften your heart and pave the way for forgiving your neighbor's basic offense. As you have received God's mercy, so extend mercy to others.  
**2)** Thank the LORD for his undeserved mercy and ask that he would bless your visit and grant the offender repentance for his offense. **3)** Plan your contact with the offender at a time and place that you will not be interrupted. **4)** Consider that he is already experiencing the weight of guilt on his conscience. **5)** Approach him in love and confront him with his basic offense as a healer and tell him you forgive him. **6)** The first step in restoration after one sins is to acknowledge the sin to God and respond with gratefulness and relief for his forgiveness.

As God forgave David for his terrible sins against Uriah, so he will forgive every Christian who earnestly confesses his sin. *My children ... If anyone does sin, we have an Advocate before the Father: Jesus Christ, the Righteous One ... If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just [righteous] to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, 1 Jn.1:9; 2:1. As I consciously say, "thank you" to God for Christ's **completed work**, my conscience should come into rest ... is it not wonderful that when we do sin, we can hurry to the place of resolution? So God means us to have as one of his gifts in this life, freedom from a false tyranny of the conscience, **TS***

p.104-106; *psychological guilt*, p.131-133.

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a. *No good deed goes unpunished* is a cynical, secular proverb that often applies to Christians, **2 Tim.3:12**. The Apostles were certainly aware of this. As a result of casting out the demon, Paul & Silas were severely flogged, chained, and imprisoned. But about midnight, God unchained all the prisoners and opened all the prison doors which led to the salvation of the jailer and his whole family. *He was filled with joy because he and his whole family had come to believe in God, Acts 16:34*. Then they encouraged the local Christians before they left the area.

There are no insignificant people and no unimportant places, **NLP, p.13-25**. Some time after Peter's great sermon at Pentecost where about 3,000 people were added to the church, he & John were going up to the temple where a cripple was put every day to beg. This time, instead of passing by, Peter said, *In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!* **Acts 3:1-10**. *All the people who saw him walking, and jumping, and praising God, recognized him* and Peter delivered another great sermon to which about 5,000 people responded, **3:11-4:4**. This resulted in their arrest, testimony to the rulers and elders of the people, and their release, **4:5-21**. They reported these events to the church and prayed together. *After they prayed ... they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly, 4:23-31*.

### Consequences of Not Forgiving

Many personal problems cannot be overcome or effectively counseled without first obtaining a clear conscience [ie, people cannot be helped with most other difficulties without first dealing with the reproofs of their own consciences]. **Depression** is one of the most significant consequences of refusing to forgive the people who **wrong** us. It is exhausting because it requires emotional energy to maintain a grudge. Just as we become WEARY when our physical energy is exhausted, so we become DEPRESSED when our emotional energy is drained ... Unwillingness to say, "I'm sorry" to the one I have hurt makes my repentance meaningless hypocrisy. This is why so many of us have deadness in our lives. We cannot just trample human relationships and expect our relationship to God to be lovely ... **TS p.157-159**.

### DEALING WITH GRIEVANCES

*... as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion [Lk.15:20; Mk.10:21], kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone [complaint, something you blame them for]. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. [Lay down your claim of mistreatment at the foot of the cross.] And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity, Col.3:12-14.*

### BUILDING UP THE WEAK

*we who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak [weaknesses of the not strong], and not just please ourselves. Let each of us please his neighbor for his good to build him up. For even Christ did not please himself, but just as it is written, The insults of those who insult you have fallen on me [Ps 69:9]. For everything that was written in former times was written for our instruction, so that through endurance and through encouragement of the scriptures we may have hope.*

Now **may the God of endurance and comfort give you unity with one another** in accordance with Christ Jesus, so that together you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, **Rom.15:1-6**.

### PARABLE OF THE UNMERCIFUL SERVANT

Peter came to Jesus and asked, Lord, *how many times shall I forgive my brother or sister who sins against me? ... Jesus answered ... every time.* He then elaborated by parable on *the kingdom of heaven* as being occupied by people whom God had forgiven an unpayable debt, **and** who in turn had themselves **canceled the lesser debt** of those who were indebted to them. But to the one who refused to treat others with the same mercy he had received, Jesus said *In anger his master handed him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed [to him]. This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother or sister from your heart, Mt.18:21-35.* Notice that the stress on **the genuineness of our forgiveness is associated with our consciousness of God's forgiveness of us.**

... **God is light.** In him there is no darkness at all [see **Jn.1:4-5, 9; 8:12; Jas.1:17**] ... if we walk in the light, just as he is in the light [**Eph.5:8**], we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, God is faithful and just to forgive us our sins [against him] and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness ... **1 Jn.1:5-9.** [Absolutely, but this does not square things with people whom **we** have wronged]

### BE RECONCILED TO ONE ANOTHER: CONSEQUENCES

... unless your **righteousness** surpasses that of the Pharisees and the scribes [teachers of the law], *you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven.* You have heard that it was said to the people long ago [mixed multitude of Israelites and Egyptians at the time of the Exodus] ... anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. But I say to you that [It's much more serious than that.] if you *remain angry with [nurse a grudge against] someone, you will continue to be subject to [in jeopardy of God's] judgment ...* So if you are presenting an offering at the altar [in the Temple] and you remember that someone has something against you [evident by their strained attitude toward you], *leave your gift there at the altar. Go [call to action] and [make every effort to] be reconciled to that person. [A guilty conscience reveals that one is unacceptable to God (unclean) and therefore his offering [prayer; worship] will be also, cf. Gen.4:2-8]* Then come and offer your sacrifice to God. *Settle matters quickly with your adversary ... Do it while you are still together on the way ... [warning to resolve issues promptly; not referring to salvation], Mt.5:20-26.* The picture here is of someone who has a justifiable complaint against you that is in your best interest to **placate** before it reaches the official adjudication and penalty stage. **Only when the matter has been resolved are you worthy to present your praise and worship to God.**

### BEWARE THE SNARE OF THE DEVIL

... A servant of the Lord must not **quarrel** but must be kind to everyone, be able to teach, and **be patient with difficult people.** *Gently instruct those who oppose the truth. Perhaps God will change their hearts , and they will learn the truth. Then they will come to their senses and escape from the devil's trap. For they have been held captive by him to do his bidding, 2 Tim.2:23-26.* Many of our passages cite the involvement of our supernatural adversary, the devil, and that many others hint at

it, **Gal.6:1-2**.

When they grew up, Abel became a shepherd, while Cain cultivated the ground. When it was time for the harvest, Cain presented some of his crops as a gift to the Lord. Abel also brought a gift—the best portions of the firstborn lambs from his flock. The Lord accepted Abel and his gift [if the man's heart is acceptable, so will his gift be, **Heb.11:4**], but he did not accept Cain and his gift. This made Cain **very angry** ... **Why are you so angry?** The Lord asked Cain ... You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right [carries the assumption that both Cain and Abel knew how to act], then watch out! Sin is crouching at the door [animation - a thing acting like an animal, **1Pt.5:8-9**], eager to control you [personification - an animal acting like a person]. But you must subdue it and master it. One day ... while they were in the field, **Cain attacked** ... **Abel**, and killed him [premeditated murder] ... the LORD said ... Your brother's blood cries out to me [for vengeance] from the ground ... **Gen.4:2-12; cl Short Course – Temptation** .

By faith Abel offered a greater sacrifice to God than Cain, **which showed that he was righteous** since God gave approval to him for his gift ... **Heb.11:4** .

**Whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God [ie, he belongs to the devil], nor is he who does not love his brother** ... Do not be like Cain, who belonged to the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own actions were evil and his brother's were righteous [ Cain transferred his anger toward God for his rejection to Abel and took it out on him as if he were to blame], **1 Jn.3:10-12**.

### KEEP YOUR GUARD UP

... each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor, for we are all members of one body. In your anger do not sin : Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry [resolve your differences quickly. Don't let your anger mature into unforgiveness. Left to fester, even righteous anger can spoil and become the corrosive ulcer that is bitterness.] and **do not give the devil a place** [an opportunity] . Anyone who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with their own hands, that they may have something to share with those in need [the complete opposite direction that results from repentance] . Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up [ p.1 & 9 above], Eph.4:25-32 . [examples of **critical words** that have **no beneficial use or purpose: WHAT'S WRONG WITH YOU! &, ARE YOU CRAZY?** ]

### TIER 3 courage

At the end of the 2001 movie, **Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone**, Dumbledore awarded Gryffindor House 10 points for Neville Longbottom's courageous stand against his friends, Harry, Ron, and Hermione, when he tried to stop them from leaving the Gryffindor common room after hours. Dumbledore said, *It takes a great deal of bravery to stand up to our enemies, but [it takes courage] to stand up to our friends.*

### Tier 3: PERSONAL EXPERIENCE

I believe **I gave the devil a foothold in my heart twice**: once when I was young, before I became a Christian; and once after I came to Christ. On the first occasion, though I was not a believer, often

prayed to God after going to bed. I expressed hatred for my dad to God and stressed that I could “never, never, never take it back.” **I wrongly blamed him** for something he didn’t do **[and was oblivious to all he did do for me]**. I have no idea what consequences resulted from that.

The second occasion came after college; 2½ years in the army (during which I came to Christ); after 3 years of Bible school and marriage when I was working with a friend who taught me a lot about the Bible, as well as how to make a living siding houses and doing all kinds of related work. This time **I am sure** I gave the devil entry to my heart or soul because I allowed my friend’s habit (which I hated) to get to me. He did nothing intentionally to me but **I focused on what I hated and worked up an anger against him**, **in spite of knowing better, that escalated anger gripped me and I could not get away from it – didn’t want to**. I foolishly wrote him a nasty letter filled with hateful language and handed it to him as I left town for thanksgiving holidays at my wife’s folk’s house. **I was miserable** the whole time **and afraid** because I wanted to punish him and didn’t want to repent. I had been taught the things written here about forgiveness and I knew I was WRONG but **I was helplessly trapped** by my own feelings and frankly **afraid for my soul**.

I realized before leaving home that I was in trouble and brought with me a cassette of a lecture by **Dick Keyes** who ministered at an AMERICAN BRANCH OF L’ABRI, Francis Schaeffer’s ministry located in Switzerland. I had listened to the series on **identity** several times and was hoping the tape would help me. The four lectures in the series were entitled (1) **the Loss of Identity**; (2) **Identity Found**; (3) **Dealing with Anger**; (4) **Toward a Higher Honesty**. Guess which one I brought with me. After much anguish, prayer, and listening 3 more times to the tape, God granted me a repentant heart. I called my friend asked for his forgiveness, and he said “You know you have that.” I finished the call by saying, “I do know.”

## TIER 2 INSTRUCTION

*Control your temper, for anger labels you a fool [you advertise that fact], **Ecc.7:9**.*

*Who is wise and understanding among you? **Let them show it by his good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom**. **But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition IN YOUR HEARTS**, do not boast about it or deny the truth. Such “wisdom” does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic, **Jas.3:13-16**.*

*... concentrate on being completely devoted to Christ **IN YOUR HEARTS**. **Be ready** at any time to give a quiet and reverent answer [*apologetic, defense*] to any man who wants a reason for the hope that you have within you. **Make sure that your conscience is perfectly clear**, **1 Pt.3: 15-16**.*

## BE QUICK TO LISTEN

*Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the **righteousness** [the essential characteristic we need] that God desires. Therefore, get rid of all moral filth and the evil that is so prevalent and humbly accept the word planted in you, which can save you, **Jas.1:19-21**.*

## TIER 3 TRAINING

The remainder of these notes briefly discuss FORGIVENESS under the general topic of **our treat-**

ment of one another both as Christians and as fellow human beings. There are many other topics left out that are connected with what is being introduced here. For **Wrong Reactions** to failure and reproof cf **p.11 GT#3**. A true confession cannot contain excuses, self-justification, or attribute blame to someone or something else. Planning Our Encounters is more than working out our wording. Part of The Thoughtful Christian Life is learning to read people's moods and attitudes, becoming sensitive to their spirits. By projecting forgiveness, love, and acceptance toward them ... *let us pursue those things that lead to peace and building up one another*, **Rom.14:19; 12:18; 1:11-12; Mt.5:9**. No one is attracted to a complaining, condemning, or negative spirit. Let's work through this together.

**If your conscience is bothering you**, it is an alarm insisting on your immediate attention [The same cry for attention is true of any irritation, frustration producing agent, or situation]. The first thing to do is identify exactly what has set it off and review the events in your mind. If you determine that you have wronged someone by an attitude you projected or something you said or did, perhaps **in reaction to their attitude toward you** or treatment of you, the passages on forgiveness and how we should treat one another are God's tier 2 instructions. Unlike many of the examples covered in lives of Abraham, Moses, Israel, Saul, and David, we may not have exact directions to follow, but we will have a **tier 2 framework** within which to work and figure it out (**Phil.2:12-13**). (1) You are only responsible for dealing with your sins that affect another and your attitude toward them. Since life situations are often **complicated by action and reaction** involving more than one person, it is important to identify **your part** whether it is small (5 percent) or larger (50 or 85 percent). Once you have determined that you have hurt someone and have not sought their forgiveness, you ought to do so without delay. (2) Purpose IN YOUR HEART to sincerely try to **reconcile** with them.

**Examination of an action/reaction escalation of a family conflict:** identifying the problem

*Honestly answer the following questions.*

- (1) List each member in your family giving the ages of brothers and sisters.
- (2) Circle those with whom you have conflicts.
- (3) How often do you have conflicts with them?

**Describe in detail the most recent conflict.**

*Dad, mom, and I were at the breakfast table when we started discussing my future occupation. Somehow **I said the wrong thing!** I said that my life as a married woman would have little outside activity, etc. I gave mom as an example of such a life [shows daughter's lack of sensitivity and wisdom]. I didn't mean for it to cause friction, but it sure did! She told me I was ungrateful, unwilling to help around the house [statement by offended party reveals an attitude that has been bothering her for some time brought into the present conflict, BASIC OFFENSE: daughter's attitude of ungratefulness and laziness in duties at home], etc., etc! **I said many things I shouldn't have** [in REACTION: retaliation to the mother's assessment]. It's so-o-o hard. I love her very much, but we always have a tense feeling between us [reveals the mother's basic offense - **harboring feelings of resentment** toward her daughter]. **How could this situation have been avoided or resolved?***

**List all the wrongs and offenses a particular member has committed against you.**

- O - Failing to keep their promises
- O - Failing to understand why I do certain things
- O - Setting a poor example
- O - Taking out their frustrations on me
- O - Other

### **List and assess your faults**

**POOR ATTITUDE:** How would your parents rate your attitude around the house?

Good?                      Average?                      Below average

**UNGRATEFULNESS:** When was the last time you thanked your parents for the ordinary things they do?

**STUBBORNESS; UNTRUTHFULNESS; BITTERNESS; LAZINESS ... etc**

**PURPOSE TO ASK FORGIVENESS FOR BASIC OFFENSES:** requires complete sincerity, and genuine repentance with no reservations.

Distinguish between **immediate and basic offenses**. It does little good to ask forgiveness for specific small offenses when they are only expressions of an underlying rebellious, stubborn, resentful, or ungrateful spirit. There are several ways to seek forgiveness that are guaranteed NOT to gain it **because they do not reflect the sincerity and humility** one must exhibit to do this – such as: *I was wrong, but you were too! If I offended you, please forgive me; I'm sorry; I apologize; etc.* There is one way to reflect genuine repentance, *I realize that I have been wrong (in my poor attitude; in failing to love you as I should; etc.). I know I've wronged you [confession] in this and I've come to ask, will you forgive me?* The question puts the onus upon them because just as you need to be forgiven, they need to forgive [cf **Self-awareness, p.7-9**].

The circle or **scope of the confession** should be as wide as the circle of the offense. If others witnessed your transgression, they must also witness your confession. **Approach** the one who has been offended most first. **Avoid shameful details** by identifying the basic offense. It is neither wise, important, nor appropriate to review **the details** of an offense. It is most important to identify the covert [underlying, hidden] attitudes that caused the overt [observable] actions.

**Example, ACTUAL OFFENSE:** gossiping about another or slandering their reputation [slander can be lying about someone or telling the truth with intent to harm them]; Be prepared to answer without going into the details.

**WRONG CONFESSIONS:** I realize I was wrong in saying unkind things about you to others. Will you forgive me? [they'll want to know what you said; **being specific will make matters worse**]; I realize that I have been disloyal to you as a friend. Others have observed this disloyalty and I've asked them to forgive me. Would you forgive me also? [They may question how you were disloyal]

### **CAUTIONS**

**Be as brief and clear as possible, Lk.15:17-24.** There is a major danger of talking too much while trying to ask for forgiveness. Once I was at supper with a number of other assistant coaches in

various sports and fooling around. I had food in my mouth and **accidentally coughed** food right in the face of a trainer. He immediately got up and left, and I followed to apologize. I asked his forgiveness and said it just happened, I didn't mean it. This is a case where trying to explain would be saying too much. It is all too easy to say something wrong or to involve matters that are not pertinent to the main subject. **This may sidetrack the whole purpose for your contact and give the impression that you are trying to justify your offenses in order to minimize them.** Often this leads directly to **arguments**. It will be very difficult to avoid implicating others if you attempt to give a full explanation of all the circumstances surrounding your offense.

Confess your transgressions as soon as possible. **If you wait too long**, you may miss the opportunity and you will tend to decrease the magnitude of your sins and the offended party will tend to increase it. This will make it all the more difficult to seek forgiveness. **It's not a good idea to try to fit a confession into your next visit about other things.** Gaining a clear conscience is a project in itself **that demands your special time and attention**. Do not wait for the opportunities to arise. Make your own opportunity at an appropriate time and occasion. Unless asked specific questions about your faith or salvation, **don't try to combine witnessing with restitution**. Your act of confession and offer of restitution is your witness at this point, **TS p.100**. You can be sure that they will be watching your life and listening to your words more closely in the days ahead. Further opportunities will usually be provided in the future as changes in your life are observed.

### Tier 2 Instruction & tier 3 insight

**PARABLE OF THE LOST SON**, repentance and working out the wording of a confession ... *There was a man who had two sons. The younger one said to his father, Father, give me my share of the estate [implication: Old man, give me my inheritance now while I am young. I don't want to have to wait for you to die]. So he divided his property between them [probably according to custom with the larger portion going to his first-born] ... He set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living [revealing his immaturity and foolishness] ... Then there was a severe famine in that whole country [which God used to reveal his foolishness & jolt him back to reality] ... he got a menial job that was barely enough to live on, **Lk.15:11-16**.*

***When he came to his senses** [began thinking rationally], he said ... I will ... go back to my father and say to him, [Once he realized what he had done, he purposed to confess his wrong, ask for forgiveness and worked out the exact wording]: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you [full confession showing genuine repentance in humility]. I am no longer worthy to be called your son [honest judgment upon himself]; make me like one of your hired servants [request for mercy] ... while he was still a long way off, his father saw him [he was constantly on the lookout for his return] and was filled with compassion for him; he ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him [he was not angry with his son, he was just overjoyed to have him home]. The son began his confession as planned, but the father [interrupting him] said to his servants, Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it ... For this son of mine was dead and is alive again ; he was lost and is found . So [the son was forgiven and restored to his former status, though his inheritance had been squandered and was unrecoverable] they began to celebrate, **17-24** .*

There was **collateral damage** associated with the boy's return and acceptance, **25-31**. It brought

out hidden resentment his older brother had been harboring rooted in ungratefulness for the stability, security, and worry free life he had on the farm. His failure to consider these things and be thankful gave way to comparison, discontent, and jealousy. *All these years I've been slaving for you and never disobeyed your orders. Yet you never gave me even a young goat so I could celebrate with my friends. But when this [worthless] son of yours [derogatory remark] who [in contrast to my diligence and hard work] has squandered your property with prostitutes comes home, you kill the fattened calf for him [I deserve it, he doesn't] , 29-30 .* Be careful not to lose the point in the details. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> in a series of 3 parables (lost sheep, lost coin, and lost son) describing God's joy over sinners who repent, cf **Coming of The Kingdom, p.1**.

### Tier 3: Preparing your Heart to Confess Wrongdoing and Ask Forgiveness

**Empathy** is the capacity to participate in the feelings of another, *Heb.2:14-18; 4:14-16 ; 10:32-34 ; 13:3; Rom.12:15* . When seeking reconciliation, our words are important. However **they must reflect a heart attitude of humility, contrition, repentance, and sincerity**. But these do not come easily or automatically just because we decide to seek forgiveness. We must allow God to break our hearts with what we have said or done so we can feel ashamed and truly regret our sin **[MOC p.26-27]**. By reliving the pain of our offense through their eyes and suffering their hurt, God can work in us true humility and sincere repentance.

### Tier 2 Instruction

**HUMILITY & SUBMISSION:** *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble [ humility is the main quality that pleases God , Prov.3:34 ] . Therefore submit to God . Resist the devil and he will flee from you . Draw near to God and He will draw near to you . Cleanse your hands you sinners; and purify [distill into a single substance] your hearts you double-minded [pulled in two directions]. Lament, mourn, and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom [language of sorrow and repentance] . Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up [restoration , TS p.101] , Jas.4:6-10 .*

... all of you, **clothe yourselves with humility toward one another** , because God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble. And God will exalt you in due time if you humble yourselves under his mighty hand by casting all your cares on him because he cares for you. Be sober and alert. **Your enemy the devil** , like a roaring lion, is on the prowl looking for someone to devour . Resist him, strong in your faith, because you know that your brothers and sisters throughout the world are enduring the same kinds of suffering, **1 Pt.5:5-10** .

*My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit ; a broken and contrite heart you will not despise, Ps. 51:17 .*

### Tier 3: forgiveness and spirituality from God's point of view

**FORGIVENESS INVOLVES A POSITIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE OFFENSE RATHER THAN A NEGATIVE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE OFFENDER:** If our initial focus after being offended is on the offender, it is difficult not to become angry or bitter. But if we focus on the offense as God's training tool and forget for the moment who offended us, we are much better able to look at the offense as a significant aspect to our personal character development. Our reactions to offenders and offenses automatically become **our responses to God and his training**.

**FORGIVENESS DEALS WITH OUR EMOTIONAL REACTION TO AN OFFENDER:** It recognizes that bitterness is assuming a right we do not have. Only God [and delegated civil authorities, **Rom. 13:1-5**] have the right to punish, *Vengeance is mine; I will repay says the Lord, Rom.12:19*. **A reaction of bitterness** is an instinctive means to get revenge on an offender. Silence toward people can also be a means of punishing them, Rom.12:17-21. Forgiving someone is clearing his record with us and transferring the responsibility for any penalty to God. Know that **the offender** has already begun experiencing the consequences for his sins through reproofs of conscience, friends, circumstances, etc. These are sufficient tools for God to emphasize to him his wrongdoing and reinforce conviction, **Prov.15:5**. Forgiving others opens for us the privilege of helping them and makes it possible for us to have **the same openness** toward them after the offense as before. A clear conscience results in that inner freedom of spirit and assurance of knowing that you have a transparency toward everyone; that no one will be able to point an accusing finger at you for wrongs that you have never made right, **1 Sam.12:3-5**.

### Common Rationalizations Hindering gaining a Clear Conscience

One of the hardest deaths to die is **the death to pride**. Our minds are ingenious at devising reasons that will circumvent or postpone our confronting what obviously needs to be addressed.

**(1) IT HAPPENED A LONG TIME AGO:** If it happened so long ago, **why do you still remember it?** Since you do remember it for such a long time, isn't that all the more reason to make it right?

**(2) IT WAS SUCH A SMALL OFFENSE:** Has it been eating away at your conscience? If so, it's big enough to be taken care of.

**(3) THINGS HAVE GOTTEN BETTER:** With uncanny regularity, someone purposing to make things right with one they're not getting along with will find the situation improving before they ask forgiveness. Often this improvement is **God's way of preparing the other to forgive us**, but we mistakenly use it as an excuse for not seeking forgiveness.

**(4) THEY WON'T UNDERSTAND:** You'll be amazed how clearly **they will understand**. Our job is to obey; Isn't that the lesson in the life stories we have been looking at? God will take care of their understanding. If they appear not to understand, it may be that your asking forgiveness has caused them to be convicted about **their need to seek your forgiveness**.

### BASIC COUNSELING INSIGHTS

A boy might be bitter about his father's unfairness to him. However, he is responsible for his reaction to his father. In talking to him, we must understand his hurts, but focus our attention on his bitter attitudes and his need to ask forgiveness **after fully forgiving** his father.

**Ask precise questions** rather than making positive [accusative] statements that are likely to raise his defenses. Instead of saying, *Why are you being so nasty, ask, Has anyone deeply hurt you? How do you feel toward that person?* Asking precise questions often prompts the individual to reveal more than he would have acknowledged if it sounded like you had **accused** him of something.

**Never make major decisions, phone calls, or texts while you are upset or frustrated with someone.**

Until you have forgiven them, you cannot help but radiate your discontent and disappointment to them which only causes them to become defensive, especially when they are sensitive about something they are hiding.

Once I called a guy who was 3 days late to do something for me. He could tell right away that I was upset because of some quality in my voice. I knew I shouldn't contact him when I was angry. Some one who is engaged is some trespass [takes a false step and so blunders from the correct path of uprightness and truth, as Paul confronted Peter for theological hypocrisy, Gal.2.11-14] and knows it will react to an inquiry or breach of the subject defensively and argumentatively because they are guilty and **oversensitive**. You can hear it in their voice. They stubbornly dig in their heels, resist the truth, and refuse to listen to wisdom. They are bolstering their resistance by rationalizing their sin. It makes for a very awkward conversation. It doesn't matter how careful you have been not to accuse them of some wrong. Their own guilty conscience will do it for you. Don't think you are wrong to confront a wayward brother, p.7. You are acting in love to try to turn him from his errant path, **Gal.6:1-2**, and stop the spread of the consequences from going further, **Jas.5:19-20**. If you don't, the blessings of God will cease and many may be affected [cf GT#4, p.3].

### A Soldier's Confession

In the old days when Joshua led us into the land of our inheritance, we defeated the Canaanites and occupied their cities. For a time there was peace, but later the Philistines came back to dominate Israel. Those were the days God raised up Judges and endowed men like Sampson with extraordinary strength and boldness, abilities and courage far beyond the capabilities of normal people even though they were not particularly godly. Under the reign of king David, we once again gained control of the land and the northern and southern kingdoms were united. We fought so many battles in those days against men like ourselves whom we thought were our enemies. But not even David was a perfect man and the kingdom was split once more. The people rebelled against God, both parts of the kingdom were defeated, first by the Assyrians and then by the Babylonians. Many years later, we found ourselves under the iron rule of the Romans.

Much later **God once again raised up another Joshua to deliverer his people**. At first, we did not understand, didn't recognize him as a hero because he was a completely new kind of soldier. He didn't wield a sword or a spear. He didn't overpower his enemies by physical means, but he won their hearts, conquered their fears, and paved the way for ultimate victory by his death and resurrection. I'll try to explain - He showed us that people like ourselves, whether Philistines or Romans, were not his enemies **and never were ours** - that the real enemies of mankind which must be conquered are invisible and manipulate us through deceit, and fear, greed, hatred, and lust for power. These cannot be defeated directly because the same roots are WITHIN EACH OF US! The men we face must be won over by humility, mercy, meekness, and love through self-sacrifice.

The supernatural foes we face and the means they use to control and defeat us must be resisted and denied. He taught us that the power to do this did not arise from within ourselves. It is not natural to this realm, this sphere of existence. So Jesus recruited us as his own and transferred our citizenship to his kingdom where we trained to overcome our real enemies through the fullness and power of his Spirit. We have **New Rules of Engagement**: to turn the other cheek, forgive offenses against us, and seek the forgiveness of those we sin against; **a New Battle Plan**: to win

the hearts of our enemies by showing them kindness and giving to their basic needs; **a New Mission Goal:** to bring the Gospel of our savior to our former enemies at the expense of our own lives; **we train with a New Kind of Armor and use different Weapons:** faith in our commander, the truth of the Gospel, and righteousness (**Eph.6:10-17**). *They have divine power to demolish strong-holds, destroy arguments and every pretension that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, 2 Cor.10:3-5. Our Battle Cry > HIS KINGDOM IS FOREVER!* [last line from A Mighty Fortress is Our God]

**Lead On, O King Eternal** [note verse 2] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GzIponYvF30>

## Tier 2: FINISHING THE COURSE

Of the three major figures we have considered in **the life studies** in this series, only **Abraham** finished his course well. **There are others who finished well:** **Enoch** *walked faithfully with God; then he was no more, because God took him away, Gen.5:24; ... suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared ... and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind, 2 Ki.2:11; Elisha* was commended for his great faith, humility, deep connection to his mentor Elijah, compassion for others, and his unwavering dedication to God; **Joseph** was commended for his devotion, forgiveness, and perseverance, which he maintained despite extreme hardship; **Daniel** was commended for his faithfulness, integrity, and wisdom demonstrated while serving in high positions under foreign kings during the Babylonian and Persian exiles. His steadfast devotion to God, even in the face of mortal danger, and his unblemished character earned him favor with both God and man; there are many others like **Rahab; Ruth; Esther; Mordecai; John the baptist; Stephen; John the apostle; the apostle Paul;** etc.

### PERSEVERANCE [cf Journey, p.1-2]

God answered a complaint by the people of Jerusalem under assault by Babylon. They claimed that *The way of the Lord is not just* for bringing this judgment upon them because of the wickedness of their ancestors, **Ez.18:25**. God answers by stating a principle [cf Cause & Effect, p.3], **The soul who sins is the one who will die, v.20.**

[cf Dynamics of Gods Judgment] *When a righteous person [is tested and he] turns back from his righteousness and practices wrongdoing, he will die for it ... When a wicked person turns [repents] from the wickedness he has committed and does what is just and right, he will preserve his life, Ez.18:26-27 ... I will judge each person according to his [ finishing ] conduct [cf repentant thief, Lk.23:42-43; Religious Practices, p.16], The Sovereign Lord declares, repent and turn from all your wickedness; then it will not be an obstruction [tripping you, causing you to fall into] iniquity, v.30; 33:12-20. [The God Who is There by D.A. Carson, p.169]*

*... people are appointed to die once, and then to face judgment, Heb.9:27.*

*We should not test Christ ... [cf judgments upon Israel, GT#3, p.1] happened to them as examples and ... as warnings for us , on whom the culmination of the ages has come , 1 Cor.10:9-11; Heb.1:1b; 9:26b; 1 Pt.1:20b.*

*If [ultimately] we deliberately keep on sinning after we have received the knowledge of the truth, no sacrifice for sins is left, but only a fearful expectation of judgment ... Anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. How much more severely do you think someone deserves to be punished who has trampled the Son*

**of God** **underfoot**, who has **treated as an unholy thing** the blood of the covenant that sanctified them, and who has **insulted the Spirit of grace?** ... **Heb.10:26-30.**

Do not be deceived. God will not be made a fool [mocked, ridiculed, treated with contempt]. For a person will reap what he sows, **Gal:6:7.**

Remember those earlier days after you had received the light, when you endured in a great conflict full of suffering ... So **do not throw away your confidence**; it will be richly rewarded. **You need to persevere** so that when you have done the will of God, you will receive what he has promised ... my righteous one will [persevere, continue to] live by faith. **I take no pleasure in the one who shrinks back.** But we do not belong to those who shrink back and are destroyed, but to those who have faith and are saved, **Heb.10:32-39.**

**If they have escaped the corruption of the world by knowing our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ** [but then] **are again entangled** [implies that they began entangled] **in it and are overcome** [see **Mt.13:20-22**], **they are worse-off at the end than they were at the beginning.** It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, **than to have known it and then to turn their backs on the sacred command** that was passed on to them ... **2 Pt.2:20-22.**

we have become people who share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firmly until the end, **Heb.3:14, 1 Pt.1:13-15.**

... **They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us** [were not Christians]. For **if they had belonged to us, they would have remained with us** [persevered] ... **1 Jn.2:19.**

### Paul's Race

... the time for my departure [death] is near. I have fought the good fight, **I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.** Now there is in store for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day—and not only to me, but also to all who have longed for his appearing, **2 Tim.4:6-8; Phil.3:13-14.**

### ENDURANCE: Our Training & Race [cf Journey, p.4]

Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses [those who preceded us in the pre-Christian era, **Heb.11**], **we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us, keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus** [spurred on and energized by faith in him], the pioneer and perfecter of our faith. For the joy set out for him he **endured the cross**, disregarding its shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God [An allusion to **Ps.110:1**]. Think of him who endured such opposition against himself by sinners so that you may not grow weary in your souls and give up. You have not yet resisted to the point of bloodshed in your struggle against sin. Have you forgotten the exhortation addressed to you as sons? My son, **do not scorn** [disregard, think little of] **the Lord's discipline** or **give up when he corrects** [reproves, and rebukes] **you**. For the Lord **disciplines** [throughout this passage: trains; educates; instructs; corrects; chastens, cf **p.1 above**] the one he loves and **chastises** every son he accepts [**Prov.3:11-12**], **Heb.12:1-6.**

**Endure your suffering as discipline** [in order to become trained]; God is treating you as sons ... discipline is something all sons have shared in ... shall we not submit ourselves ... to the Father of spirits and receive life ... **he disciplines us for our benefit, that we may share his holiness**. Now all discipline seems painful at the time ... But later it produces the peaceable fruit of **righteousness for those trained by it**. Therefore, strengthen your listless hands and your weak knees [**Isa.35:3**, refers to their need for renewed resolve and fresh strength in their struggles, **Heb.10:36-39**] and make straight paths for your feet [**Prov.4:26**, ie, stay on God's paths], so that what is lame may not be put out of joint [what ails you may not become debilitating] but be healed, **7-13; 2 Pt.1:10-11**.

In the 2015 movie, **Mad Max: Fury Road**, years after the collapse of civilization, the tyrannical Immortan Joe enslaved apocalypse survivors by controlling the water supply. He surrounded himself with devoted acolytes whose ultimate joy and desire was to die spectacularly. They sprayed paint on their faces and in their mouths crying out **witness** as they sacrificed themselves in a death they hoped to be EPIC. During a multi-vehicle chase one such acolyte did this and Joe, who observed it casually remarked, **MEDIOCRE!**

**I Have Finished the Race** (Lyric Video) - Francesca LaRosa and Hannah Schaefer  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=u10sd6x85wg>

In the 2013 movie **Odd Thomas**, his girlfriend, Stormy, was shot and killed in the mall where she worked. At the end of the film we hear Thomas' thoughts about her. *She always believed that life is not about how fast you run, or with what degree of grace, but that this life is a boot camp - that we must persevere through all the obstacles and hardships to earn our way into the next life*. Thomas mused, **sometimes it seems to me training is unnecessarily painful!**

**I recommend** The Mark of the Christian, **MOC**, 1970, 38 pgs, **a booklet** by Francis A. Schaeffer **for further study**: Free revised copy at [y+Francis+Schaeffer.pdf](#)

**MAY YOU FINISH WELL**