



Dealing
with THE
Pain

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DEALING WITH THE PAIN

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PROLOGUE

“Living at the Level of Love”

One of the most common experiences of all human beings is that of being wounded. Wounds are cuts into our being, sometimes literal - sometimes emotional. Both are very real. When we experience wounds, we lose some of our life's power through bleeding. If we lose enough blood from our wounds, we die.

We hurt when our dreams do not come true. We wait for opportunities that never arrive. Sometimes, we even pursue others for love who are not interested in us and so, we hurt. We are wounded. We bleed.

Sometimes our wounds are quite literal and we can see ourselves bleed. When we fall and scrape our knees, we see ourselves bleed. When we cut ourselves with knives, we see ourselves bleed. When we are shot, we see our wounds and see ourselves bleed.

Sometimes our wounds are not literal and we cannot see ourselves bleed. They result from our relationships that do not work out as we planned. Our feelings hurt and we bleed emotionally. We become the walking, the talking, and the pretending not to be hurting. Life bleeds away from us while we are in denial, acting as if all is well. We must keep up our front of having it together at all costs. Whether we are wounded literally or emotionally, we still bleed.

To live at the level of love, to be fully alive, we must be able to feel and experience life as it is. We must be able to acknowledge our wounds, our hurts, even our bleeding and claim them. They are ours. They are our great teachers. They teach us that we have experiences. Experiences do not have us.

Living at the level of love is to be filled with excitement for the coming of each new day because it will bring with it its own accomplishments and challenges. It means accepting responsibility for our behavior, our wounds, and our healing.

Others are not setting course to hurt us because they have nothing else to do with their lives. They are, just like we are, living life to the best of their ability. And so they are to be appreciated for what they are able to share and not held responsible or accountable for what they cannot.

When we are hurt or feeling hurt, the easy way out is to search for someone to blame. After all, we would not cause our own hurt, really, would we? Living at the level of love is to take the weight off yourself and others to be right all the time. That is never going to happen. Life is not a fairy tale. It is much better because it is real.

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Living at the level of love will not make us immune to hurts, pains, and other wounds. It will, however, deliver us from the need to blame others.

Are you still blaming others for your wounds and other life situations? If you are, then free them and especially free yourself from the carrying of this extra burden. Love yourself enough to give up what is not necessary and free yourself to live at the level of love, the place where miracles take place everyday.

This week, be the blessing to yourself first by stepping up to live at the level of love. Then you shall be a fully alive blessing at the level of love for others.

YOU ARE LOVED!

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Author's Note: This short booklet was put together to encourage the people of God to exercise the one discipline that sets us apart from all others – forgiveness. In life we deal with many painful situations. This booklet will not deal with all of them but it will give you a start on your way to recovery from your pain. I pray that it blesses you.

opening comments

PAIN – {*American Heritage Dictionary*} 1. An unpleasant sensation occurring in varying degrees of severity as a consequence of injury, disease, or emotional disorder. 2. Suffering or distress. How do you handle pain in your life? How do you move on when someone has said the wrong thing, done the wrong thing, looked at you in the wrong way? What magic formula can relieve the suffering? As stated in the prologue, pain comes from natural consequences (scrapes, bruises, physical ailments) and pain comes from emotional or mental consequences (wounded spirits, broken hearts, crushed dreams). We are blessed to have physicians to help us through our natural distress and, in extreme cases, psychiatrists and counselors for our emotional distress. However, the majority of emotional pain falls into that gray area where it's not so bad that you need counseling or a psychiatrist **BUT IT STILL HURTS!** The pain is part of your daily life. The pain resurfaces whenever you run into the source of that pain. Some people live their entire lives with hurts and emotional bruises that have never healed and these injuries have changed their personalities, destroyed relationships, and caused them to never realize some of the fundamental dreams they held dear from early in life. For that reason, I have set out to provide some guidance through the benefit of the leading of the Spirit of God as to how to “deal” with this pain, move on, and maintain ourselves and our relationships. I pray that it is a blessing to you and those around you.

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introduction

Matthew 18:2-3 ***And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Verily I say unto you, except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.***

There are a number of formulas and steps within this booklet that are in line with what the Bible says to do. However, going through the motions will not get the job done. There must be a change on the inside. We must convert our thinking and our attitudes to be like those of little children. I want you to notice some things in this verse: (1) Jesus is not addressing this to the world but to those who had walked with Him for three years at that time, i.e., He's telling the church to repent; (2) Jesus did not use an older child but specified that we must become as little children. That means that if I want an example, I'd better get hold of one before they get the opportunity to be polluted by the ways of the world. Having said this, I want you to promise yourself that you will be willing to take some bold steps in order to maintain the peace among the brethren. You may have to go back and do something that seems utterly distasteful but think of young children – they haven't developed particular "tastes." To follow Jesus all the way in, we're going to have convert our tastes also.

In looking at the church as a whole, there are hurts that people are carrying around with them from any number of sources. Leonard Keene, in his book, **Please Don't Hurt Me**, referred to them as "wounded walkers" . . . *People who are up and around; walking, talking, working and playing who are wounded ... wounded deeply in the spirit.*" This study will focus more on our response to the pain rather than the pain itself. It is our response that is killing the effectiveness of the church and killing us. In our study of these hurts and our response to them, we will use three principles to guide us. The intent of these three principles is to keep our thinking in line with the Word of God:

- 1) **PRINCIPLE: Jesus Christ is a healer of emotional AND physical illnesses.** Luke 4:18 ***The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; HE HATH SENT ME TO HEAL THE BROKENHEARTED, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.*** The healing of broken hearts (hurts) is part of the atonement. Because of that you and I have a right to deliverance in our situation. (Notice that I said "in our situation" not "from our situation." Jesus Christ comes to help us go through anything and come out with our hearts intact.)
- 2) **PRINCIPLE: Healing starts internally (with YOU) not externally (with someone else).** No matter how often your brother turns to you and asks forgiveness, the hurt is not dealt with in each incident. The person involved often has no idea how the incident has effected you on the inside. To begin this process, the one hurt must look inward and deal with themselves

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first. Because of this, we can be free in spite of how cruel or callous the offender is to our feelings. Mark 7:18-23 **And he saith unto them, Are ye so without understanding also? Do ye not perceive, that whatsoever thing from without entereth into the man, it cannot defile him; Because it entereth not into his heart, but into the belly, and goeth out into the draught, purging all meats? And he said, That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man.** Bitterness and unforgiveness are defiling traits – they will really mess us up. Therefore, we must look inside ourselves to receive healing and deliverance.

- 3) **PRINCIPLE: No amount of pain gives you the right to violate the Word of God.** In discussing, counseling, and ministering regarding what the Word of God says about forgiveness or marriage, I am often confronted with these words, “*But you don’t know what he or she did to me...You don’t know what pain I’m going through!*” I’ve usually seen this as an excuse to hold a grudge or to be less than Christ-like in our dealings with the offending party but the source is real pain – pain that they don’t want to repeat. The Word of God says in Psalms 119:89 **For ever, O LORD, thy Word is settled in heaven.** Since the Word is settled in heaven, it cannot be affected by what goes on in the earth. Instead, we need to grab hold of the Word in complete obedience in order to receive our healing. Psalm 107:20 **He sent His Word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.**

There are four areas that we are going to examine together to gain our deliverance:

- 1) **BITTERNESS** - We must understand the source of our pain, how it turns into bitterness, our response to that pain and how to root out any response that is not in line with God’s Word. This study will not look at bitterness that stems from an evil heart (bitterness for other reasons than pain). The type of bitterness that we will look at comes from emotional pain.
- 2) **THE TALEBEARER** - The talebearer (gossip) is a source of pain and bitterness but this topic is so important that it needs to be discussed by itself. The talebearer is not only a gossip but one just passing on seemingly harmless information. We’ll look at the talebearer, how we can handle what is “dished out,” and how we can avoid falling into the same trap.
- 3) **FORGIVENESS** - What is true forgiveness as taught by the Bible? Why does our forgiveness sometimes turn into bitterness? Once we answer question one, we’ll see how we have failed in question two.
- 4) **THE TORMENTORS** - Are you holding a grudge? Are you avoiding forgiveness because you feel that you are justified? Be careful! Here we will look at the mechanism that God has set in place to correct us when we **refuse** (this is a key word) to forgive.

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It is an accepted fact that there is pain and it will always be with us until we reach the Holy City. How we respond is what will determine whether we will make it to that place or not.

BITTERNESS

DEFINITION: **bitter** - {*Vine's Expository Dictionary*} "bitter" comes from a root Greek word *pik* meaning to cut, to prick, hence, pointed, sharp, keen, pungent to the sense of taste, smell, etc., to irritate, to make bitter. In all of its uses, the key is that it denotes something very sharp either naturally to the senses or spiritually to the soul. (Adjective *pikros* - James 3:11, 14; verb *pikraino* - Colossians 3:19, Revelation 10:9, 8:11, 10:10; Noun *pikria* - (bitterness) Acts 8:23, Romans 3:14, Ephesians 4:31, Hebrews 12:15 (a root of bitterness producing bitter fruit); adverb *pikros* - Matthew 26:75, Luke 22:62 (the heartfelt grief of Peter)). {*American Heritage Dictionary*}
1. Having or being a taste that is sharp, acrid, and unpleasant. 2. Causing a sharply unpleasant, painful, or stinging sensation; harsh: *enveloped in bitter cold; a bitter wind*. 3. Difficult or distasteful to accept, admit, or bear: *the bitter truth; bitter sorrow*. 4. Proceeding from or exhibiting strong animosity: *a bitter struggle; bitter foes*. 5. Resulting from or expressive of severe grief, anguish, or disappointment: *cried bitter tears*. 6. Marked by resentment or cynicism.

FACTORS THAT GO INTO EMOTIONAL HURTS: After looking at all of these definitions, what is bitterness as it applies to our emotional state? Bitterness springs up from a cut or irritation within us. This is the result of something that has been done or said to us or about us by someone else that has been hard for us to bear emotionally. Bitterness is the result of a hurt that has not been dealt with properly. There are factors that go into the hurts that we bear. To understand how these hurts can become bitterness, we must first understand the factors that go into the pain:

- 1) **CLOSENESS OF THE IRRITANT** Psalm 55:12-14 *For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.*

Psalm 41:9 *Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.*

If someone you didn't know tore down your reputation and there was no basis for this, it would bother you but you could deal with it and get over it. Or as David says here, if it had been an enemy, it would be easier to bear because that is the type of thing that is expected of an enemy and preparation would have already been made in case of such an attack. The relative closeness of the association of the parties involved is important before what has done can cause a "permanent" scarring. In Psalm 55, David said that the source of his hurt was his equal, his guide, his acquaintance. In Psalm 41, he said it was his familiar friend in whom he trusted. All of these factors go into hurting us and have the potential for developing into bitterness.

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- 2) **LOSS OF CONFIDENCE IN AN AUTHORITY FIGURE** In looking at the first factor, I tried to test the theory in my mind by reviewing some of the pain that I had gone through. In doing so, I found some by those that I vaguely knew but in whom I had placed some degree of confidence. Let's try this example:

You have gone to a certain minister in another church for counsel on some deep dark secrets from your past that you were thoroughly ashamed of. You chose this type of setting because you wanted no possibility for the secret to get out. After some time, the talebearer appears to taunt you over these exact things. These were things that no one knew except you and that particular minister. You're devastated because your confidence has been violated.

Any person in authority like a minister, a church officer, a wife of a minister or church officer will automatically be placed on a pedestal in our mind whether we know them or not. But after a few times of going through this type of situation (God forbid that it should *ever* happen), bitterness will set in towards not only the offender but towards all that hold the same position as the offender.

- 3) **TRAGEDY** Personal tragedy such as the violent death of a loved one is very painful. There is danger in this situation, if the grief is not handled in prayer, in directing our venom toward the party who caused the offense or others who cannot appreciate the level of your pain.
- 4) **MISUNDERSTANDING** The disciples of Jesus are a good example of misunderstanding because it seems that they constantly were involved with it. Mark 9:32 ***But they understood not that saying, and were afraid to ask Him.*** The second part of this verse is very important when dealing with emotional situations. If you don't attempt to get an understanding of what was said (whether through fear, anger, pain or whatever) you'll have to deal with the situation by yourself. This gives rise to speculation and innuendo but does not bring a resolution. It won't be long before you find yourself cautious and tentative around someone with whom you used to be relaxed. **BEWARE: These are seeds of bitterness being sown!**
- 5) **ANY "TALEBEARER" NEWS** Anything that is heard from a talebearer whether it is factual or exaggerated will hurt. This is a Biblical principle in spite of your testimony that these types of things don't hurt you (Proverbs 18:8). And because it is brought by a talebearer and not by the person who started it, it's harder to deal with. You may be reluctant to let that person know that something they said has gotten out. So what do you do? You suffer in your pain and hurt, then you get angry, then you get even by getting bitter (even though the bitterness is hurting you more than anyone else). (We'll discuss the talebearer at length in the next section.)

All of the "hurts" that we experience have the potential to become bitterness in some sort unless we deal with them properly. When you add the dictionary definition along with the root Greek word, this conclusion is even stronger. So let's go from here and find out how that hurt became bitterness.

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THE SOURCE OF BITTERNESS: We know what factors go into our pain but how does this translate into bitterness? Also, once I understand that, how can I tell if bitterness is in my life? A key ingredient in all of the above factors that go into our pain is a lack of repentance by the offending party. This coupled with our unforgiveness plants the seed of bitterness. The source then is the lack of true forgiveness. Though we forgive, we often hold grudges; there is resentment and hostility; and we often bubble over with animosity. Hebrews 12:15 says that the root of bitterness will defile (spoil, disgrace) many. This attitude effects all of those around the one who is bitter. Galatians 5:15 ***But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.*** Holding resentment and not forgiving from our hearts will invariably lead us into bitterness. Then we must also deal with the tormentors (to be discussed later).

THE IMPACT OF BITTERNESS: Hebrews 12:14-15 ***Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of BITTERNESS springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;*** There are two parts two the impact caused by bitterness. First, it defiles (to soil or tarnish as in reputation) the one holding the bitterness and then it effects others in the same manner. let's deal with the second part first: the impact to others. Remember that our definition from the dictionary said (among other things) that bitterness causes pain; it is harsh, cutting and cruel; it is characterized by intense animosity; it feels or shows resentment or animosity. When these type of characteristics appear among those that are to act and look like Jesus (CHRIST-ians) then the end result is that the world turns away from us and they are lost (defiled). 2 Corinthians 4:3 ***But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:*** And among those in the church, one with a bitter attitude stirs up those who have not yet mastered their spirit. It brings to mind how the bitter attitude of Nabal in I Samuel 25 almost stirred David to sin. If God had not intervened, David would have never learned how God executes judgment and he would have failed a test that would be needed later when dealing with Shimei (see 2 Samuel 16:5-14, 19:15-23).

But the verse also said that the individual holding the bitterness would be defiled and this is the starting point. We as New Testament believers are instructed repeatedly to let this attitude be put away from us (Ephesians 4:31; James 3:14; Romans 3:14, 10-18). The reference in Romans is very clear in letting us know that the one engaged in such an attitude is part of those that the Scripture says are not righteous.

THE SOLUTION TO BITTERNESS: We cannot deal with bitterness on our own. It will take the spirit of God working with us. On a certain Friday in June while at church, God began to deal with me about what it takes to be free from bitterness. The night prior to that, I had been working in the backyard cutting hedges and pulling up small weeds. There were two small trees that had grown next to the porch. These were at least two years old because I remember trying to pull them up before without success. But at this time, the ground was moist from a very rainy May and my

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wife had been planting in that area so the ground was also moist from watering. When I went to pull them up this time, they both came up from the root. Using this, God gave me to know that dealing with the root of bitterness takes both a husbandman (God) and the right type of soil. We must work with God by yielding ourselves to Him. We must be willing to drop the bitterness, the hurt, and the unforgiveness completely and deal with that person as if they had never done anything wrong. The bitterness must become more important than the pain in order for it to be dealt with. **Without pulling up the bitterness, you will never deal with the pain. The key to success over bitterness is to mortify (KILL!) the ability of the offending situation to bind us.** Romans 8:13 *For if ye live after the flesh, ye shall die: but if ye THROUGH THE SPIRIT do mortify the deeds of the body, ye shall live.*

WHY MUST WE DEAL WITH BITTERNESS? James 3:14 *But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth.* Bitterness must be dealt with if you intend to see Jesus in peace. Resentment, bitterness, rancor, and malice are all evidence that you are not in the truth. All of these are terms used to describe bitterness.

ARE YOU IN BITTERNESS? We cannot finish our discussion on dealing with the pain until we look at two other areas that have the potential to afflict us. We may not be bitter but are we a talebearer — the source of bitterness and strife? We may not be bitter or a talebearer but are we harboring unforgiveness? We already have seen that it will lead to bitterness. These areas deserve further examination in our own lives to ensure that we are not walking in them.

THE TALEBEARER

THE TALEBEARER The second factor that often plays a part in emotional pain is the talebearer. This is the Bible word for a gossip. Proverbs 18:8, 26:22 ***The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly.*** This verse is quoted in both places. Notice the wounds again. What the talebearer is doing is bringing things to you that you would have not otherwise known and those things hurt. Notice also that the talebearer is not the one that receives the bitterness. Often, the talebearer is not even considered in the whole equation but this is the one that caused all the problems. Sometimes, the one who has been hurt even becomes closer to the talebearer. This is the exact opposite of what the Bible says our response should be. Proverbs 26:20 ***Where no wood is, there the fire goeth out: so where there is no talebearer, the strife ceaseth.*** **If you eliminate the talebearer, you can make a big impact on eliminating strife among the brethren and eliminating the pain in your life.**

The intent of the talebearer does not always have to be malicious or evil. This is in spite of the fact that we look at a gossip as being just this. The word “gossip” refers to mischievous or idle talk usually about the affairs of others. At the time of this writing, a friend brought to me some painful words uttered about me by some friends of mine. The situation that was brought to me concerned me but the ones originally discussing it did not mean for it to get back to me because I’m sure they realized that at face value it could be painful. But the talebearer, with good intention, let me know how he defended my cause in this situation. I didn’t reflect so much on his loyalty to my side as much as on the words said by the other parties. The talebearer meant well, but there was still pain to deal with. (By the way, as a preview of things to come, I have forgiven them and removed not only the pain but also the scar.)

THE SPIRIT OF THE TALEBEARER Though this discussion is focused on how an individual deals with the pain, I want to look at the spirit of the talebearer briefly to help us understand how we can so easily be the cause of pain. Whenever you set out to put something in writing that deals with a topic like this, a topic that can bring freedom and liberty, the devil will naturally act up. While writing this, a crisis occurred in my own family where my wife was confronted with information by a true friend (I want to emphasize the word “true”) that hurt immensely. I found myself with feelings of resentment and animosity coming in, but here again, it was not directed towards the talebearer but towards the offending party discussed by the talebearer. We talked it out and felt the pain for a few minutes and then I came to myself and realized what God had already shown me. **THE PROBLEM WAS NOT THE OFFENDING PARTY AS MUCH AS THE TALEBEARER.** Like the saying says, “ignorance is bliss,” it is truly bliss when ignorance avoids pain. Now, let’s look at the spirit of the talebearer and examine ourselves to see if this is where we are:

- When you find out information that effects someone close to you and the party involved does not know it, before you pass it on, make sure that you’re not operating in this spirit. The world

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has schooled us to make sure that this type of information is passed on so that the ignorant knows where someone else stands. But what if the offending party repents in the mean time? What if the Lord touches them and the painful words they uttered go away? What if they were uttered in frustration, anger or fatigue? If you pass them on, you have stirred the pot further and may find yourself in danger of judgment because of this. Matthew 12:36-37 ***But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.***

- Does a talebearer really love their friend? A friend of mine once preached a message entitled, “If You Love Like You Say, Why Do You Do Me Like You Do?” This title has been ringing in my ears since I heard this information. Love for both parties will not allow tales to be borne.
- The talebearer usually brings **FACTS**. They have not dreamed this up but they have heard it and many times they have heard it first hand.
- The talebearer can often be a close friend who means nothing but good for you but in this situation, they have not thought things through. That’s what this study is for, to help each of us think things through more clearly before we open our mouths and destroy relationships.
- Remember that the talebearer can be as close as your husband, wife, mother, or father. If we remember this and don’t relax, we’re on our way towards keeping out of bitterness. I Thessalonians 5:13b ***And be at peace among yourselves.***

HOW DO YOU DEAL WITH THE TALEBEARER? The answer is found in the statement itself. The first rule to be established is – don’t deal with the information received, deal with the talebearer. If you don’t, you’ll find all kinds of “friends” (and real friends too) dumping garbage your way. God has not called us to be garbage cans but vessels of honor (see 2 Timothy 2:21). Let your friends know that you don’t have “*Rubbermaid*” stamped on the side of you but the seal of the Blood of the Lamb - friends should know what hurts friends. Likewise, you be careful that you are not also found in the same thing. Know your friends and family and love them. Your love for them will not allow you to pass on things that you know will hurt.

A FINAL WORD The Old Testament is full of types and examples, in the natural, to illustrate how we should handle things, in the New Testament, in the spiritual. David dealt with the talebearer fiercely. We cannot be as fierce in the natural but let us work fiercely with each other to eliminate the causes of unnecessary pain and maintain unity among the brethren. 2 Samuel 4:9-10 NLT ***But David said to Recab and Baanah, “As surely as the LORD lives, the one who saves me from my enemies, I will tell you the truth. 10 Once before, someone told me, ‘Saul is dead,’ thinking he was bringing me good news. But I seized him and killed him at Ziklag. That’s the reward I gave him for his news!***

FORGIVENESS

DEFINITION: **forgive** - {Webster's Dictionary} To cease to feel resentment against; to give up a claim on account of; to grant remission of an offense, debt, fine, or penalty; to pardon; to free from the consequences of an injurious act or crime. Using this definition, there is no way that bitterness can come in if forgiveness has been exercised. **If bitterness is there (remember, bitterness involves resentment), the forgiveness that God expects is not there.**

GOD'S EXAMPLE OF FORGIVENESS: Because there is so much turmoil within the church regarding all that is involved in forgiveness, we need to look to the Lord as our perfect example to understand how He forgives.

- 1) **GOD'S FORGIVENESS INVOLVES FORGETFULNESS** Ezekiel 18:21-22 *But if the wicked will turn from all his sins that he hath committed, and keep all my statutes, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall surely live, he shall not die. All his transgressions that he hath committed, THEY SHALL NOT BE MENTIONED UNTO HIM: in his righteousness that he hath done he shall live.*

Isaiah 43:25 *I, even I, am he that blotteth out thy transgressions for mine own sake, and WILL NOT REMEMBER THY SINS.*

Isaiah 38:17 *Behold, for peace I had great bitterness: but thou hast in love to my soul delivered it from the pit of corruption: FOR THOU HAST CAST ALL MY SINS BEHIND THY BACK.* How often do we hear the people of God say, "I'll forgive but I won't forget?" If this were the attitude of the Lord, all of the great ones of the Bible would not exist because God would still hold sin against them...and neither would we!

This concept is best illustrated in the fall of Peter. There were a number of steps in that very famous situation but I only want to discuss some of the more notable ones:

- **Peter made a bold declaration of how he would never leave Christ.** Luke 22:33 *And he said unto him, Lord, I am ready to go with thee, both into prison, and to death.* Sometimes the commitment made by others to us is emphasized to such an extent that it makes forgiveness more difficult. This was a time that Jesus the man needed Peter to come through on his commitment. He needed the prayers of the saints to sustain Him in this difficult venture.
- **Peter boldly denied Christ.** (Luke 22:54-60). This was not the end of Peter's sin. Even after the crucifixion, Peter was instrumental in leading the other apostles back to their former life of fishing (John 21:3) away from the commission of Christ.
- **The Lord knew that this had happened and was, at the very least, bothered by it.** He may have even been hurt. Luke 22:61a *And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter.*

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- **The Lord forgave Peter and recommissioned him to the task that they had walked three years together for.** John 21:17 *He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, feed my sheep.* This whole process is important but especially this last step. The Lord Jesus searched and found out where Peter was and then sent him back on the same journey. He did not change the direction of his ministry but **completely** forgave him. **TO FORGIVE IS TO FORGET!**
- 2) **GOD'S FORGIVENESS IS COMPLETE** Psalm 103:12 *As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us.* Because God's forgiveness is complete, we must also forgive ourselves. How often do we let the devil beat us down with things from our past that God has forgiven? In our forgiving, let us encourage the offender to not continually look back to his offense.
 - 3) **GOD IS FAITHFUL TO HIS PROMISE TO FORGIVE** I John 1:9 *If we confess our sins, HE IS FAITHFUL AND JUST to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.* If we will just humble ourselves and confess our sins to God, He is faithful (able to be counted on; dependable) and just (fair; upright) to wipe the slate clean. When we do our part, we absolutely can trust God to do His part.
 - 4) **GOD IS READY TO FORGIVE** Psalm 86:5 *For thou, Lord, art good, and READY TO FORGIVE; and plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee.* Ready - prompt in performance or action; willing; inclined. If we call on God to forgive us, He is not only willing to do it; He not only has the inclination to do it; He is also quick about doing it. He's not going to let sin hang over our heads when we ask forgiveness.
 - 5) **GOD'S FORGIVENESS HELPS ESTABLISH THE FEAR OF HIM** Psalm 130:4 *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* We understand that God is a judge. Judgement without the hope of forgiveness brings fear and dislike. Forgiveness brings fear and love. After having sinned, this fear keeps us in check so as not to come to the point where forgiveness might expire.

THE CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IN FORGIVENESS: We have looked at how God works in His forgiveness. With that done, we need to look at what our responsibility is as Christians in forgiveness:

- 1) **IT MUST MATCH UP WITH GOD'S FORGIVENESS** Colossians 3:13 *Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: EVEN AS CHRIST FORGAVE YOU, SO ALSO DO YE.* We have seen in the previous paragraph that

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there are a number of attributes to the Lord's forgiveness. Using that as a starting point, let's apply those same points to how we forgive:

- a) **When We Forgive, We Forget** – I have seen in my own life and, unfortunately, in some of my own past teaching that I have not truly forgiven some. Just as Peter was forgiven and became one of the pillars of the church, our forgiveness must, if at all possible, restore all that the sin has torn down. Sometimes the sin/forgiveness process may open both parties eyes to things that they were doing that were incorrect. For example, if I run over to your house all of the time, and you let it wear on you but don't properly deal with it in the Bible way, there may eventually be a big "blow-up." When everything has calmed down and we have forgiven one another, to go back to the same thing invites the same blow-up all over again. Now that I see that this bothers you, I need to correct my ways. The key thing, however, is to make sure that any correction made beyond forgiveness is not some type of "pay-back" or caution exercised because of the sin. Otherwise, this is not the forgiveness of God.
 - b) **Our Forgiveness Must Be Complete** – This is an extension of the previous point. We must throw the offender's sin from us so far that we can't retrieve it to use as a club. As was stated previously, we must encourage the offender to forgive themselves. We have a responsibility to our brother or sister to make sure that the devil does not beat them down with this sin that has been forgiven. Not only must we forgive and forgive, we must help in the restoration process. Galatians 6:1 **Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, RESTORE such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.** Restore - to bring back to a former, original or normal condition. When we truly forgive, everything returns to its former state.
 - c) **We Must Be Faithful To Forgive** – You are one of the people of God. If you are just a church member, you are not of this number. But those that are God's must take on His same nature. We cannot use forgiveness as a tool to extort what we want from others. The offender should expect us to forgive. We can't let them down.
 - d) **We Must Be Ready To Forgive** – As stated earlier, the attitude of God is that He is not only willing to do it; He not only has the inclination to do it; He is also quick about doing it. How quick are we to forgive others? Must we go through prayer line after prayer line of being dealt with by the Lord before we are willing to give up and forgive? If our forgiveness is not prompt, we may further wound the spirit of the one seeking forgiveness and cause them to be bitter.
- 2) **IT MUST BE LIMITLESS** Matthew 18:21-22 **Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.**

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Jesus is not setting a specific number of incidents that we are allowed to go through with each individual we meet. For if we had a “tally sheet” set up to find out when a person reaches incident number 490, then we must also realize that there are 489 incidents that are unforgiven.

Remember the former points: **WHEN WE FORGIVE, WE FORGET** and **OUR FORGIVENESS MUST BE COMPLETE**. That’s the catch to this passage that is not often brought out. If I have truly forgiven you, the tally sheet has been wiped clean and we’re back at zero. Because God forgave us and continues to forgive us, we must be faithful to forgive others and continue to forgive them.

- 3) **HOW WE FORGIVE EFFECTS HOW WE ARE FORGIVEN** Mark 11:25-26 *And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.* The unforgiving are unforgiven! An unforgiving spirit is a spirit without love. Luke 7:47 *Wherefore I say unto thee, her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little.* We have *no right* to be in the state of one to whom little is forgiven. If you are saved, have given your life to Christ, your slate has been wiped clean from the time of conscience to the present time. That is a lot of sin no matter how good you may have been. If we re-examine our love and fix it, a forgiving spirit should follow.

More importantly is the fact that if you don’t develop that loving spirit and you refuse to forgive, God says that He will not forgive you. I believe that many in the church are not seeing growth in their lives because their sins are unforgiven. Yes, they have gone to the altar and asked God to forgive them. Yes, they left there believing that God had forgiven. And yes, they may have even stopped that sin altogether. However, all of this means nothing if you leave the altar with unforgiveness in your heart. Your faith cannot override a principle in the word of God! Until you forgive, you’re living in a dangerous state with unforgiven sin in your life...and I believe that you can be lost because of this!

- 4) **IT MAY INVOLVE PERSONAL LOSS** I Corinthians 6:7 *Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because ye go to law one with another. Why do ye not rather take wrong? why do ye not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded?* Many hostilities arise because of pride in one of the two or more parties. The Bible is so clear when it says in Proverbs 13:10a *Only by pride cometh contention.* If someone had swallowed their pride, the hurt would not have come, forgiveness would not have been required, etc. But now that the hurt has occurred, holding it only worsens the hostilities and brings in bitterness. You must expect to sacrifice personal rights when you forgive. Though we have been taught all of our lives to exercise vengeance (“Johnny, if he hits you, you hit him back.”), the way of Christ is to suffer loss for the sake of the relationship. Matthew 5:25 *Agree with thine adversary*

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quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.

- 5) **IT MUST NOT BE BOUGHT** Hebrews 12:17 *For ye know how that afterward, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.* Only God has the right to withhold forgiveness. This verse gives us the example of a very sad case but I want to emphasize the last part: he sought it carefully with tears. How often have I seen the one who has caused the hurt trying to literally buy back the favor of the one they hurt because of a lack of forgiveness? Sure, they hear the words, “I forgive you,” but the actions say otherwise. To repeat an earlier point: **FORGIVENESS MUST INVOLVE FULL AND COMPLETE RESTORATION OR ELSE IT’S NOT FORGIVENESS.**

- 6) **THERE IS RESPONSIBILITY ON BOTH SIDES** Luke 17:3-4 *Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.* Once your friend, family member, or acquaintance asks for forgiveness, you forgive...period. Your responsibility is to point out the offense and to forgive. Their responsibility is to repent (to feel remorse, contrition, or self-reproach for what one has done or failed to do and make a change for the better as a result of it). However, if they don’t repent, you must forgive anyway ... or else! Or else what? For the answer to this, keep reading in the next section.

THE TORMENTORS

The concept of “the tormentors” comes from Matthew 18:23-35.

Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellow servants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellow servant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the TORMENTORS, till he should pay all that was due unto him. SO LIKEWISE shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Torment - to have extreme pain; to be in anguish of mind; to torture; to cause such pain; to afflict; to tease, vex or harass; to annoy. {*Vine's Expository Dictionary*} (Greek) ***basanizo*** - to put to the test; to examine by torture; distress; sickness; the retributive judgments of God upon impenitent mankind at the close of this age. **Tormentor** - {*Vine's Expository Dictionary*} (Greek) ***basanistes***, a torturer, one who elicits information by torture, it is used of jailers. One who has been turned over to the tormentors is one who is in bondage to this spiritual jailer until what should be exacted from them (an attitude of forgiveness) is paid.

Let's look at a brief exposition of what these verses in Matthew are saying.

24 And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. The servant was accused of embezzling or wasting through mismanagement 10,000 talents. The talent was the greatest weight and largest measure of money among the Hebrews and it was used for gold or silver. A gold talent was equal to approximately \$30,000 each, or \$300,000,000 in this case. A silver talent was equal to approximately \$2,000 each, or \$20,000,000 in this case. Both of these numbers are based on an estimate of today's money and you will also find various commentators who will give different amounts but the key is that this was a huge sum of money!

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25 But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The king intended to have this servant, his wife, his children and all that he had sold to satisfy a portion of the debt. This would not even begin to pay the debt but it would help to satisfy the king's wrath. This was not an idle threat but it represented the true intention of the king. It also represented the legal remedy the king had at his disposal to deal with this man because of his crime. Before you begin to think unkind thoughts about the king, remember, the servant had committed a crime (legal word for sin) and the approach the king took was the legal remedy provided by the law of that day.

26 The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. The word that leaped out at me in this verse is WORSHIP. This is the only reference in the New Testament of this word being used towards a man without the worshipper being rebuked. To worship is to make obeisance, do reverence to or to pay homage to. This man was desperate and had gone so far as to give this man what was rightfully only God's. He not only worshipped but he promised. **He worshipped one who did not deserve it and promised what he could not pay in his desperation.** He demonstrated his remorse, his sorrow, his need for forgiveness. This attitude is what reduces sentences in our legal system today. This also demonstrates the true attitude of sorrow for sin. Unfortunately, in this man's case, it was more so motivated by fear of the punishment rather than sorrow for the sin.

27 Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. What forgiveness! Take notice of this because it's a type of the forgiveness of God. Our sins are overwhelming in their weight and God completely forgives us.

28 But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. Now the servant has been forgiven but look how he responds to his forgiveness. This same servant finds one of his fellow servants (a type of our brethren in the church or people that we run into in general). This fellow servant owed him 100 pence, which was the equivalent of 100 days wages. (The parable in Matthew 20 supports the fact that a penny or denarius was a day's wage during this time.) To modernize that, based on an average salary of \$17,000 per year, this would equate to \$6,800. Quite a difference when compared to what the forgiven servant owed the king. Also notice how he treated him: he laid hands on him and took him by the throat! This is not how the king treated him in spite of the gross difference in debts.

29 And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. The fellow servant entreated the first servant in almost the exact same manner as the first servant had entreated the king a few minutes prior. This should have been enough to jog the servant's memory and help him to respond in a more

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compassionate manner but it did not. Has God tried to give you a wake up call like this when you have held on to something without exercising forgiveness?

30 And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. Look at the first servant's response: (1) he refused to have patience with him any longer; (2) he demanded immediate and full restitution; (3) when he could not get the restitution he wanted, he had him imprisoned. We'll see later that the imprisonment had nothing to do with restitution as much as it did with punishment. He wanted his money and he didn't care about anything else. He had a right to his money but so did the king. You have a right to be treated in certain ways but so did the Lord before you came to Him. He forgave you; you must also forgive.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. When you respond in the manner of the first servant, there will always be someone to see you and entreat the Lord, directly or indirectly, about what you have done. How often has the world wagged their head and questioned the reality of our salvation when they have seen how we act to others! We must realize that God sees and hears this response from the world because it is really directed towards Him. (Romans 2:24 **For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles THROUGH YOU, as it is written.**)

33 Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had pity on thee? This is the main principle of Christian forgiveness: **We forgive because we are forgiven and we forgive in the same manner as we are forgiven.** The servant should have exhibited compassion on his fellow servant based on what happened to him.

Mark 11:25-26 **And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses.**

34 And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. There are three points that should be brought out in this verse:

First, The king delivered him to the tormentors until he should pay all that was due the king. What was due the king? A few million dollars? Yes. But more so, the king wanted this servant to exhibit the same attitude of forgiveness towards his fellow servants that the king had shown him. And the torment would continue until this attitude was worked into the servant. As stated earlier, this was more about punishment and correction than restitution.

Second, let us remember that this man is in prison. By being in prison, he is making less money than when he was a servant so the re-payment is even slower. As a result of his unforgiveness, he's going through the suffering and pain of judgment that Jesus paid for on the cross and he's going through longer than normal.

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Third, this was a transgression from which he had received forgiveness (see verse 27). But when he refused to similarly forgive, the transgression came back upon him. Remember this thought as we look at the next verse.

The tormentors are the result of the bondage of unforgiveness and bitterness. They come to afflict in any number of ways and develop in you the correct attitude towards forgiveness. The tormentors appear when our hedge comes down. It cannot help but come down with all of this unforgiven sin in our lives. Remember, since you won't forgive, God won't forgive you. **WHEN YOU ARE UNFORGIVING, YOU ARE UNFORGIVEN.** They remind me of the verse in I Corinthians 5:5 ***To deliver such an one unto Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus.*** God will allow the devil to open up on us until the carnality that caused this unforgiveness is worked out. This is not done maliciously but in order to save us.

35 So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses. Likewise - in similar manner. This means that similarly, God the Father will deal with us when we don't forgive from the heart. This forgiveness must be from the heart for when the heart has changed, actions will follow to bring about complete forgiveness.

Before leaving this discussion on the tormentors, it would be good to bring in this point: WHAT MUST I DO TO BE FREE OF THE TORMENTORS? I have four points that I believe will open up the prison doors for those who are going through this:

- 1) **WORK WITH GOD BY YIELDING OURSELVES TO HIM.** Recognize and acknowledge the fact that you are a sinner because you refuse to forgive (re-read Mark 11:25-26). In order to be free you must drop all past pride that has kept the unforgiveness active in your life.
- 2) **BE WILLING TO DROP THE BITTERNESS, THE HURT, THE UNFORGIVENESS COMPLETELY AND DEAL WITH THAT PERSON AS IF THEY HAD NEVER DONE ANYTHING WRONG.** Drop that attitude and treat that person right! You must drop it, forget it, forgive them, and treat them as if nothing had happened. It doesn't matter what it is or what they have done. Remember the attitude of God is that His forgiveness involves forgetfulness. Did I say it was easy? No, I did not. However, this is why the Lord has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness so that we can forgive like He forgives.
- 3) **ALLOW GOD'S SPIRIT TO REVEAL EVERYBODY THAT YOU ARE STILL HOLDING GUILTY FOR SOME OFFENSE.** Pray and ask God to show you name by name, those that you have a resentful, bitter attitude towards.

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- 4) **FORGIVE, FROM THE HEART, EVERYONE THAT GOD SHOWS YOU.** You must consciously (not necessarily face-to-face) forgive those that have wronged you. You must make them a part of your prayer life (Matthew 5:44).

This brief prayer is offered as a suggestion for deliverance as God shows you each one that you need to forgive:

Lord Jesus, you know that I have resentment and unforgiveness towards _____. I call it what it is, it is SIN. I ask You to cleanse this resentment out of me with Your blood. I forgive _____ completely of what they have done. I pray that you heal the wounds in me and take away all painful memories of the incident. I also pray that you bless that one that hurt me, so that our relationship can be restored. Please begin the healing process and restore us completely to our former fellowship. In Jesus' name I pray. Amen.

CONCLUSION

God has a plan for His people in order for them to maintain fellowship and friendship in the family of God. Being God, He does not leave any stone unturned and presents a plan for both situations:

- If you find that a brother or sister has something against you, He has a plan for that (Matthew 5:23-24).
- If you have something against a brother or sister, He has a plan for that (Matthew 18:15-17).

We'll first look at what to do when you find that a brother or sister has something against you.

Matthew 5:23-24 ***Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.***

Jesus felt that peace among the brethren was so important that He demonstrated it in this example. Let's say that you are a Jew involved in a religious ceremony of giving. While you are waiting in line to give or about to give, you remember that Brother Smith (for lack of another name) has something against you that hasn't been cleared up by an action on your part. This reconciliation is so important that you are to immediately stop or suspend what you are doing, leave the synagogue, go find Brother Smith and get it straight. Once it is straight, then you can come back and finish offering what you have to offer. What if Brother Smith is also Mr. Smith, my husband? The same rule applies. What if Brother Smith is actually Mrs. Smith, my wife? The same rule applies. Quick Side Note: Once we learn to apply the same Bible principles in our marriages that we're using with our friends, loved ones, co-workers, acquaintances, etc., we'll see the same positive Bible results in our marriages.

This verse has to do with reconciliation of the brethren. Once you get to the altar, you remember that your brother has something against you. (The word "ought" means "anything or any part.") Since you're still not reconciled, it's obvious that he did not handle it properly and present the situation to you so that it could be worked out. Maybe his behavior or his attitude changed and you meant to ask him about it but never got around to it. The point is, now that it's come back to mind, stop whatever you're doing, no matter what and get it straightened out. This is not going to be easy **but we've got to do it**. It's going to work directly against our pride but remember Proverbs 13:10a ***Only by pride cometh contention***. Your pride will keep this going so it must be either swallowed or spit out. 2 Corinthians 5:18 says that since we have been reconciled to God, we have likewise been given the ministry of reconciliation. It's pretty pathetic when the reconcilers can't even be reconciled among themselves.

Before leaving this thought, let me remind you that YOU (AND I) ARE NOT PERFECT. Our perfection is a spiritual perfection and we are working daily to make our outer man line up with our

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inner man. We must maintain the integrity of the Body of Christ even if that part of the Body is right in our own homes.

Now let's look at how we should behave when someone has mistreated us. Matthew 18:15-17 ***Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as a heathen man and a publican.***

If you find yourself the subject of an injustice (perceived or otherwise) and the source is one of your brothers or sisters in the Body of Christ, this verse is your remedy. Don't begin a negative gossiping campaign against the brother but follow the Bible steps:

- 1) **TALK TO THEM ONE ON ONE AND TRY TO GET IT STRAIGHTENED OUT.** Unfortunately, many "Christians" today will, without blinking an eye, lie and tell you that "nothing is wrong — you've got this all wrong" when they KNOW what they did. This is the point where you exercise forgiveness. Don't cast aside everything that has been presented to this point. Our mission is reconciliation not retribution. However, if the situation gets worse and you can't get the situation worked out, the Lord saw this time also and gave a secondary remedy.
- 2) **GET SOMEONE ELSE (ONE OR TWO OR MORE) TO GO WITH YOU WHO HAVE PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE (NOT HEARSAY FROM YOU) ABOUT THIS SITUATION TO TRY TO GET IT WORKED OUT.** Perhaps when the person hears that their actions have been viewed by a number of people, they will repent. But again, the Lord saw how we are and presented an ultimate solution.
- 3) **BRING IT TO THE CHURCH.** In bringing it to the church, you need to bring the one, two, or more witnesses that you had in step 2. The church must be convinced that this is not in your mind but is truly a problem that the other person should have dealt with. Now if they refuse to repent, you and the church are to separate yourselves from them. This is a person that REFUSES to walk in the way of Christ. This is a dramatic step that, for the most part, we're not willing to do today but the soul of the offender is at stake.

Now let me throw a wrench into the situation. If the incident proceeds all the way through step 3, **YOU STILL HAVE TO FORGIVE THE OFFENDER.** The church has exercised discipline to keep the church clean but the believer (the offended person) and the church must forgive the offender and work to restore the offender in a spirit of love.

Finally, you will find that if you will follow the instructions of the Word of God, you are guaranteed success. If you feel like these instructions are too difficult and you have your own ideas, nothing is promised except hard times (the way of the transgressor is hard). Let me also

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point out that there is nothing in Scripture that encourages us to just let things “blow over.” We must always first try to come to a resolution so that we can be reconciled. Anything less opens the door for bitterness, unforgiveness and the tormentors.

Luke 17:3 ***Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, REBUKE HIM; and if he repent, FORGIVE HIM. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; THOU SHALT FORGIVE HIM.***

Do this and enjoy Jesus and each other in the unity of the Spirit! I speak blessings into your life in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ!



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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Maurice A. West was born and raised in Missouri, the son of Juanita (Jefferson) Whitfield, and the late Henry Walker West. His childhood years were spent as a member of the Catholic Church in Kansas City, where he received his initial religious education.

In April 1972, he received the Lord at Lincoln University, Jefferson City, Missouri, and became Spirit-filled on Easter Sunday 1973 at First Assembly of God of Jefferson City. His ministerial instruction came under the careful, stern tutelage of his father in the Gospel, Apostle Ted Byrd of Kansas City. After graduating from college in 1975, he moved to St. Louis. The Lord soon completed His direction regarding his marriage to Sharon Denise Carson and they were married July 1976 in Kansas City.

While living in St. Louis, the West's worked under Pastor James T. Jefferson. Pastor Jefferson saw something in the young preacher and recommended him for ordination. At the age of 24, Bishop W.E. Turner ordained Pastor West an elder in the Churches of God in Christ at historic Bostick Temple Church of God in Christ in May 1978. In the same year, the West's moved to Elgin, Illinois, and began serving under the ministry of Administrative Assistant Leonard R. Spates, Sr., where they served for thirteen years. While living in Elgin, the Lord blessed them with their two children, Maurice II and Mark.

In December 1990, Elder West received a call from Elder Loren Lambert, pastor of West Side Church of God in Christ in Rockford, Illinois. Pastor Lambert wanted Elder West to move to Rockford to serve as his assistant pastor. Elder and Sister West prayed and with the Lord's direction, the family began to work under Elder Lambert's ministry in January 1991. Elder West served Pastor Lambert for eight years as his assistant pastor. Upon the untimely passing of Pastor Lambert in 1999, the jurisdictional bishop, Bishop Dennis Flakes of Milwaukee, appointed Elder West as the pastor of West Side Church of God in Christ.

Since becoming pastor, Pastor West has focused West Side on the vision the Lord gave him for the church. Pastor and Sister West have always maintained a focus on empowering the people of God to achieve the destiny that God has for them by an intimate knowledge of the Word of God.