

THE

OVERCOMING

LIFE

30 DAYS OF CONQUERING LIFE'S OBSTACLES

JOE WYROSTEK



The Overcoming Life: 30 Days of Conquering Life's Obstacles

Copyright © 2017 by Joe Wyrostek & Metro Praise International.

All rights reserved.

Printed in the United States of America.

Published by Metro Praise International Publishing,
Chicago, IL.

Unless otherwise noted all Scripture quotations are taken from the
New International Version copyright © 2011 by International Bible
Society.

www.mpichurch.org

PREFACE

John 8:31-32, *“31 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, ‘If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. 32 Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.’”*

Nothing is more heart breaking for me as a pastor than watching Christians live in spiritual bondage. Some people’s bondages are obvious like addictions, broken relationships and negative talk. Others are more hidden like depression, stinking thinking and crippling doubt. Sadly, as I watch people struggle with their bondage, the issue I see them battle with the most is believing God’s Word.

Often times, they spiritualize their bondage by comparing it to Paul’s thorn in the flesh. They wrongly believe it’s God’s way of humbling them (2 Corinthians 12:1-10). However, Paul’s thorn in the flesh doesn’t apply to people in spiritual bondage because all the things they are struggling with Paul was free from. Theologians are not sure of what exactly God allowed the devil to do to Paul- some think it was a sickness (maybe partial blindness) and others believe it was being in consistent battle without reprieve. Regardless of what it was, Paul never used it as an excuse to live a defeated life; rather he used it as an opportunity to boast in God’s overcoming power! He wrote in 2 Corinthians 12:10, *“For when I am weak, then I am strong.”*

Therefore, it’s disturbing for me to hear Christians use Paul’s example of victorious living, despite his demonic attacks, to remain in their bondage to sin and despair. Also, what is equally grieving to me is the amount of preachers that will help Christians stay, “busted and disgusted” on the “gerbil wheel of defeat” because the majority of their sermons are centered on the theme, “You can make it!” They keep the Christian in the mindset that they always need a pep talk because without it they will be defeated. These man-centered preachers talk to Christians as if we are all frail and always on the verge of breaking down and quitting on Jesus.

If you went to most Christian conferences you’d pay top dollar to hear the highly paid speakers (I mean preachers) tell you that you can make it night after night until you started to think that it was normal to live a defeated Christian life. For example, you’d probably hear the first night about how you’re just like the woman with the issue of blood, who needs to touch Jesus to be healed. Then the next night, the preacher would tell you

how you're like blind Bartimaeus, who just needs to cry out to Jesus so you can see. And then the last speaker would preach to you about how you're like dead Lazarus that stinks and finally Jesus is coming to resurrect you. Think about it... you'd go from being sick and bleeding, to blind and all alone; to dead in a grave and stinking; God have mercy!

When do you get to be Jesus in the story and do what Jesus taught the disciples to do and actually lay hands on the sick and bring others deliverance? When do you get taught to be like the disciples who preached with so much courage and power that thousands were saved in one day? It's time to stop seeing yourself as the blind, cripple, bleeding and dead person in the story- you've been born again! It's time to see yourself as a saved, sanctified saint that has been set on fire with the Holy Ghost to be a world changer, history maker and generation shaker!

The point is this- Jesus said that His disciples know the truth and the truth sets them free- and who the Son sets free is free indeed! Freedom is meant to be our default position as Christians. So if somehow you find yourself in bondage as a Christian you have done something wrong- "it's not okay, to not be okay" (despite how popular songs on Christian radio will try to make you think). I'm not saying bad things can't happen to good people; but what I am saying is bondage is not an accident or something unpreventable like cancer. Spiritual bondages, like the things discussed in this book, are the very things Jesus came to set you free from!

Most people don't live free because they don't believe it's possible.

A wise man once said, "You receive not, because you believe not." I pray that you will carefully read each chapter and every verse noted so that you will be filled with faith and live free from all bondage. I am a living testimony that God is able!

HOW TO USE THE BOOK

1. Read a lesson each day consistently for 30 days.
2. Prayerfully consider the reflection at the end of each lesson.
3. Put into practice the three actions listed each day.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DAY 1:	Disciples are Overcomers	7
DAY 2:	Overcoming Pride	9
DAY 3:	Overcoming the Fear of Man	11
DAY 4:	Overcoming the Fear of Failure	13
DAY 5:	Overcoming the Fear of Persecution	15
DAY 6:	Overcoming Self-Centeredness	19
DAY 7:	Overcoming Offense Towards God	21
DAY 8:	Overcoming Bad Theology	25
DAY 9:	Overcoming Being Unteachable	27
DAY 10:	Overcoming Greed	31
DAY 11:	Overcoming the Worries of Life	33
DAY 12:	Overcoming Doubt	35
DAY 13:	Overcoming Laziness	37
DAY 14:	Overcoming Sexual Sin	41
DAY 15:	Overcoming Family Rejection	43
DAY 16:	Overcoming Shame	47
DAY 17:	Overcoming Unforgiveness	49
DAY 18:	Overcoming Bad Leadership	53
DAY 19:	Overcoming Gossip	55
DAY 20:	Overcoming Life's Troubles	57
DAY 21:	Overcoming Deception	61
DAY 22:	Overcoming Offense	65
DAY 23:	Overcoming Hypocrisy	69
DAY 24:	Overcoming Lack of Trust	73
DAY 25:	Overcoming Lying	75
DAY 26:	Overcoming Being Lukewarm	77
DAY 27:	Overcoming Rebellion	79
DAY 28:	Overcoming Discouragement	83
DAY 29:	Overcoming Bad Time Management	85
DAY 30:	Overcoming Losing Your First Love	87

DAY 1: DISCIPLES ARE OVERCOMERS

1 John 5:5, *“Who is the one who overcomes the world? Only the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God!”*

Disciples are called to be overcomers, more than conquerors and a terror to the spiritual forces of evil. However, many people in the church today are not living the life of a true disciple, instead they are trapped in their sins and in bondage to their own fears and failures. Because many Christians don't know their identity in Christ and the power of His resurrection they are subjected to living a life of continual defeat.

While being called to forsake all, live a new life and serve Jesus they are trying to follow Him with their baggage and are unable to step out of their past into their future. Since many are struggling to live out their own purpose they can't really impact other people's lives because they can't give people what they don't have- freedom.

They may cry out for help, but sadly they're unwilling to really let God change them so they get stuck in a cycle of defeat. God will not bless their mess. Like the gerbil in a wheel, they go round and round but never go forward no matter how much human effort they exert. As a result, they watch others get off the merry-go-round of defeat but they remain in the same place watching time pass by. Before they know it they have not just lost days or months but years of their life to the battle within.

Now be honest- have you ever felt like that? Are you on the gerbil wheel of defeat? Have you watched Jesus set others free, but time has passed by and you're still fighting and losing the same battles? If this is you, Jesus has come today to set you free once and for all! Today's passage promised that whoever believes Jesus is the Son of God overcomes the world.

Jesus came to give you an abundant life that is totally free from sin and despair (John 10:10). It's not too good to be true; it's true because God is too good to let you live defeated- faith in Jesus

will change your life forever.

Now is the time to cry out to God and ask Him to deliver you from all the lies of the enemy! John wrote, *“The one who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil’s work”* (1 John 3:8). Today is your day, this is your hour for every work of the devil to be destroyed in your life.

Lester Sumrall wrote, “Christ came to conquer this world, to snatch it out of the hands of the devil and save us from hell. When Jesus appeared to the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos, He proclaimed that the keys of death and hell were in His hand (Rev. 1:18). Just after His resurrection, He told His disciples, ‘All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth (Matt. 28:18).’” Therefore, there’s no devil in hell that can stop you when Jesus is on your side—all authority in heaven and on earth is His!

Declare with me, “Father, I believe Jesus died on the cross and rose again for my salvation and total deliverance. Set me free today from all my sins, fears and hurts [*name and confess them one by one*]. I believe you are with me now and I receive your overcoming victorious life. By faith in Jesus, I will never ever be the same again. Hallelujah and Amen!”

REFLECTION

If you are born again, do you believe Jesus has already made you an overcomer?

ACTION

1. If you haven’t been born again, confess Jesus as the Lord of your life right now!
2. Repent of any doubt that you may have that causes you to think Jesus hasn’t already set you free and destroyed every work of the devil.
3. Read out loud 1 John 3:8 & 5:5 until you believe it!

DAY 2: OVERCOMING PRIDE

Proverbs 16:18, *“Pride goes before destruction, a haughty spirit before a fall.”*

Pride is a sin that is always easier to see in others than in our self. Pride goes hand-in-hand with self-deception because when people say we are prideful we will lie to cover it up. A wise man once said, “We lie the loudest when we lie to ourselves.” When confronted with our pride we’ll say something like, “I don’t have a problem with pride-it’s everyone else’s fault.” Consequently, in the church the person with pride attempts to “teach the teacher” and “correct the corrector.”

Pride has many different masks. Sometimes it can appear as false humility, “Who, me? You think I have pride? I’m just a lowly servant that everyone overlooks and never pays attention too.” Other times pride appears as over confidence, “Accountability? Nope, I’m all good. No need to probe into my life and see how I’m living when no one is looking- I’m here in this Bible study to help others who really need it.”

Self-pity and self-adornment have the same thing in common- pride.

They both are false views of one’s self. The best definition of pride is, “to think of yourself differently than God does and to act differently than God commands.” For example, if you have self-pity and don’t believe you are who God says you are and you love to throw “pity patty parties” for yourself, you have pride. On the other hand, if you think life is all about you and you can’t accept God’s command to be a servant to others, you stink of pride.

The Bible, especially the book of Proverbs, has much to teach about pride. The best way King Solomon taught to be free from pride is to receive correction from trusted leaders in your life. Why? Because without being corrected by wise instructors you won’t be able to see your own pride and gain the instruction to personally

overcome it. Proverbs 13:10 states, *“Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.”*

Therefore, if you want to overcome pride, pray this simple prayer and mean it, “Father, please send trusted leaders into my life to teach me to overcome my pride, in Jesus’ name, Amen.”

REFLECTION

Are you humble enough, by God’s grace, to let leaders in your life teach you to overcome your pride?

ACTION

1. Repent of the times you have acted in pride towards church leadership.
2. Ask God to make you humble like Jesus (Philippians 2:1-11).
3. Trust godly leaders, who are led by the Spirit, to help expose and teach you to overcome your pride.

DAY 3: OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF MAN

Proverbs 29:25, *“Fear of man will prove to be a snare, but whoever trusts in the Lord is kept safe.”*

The fear of man is an unhealthy addiction to what people may think and say about you (in other words, “man pleasing”). Most commonly the fear of man manifests itself in the sin of hypocrisy. Take for example; a new believer joins the discipleship class under the agreement to be accountable to a certain moral code, like abstaining from pornography. Over time, if the disciple begins to fear man more than they fear God, they won't confess to their leader when they sin in this way because they're afraid of what the leadership will say and do.

Sometimes it's true that people in leadership can mentally intimidate and abuse those under them, but in most cases the godly leader is not a “Secret Service Spy,” but rather a concerned accountability partner that desires to see the disciple succeed and achieve their goal of being free from sin! James said, *“Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective”* (James 5:16). A key part of discipleship is humility in accountability.

Today's proverb teaches that whenever we fear man more than God, we will be trapped by man's opinions and bound to our sins. However, if we follow the biblical pattern and openly confess our sins and weaknesses to each other we can overcome our hypocrisy and live free from the fear of man. Paul said in Galatians 6:1, *“Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who live by the Spirit should restore that person gently.”* Godly people are important in our lives because God uses them to help us mature and live free from all sins, including the fear of man. But we must never fear them, lest our fear become a stumbling block in our Christian walk.

God's remedy for the fear of man is the fear of the Lord. When a person truly fears God, they will fear no man (Matthew

10:28).

Other times, disciples fall into the trap of being “man-pleasers” instead of being “God-pleasers” because they fear not having a certain man’s approval. Maybe a new singer is working with the worship team and instead of being honest about not liking some of the songs, they lie and say they love them all. However, if they would be honest, without being rude or rebellious, they could actually benefit the group because maybe others feel the same way.

Therefore, the fear of man is never good and its outcome is always the following three things; (1) Guilt and condemnation to the one with the fear, (2) Shallow, unfruitful and disingenuous relationships and (3) Rejection of the fear of God. Paul Chappell wrote, “The fear of man strangles us, because we can never please everybody; but the fear of the Lord frees us, because it challenges us to live and serve for an audience of One.”

What’s the solution to those who have the fear of man? Fear God alone! Do you want to be free from the fear of man? Pray this out loud, “Heavenly Father, I ask that I will not fear man, but only fear you. Empower me to always live an open and honest life with all those around me in Jesus’ name, Amen.”

REFLECTION

Have you ever pretended to be something you’re not because of the fear of man?

ACTION

1. Repent of the times you have allowed the fear of man to make you a hypocrite.
2. Ask God for a deep understanding of the fear of the Lord according to Proverbs 8:13.
3. Live your life with honesty, transparency and the fear of the Lord.

DAY 4: OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF FAILURE

2 Timothy 1:7, *“For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline.”*

The fear of failure is the apprehension of living for God because you think you will fail and not live up to what God wants. The fear of failure is closely related to the sin of rebellion and pride. When a person has this fear they generally refuse to be obedient to God’s commands because they view their weaknesses as stronger than God’s power.

Fear is the exact opposite of faith. Faith is a trust in what God said and fear is a trust in what you think. Faith makes a person stronger and enables them to do things they never would be able to do. Fear paralyzes people and keeps them from doing what God said they could do. Faith conquers fear and fear nullifies faith. You can only live with one at a time.

You will either choose to live by your thoughts that produce fear or by the Word of God, which produces faith; but you can’t do both at the same time.

In today’s passage, Paul boldly taught that when you were born again you received the Spirit of God- not a spirit of timidity (fear). As a result, by the indwelling of the person of the Holy Spirit, you have been given all the power, love and self-discipline you will ever need. Paul also wrote in Philippians 4:13 (NKJV), *“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.”* If Paul could do all that God wanted him to do by the Holy Spirit, you can do everything God commanded you to do.

Consider the three main ways the Holy Spirit will empower you to do God’s will for your life; first, the Holy Spirit will give you the power to overcome sin, human limitations and all your inner fears by renewing your mind with the Word of God (Romans 12:1-2). Second, the Holy Spirit will give you a deep and personal assurance that God

loves you and that He'll never leave you nor forsake you. You can be assured you're never facing life's challenges alone. Third, self-discipline, along with a sound mind, is given by the Holy Spirit to conquer all your bad habits and "stinking thinking" to be all that God called you to be! That means, even if you fail at something, you're not going to believe you're a failure and give up. My Dad always said, "Failure is an event, not a person." When you fail get back up and believe you are who God said you are and you can do what He said you can do!

Don't let your fears of failure keep you from serving God, instead be filled with the Holy Spirit and receive His power, love and self-discipline. Pray this out loud with me if you want to quit your quits, "Father, I ask you in the name of Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit to remove all my fears of failure and fill me with your power, love and self-discipline. I believe I can do what you said I can you do! Amen."

REFLECTION

Have you ever been disobedient to God because of the fear of failure?

ACTION

1. Repent of the times you have had the fear of failure.
2. Ask God to fill you with His power, love and self-discipline.
3. Believe what God said in His Word, do what He commanded and live free from fear!

DAY 5: OVERCOMING THE FEAR OF PERSECUTION

Luke 12:4-5, “4 *“I tell you, my friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body and after that can do no more. 5 But I will show you whom you should fear: Fear him who, after your body has been killed, has authority to throw you into hell. Yes, I tell you, fear him.”*

The fear of persecution is being afraid of rejection, threats and physical harm by those who oppose the gospel. On one hand, this kind of fear comes natural to everyone because no one desires to suffer and be mistreated. Even Jesus, God the Son in the flesh, prayed in Luke 22:42, “*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*” On the other hand, like every other fear, the fear of persecution is not of God and can lead to disobedience and rebellion.

For example, when Peter was afraid of persecution he denied Jesus three times (Matthew 26:69-75). Jesus had taught Peter, along with all the other disciples, not to fear what man can do to the body but rather fear what God can do to the soul. However, when it came time to stand up and be counted as a disciple, Peter let his fear take over. We are to obey God’s commands even if we are afraid. Fear is still rebellion against God and is never an excuse for disobedience; especially when it comes to fulfilling the Great Commission.

Our fears can make us cowards and Jesus said cowards would be cast into the Lake of Fire. John wrote in Revelation 21:8, “*But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile... and all liars—they will be consigned to the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death.*”

Thankfully, Peter was given a chance to repent and reaffirm his

love for Jesus, unlike Judas who hung himself and most likely went to hell (John 21:15-19). Afterwards, Peter preached the first message of the church in Jerusalem before thousands of people filled with power of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:14-41). The same Peter, who weeks earlier, was afraid to even admit he knew Jesus in front of a servant girl was now able to preach before a whole city without the fear of death—that's what faith in action looks like!

Eventually, Peter along with many of the disciples were arrested, flogged, publicly mocked and even put to death. Peter asked to be crucified upside down because he felt he was unworthy to die how Jesus did. Now because of the courage of these great disciples we have the expansion of the Word of God growing all over the world (Hebrews 11:36-12:3).

Though the fear of persecution is real, we are to be people of faith and follow all of God's commands- especially being obedient to Jesus' command to be a public witness (Acts 1:8). Don't let what people say and do affect your willingness to go in public and preach the gospel. Always remember what Jesus said in Matthew 5:11-12, *"11 Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."*

Are you afraid of persecution? If yes, the answer to the fear of persecution is two-fold. First, fear God more than man and second, be filled with the boldness of the Holy Spirit. If you want to be free from fear, pray this prayer out loud from Acts 4:29-30, *"29 Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus."*

REFLECTION

Has the fear of persecution ever made you afraid to preach the gospel to strangers in public?

ACTION

1. Repent of the times you have had the fear of persecution.

2. Ask God to fill you with the boldness of the Holy Spirit.
3. Fear God more than you fear man and be a public witness for Jesus Christ! Thomas Watson wrote, “[Christianity] will cost us the tears of repentance and the blood of persecution.”

DAY 6: OVERCOMING SELF-CENTEREDNESS

Psalm 119:36, *“Turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain.”*

Today with the rise of reality TV and online social networking sites, people are easily becoming the most self-serving generation known to mankind. Paul actually warned of this new level of self-worship in the end times in 2 Timothy 3:1-2, *“1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days. 2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud...”* Did you know that greed, abortion, famine, urban decay, obesity, addiction, fatherless homes and the like all have their roots in selfishness?

Jesus commanded His disciples to deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him because He knew how self-destructive our selfish desires can be.

Self-centeredness has many different manifestations-sometimes it will appear in conversations when a person doesn't let others speak but continually makes the entire conversation about them. Other times, selfishness is seen on people's social sites when all they do is post up pictures of themselves, talk about their lives all the time and never contribute anything positive to others. Likewise, selfishness is seen in the church when so-called-Christians are unwilling to serve and help others but seek attention for themselves in all they do.

Jesus said in Matthew 16:24 that the first thing you had to do if you wanted to follow Him was, “deny yourself.” In other words, Jesus taught His disciples that life with Him was no longer about their wants, dreams and expectations; but rather, first and foremost life is about God's wants, dreams and commands! Also, Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”* God's Kingdom is about Jesus and serving others, often times the “least of these” (Matthew

25:31-46).

Idolatry is just as popular as it has always been, it's just the idols are no longer called, "Zeus," "Buddha" or "Krishna." Now they are called, "Fame," "Sports," "Entertainment" and "Me, Myself, & I." Sometimes I talk to people who think they are free from selfishness because they say, "I work hard, provide for my family and help my neighbors whenever they need it." However, without Christ, even a person's own good works can become their idol because it's about what they did and not humbling one's self to worship and serve what Jesus did.

On Judgment Day, when heaven and hell are at stake, Jesus isn't going to ask if you were a good person. Instead, He is going to ask, "Have you been born again?" Did you deny yourself, take up your cross and follow me? Or did you live according to the words of Frank Sinatra's song, "My Way?" C.S. Lewis once said, "There are only two kinds of people in the end: those who say to God, 'Thy will be done,' and those to whom God says, in the end, 'Thy will be done.' All that are in Hell, choose it."

Do you want to be free from a self-centered life? Pray this out loud, "Father, I ask that you, *'turn my heart toward your statutes and not toward selfish gain,'* in the name of Jesus, Amen."

REFLECTION

Have you ever put your wants, desires and ways of doing things before your obedience to God's commands?

ACTION

1. Repent of the times you have been selfish.
2. Ask God to turn your heart to His commands and serving others.
3. Deny yourself, take up your cross and follow Jesus! (Matthew 16:24)

DAY 7: OVERCOMING OFFENSE TOWARDS GOD

Job 10:1, *“I loathe my very life; therefore I will give free rein to my complaint and speak out in the bitterness of my soul.”*

Many people are offended at God. Some admit it openly and others are unaware of it because they are afraid to admit it to themselves. The ones who admit their anger towards God say things like, “If God really loved me, He would have never allowed ‘such and such’ thing to happen to me.” Or, “It’s God fault that this tragedy happened because He could have prevented it, but He didn’t because He doesn’t care about me!”

Those with a hidden offense towards God say things like, “I tried all that ‘faith’ stuff- it just didn’t work for me- bad things still happened. Now I’m not sure if prayer really works like how I was taught.” Or, “I felt like God wasn’t there when I suffered that tragedy, maybe He doesn’t get involved in everyone’s life like He does for others.”

People’s offense towards God may be hidden or revealed, but it still has the same result- faithlessness and despair.

The person suffering from an offense towards God doesn’t fully believe in God’s character and promises anymore. Sadly, because of their hurt they commit a serious sin against God- slander. Slander is saying something about someone that is not true but can damage and stain their reputation (in others words, “lying about someone to others”). When people have an offense towards God they are slandering His reputation. Certainly, God doesn’t need us to promote His power on the earth- He is all-powerful with or without our approval. However, we’re commanded to praise God because it’s the right thing to do- He is our Creator (Psalm 150).

At the same time, everyone has gone through things in their

walk with God that they didn't fully understand. Even great men of faith like David, Abraham, Joseph, Elijah, Peter, John the Baptist and Paul felt at times like God wasn't there for them in the way they wanted Him to be. What we can learn from them is that they never let their doubts and fears lead them to stop following God and giving Him the praise He deserved. They chose to still serve God even though they didn't understand His ways. David said in Psalms 73:26, *"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."*

No book in the Bible better addresses the sin of offense towards God than the book of Job. Job was a righteous man who was tested by Satan to prove his love and sincere devotion to God (Job 1:8-12). Though the story of Job has an encouraging ending, the dialogue between Job and God reveals the deepest pains mankind can ever face with trusting God in life's troubles.

In today's passage Job came awfully close to slandering God. He was complaining and pouring out his heart to God, which is acceptable in times of great pain. Job hated even being alive. However, Job didn't turn his back on God, but rather he became more grounded in his faith. He declared in Job 13:15, *"Though he slay me, yet will I hope in him."* We can learn from the life of Job that even if we don't understand why God allows certain tragic things in our life, we can determine to always trust Him.

The ole' timers used to say, "It's better to go through life's troubles with God, than without Him!" As a result, the solution to an offense towards God is trust. Trust God's love and plan for your life even when you don't understand His ways (Romans 8:28). One day, when life's troubles are over, we will all be thankful for what we suffered because spending eternity with Jesus will be worth it all (Psalm 66:20).

Are you dealing with an offense towards God? If you want to be free from your offense pray this out loud, "Father, forgive me for doubting you and slandering your precious name. Please give me a heart to always trust you- even when I don't understand you. I praise you because you are always good and worthy of worship. I believe no matter what I face, there is a purpose for the pain. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Have you ever been bitter towards God?

ACTION

1. Repent of any offenses you may have towards God.
2. Declare your trust to God by praising Him everyday.
3. Always remember, “God is good.”

DAY 8: OVERCOMING BAD THEOLOGY

Galatians 1:8, “But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let them be under God’s curse!”

People say what they think, but live what they believe. What we believe about God theologically matters. Theology is the study of God. Some naive Christians say, “I don’t get into all that theological stuff... I just read the Bible.” Saying you don’t have a theological belief is proof you have a bad one because you’re in self-denial. No one is without a belief system concerning God- even atheists have them. Likewise, anyone who reads the Bible has theological beliefs.

For example, when you read the Bible, do you believe it’s the Word of God or man’s opinions? Your theology matters. When you read the Old Testament do you try to do everything it says in today’s culture or do you believe Christ fulfilled the Old Testament rituals? Your theology matters. Do you believe there are many ways to heaven or just one way through Jesus Christ? Your theology matters. Do you believe in the moral commands of the Bible or do you think culture should help shape our ethics? Your theology matters. Do you believe Jesus was just a prophet, a good man, a god among many gods or God the Son in the flesh? Your theology matters.

Everyone is a theologian- sadly, not everyone is a good one.

The things that matter in our theology are important, so if you don’t have the proper training and humility to learn the Bible; false teachers or your own imaginations can easily lead you astray. The New Testament is full of examples of people turning from the truth of God to lies. Believe it or not, a false gospel invaded the church in Galatia within a few short years and the apostle Paul started it!

The people were beginning to believe things about salvation that weren’t true. However, to them these erroneous beliefs seemed right because the false teachers were convincing. Paul even said it was

like they were under a spell of witchcraft (bewitched) in Galatians 3:1. Why? Because when people are deceived they don't know they're deceived- they think they're right. The problem with deception is it's deceiving!

The only way someone can realize they are wrong about something in the Bible is if they humble themselves, become teachable, study and hear what God is really saying in the Scriptures. The solution to bad theology is good theology. Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:15, *“Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth.”*

Have you been told by well-trained leaders that you believe things not clearly taught in the Bible? If so, pray this out loud, “Father, I ask you to forgive me for following man's opinions and not your Word. Help me to discern between truth and error according to your Scriptures. Make me teachable to your trusted leaders in the church. Examine my heart and lead me in your paths of righteousness. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

REFLECTION

Have you ever had bad theology or false beliefs?

ACTION

1. Make time to meet with a well-trained leader in your church to discern if your core beliefs about God are true or false.
2. Repent of any false beliefs. A.W. Pink said, “An honest heart loves the truth.”
3. Live your life as a student of God's Word- rightly dividing it and following its path!

DAY 9: OVERCOMING BEING UNTEACHABLE

James 3:17, "But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."

Are you the smartest person you know? Do you feel like the people in your church don't know as much about life as you do, even those in leadership? Do you feel when someone tries to teach you, the lesson is not needed because you're fine the way you are? Have you found it difficult to stay faithful in one church for a long time because people can't "get it together" the way you "have it together?" If you've answered any of these probing questions with "yes," then most likely you're unteachable. If you're really unteachable and have a bad case of it, you probably think I'm wrong and don't think these questions apply to you. If you could explain yourself then you'd be justified in not receiving from others (including me), because you really want to learn, but you don't need to learn how to be teachable, others need to come up to your level first to teach you, right?

Those who are unteachable often times have the biggest planks in their eyes because they don't think they need anyone's help.

I used to be unteachable. I actually thought it was my job in Bible College to teach the professors how to do their jobs. Sure, I had only been saved for 18 months and had never been in ministry, but I thought I was so anointed that it didn't matter- I was "special." I sincerely believed that God had given me the supernatural ability to teach those "naïve" professors theology. Granted they had master's degrees, over 25 years of full time ministry experience and had been walking with the Lord for 50 plus years- but that wasn't important. What was important was that God called me to be their teacher. God have mercy! Long story short, within the first semester I was kicked out because of my pride. If the Lord hadn't been merciful to me while

I was getting gas to drive home, my life would have been a disaster.

Unteachable people are some of the hardest to deal with in the church because their pride is deeply rooted in their false view of themselves. Sometimes what they may be saying has a hint of truth but because they go about it the wrong way, it always brings the wrong results. Know-it-all's will gossip and call it "telling the truth." They will try to split a small group or church faster than you can say, "hypocrite!" And they will do it all in the name of "truth" and "righteousness!" Just like the Jews in the Bible, they will actually think killing Jesus is a good thing. In times like this the old saying is true, "With 'friends' like this who needs enemies?" If the devil can divide and tear apart a church because unteachable people can't humble themselves and follow leadership- who needs demons- the church will tear itself apart- Lord help us!

Consider what James said; *"13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom. 14 But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth. 15 Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. 16 For where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. 17 But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere. 18 Peacemakers who sow in peace reap a harvest of righteousness"* (James 3:13-18).

So what is the solution to being unteachable? Christ-like humility that is *"first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere."* Do you struggle with being a know-it-all? Then pray this out loud, "Father, please forgive me for acting in pride and hurting your people. Humble me and give me a teachable peace-loving heart. Send people into my life to help me grow and teach me how to receive correction. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

When was the last time you were unteachable?

ACTION

1. Repent of the times you have been unteachable.
2. Be peace-loving, even when you're right and people disagree with you.
3. Open your heart to learn from others because no one knows it all!

DAY 10: OVERCOMING GREED

Matthew 6:24, “No one can serve two masters. Either you will hate the one and love the other, or you will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.”

Money is one of the greatest indicators of what we truly value in life and who our “Master” really is. If we serve God, money will always be spent in a way that places God’s Kingdom first and glorifies Him in all we do (Matthew 6:33). However, if we love money more than God, then we will spend our money on whatever we want and “our kingdom” will always come first.

The biblical definition of “greed” is, “putting money above obedience to God’s commands.” Consequently, if someone wanted to see what we valued most in our lives and who our Master really is, all they would have to do is look at our bank statement and see where we spend our money.

For example, monthly house payments shows we value shelter, the grocery expenses show we value food, clothes and cosmetics reveal our value for our appearances, the gym membership shows we value health and charitable donations show we care about others in our community. For those of us who are married and or have children most of these expenses (and many more) would show we value family.

How much would someone see you give to God? God commanded us both in the Old and New Testament to give Him our very best every time we receive an income. The Bible calls this “tithes and offerings” (Malachi 3:10). A “tithes” is 10% of our total income and “offerings” are anything we give after our tithes to the church. Are you a faithful tither and giver of offerings?

It’s tempting in our “me-centered” generation to think that giving God tithes and offerings is not as important as taking care of our family, paying bills and living a good life. But the only way

to be blessed and break greed off our hearts is to put God first in our finances.

Jesus said in Matthew 6:19-21, “19 *Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moths and vermin destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. 20 But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moths and vermin do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.*” Do you believe what Jesus said about “treasures in heaven?” If you do you then you should joyfully give your tithes and offerings every chance you can.

Disciples of Christ should spend money on the good things God has blessed us with on earth; however, God’s Kingdom should always come first in our finances. We must store up for ourselves treasures in heaven by supporting and giving faithfully to Christ’s church. Therefore, decide today where your treasure is going to be and what Master you are going to serve- God or Money. I pray that you choose to serve God and live a life of Kingdom generosity!

If you have struggled with greed by not being a faithful giver of tithes and offerings pray this out loud, “Father, I repent for having a heart of greed. Please teach me to give back to you tithes and offerings from whatever you give me. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

REFLECTION

Who is the Master of your life- God or Money?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have not been faithful in giving tithes and offerings.
2. Be faithful in giving your tithes and offerings to the Lord every time you receive income. Adrian Rogers said, “God doesn’t need us to give Him our money. He owns everything. Tithing is God’s way to grow Christians.”
3. Ask God to bless you so that you can be a blessing to others (Proverbs 19:17).

DAY 11: OVERCOMING THE WORRIES OF LIFE

Luke 12:22-23, “22 Then Jesus said to his disciples: *‘Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. 23 For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.’”*

Worry is faith in fear. Worry comes from our lack of trust in a good God who promised to never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). Worry will never pay our bills, increase our productivity, give us favor or make us strong. Worry only drains our hopes and saps our strength. Worry can even choke out the life of God in us and cause us to perish (Mark 4:19). Worry is sinful.

We worry the most when we trust God the least.

Worry’s best friend, “stress” can lead to physical illness, increased body weight, lack of sleep and mental distress. As a result, worry and stress are not good for the Christian and need to be rejected the same as any other sin. The same way a disciple would repent of perversion and avoid it at all costs, by God’s grace, we need to repent of stress and worry.

Though most of our worries may be based on life’s situations, we need to put our faith in God’s truth. The fact may be that you have little money and big bills, however, the truth of God’s Word says in Philippians 4:19, “*My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.*” Therefore, what are you going to put your faith in- God or fear?

It is said that we think on average over 20,000 thoughts per day. If just one out of ten of our thoughts are negative that means we can think 2,000 worry filled thoughts every day. No wonder so many people are depressed- God help us! Corrie ten Boom once said, “Worry does not empty tomorrow of its sorrow. It empties today of its strength.”

The answers to worry are found in God’s word; (1) Place all

your cares and burdens on Jesus (Matthew 11:28). (2) Pray continually (1 Thessalonians 5:17). (3) Meditate daily on God's Word (Psalm 1:2). (4) Let your mind be renewed by the Holy Spirit as you offer your body in obedience to God's will for your life (Romans 12:1-2). (5) Always be thankful to God for who He is and what He has done (Psalm 147). (6) Only direct your thinking towards Holy Ghost inspired thoughts (Philippians 4:8).

Paul said in Philippians 4:6-8, "*6 Do not be anxious [worrisome] about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*"

Paul said we have a choice regarding what we think about. So if you have worries in your life pray this out loud, "Heavenly Father, I repent for worrying because I haven't been trusting you with my life. I believe that if you care for the birds in the sky and the lilies of the field then you care for me. I choose to trust you and have faith in your promises. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Are you free from all worry?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have any worry in your life.
2. Daily pray and meditate on God's Word.
3. Whenever worry tries to come back speak the Word of God over your life and let the peace of God guard your heart and mind!

DAY 12: OVERCOMING DOUBT

Matthew 11:2-3, “*2 When John, who was in prison, heard about the deeds of the Messiah, he sent his disciples 3 to ask him, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or should we expect someone else?’*”

In today’s passage we learn that after John the Baptist was arrested and put into prison, he had some doubts about Jesus. He, like most Jewish people, thought once the Messiah came all the enemies of Israel would be defeated and God’s Kingdom would be established on earth. Yet now John was facing certain death and his hopes were hanging by a thread.

Have you ever been there before? You feel like God’s plans didn’t go the way you intended them to and felt hopeless. King Solomon wrote in Proverbs 13:12, “*Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life.*” Sometimes when our hopes are deferred by God’s plans we face heartache. It’s not that we totally disbelieve in God, it’s just our heart is sick because our life feels upside down.

The good news about our doubts is that Jesus understands them better than we do. He knows how to align our hopes to the plan of God for our lives.

So when John sent his disciples to Jesus with his doubtful question, Jesus didn’t hesitate to clear up all his misunderstandings. Jesus said in Matthew 11:4-6, “*4 Go back and report to John what you hear and see: 5 The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is proclaimed to the poor. 6 Blessed is anyone who does not stumble on account of me.*” In other words, Jesus said to John, “Everything is happening perfectly according to God’s plan!”

Shortly after John received the confirmation of Jesus being the Messiah he was beheaded by King Herod (Mark 6:27). However, he

could die knowing that his hopes weren't misplaced. All that God had promised was coming to pass, but God was doing it in a different way than he expected. One day, when Jesus returns as a conquering King, John the Baptist will rule and reign with Him upon the earth- just like he hoped to. John's faithfulness in his time of hardship will be rewarded.

Are you willing to trust God when His plans are different than yours? Often times we doubt God because we don't see Him do what we want Him to do. However, life is not about our plans, it's about His glory. The bottom line is; doubt is not of God, faith is- so trust God over your doubts. Learn to doubt your doubts! If you ever feel hopeless because you lack faith, read God's Word and let faith arise in your heart because nothing is impossible for those who believe (Matthew 17:20). Jesus loves to reinforce His plans and promises for your life in His Word. Take time to listen to His heart.

If you are doubting God's plans in your life pray this out loud, "Father, please forgive me for my unbelief and doubts. I humbly ask you to teach me in your Word to have faith in what you say and promise. I declare today is a new day of amazing faith and I choose to place all my hopes in you. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

What are your doubts concerning God's will for your life?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have allowed doubts to stay in your heart.
2. Pray and meditate on God's Word to grow and develop your faith. F.F. Bosworth said, "Believe your beliefs and doubt your doubts."
3. Whenever life doesn't turn out the way you hoped, trust God, because He will never disappoint you (either in this life or in the age to come).

DAY 13: OVERCOMING LAZINESS

Proverbs 18:9, *“One who is slack in his work is brother to one who destroys.”*

Laziness is a form of rebellion and disobedience to God because it leads to neglect and destruction. Today’s passage makes it clear; when you’re lazy you will destroy things in your life. Though many people work hard at their jobs and are at times overwhelmed with family matters at home, we should never be too busy to do the things of God. Jesus said in Matthew 6:33, *“But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.”*

There are many good things to do in life, but God’s Kingdom must always come first and be the center of all we do.

For example, personal prayer and Bible reading is a must everyday. If you think you’re too busy to pray and study God’s Word, you’re deceived- the truth is you’re too busy in life not to pray and seek God’s Word for His council. Lacking prayer and Bible reading in your life will result in spiritual destruction. John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement said, “Though I am always in haste, I am never in a hurry.” In other words, it’s good to be busy, but we should take control of our schedule and never be rushed or neglectful of important things like church, outreach, Bible study, family devotions and the like. Think of it this way, you can go to hell with a great job, 401k and family vacations. But those who serve God will have heaven on earth both now and in the age to come.

The author of Hebrews wrote, *“24 And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, 25 not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another —and all the more as you see the Day approaching”* (Hebrews 10:24-25). We should never stop going to church and doing good works, but rather as Christians we should spur each other on to good works as we see Jesus’ second coming getting

closer. No one will be able to use the excuse of being too busy or tired on Judgment Day. Jesus will judge and examine all our works by fire and only that which was done in obedience to God will be rewarded (1 Corinthians 3:13). John Wesley said, “Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can.” Is what you’re living for, worth Christ dying for?

In Revelation we get a picture of what Jesus’ judgment will be like as we read the report He gave the church in Ephesus. He blessed them for their hard work and dedication to His Kingdom by saying in Revelation 2:3, “*You have persevered and have endured hardships for my name, and have not grown weary.*” He also corrected and warned them by saying, “*4 Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken the love you had at first. 5 Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place*” (Revelation 2:4-5). Therefore, in your times of weakness call out to God for His strength and He will give you the power to overcome laziness. Keep your first love for God first in your life!

The solution to laziness is both spiritual and physical. First, spiritually, ask the Holy Spirit to motivate you and strengthen you to do all that God has commanded- you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you (Philippians 4:13). Second, physically, use self-discipline to organize your life in such a way that you have time for sleep, work, church, family time, exercise, devotions, etc. Be mindful of the time you waste because you’ll never get it back. Paul said in Ephesians 5:16, “*Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.*”

If you have been lazy, pray this out loud, “Father, please forgive me for neglecting your commands. Give me the strength and wisdom to organize my life to please you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

REFLECTION

Have you neglected keeping God’s commands due to laziness?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have been lazy or neglectful of God’s commands.

2. Organize your life with “Kingdom Business” first; at your center.
3. Avoid wasting time (TV, sports, social media, etc.).

DAY 14: OVERCOMING SEXUAL SIN

Matthew 5:28, *“But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.”*

Jesus was clear regarding lust and perversion of the heart- He said it was likened to the sin of “adultery.” He also said in Mark 7:21-23 that the heart is the source of all sin, *“21 For it is from within, out of a person’s heart, that evil thoughts come—sexual immorality, theft, murder, 22 adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. 23 All these evils come from inside and defile a person.”* Consequently, the heart of lust is no different than the heart of greed or arrogance because all sins have their roots in the heart (i.e., “the mind of man”).

Sin starts with the root in the heart then it results in the fruit of one’s life. So if you want to change the fruit in your life, you have to first change the root. If you want to rid yourself of lust, ask God to give you a pure heart.

If you want to be free from lust and adultery of the heart you have to let God change what’s in your heart. The good news is God promised that all who ask and seek Him in humility would receive a new heart. God said in Ezekiel 36:26-27, *“26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.”* Do you believe Jesus can change your heart and move you to keep His laws? The difference between having a new heart and keeping your old perverted heart is faith in God’s Word.

The solution to a perverted heart is to receive a new heart filled with the Holy Spirit that will be moved you to follow all of God’s commands. When perverted thoughts try invade your new heart and pollute your precious new life, stop and ask the Holy Spirit to lead

you not into temptation but deliver you from evil (Matthew 6:13). If you happen to sin and lose the battle of the mind, quickly repent and ask God to cleanse your heart and make it pure again like David did in Psalm 51:7-12.

Paul gave us the list of things we should think on with our new heart. If anything is not found in this list it should be avoided. You are not your thoughts and you can choose what to think on. Some thoughts you need to ignore, others you need to confront and some you'll need to repent for. The battle is fought and won in the heart. Paul wrote in Philippians 4:8, "*Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.*" Make a choice today to receive and keep a pure heart.

If you struggle with lust pray this out loud, "Father, forgive me of my sins of sexual perversion. Please give me a pure heart like yours. Fill me with the Holy Spirit to guide me to live a life pleasing to you in all my thoughts and deeds. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Do you struggle with lust?

ACTION

1. Repent for the times you have lusted in your heart.
2. Only think on the things listed in Philippians 4:8.
3. Live in the perfect love of God for humanity. C.S. Lewis said, "Love is the great conqueror of lust."

DAY 15: OVERCOMING FAMILY REJECTION

Matthew 10:21-22, “21 Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; children will rebel against their parents and have them put to death. 22 You will be hated by everyone because of me, but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

One of the most heart breaking things to witness is when a family rejects one of their own because they have decided to follow Jesus. Times like this remind me of the ole’ song, *I Have Decided to Follow Jesus*, written by Sadhu Sundar Singh. Sadhu was born into a Sikh family in northern India in 1889. He was trained as a young boy to be a Sikh, which is a break away religion from Hinduism, founded in in the 1500’s. Sikhism teaches the belief in one God and an ascetic lifestyle. However, after his mother died tragically he decided to kill himself but the night before he had a vision of Jesus. The next day he announced to his family that he was going to be a Christian, but his father disowned him and his brother tried to poison him.

At 16 years old, after being baptized, he left his home and lived with lepers in a Christian mission. With the passing of time he grew stronger in the Lord and received a calling to reach his people with the gospel. As an adult, he was well known all throughout India for traveling like Jesus from village to village preaching the good news. The words of his famous song reflect the cost he had to pay to follow Jesus, he wrote, “I have decided to follow Jesus... Though none go with me, still I will follow... Will you now decide to follow Jesus? No turning back, no turning back.”

In today’s passage, Jesus said that times would come to His disciples when family members would betray each other for the cause of Christ. During the time of the Nazis, parents and children were ordered to report each other if they were dissenters. What would you do if your parents were Nazis and told you they’d report you if they saw you praying? Jesus also said in Matthew 10:37-38, “37 *Anyone*

who loves their father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves their son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. 38 Whoever does not take up their cross and follow me is not worthy of me.” Sadly, there may come a time when you have to choose between Jesus and your family.

If our families ask us to choose between them or Jesus, we must always choose Jesus.

The solution to the hurt of being rejected by one’s family is the love and abiding presence of God. David said in Psalms 68:5-6 that God is, “5 *A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. 6 God sets the lonely in families, he leads out the prisoners with singing; but the rebellious live in a sun-scorched land.*” This promise was reiterated by Jesus when He said in Mark 10:29-30, “29 *‘Truly I tell you,’ Jesus replied, ‘no one who has left home or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or fields for me and the gospel 30 will fail to receive a hundred times as much in this present age: homes, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and fields—along with persecutions—and in the age to come eternal life.’*” Therefore, if our family doesn’t want us; God will give us a new family in His kingdom!

If you are hurting because people in your family have rejected you because of Christianity, pray this out loud, “Heavenly Father, I ask you to forgive my family and bring them to saving faith in you. I also ask that you will fill my heart with your unconditional love and acceptance for those who reject me. Comfort me now with your love and use your church to fill every relational void in my life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

REFLECTION

Have you been rejected or persecuted by your family because of following Jesus?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have thought about walking away from Jesus because of family troubles.

2. Pray and ask God to save and forgive your family if they have rejected you because of Jesus.
3. Follow Jesus, even if no one else does- Jesus is worth it all!
(Revelation 12:11)

DAY 16: OVERCOMING SHAME

Psalm 34:4-5, “4 I sought the Lord, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. 5 Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.”

In today’s passage, we’re reminded of four things that happen when we seek the Lord; first, whenever we call on Jesus He will always answer us. Second, He will deliver us from all our fears. Third, our lives will be radiant with His love. Fourth, our faces will never be covered with shame.

Shame is defined as, “a painful emotion caused by a strong sense of guilt, embarrassment, unworthiness or disgrace.” The Bible teaches that the people tried to shame Jesus while crucifying Him but He scorned their shame, Hebrews 12:2 reads, “*For the joy set before him he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” Jesus said, “no” to shame and embarrassment.

He knew that He wasn’t guilty of sin and that the Father was on His side. It didn’t matter what other people said or what they thought about Him- Jesus wasn’t going to allow Himself to feel unworthy or disgraced. He knew the Father loved Him and that was all that mattered. He decided in His heart not to let anyone take away His confidence in God.

Shame is a choice; you can choose to receive it or reject it.

Just like Jesus, you have a choice to either let people shame you or to reject it. Shame is the opposite of God’s love. Which one do you want to live with; shame or God’s love? The moment you accepted Jesus as the Lord of your life you were saved from ever feeling shame again. Even if you sin you can be forgiven without feeling shame. Once again, shame is never from God. Thomas Watson said, “Sin has the devil for its father, shame for its companion, and death for its wages.” Sin, the devil, shame and death are everything Jesus set us

free from on the cross!

Conviction is the Holy Spirit reminding you of who you are in Christ. Shame (or condemnation) is the devil telling you who you are not. If you ever feel like you're not who God said you are- loved, forgiven and blessed; confess the Word of God over your life and decide to reject shame! Paul said in Romans 8:1, *"Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus."* Repeat out loud with me, "There is no condemnation for me in Christ Jesus!" It doesn't matter where guilt or shame comes from (i.e., "the devil, your own thoughts, loved ones, people around you, etc."); you never have to accept it.

John wrote in his first epistle, *"20 If our hearts condemn us, we know that God is greater than our hearts, and he knows everything. 21 Dear friends, if our hearts do not condemn us, we have confidence before God"* (1 John 3:20-21). Now it's your choice to believe what God says or what shame says- I choose to believe I am who Jesus said I am and reject shame. Decide with me to have confidence in who God is and who God said you are- His beloved, righteous child.

Do you want to reject shame once and for all? Pray this out loud, "Father, forgive me for allowing my feelings of guilt and condemnation to change how I see you and myself. I believe you are who you said you are and I believe I am who you said I am. Therefore, I reject and despise all shame! In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Have you allowed shame in your life?

ACTION

1. Repent if have allowed shame to be in your life.
2. Pray and ask God to fill you with His love.
3. Whenever shame tries to come into your life, believe and speak the Word of God and reject shame!

DAY 17: OVERCOMING UNFORGIVENESS

Matthew 6:12, *“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.”*

Unforgiveness is of one of the most destructive sins one can have; yet it is often times the most hidden. Not forgiving people when they sin against you can be troublesome in the following two ways; first, unforgiveness is dangerous because it is in fact a sin and second, it can build up over time and eventually choke out your spiritual life.

Jesus didn’t suggest we forgive those who sinned against us- He commanded it!

Some people wrongly think that because of the severity of what someone did to them they are justified in not forgiving them, however, Jesus was very clear in describing what would happen to those who don’t forgive others. He said in Matthew 6:15, *“If you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.”* It’s that simple- if you don’t forgive those who have sinned against you, God will not forgive your sins.

Unforgiveness is deadly to one’s spiritual life because it can come slowly and build over time. Bitterness first appears like a small weed-like vine. It seems controllable and harmless in the beginning, yet over time as the mind continues to dwell on the hurt, bitterness will continue to grow until it has choked the roots of grace and spoiled the fruit of salvation. God said in Hebrews 12:15, *“See to it that no one falls short of the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”* Bitterness and unforgiveness can result in you losing your salvation and not having your sins forgiven because it hardens your heart and leads to unbelief. When you stop believing that Jesus can heal your hurts you are in danger of being cut off (Romans 11:20-21).

In the parable of the “Unmerciful Servant” found in Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus gave the example of a man who was forgiven of great

debt, yet he was punished severely because he didn't forgive someone's smaller debt to him. Jesus' point was clear; since God has graciously forgiven our "greater debt" against Him, we should be willing to forgive the "smaller debt" people have with us. That is why Jesus taught us to pray in today's passage, "forgive our debts as we forgive our debtors."

Consider Paul's lengthy passage in Romans 12:14-21, "*14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited. 17 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. 18 If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. 19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: 'It is mine to avenge; I will repay,' says the Lord. 20 On the contrary: 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head.' 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*"

Consequently, forgiveness is a choice to trust God and allow Him to heal your hurting heart. When you forgive someone you are not saying what he or she did was okay or that they were not wrong. What you are saying is, "If God can forgive me, I can forgive you." Sometimes people will change and other times they will not. Some people who hurt you will be your friends again, other times you may have to give them the "gift of goodbye." Either way, I strongly urge you to forgive all of their sins against you and let God deal with them either in this life or the judgment to come.

Do you have unforgiveness in your heart? Pray this out loud, "Father, please forgive me for not forgiving others who have hurt me. Remove all bitterness from my heart and restore what they have taken from my life. Help me to always love and forgive others as you have loved and forgiven me. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Are you free from all bitterness and unforgiveness?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have not forgiven those who have sinned against you. Joyce Meyer said, “Unforgiveness is spiritual filthiness, so get washed in the water of God’s Word to forgive and stay clean.”
2. Ask God to fill you with His love and to heal your broken heart (Isaiah 61:1-3).
3. Whenever someone hurts you be quick to forgive them and don’t give any room for bitterness to grow- kill it at the root!

DAY 18: OVERCOMING BAD LEADERSHIP

Ezekiel 34:2, “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel; prophesy and say to them: ‘This is what the Sovereign Lord says: Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?’”

Sometimes in the church people get hurt and wounded because of the mistakes and shortcomings of the leadership. As a result, the church has “wounded warriors” and “suffering saints.” By no fault of their own these precious children of God go through hardships because of what others did to them. Like in the time of Ezekiel, God’s flock can find itself under the care of shepherds who don’t really love them but only want to use them for their own selfish gain.

As a Christian, I myself have been hurt and let down by other leaders too. One of the first pastors I looked up to when I was newly saved had an affair with the church secretary and actually expected the church to continue to follow him. Another time in Bible College my favorite professor got fired for lacking integrity and wasn’t even allowed to come back and say good-bye. Once when I was pastoring in New Orleans, I held my first major outreach and invited a powerful inner city church planter with 20+ years of experience to be the main speaker. After one of the meetings he met with an old girlfriend and eventually ended up divorcing his wife, leaving his kids and quitting his church just to be with her.

Despite the church’s best preventative measures, leaders can still find a way to sin and hurt others. The following three ways are the most common; first, leaders can hurt their sheep by living a double life. They can be secretly stealing from the church, having an affair or being abusive to their wife and children. Second, leaders can be terrible people and can cause psychological harm by being rude and abusive to their staff and congregation. Third, leaders can be nice people but teach false doctrine and destroy the faith of God’s people.

All bad church leaders have one thing in common; they

hurt God's people.

The solution to hurtful leadership is God's love, restoration and healing through the Holy Spirit and new relationships with good church leaders. What many hurt Christians forget due to their pain is that God uses good leaders in the church to help heal the hurts and bring spiritual healing. If leadership in the church has hurt you, consider the following four things; first, forgive those people who have hurt you. Second, speak to other leaders about your hurts. Your healing may need to come through exposing the bad practices of your former leaders (God desires them to change as well).

Third, prayerfully decide if you can effectively stay and work in the church or need to join another church. Fourth, always treat others as you would want to be treated. Most bad leaders can be restored if they take the proper steps to being retrained and healed themselves. In my experience, most of the bad leaders I've met were hurt themselves, thus the ole' saying is true, "Hurt people, hurt people."

Are you hurting because of bad church leadership? If so, pray this out loud, "Father, help me to forgive and love as much of the church as you do. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Have you been hurt by leaders in the church?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have allowed your hurt feelings to be an offense against the church of Jesus Christ. In other words, do not allow what some bad leaders did to cause you to reject the entire Body of Christ and stop gathering together with godly leaders.
2. Pray and ask God to help you discern the difference between being overly sensitive towards good leadership (every little thing bothers you) and genuine hurt from hypocrisy, bad character or false doctrine.
3. Forgive the leaders who have sinned against you and find a loving church to fulfill Jesus' Great Commission!

DAY 19: OVERCOMING GOSSIP

Proverbs 16:28, *“A perverse person stirs up conflict, and a gossip separates close friends.”*

“Did you hear what ‘So and So’ did?” Has anyone ever tried to start a conversation with you like that? Or have you ever gossiped like that before? Gossip is a “secret” sin that people try to cover up often times with “shallow concern” and “false motives,” but really it does nothing but stir up conflict because it comes from an unclean heart (Matthew 15:19).

Gossip is like a two-sided coin; the first side is saying something that is true or partially true with bad motives about someone behind their back. The second side brings people into a situation that shouldn’t be involved. For example, sharing things with others who the information was never meant for- whether the intent was evil or not.

Consider both of these sides from a biblical perspective. First, God addresses slandering gossip in Proverbs 26:20, *“Without wood a fire goes out; without a gossip a quarrel dies down.”* When you do not listen to gossip or spread it, you are helping solve the problem. However, if you listen to or spread gossip, your words are acting as gasoline on the problem.

Second, loud mouth gossiping is addressed in Proverbs 20:19, *“A gossip betrays a confidence; so avoid anyone who talks too much.”* When you are told something in private that involves delicate information you are to keep your mouth closed (excluding potential injury or harm to the one involved or others). If you break trust and begin spreading the information to people not involved, you are guilty of creating a problem and are in the wrong.

Certainly, “sinful secrets” that harm people like suicide, incest, stealing, adultery or the like should be exposed, but things that are private and are shared in decency should remain personal and private. When in doubt, consider the Golden Rule, “Would I want someone saying these kind of things about me to others?” Because the ole’

saying is true, “Whoever gossips to you, will gossip about you!”

Whether people spread lies or break confidence; gossip will never produce good fruit because it comes from a sinful root.

Do you struggle with gossip? Then pray this out loud, “Father, forgive me for the times I have gossiped by either slandering someone or sharing private information. Please grant me self-control, the wisdom when to speak and love for my neighbor so that I will only say what pleases you. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

REFLECTION

Do you gossip?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have ever been a gossip or listened to gossip.
2. Pray and ask God to help you not to slander or expose people’s personal information.
3. Do unto others, as you would have them to do you.

DAY 20: OVERCOMING LIFE'S TROUBLES

John 16:33, *"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."*

What kind of troubles are you facing in life today? Money troubles, family troubles or health troubles? If you don't have any troubles right now- trust me they are coming! If you just overcame some troubles in the past take a deep breath and get some rest because new ones are getting ready to come your way. How do I know? Because Jesus promised in today's passage, *"in this world you will have trouble!"*

Just as truly as you can always count on having "trouble" in this life- you can count on having Jesus' peace because He has overcome the world.

Not every hard time is the same and some people's hard times can seem harder than others, but it doesn't matter because each person's troubles are enough to trouble them! It's like puppy love, it may not be full fledged love compared to a couple that has been married for 50 years, but puppy love is all the love a lil' puppy knows. Your troubles may not compare to other people's troubles on the outside, but it doesn't matter because your troubles are all the troubles you may be able to handle on the inside. In the midst of life's troubles, let us never forget Jesus' promise of peace. Also, David said in Psalm 34:19, *"The righteous person may have many troubles, but the Lord delivers him from them all."* So even though the righteous person may have many troubles, God promised to deliver him from them all!

I believe that our deliverance is sometimes in this world and other times it is in the world to come. No matter when our deliverance comes, we can always count on having peace in every trouble we face. Someone might say, "I don't understand how God could ever give me peace during this trouble- it's too troubling." However, God's peace is so great it even surpasses our own understanding. In other words, you

don't have to understand how your troubles will work together for your good in God's plan to receive His peace; you just need to trust Him during the troubles. Paul said in Philippians 4:6-7, "*6 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*" Therefore, you have two options; (1) You can go through life without God on your side and be defeated by your troubles and then spend eternity in hell; or (2) You can have Jesus on your side in life and be delivered from all your troubles and then spend eternity in His presence. What option do you choose? I choose option two!

No matter what, we are going to face troubles in life, but with God we are promised peace and joy in the midst of them. Plus, Jesus said He would never leave us nor forsake us in Hebrews 13:5. Let the words that Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:16-18 increase your faith in God during troubling times; "*16 Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. 17 For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. 18 So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.*"

Are life's troubles taking away your peace? Then pray this out loud, "Father, please forgive me for complaining and not trusting you in the midst of all my troubles. I ask that you would give me peace by the Holy Spirit and I believe one day I will overcome them all. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Do you struggle with trusting God during life's troubles?

ACTION

1. Repent if you're feeling despair because of the troubles you are facing in life.
2. Read and prayerfully meditate on Psalm 91.

3. Let the troubles of this life draw you closer to God. E.M. Bounds wrote, “Trouble and prayer are closely related. Trouble often drives men to God in prayer, while prayer is but the voice of men in trouble.”

DAY 21: OVERCOMING DECEPTION

2 Corinthians 11:3, *“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent’s cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ.”*

Do you think people who are deceived know that they are deceived? Mostly likely they don’t see they are deceived because of the fact they are deceived. Do most Mormons, Jehovah Witnesses, Scientologists and Muslims act like they are deceived? No. Why not? Because they believe they are right and they think that those who don’t believe what they believe are the ones who are really deceived.

Consequently, how can anyone really know if what they believe is actually true or false? The only way someone can truly discover whether or not they are deceived is by examining the truth with an open mind. If the earth is truly round then all open-minded people searching for truth should come to that conclusion. If someone examines the evidence for the shape of the earth and still believes the earth is flat, the problem is not with the truth, but with the person.

Consider if a person was taught by their parents to believe the earth is flat. They may refuse to change their belief because they feel it will dishonor their family. Also, they may have been taught to distrust scientists because they were taught that they were evil. So they would rather trust their own experience and family upbringing. They might say after examining all the evidence, “As far as I can see the earth is flat and everyone I trust told me it was that way too; so I still believe the earth is not round but flat.” However, the flat-earther’s belief doesn’t change the fact that the earth is round.

Deception is only deceiving to those who don’t have the truth.

Now consider the Bible and the Christian faith. I believe that it is as true as the fact that the earth is round. I don’t believe it because my parents taught it to me but because I have gained the truth from a

personal experience with God that is confirmed by evidence. Because of God's truth in the Bible I can understand all of creation, including myself. For Christians faith and reason are not opposed to each other but rather they are complimentary. Like Anselm said, "*Credo ut intelligam*," which is Latin for, "I believe to understand."

Therefore, if someone rejects the clear and plain teachings of the Bible, it is because they are refusing to see the truth. Often times people will leave the church and stop believing in Jesus because of what a person in the church did or because their family and friends believe something else. Even still, they might have learned something on the internet that seems to disprove the Bible. However, they haven't really disproved anything, they just have let their minds be deceived by the devil's cunning work like Paul mentioned in today's passage. As a result, if you ever find yourself being led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ, stop running away and examine the truth again with an open mind.

I believe if you do, you will not only see and understand the truth of the Bible, but you'll experience the power of God personally. When it comes to religions there are many to choose from, but only one way leads to God (John 14:6). Christianity offers you salvation through the death, burial and resurrection of the Son of God. In other words, because of what Jesus did you can have a meaningful and personal relationship with God the Father.

So before a person becomes deceived, they should consider what Jesus said and did according to the Bible. And if you doubt the validity of the Bible, see how it answers the big questions of life compared to all other worldviews. I know you will discover once again that Jesus is truly the Way, the Truth, and the Life and no one can come to the Father but by Him (John 14:6).

Do you struggle with believing in Jesus and discerning truth from error? Then pray this out loud, "Father, please forgive me for allowing my doubts to cover your truth. I come to you with an open mind and humble heart, please reveal yourself to me through the Bible. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Are you battling religious deception?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have allowed Satan to trick you, like he did Eve, with His cunning lies.
2. Read and study the Bible with a trusted leader to help answer your questions.
3. Ask God to fill you with His love and power by the Holy Spirit. One moment with God can last a lifetime!

DAY 22: OVERCOMING OFFENSE

Proverbs 19:11, *“A person’s wisdom yields patience; it is to one’s glory to overlook an offense.”*

Today in our modern culture people’s negative feelings have been given unprecedented attention through social media, reality TV, talk shows and customer ratings. Though people’s feelings are important in many aspects of life, at the same time, all this attention can lead some people to become “me-centered,” “hard to please” and “easily offended.”

For example, a person might get offended with a restaurant because their server brought them the wrong dish. In their offense they may write a harsh online review for all to read, not once considering the fact that the waiter might have been working a double shift, was up all night with their infant or had correctly served a hundred customers prior to their mistake. However, the offended customer doesn’t think about the server and makes their offense public by posting a scathing online review. I wonder how the offended customer would feel if every time they made a mistake on their job it was posted online.

Or imagine a pastor has a meeting on Sunday after church, but someone quickly steps in his way and asks for “five minutes” of his time. The pastor knows that someone else is already waiting for him because the meeting was scheduled in advance, so he then kindly responds to the person, “I’m sorry, I am not able to talk at this time, but if you would like my assistant can help you find another pastor on staff.” Consider if this member got offended and didn’t come back to the church and then told all their friends; “I’ve been going to that church for years, volunteering and giving of my finances, yet when I needed the pastor he couldn’t even give me five minutes of his time.”

The problem is the member refused to think about the pastor’s schedule, the others who were waiting in the office and all the previous times he and the church leadership were there for their family (funerals, baby dedications, counseling, etc). Just one

disappointment turned to an offense that made them feel like the pastor and the church had deeply failed them- God have mercy! I wonder how this sassy saint would feel if they needed to be in an important meeting for their job and the pastor called and asked them to drop what they were doing and come to the church to do a task, that others not as busy as them could easily do.

Easily offended people lack self-awareness, maturity and godly compassion.

Today's passage gives us the way to handle small offenses in life; overlook them. Consider the customer who received the wrong dish. All they had to do was forgive the waiter and ask them, "Is everything okay?" Now if the server gets an attitude and lacks professionalism they can ask to talk to a manager. And if the manager lacks good judgment they can write an honest review without harsh words and anger. But they should also be ready to drop the offense if the server gives a valid explanation and offers a sincere apology.

The same is true with the disgruntled church member. All they have to do is talk to the assistant and learn how appointments are made in the church. And after hearing the protocol they can drop the offense and have their issue resolved in peace. However, if they don't like the church's protocols they can prayerfully ask God if they are in the right church and follow God's leading without anger or resentment. Personally, even if they decided to find another church I would never recommend them leaving a bad review online or talking negative about the church because the issue didn't involve blatant sin or teaching damnable doctrine.

Do you struggle with being easily offended? If so, pray this out loud, "Father, please forgive me for my selfishness, lack of maturity and short temper. Give me compassion and a loving heart for others, so I can see things from their point of view. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Are you easily offended?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have become touchy and hard to please. A wise man once said, “Those who make idols of themselves get angry when others don’t worship their idol of self like they do.”
2. If you struggle with petty offenses ask mature people to help you know when an issue has grounds for correction or when it should be overlooked.
3. Treat others how you would want to be treated.

DAY 23: OVERCOMING HYPOCRISY

Matthew 23:28, *“In the same way, on the outside you appear to people as righteous but on the inside you are full of hypocrisy and wickedness.”*

One of the biggest issues Jesus had with the Jewish leaders of His day was their hypocrisy. The English word “hypocrite” comes from the ancient Greek word for “actor or pretender,” which is “*hypokrites*.” To be a hypocrite means you “pretend to be someone you are not” and hypocrisy is defined as “play acting.”

Some people wrongly think that being a hypocrite is someone who makes mistakes or sins. However, if the definition of a hypocrite were a person who sins then everyone would be a hypocrite because no one beside Jesus has lived sinless (Proverbs 24:16).

A hypocrite is not someone who sins, but rather someone who hides their sins and pretends to be someone they’re not.

Lies and deception go hand-in-hand with hypocrisy. For example, if a single male was volunteering as a youth leader in your church and he was having sex outside of marriage, while at the same time trying to teach the students to be virgins; he would be a hypocrite. The leader should confess his sin to the youth pastor, step down from leadership and learn how to “practice” what he has been “preaching.” Paul gave a great definition of what a hypocrite does in Romans 2:1, *“You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”* In other words, if you are passing judgment on someone for doing the same things you’re doing, that is hypocrisy.

Imagine if you were a manager that was responsible to hand in reports to your boss every Friday. However, if you continually handed in the reports late and did an unsatisfactory job but kept harassing your employees for their late work; you would be a hypocrite.

Likewise, Jesus wasn't against the Law of Moses or the high standard that God had placed on the Jews nor was He angry because the Jewish leaders failed at times to keep it. Jesus' main problem with the priests and teachers of the Law was that they pretended and acted like they were experts at keeping the Law, yet they were just as bad, if not worse, than the people they were supposed to be helping (Matthew 23:15).

The key to not being a hypocrite is to be transparent and walk humbly before God and man. A great way to practice transparency is to have an accountable partner in your life that you can be real with (James 5:16). Find someone of the same gender in your church, if you haven't already, and ask him or her to lovingly point out your weaknesses so you can mature in your walk with God.

Also, consider walking transparently with people on the job, in the church and with your family. By being open with your weaknesses you will allow others to be open with theirs. Then hopefully everyone can grow together to be the best they can be (Colossians 3:17). For example, I let the pastors I oversee help me to be nice and patient with those in the church. This kind of honesty allows them to be more receptive when I need to point out their growth spots.

Do you struggle with acting like someone you're not? If so, pray this out loud, "Father, please forgive me for being fake and wearing a mask in life. Help me to be honest with others concerning who I really am. Make me a person of integrity wherever I go. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Are you a hypocrite?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have been a hypocrite.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your weaknesses to you, so you can be honest and admit them before God and others.

3. Walk honestly and humbly before people. Warren Wiersbe said, "Truth without love is brutality, and love without truth is hypocrisy."

DAY 24: OVERCOMING LACK OF TRUST

1 Corinthians 13:6-7, *“6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”*

Many of us can relate to being hurt and disappointed in life because the people we trusted let us down. As a pastor I have to work extra hard at showing myself trustworthy because many people have been let down by those they looked up to (i.e, “parents, pastors, teachers,” etc.). Sadly, in my experience one of the most difficult things to help people through is regaining trust with those who have broken it. The closer the relationship is in a person’s life, the more pain they experience when their trust is shattered.

On one hand, it’s a fact of life that people will let us down. Even some people will break our hearts because we trusted them too much. However, God doesn’t want us to go through life with a bitter heart towards people. We shouldn’t allow the mistakes of others to impact our new relationships. We must be willing to forgive those who truly repent and desire to still be in our lives (Matthew 18:21-22).

On the other hand, we shouldn’t become people’s doormats by allowing them to hurt us in the same ways over and over again. There are two sides to the coin of trust. The first side is to forgive and be willing to trust people. The other side of the coin is to find the right people to trust in the right places in our lives. In today’s passage Paul reminds us that if we’re going to love people, we must learn to trust them.

For example, I would not have married Nancy unless I trusted her. I had been cheated on in a previous relationship but I had to learn to start over and let Nancy build trust without any hindrances from my past. At the same time, if she decided to start cheating on me now, I don’t have to stick around. I am free to hand her over to her sin and give her the gift of goodbye (1 Corinthians 7:15). But aside from the worse case scenario of adultery, we’ve both had to learn to forgive each other of smaller offenses and sins. We don’t let our minor issues

tear apart the “trust” foundation of our marriage.

Trust should be slow to give and quick to lose. We should neither be naïve or cynical, but rather we should be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove.

Consider work relationships. You may have an employee that sometimes messes up but they are quick to apologize and then do their best to learn and not repeat the same mistakes. In that case, it might be good to keep forgiving them and helping them to develop their skills. However, if they steal or keep breaking their word that would be a good sign that they need to be fired to learn a lesson. You can give them parting advice so that they will hopefully do better on their next job. We should learn how to forgive those who let us down and know when the right time is to give someone the gift of good-bye. Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:33, *“Do not be misled: ‘Bad company corrupts good character.’”* So whether we move with or move away from people, we must always do so with God’s wisdom and love. In other words, don’t let what people have done make you give up on finding trustworthy friends in life. They’re out there- you just need to be patient and find them. Do you struggle with trusting people? If so, pray this out loud, “Father, I ask you to forgive me for not loving people like you do. Help me to trust the right people in the right places in my life. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

REFLECTION

Do you struggle with trusting people?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have allowed past hurts to scar your heart and make you untrusting.
2. Ask the Holy Spirit to give you trust for others. Isaac Watts wrote, “Learning to trust is one of life’s most difficult tasks.”
3. Be led of the Holy Spirit to trust people in the right ways and in the right places of your life.

DAY 25: OVERCOMING LYING

Colossians 3:9, *“Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices.”*

Current studies show that the average person lies between 1-2x a day. Funny, but true, no one actually knows if these numbers are correct because people might have been lying during the research. Some people lie to make themselves look better than they actually do. The “Boasting Liar” will say they earn \$100,000 a year when they only make \$65,000. I even know some pastors that do this too. They’ll say they have 500 people in their church on Sundays when they only have around 200.

Some people lie to avoid conflict. The “Nice Liar” will say they agree with you in person but tell everyone else they think you’re wrong behind your back. Other times lies are told in business to take advantage of people. The “Business Liar” tells you the used car will last another 100,000 miles, but they know it most likely will break down in the next 10,000 miles. Politicians have a bad reputation of lying to the voters because they want to win the election. The “Political Liar” says they will not raise taxes while campaigning, but once elected they raises taxes because it was their plan all along.

The different kinds of lies liars tell are numerous. How many lies do you tell a day? If you’re in the habit of telling lies, do you make excuses for the lies you tell? For example, do you think it’s better to lie to your friend and promise to set a date to hangout, but never do because you don’t want to tell them the truth about your feelings?

If we want to stop the lying epidemic in our culture then we must take responsibility to stop lying to ourselves and to each other.

According to Paul in today’s passage Christians are given a new nature that is free from lying. As disciples of Christ we have been

born again and made like Jesus. God has changed us on the inside and taken away our old self with its sinful practices; including lying. Therefore, there is no excuse for a Christian to ever tell one lie again. Every time you are tempted to lie, make the conscious decision to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth- so help you God!

Do you struggle with being honest? If so, pray this out loud, "Father, forgive me for the lies I have told and the people I have hurt. Please give me the strength to be honest and always tell the truth. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

When was the last time you lied?

ACTION

1. Repent to God for the lies you have told.
2. Confess your lies to the people you have lied to. Ask for their forgiveness and commit to not lying to them moving forward. C.S. Lewis wrote, "A little lie is like a little pregnancy-it doesn't take long before everyone knows."
3. Be led by the Holy Spirit to live a life of honesty in all you say and do.

DAY 26: OVERCOMING BEING LUKEWARM

Revelation 3:16, *“So, because you are lukewarm—neither hot nor cold—I am about to spit you out of my mouth.”*

Some things are best served either hot or cold. Take for example coffee and milk, they both taste great hot or cold but when they are lukewarm they taste disgusting. Imagine forgetting that you had left the milk out and then drank it at room temperature- you'd probably spit it out. The same is true with lukewarm coffee.

In today's passage, Jesus is not saying He wished you either lived for Him (hot) or served the devil (cold). Rather, Jesus is saying He wished you would serve Him as either being a cool refreshing drink or as a hot beverage that warms the soul. If you are neither hot nor cold Jesus is basically saying, “You make me puke!”

Be hot or cold for Jesus, but never be lukewarm; the double-minded life is a wasted life.

Here is a short list of the things the Bible teaches that cause people to become lukewarm; (1) Unrepentant Sin: All sin should be repented of immediately and not willfully repeated (Hebrews 10:26-27). (2) Neglect of Spiritual Growth: If you're not growing, you're dying, so keep growing in the things of God (2 Peter 1:5-9). (3) Lack of Spiritual Disciplines: For example; prayer, worship, evangelism, Christian fellowship, discipleship, acts of charity, accountability and study of God's Word. Spiritual disciplines are a must for every believer to please God. They should be done often and consistently. If you stop doing them you will become lukewarm (Revelation 2:5).

The deceitfulness of being lukewarm is dangerous because most people who are lukewarm think they are fine. The reason is because the very nature of becoming lukewarm is gradual- it happens very slowly. First comes the neglect of God's commands, then second, the commands are replaced with man's opinions, and third, the heart is deceived into believing it is in a similar place as it was

before. The biggest lie the lukewarm person tells himself or herself is, "I'm fine just the way I am."

However, what has actually happened is that the lukewarm person has traded the precious things of God for the defiled things of this world. Jesus said in Revelation 3:17-19 to the lukewarm church of Laodicea, *"17 You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. 18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. 19 Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest and repent."* Therefore, don't let your heart be deceived and hardened by sin's deceitfulness- stay in love with Jesus and obey His commands (John 14:15).

John Bunyan said, "One word spoken in faith, is better than a thousand prayers, as men call them, written and read, in a formal, cold, lukewarm way." We should never settle for anything less than giving God our best. God doesn't want our leftovers, He deserves our first fruits. And we shouldn't try to live for God with one foot in the world and one in His Kingdom. Jesus is either Lord of all our life or not Lord at all.

Are you lukewarm? If so, pray this out loud, "Father, forgive me for being lukewarm. Please remove all the sin and compromise from my life and make me pleasing to you. Set my life on fire so the world can watch me burn for you. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Are you hot or cold for Jesus or are you lukewarm?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have allowed yourself to become lukewarm.
2. If you have been lukewarm or headed in that direction, pray for God to show you the things He wants you to do.
3. Ask Jesus to make you effective and pleasing to the Father everyday of your life!

DAY 27: OVERCOMING REBELLION

Proverbs 12:1, *“Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but whoever hates correction is stupid.”*

The most difficult people to deal with in the church are those who are rebellious. Rebellious people think they can “teach the teacher” and be everyone’s “speck inspector.” However, just like with the rebellious hypocrites in Jesus’ day, they fail to see the “log” in their own eye (Matthew 7:3-5). They willfully forget that it is God’s will for them to submit to leaders in the church (Acts 14:23). Rebellion was the greatest challenge of my spiritual life because it convinced me that I was right and everyone else was wrong. I believed that I knew better than those who were in leadership over me because of my own personal convictions. I failed to follow the command God gave in Hebrews 13:17, *“Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.”*

Certainly, there are times we shouldn’t submit to leaders- like if they try to harm us, willingly sin against us, break the law or teach false doctrines. However, like in the time of Korah’s rebellion in Numbers 16:1-35, most rebellion in the Body of Christ is based on people trying to arrogantly make themselves equal or above the leadership God has set up. The Lord punished Korah for rebelling against Moses by opening the earth and swallowing him, along with sending fire to consume 250 of his followers (because rebellious people never work alone). Jude warned in the New Testament of these “Korah-like” people in his letter to the churches in Jude 1:11.

Rebellious people should always be avoided, especially in the church because God will never bless what He said He would curse.

Paul wrote in Titus 3:10-11, *“10 Warn a divisive person once,*

and then warn them a second time. After that, have nothing to do with them. 11 You may be sure that such people are warped and sinful; they are self-condemned.” Disciples shouldn’t be in relationship with people that are considered rebellious and divisive because godly leadership is appointed by God to serve as our protective shepherds (1 Peter 5:1-8).

Here are some signs of rebellion to watch out for in people; (1) They cannot receive correction without being bitter (Proverbs 17:10). (2) A pattern of trying to teach the teachers (Hebrews 13:7). (3) Judging other people based on personal convictions instead of the Bible (Romans 14:10). (4) They are divisive and slanderous because of “self-righteousness” (2 Corinthians 12:19-20).

The solution to rebellion is humility. Those who desire to avoid rebellion should joyfully submit and serve the godly leadership God has placed over them (Romans 16:17-19). If for whatever reason a person believes their leadership is no longer biblically based they should bring their issues respectfully before the leadership as Jesus commanded in Matthew 18:15-19. And if the church is not willing to address the important issues, they should leave and let God handle it (Romans 14:4). But for everything else that is not sinful, the disciple should be a joy to the community of believers and not a burden.

Do you struggle with being rebellious, especially in the church? If so, pray this out loud, “Father, forgive me for being rebellious and prideful towards your appointed leadership. Help me to love as much of the church as you do and to humbly serve alongside my elders and deacons; just as Timothy served with Paul in Philippians 2:20-23. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

REFLECTION

Are you rebellious?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have been rebellious towards godly leadership in the church. Francis Frangipane wrote, “You say, ‘Well, I am not going to be anyone’s ‘yes man.’ If I see something wrong in a person, I’m going to warn others about it.’ Fine. But beware that

what you are calling ‘courage to speak out’ is not more truly a deception masking a rebellious, dishonouring attitude.”

2. Pray for the leadership of your church.
3. Desire to be a good leader so people will follow you, as you follow Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

DAY 28: OVERCOMING DISCOURAGEMENT

Exodus 6:9, *“Moses reported this to the Israelites, but they did not listen to him because of their discouragement and harsh labor.”*

Have you ever felt like giving up on God? Maybe you weren't going to become an atheist but you were tempted to stop praying and having faith for things to change because of your disappointments in life. If we're being honest, I believe all of us have felt discouraged at one time or another since becoming a Christian.

For some, discouragement can come after the loss of a loved one or when they receive bad news from the doctor. Others feel like giving up when they face financial troubles. Sometimes ministers even feel like giving up when the church hits hard times or they get burned out. Others can be discouraged because they find themselves on the “merry-go-round” of sin and no matter what they do they can't control their inner desires.

It doesn't matter what makes us discouraged because every discouragement has the same cure- Jesus!

Consider the following three things to do in order to overcome discouragement; first, recognize that having discouragement doesn't mean you're bad or abnormal. Discouragement can come to anyone at anytime. Even the great prophet Elijah felt like giving up despite having seen God's miraculous delivering power on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 19:4). Discouragement is defined as, “the loss of hope and confidence.” Specifically, we as disciples can become discouraged when we don't have hope in God's promises like we used to.

Second, don't let your “feelings” control your “faith.” You have to decide that regardless of how you feel- you are going to believe and confess God's Word over your life. Many times people of faith have had to overcome their feelings of discouragement (ex., “King David, Paul, Moses, etc.”). Just because you feel discouraged doesn't mean

you have to live discouraged. If Daniel could overcome discouragement in the lion's den- you can overcome whatever is discouraging you; just keep your faith (Philippians 4:13).

Third, don't let your present circumstances dictate your God-given identity. Just because you might have lost a loved one doesn't mean you're alone- God is with you. You're not a loser because you lost a job- you are a blessed and highly favored child of God waiting on the Lord to open a new door of employment. You're not a sinner because you have sinned; you are a Holy Ghost sanctified saint of God learning to count your flesh as crucified with Christ (Galatians 5:24). Make a decision to believe you are who God said you are and that you can do all that He said you can do (Ephesians 4:22-24).

Do you struggle with discouragement? If so, pray this out loud, "Father, forgive me for losing my hope and confidence in you. Help me to believe I am who you said I am and that I can do what you said I can do. I choose to trust you over my feelings because I know you will never leave me nor forsake me. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

Are you discouraged?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have allowed discouragement to take away your trust in God's plan for your life.
2. When facing discouragement find verses in the Bible that give you faith and pray them over your life (Romans 10:17). A wise man once said, "When you're discouraged don't think to yourself, speak the Word to yourself!"
3. Praise God for who He is, all that He has already done and has promised to do (Psalm 149)!

DAY 29: OVERCOMING BAD TIME MANAGEMENT

Ephesians 5:16, *“Making the most of every opportunity, because the days are evil.”*

Every person on earth has the same 24-hour day. Most people sleep for eight hours, work for another eight and then mismanage the other eight hours. The big question is, “What are you doing with your eight hours of manageable time?” If you have ever felt you were too busy for the things of God, I challenge you to stop making excuses and prayerfully make a “Time Management Chart.”

I believe when most people chart their time they’ll not only find time for the things of God but they’ll also be convicted of how much time they have given to things that are not important (TV, sports, entertainment, social media, etc.) And even after making the chart if you find yourself with little time wasted- you will still be able to see how to make the most out of your time for God.

Remember, Jesus made time for you by dying on the cross; you can make time for Him everyday (Matthew 6:33).

Follow these three steps to manage your time. First, list and add together all your priorities. Start off by writing how many hours you sleep a night, then how many hours you work (include your commute time), then how many hours you spend eating, how many hours you spend getting ready each day, the hours you give to God in daily devotions and church activities and how many hours you do things with your family (activities, school work, etc.). Do this for each day individually and then add up all the hours.

Second, after you have factored in all the priorities of life then minus the hours you have tracked by 168 (total hours in a week). Consider what is left over as free time. Now you can begin to plan more rewarding activities with that free time. Plus, you can see where

you have been wasting time and begin to restructure your life according to the priorities of the Bible and give yourself time to do the things that are really important. Don't waste your life on things that have little to no value. Instead increase your time in the things of life that give you back the highest benefits.

Third, don't let life pass you by; you only have one life so live your life to the fullest for God. Make the most of your life by prioritizing your time in a way that pleases God. No one will be excused on Judgment Day because they were "too busy to serve God!"

Do you struggle with time management? If so, pray this out loud, "Father, forgive me for letting my life get out of your control. Help me to prioritize the things that matter most. I dedicate my life to not being a busybody but somebody that is busy for you. Also, help me to rest and know my limits so I don't burn out but burn up for your kingdom. In Jesus' name, Amen."

REFLECTION

How much time do you waste a day?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have been too busy for the things of God (prayer, Bible reading, church, etc.). Andrew Murray wrote, "Unless we are willing to pay the price, and sacrifice time and attention for the sake of the heavenly gifts we [can't expect to] experience heavenly [power] in our [earthly] work."
2. Arrange your day in a God-centered way.
3. Be led by the Holy Spirit to guard your time because one day you will give an account for every minute of your life!

DAY 30: OVERCOMING LOSING YOUR FIRST LOVE

Revelation 2:4, *“Yet I hold this against you: you have forsaken the love you had at first.”*

The most tragic thing to lose in your walk with God is your first love. The first love we have for Jesus is priceless and incomparable to any kind of love in this world. Love is defined as, “strong emotion, intimate care, self-sacrifice and passion for someone.” If you have never truly loved God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength- then you have never been born again. In other words, it’s impossible to be in a relationship with Jesus without loving Him with everything you have because loving God is the first and most important command (Mark 12:30).

The Bible defined loving God in two ways; first, we love God by worshipping and adoring Him (John 4:24) and second, by obeying all of His commands (John 14:15). John wrote in his first epistle, *“Whoever says, ‘I know him,’ but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that person”* (1 John 2:4). Are you a liar or do you keep all of God’s commands- including loving Him with all your heart?

Things in life- even God’s blessings, like our family and jobs can easily slip in and divert our worship and obedience to God if we’re not careful to guard our heart. This is not to say that we cannot love both our families and God, but you can begin to lose your first love for God by putting your family above worshipping Him and obeying His commands.

For example, imagine if you thought going to a family function was more important than being at church- this would be making your family an idol. No matter how much we love our family, we should never forget what Jesus said in Luke 14:26, *“If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my*

disciple.” God must always be the center of our families lest we perish forever with our families. I’d rather come late to a family picnic because I went to church first, than miss church and set a terrible example for my lost family members. I want to show them how important my love for Jesus is to help inspire them to forsake their idol of self-worship and love God with all of their heart and soul!

Never forget this one thing in life; it will always and forever be about Jesus. Long after your life on earth is over, it will still be about Him.

Make your short life full by loving God and obeying His commands. A.W. Tozer wrote, “You can see God from anywhere if your mind is set to love and obey Him.” How do we keep our first love and dedication to God all throughout our lives? Keep doing the things we did when we first fell in love with Jesus. In other words, I will never lose my first love for my wife if I keep doing the things for her that I did when I first fell in love (ex., “treating her special,” “making time to be alone,” etc.)

The same is true with what Jesus said in Revelation 2:5 to the church of Ephesus after He rebuked them in the previous verse for losing their first love. He said, “*Consider how far you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first. If you do not repent, I will come to you and remove your lampstand from its place.*” As a result, if you have lost your first love for God; first repent and then second, do (and keep doing) the things you used to do.

Have you lost your first love? If so, pray this out loud, “Father, forgive me for allowing the things of this world to take away my worship and obedience. Empower me by the Holy Spirit to do the things I did at first and to never stop doing them until I see you face to face. In Jesus’ name, Amen.”

REFLECTION

Do you still have your first love for Jesus?

ACTION

1. Repent if you have lost your first love for Jesus.

2. If you have lost your first love, start worshipping God and obeying all that He commanded you to do- no short cuts or compromise.
3. Live your life loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength!

ALL THE BOOKS IN THE 30 DAYS SERIES

1. The God Kind of Life: 30 Days of Living a New Life with Jesus
2. The Promised Life: 30 Days of Experiencing God's Promises
3. The Prayer Life: 30 Days of Practicing God's Presence
4. The Wisdom Life (Pt. 1): 30 Days of Growing in Wisdom
5. The Wisdom Life (Pt. 2): 30 More Days of Growing in Wisdom
6. The Spirit-Filled Life: 30 Days of Operating in Pentecostal Power
7. The Discipleship Life: 30 Days to Becoming a Follower of Jesus
8. The Purpose-Filled Life: 30 Days of Learning the Meaning of Life
9. The Soul Winning Life: 30 Days of Doing Biblical Evangelism
10. The Overcoming Life: 30 Days of Conquering Life's Obstacles
11. The Faith-Based Life: 30 Days of Walking by Faith
12. The Revival Life: 30 Days of Standing for Cultural Change

To purchase, visit mpichurch.org/books or search “Joe Wyrostek” on Amazon.com