

Lesson 16 - By Way of the Cross & Forgiveness

Self and selfishness is the enemy within us.

- Our **greatest hindrance** to walking with the Lord in love is not others but **SELF!**
- When you accept Jesus as your Savior, your spirit is made brand new and filled with God's Spirit. In our spirit, you were created for love.
- Your inward man, spirit, which is filled with Him is meant to rule your life.
- You can imprison His life and love, if you do not let it out through your soul and flesh. Your outward man must be broken so His sweet fragrance can come out and touch others. (**Mark 14:3**)
- It is a life-long process to see ourselves conformed to His image and reflect Him to others all the time. (**Rom. 12:1-2, Phil. 2:12, 2 Cor. 3:18**)
- You are a three part being. (**1 Thes. 5:23**) **You are a spirit**, which is to rule and be the center of your life. **You have a soul** – your mind, will, and emotions that function outside of God. **You live in a body** that experiences sight, sound, smell, taste, and touch.
- Selfish patterns in our soul and body frequently are not in harmony with our spirit. We must **choose to die to the big "I"** so that Jesus can be all and live His life through us.
- **Self** sometimes **tries** to live the Christian life, which means self becomes responsible. We may **try and manage our behavior** rather than renewing our minds and focusing on the new heart that God has given us.
- Living the Christian life in our own strength is exhausting! At some point, self and our flesh may not be able to handle the problems in our life.
- **Our self-centered life will never please God. We must come to the end of self and let God be everything!**

Our Independence - A Hindrance to God

- God's relational nature can be seen everywhere but especially in the life of Jesus. In Jesus' ministry He said, "I and My Father are one, the Son can do nothing of himself, but what He sees the Father do." This shows Jesus' attitude of dependence.
- We see the opposite in Lucifer's words. He said, "I will..." in rebellion and self-assertion which led to his being expelled from heaven. We need to see the danger of independence in our lives.
- We all accept Satan's deception that our free will gives us the right to make our own choices. God calls us to live in cooperative submission to Him, only doing what we see our Father do.
- Our independence causes separation from God and from our brothers and sisters in Christ.
- The tendency to walk in independence comes to us all. We often struggle with the temptation to be in charge and we can fail to be committed to others.

Characteristics of Independence

1. **Following my own agenda**, just like Lucifer
 - This may be our greatest temptation, desiring to go our own way rather than willingly submit to God's agenda.
 - God wants us to express our submission by getting under someone else's mission.
 - That is called sonship and we are all sons of someone. Are you a son out of duty or from willing obedience to Father God? Are you a servant or a son?

2. Presumption

- This occurs when we make choices, decisions and take actions based on assumptions without asking God.
- We may start out with a Godly vision, but we drift into self-directed activity toward our godly vision.
- Where is your focus during each day? Are you being led and guided by God's presence? Ask yourself regularly, who is in the driver's seat, setting the pace or choosing the way to your destination.
- Saul's sin of presumption, offering a burnt offering illegally cost him the kingdom. (1 Sam. 13:10-15)
- Be careful not to focus on what a ministry can do for you rather than what God wants to do through you.

3. Self-focus

- Self-directed activity is a snare to many especially those in leadership.
- This can also be a time when you are preoccupied with yourself – your progress in God, your ministry, your reputation, your faults and weaknesses, your needs or desires, and your worth (or lack of it)
- These things belong on God's "to do" list, not yours.
- You are to worry about the things of life or your future, but you are to focus on His kingdom and His righteousness.

4. Worry, anxiety, and fear

- Self-focus leads to each of these emotions.
- Experiencing anxiety or fear are early symptoms of independence coming back into our lives.
- Perfect love casts out fear. True love is relational because it requires love being given and received.
- There can be physiological issues that cause fear and anxiety.

5. Not Listening

- A person that is battling fear and is self focused often finds it difficult to relate to others.
- Being too focused on a goal ahead leads to not listening to those around them
- Husbands especially may save themselves from some pain, error, or disobedience to God if they will listen to their wives.
- Listening to God both directly and through other people's input can help us identify and overcome independence.

6. Striving

- This is a clear indicator of independence in our lives.
- Adam and Eve's independent action in agreement with Satan led to a curse.
- Instead of God's rest, their future was to be one of toil, striving, and pain. (Gen. 3:17-19)
- Satan tried to strive for position, but Jesus ministered with great power and obedience to the Father without striving.

7. Desire for Promotion

- Each person was created with a need for praise and affirmation, but the counterfeit of this is a desire for title, promotion, or recognition.

- Promotion can be dangerous and connected to independence if there is any pride at its root even though there is humility or a godly vision.
- Be careful not to allow yourself to want to be recognized for your achievements and skills above others so by your own efforts rather than as a gift of God's grace.
- Jesus was willing to be demoted for love's sake and then he was exalted by God without ever seeking position. (Phil. 2:5-11)
- Desire for promotion and position is Satan's counterfeit rather than God's plan for your life of purpose and destiny. Check your desires carefully.

8. Negativity

- Looking at scripture we will find that Satan is entirely negative and God is completely positive.
- Jesus said "he has nothing in me" when speaking about the prince of this world. (John 14:30)
- Negativity is anti-God and independent. It is being in agreement with the devil.
- By negativity we mean dwelling on negatives, repeatedly speaking words which are more of a curse than a blessing tending to find the negative in a situation more than the positive or speaking to put down others.
- Studies have shown that 80% of our thinking is negative, which means we are lining up more with Satan than God.

9. Pride

- It is described in the New Testament as "to appear above" or "to puff up like rising smoke." Pride may be smelled even if it is not seen.
- A desire to be seen above someone else or any pleasure in a "higher" position than others can be a sign of pride.
- The best way to handle pride is to think of ourselves soberly. (Rom. 12:3) This literally means "with a saved mind and emotions" with a godly perspective.
- Ask the Lord to sensitize us to it and choose to be humble and interdependent like Jesus, not walking in your own strength.

Reducing Independence

- While we will deal with our flesh until we meet Jesus, we should **embrace the call to interdependence** over independence.
- Independence can be reduced by repentance and bringing us into agreement with God that it is sin. As we submit to God in this way, we can resist the devil and turn away from his methods to godly motives. Then we choose to embrace relationship with God and others.
- James 4:6-10 gives us some good instructions to follow:
 - **Submit to God** - step into your place under God's authority.
 - **Resist the devil** - stand against any forms of independence. Choose to act in the opposite spirit and reach out to maintain relationships.
 - **Draw near to God** - actively move toward God, receive His love, and rest in His presence.
 - **Cultivate humility** – choose submission to God in any situation and you will find Jesus there. You may have to give up your "rights" in order to demonstrate love. Look for the "lower" place because in it we express servanthood.

By Way of the Cross & Forgiveness

- **Seek relationships** – We need others in our lives both to reveal independent pride and to walk with us in obedience to God.
- **Invite input** – build relationships and humility by actively seeking input in your life. Ask others to help you see your blind spots or faults and be thankful when others point them out.
- **Choose to be positive** – looking for the positive in every circumstance.
- **Seek to live in agreement** – with God and one another. Always seek to discuss decisions and agree. Ask the Holy Spirit to help us walk in interdependence.

God's Way of Living Life

- For God's love to fully flow through us we must choose God's way of life, which reflects and releases love.
- Living like Jesus is described in **Mark 8:34-35**. The Amplified Bible says, "...let him deny himself- forget, ignore, disown, lose sight of himself and his own interests...For whoever wants to save his (higher, spiritual, eternal) life will lose (the lower, natural, temporal life) which is lived only on the earth..."
- We must **embrace the cross daily** so it can break all that belongs to our outward man – our ways, opinions, our cleverness, self-love, our all. We must **learn that our will must be broken to His will! Learning to "DQ" – die quickly to self should be our goal!**
- **Forgiveness** is the key to walking in the freedom God has for us. It is the prerequisite for lasting healing. It breaks the powerful spiritual bond that locks people into negative ways of relating to each other.

Forgiving Father- Our Example

- Throughout the entire Bible over and over again we read about Father God forgiving His people. We all need a greater revelation of our Heavenly Father's forgiveness of our sins, mistakes and shortcomings. He has always desired to have a relationship with each of His creation.
- Psalm 130 beautifully states God's attitude as one of forgiveness, not one who keeps a record of our iniquities. His nature is not to hold on to our sins but to send them away.
- The forgiving nature of God should cause us to live holy with respect and reverence for our Father.
- Father God gives us a **gift of forgiveness**-something we don't deserve, but the only way to keep that gift is to give it away to others.
- Father God has always made a way for His people to be forgiven of their sins whether through the blood of animals or forever by His Son's precious blood.
- We read of His mercy being shown to man from the beginning. **Psalm 103:11-13** speaks of our Father showing us His great mercy by removing our sins "as far as the east is from the west." **Mercy** could be defined as **not getting what we deserve**. Webster's defines mercy as: **that benevolence, mildness or tenderness of heart which causes one to overlook injuries; the disposition that tempers justice and induces an injured person to forgive trespasses and injuries; and to inflict less than the law warrants.**

A Revelation of Father God's Forgiveness

- **Read Matthew 18: 21-35.** God takes the matter of forgiveness both towards us and coming from us very seriously.
- Jesus' words give us an understanding of how literally Father God forgives. Can you imagine forgiving someone seven times in a day for something let alone seventy times?
- We all need a deeper experience of the Father's Love and forgiveness in our own hearts that will allow us to release mercy at this level.
- Few of us have fully seen the areas of our lives that need to be forgiven or understood the fact that God has indeed forgiven us and that we are completely free from guilt.
- Father God is a holy and righteous God in whom there is no darkness, yet He is a God of forgiveness. Receiving His forgiveness should bring us to our knees before the One who would condemn us and has every right to condemn us, but has chosen to forgive us at a great cost to Himself.
- We need to receive the gift of God's forgiveness, but we also need to give it to others.
- In **Luke 17:3** Jesus says, "If your brother sins against you, **rebuke** him." **Rebuke** is the Greek means "**to tax upon.**" It means to assign a monetary value to the sin that caused that person to be in your debt. If we hold unforgiveness against someone, we have taken the debt of their sin and laid it on them. The idea is that person is to carry that until he pays you back.
- The Greek word "**forgive**" means literally that you **take the thing off a person and send it away.** This is what Father God did for us through Jesus. (**Is. 53:6**) We must each accept Jesus' offer to forgive (carry away our debt.) Then we need to follow His example and forgive others.
- **Forgiveness is the setting of one's will, the making of a decision that release is granted to the offending person or situation.** It can also mean **to pardon.** Forgiveness must flow several directions. We must **forgive ourselves**; we must **ask and receive forgiveness from God**; and then we must **forgive ourselves**, which allows the fullness of God's forgiveness to be received.

Scriptural Principles for Forgiveness

1. God requires us to forgive each other. It is non-negotiable. Issues of fairness, feelings, and right or wrong are not relevant.
2. God asks us not only to forgive, but to be willing to take the initiative for reconciliation when needed.
3. God wants forgiveness from the heart, which takes God's grace. We may not be able to start forgiving from our heart, but we can make a decision to forgive and let the healing process of wholehearted forgiveness start.
4. There are consequences to our unforgiveness: we are not forgiven, we are out from under God's protection, and we are turned over to the tormentors. (**Mark 11:25**)
5. Forgiveness needs to take place as long as there is hate, bitterness, resentment, or a desire for the other person to be punished. We need to forgive in an unlimited way. We can begin each day by setting our will to forgive whatever happens to us that day. We can choose to forgive before an offense.

Misconceptions about Forgiveness

1. A common misunderstanding is that once the offender is released, all the pain will automatically leave one's heart. Once the offense is forgiven, the healing only begins. The person needs God to come and heal his heart and take away the pain. He may also need to renew his mind from any lies that he has come to believe about himself, others, or God.
2. While forgiveness starts by making a decision, in most situations forgiveness is a process that takes time, especially if the person has been seriously wounded.

Things that can Block Forgiving Others

1. There may be ignorance of the Scriptures. A person may not know what the Bible says about the importance of forgiving others.
2. A person has to **feel** like forgiving another. No! Once we choose to forgive, God will honor that and eventually the feelings of forgiveness will follow.
3. A person's offense may seem too big for God to forgive. Pride is thinking our sin is too big for God to forgive.
4. A person may **fear** forgiving, equating forgiveness with excusing or ignoring the offense. We can release the offender from the blame while at the same time acknowledge the hurt or abuse to our life. Forgiveness is not saying that the offense was "okay." The offender is still responsible for their own actions.
5. We may think we have already forgiven, but the Holy Spirit knows best. We need to be willing to ask the Holy Spirit to show us if there is any unforgiveness left.
6. By holding onto unforgiveness a person may feel they have power over the other person rather than being a victim.
7. A spirit of unforgiveness or a Spirit of control tends to be passed down family lines. These demonic spirits will do everything they can to prevent forgiveness.

Steps to Forgiveness

1. Ask Holy Spirit to enable you to forgive the person or persons that have hurt you.
2. Take some time to ponder the price Jesus [aid for you personally to receive forgiveness. Focus on your specific sins. Recognize that forgiving others is not different than Jesus forgiving you of your sins.
3. Consider the offender. Hurt people hurt other people! Take time to see the pain is the other person's life. This will help you have compassion for those who hurt you.
4. Pray and forgive the person or persons that have hurt you. Take the person and the offense to the cross and release them and let them go. Thank God for working forgiveness in your heart.
5. Repent and ask God's forgiveness for your sin of how you reacted. Repentance means to turn around and go in a different direction intentionally to change. Ask God to forgive you and cleanse you by His blood. Receive God's forgiveness and allow it to become real in your heart.
7. Forgive yourself for holding onto the hurts, bitterness and unforgiveness. Because God has forgiven you, you need to forgive yourself also.

The Importance of Brokenness

God wants to touch others by His Spirit moving in and through us. Only when we allow our outward man (flesh, mind, will and emotions) to be broken can what's in our inner man (spirit) flow out.

1. Brokenness can be gradual or be sudden-the timing is in God's hand. He wants the big "I" to be bent to His will and become a "C" like Christ.
2. Being broken is **both God's work and ours**. He brings the pressure to bear in either gradual or sudden circumstances. We then choose whether to yield our rights and selfish interests or not.
3. Unbroken self is like a hard shell around your spirit. Your spirit is unable to function. Your mind governs your work. Your emotions control your actions. Unbroken self can react like a snake that rises up and strikes back when attacked rather than Jesus' example of being like the worm that offers no resistance. (**Ps. 22:6**)
4. Anything with "I" or "self" in it is sin. – Self-consciousness, self-energy, self-complacency, self-pity in trials, self-seeking in business or Christian work, self-indulgence, sensitiveness, touchiness, resentment, self-defense when hurt, reserve, worry, fear, temper, envy, or unbelief, an inverted form of pride. **Allow Jesus to show you what is in your life that needs to go!**
5. Everything that is a barrier between us and another becomes a barrier between us and God. We need to put it right immediately or the barrier will get thicker and shut us off from God and others.
6. In brokenness, we offer no excuses and see things to be sin that we never thought to be sin before. We see our sins wounding and hurting Jesus. Then we carry all the sin that is revealed to the Cross and the Fountain of His Blood. It is gone from God's sight and our hearts!
7. Only the broken can enter the way of holiness. "Not I, but Christ lives." (**Gal. 2:20**) We must have a real hunger and come to the foot of the cross. We lay down our rights before God and man. We surrender everything having nothing that we call our own – time, money, possessions, and position.
8. We can only produce and bear the fruit of the Spirit where sin and self have been taken to the cross!
9. Brokenness is the opposite of hardness. Hardness says, "It's your fault." Brokenness says, "It's my fault."
10. We need to learn to live under the shadow of Calvary and see our sin there. We do not need to compare our sin with another's.

The Lamb- Like Disposition Jesus Showed Us

The power in Jesus' blood comes from the lamb-like disposition of Jesus. The characteristics of Jesus being like a lamb are:

1. Meekness, lowly in heart, and submissiveness
2. A simple creature with no schemes or plans, helplessness and simplicity
3. Willing to be shorn of His rights, reputation, and all liberties – He never resisted or reviled
4. He was silent – gentle and unresisting, never defended Himself or explained Himself
5. A spotless lamb – nothing in His heart but love for those who sent Him to the cross – no resentment, grudges, or bitterness
6. Willing to be broken – surrendered to the Father's will, deep humility and self-surrender
7. A substitute lamb that bore our sin and died for us

Our will must be broken for this lamb-like disposition to be in us. **God looks on the heart, not just outward appearances.** If we feel innocent with nothing to be broken, we may not have seen what is there. **Jeremiah 17:9** says, “The heart is deceitful above all things...” We need to have the following attitude about ourselves:

1. I am nothing – **1 Cor. 13:2, 2 Cor. 12:11**
2. I have nothing – **1 Cor. 9:16**
3. I know nothing – **1 Cor. 8:2, 1 Cor. 4:4**
4. I can do nothing – **John 5:19, 30; John 15:5**

A Resurrected Life-Becoming More Christ-Like

- A resurrected life involves letting God transform or change us. Transformation is going from the way things are to the way God intends them to be. God wants His life to penetrate and impact every bit of our human nature.
- The key is not me living my life, but Him living His life through me and me living a life of death on the cross. (**Gal. 2:20; 2 Cor. 4:11; Gal. 4:19**)
- Sometimes He brings a major change to us by a sudden Jericho experience, but most of the time we will experience the Calvary Road where there must be a renewing of the mind and a process before we see change.
- We must die daily. (**1 Cor. 15:31**)

The following steps can help in this process:

1. **Confession- James 5:16** We must identify the fruit or behaviors in our lives that are not like Him.
2. **Trace it to its source-Gen. 1:11** What relationships in my life caused this behavior? Laws that were broken? Unconfessed sin? Curses from past generations, judging others or dishonoring parents?
3. **Acknowledge the fruit and root as sin.** Have a time of confessing and repenting over the fruit. Deal with the root also.
4. Confession often needs to involve another person. (**Ps. 116:11; Jer. 17:9**) We need someone who knows how to speak the truth in love to us. We need to allow that person to bring light to the darkness in our lives. The other person can help us judge ourselves and not others. (**2 Cor. 1:31**)
5. We confess something once to God, but we may need to continue to confess it daily until the root dies in our thinking. Die to the old pattern and develop new habits.
6. Confess your weakness to those you hurt and ask their forgiveness.
7. We need to repent, hate sin, and the stronghold that is bearing bad fruit. Then return to love. (**Rom. 12:9**)
8. Bring forth good fruit in keeping with repentance (**Matt. 3:8**) There is a difference between remorse and repentance.
 - **Remorse is of the flesh**-“I’m sorry I blew it. I’m sorry I got caught.”
 - **Repentance** is godly sorrow. It is a change of mind so deep it causes my behavior to change.
 - We must become “ripe.” It is the place where the pain and conviction of things from the past become so great, I am willing to pay the price of exposing what is wrong, stop blaming others or justify my behavior. I own my sin, emotions, actions, etc.
 - **Romans 2:4** is the motivator. The more we know God’s goodness, the easier it is to come to repentance!

Experiencing Jesus’ resurrection life and becoming more Christ-like requires going through the process like Jesus did. We may ask God’s forgiveness for our carnal ways and habits, but to experience new life we must crucify or die to our habit structures and patterns of thought. (**Gal. 5:24**)

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1. **Have a Gethsemane experience-** See our sin and hate it. Accept and yield to Gods' will of taking this sin to the cross. Without Gethsemane we will crawl off the cross.
2. After Gethsemane, we may be betrayed, accused, or experience beatings from others. We need to respond like Jesus –not fight or answer (**Mark 15:5; Ps. 55**)
3. You may need someone to help bear your burden and help you make it to Calvary. It will be someone who understands death.
4. **Crucify our old ways-** We must choose to take out fleshly ways, old habit structures and thought patterns to the cross
to be put to death before we can experience Christ's life.
5. After death we need people like Joseph of Arimathea to take the body to a place of rest.
6. We must have time in the tomb. It is a place of incubation. All introspection must stop and we must rest. God is slaying all that is performance oriented, pride, and position. (**Matt. 12:40**) Don't pay attention to the dying symptoms.
7. Let Christ work. Focus on the resurrection life that is coming. (Luke 24:45) Completion of the process is totally dependent upon faith. You will have a new understanding and revelation.