

SERIES THREE

Principles

for

Marriage

Healing

**A BIBLICALLY-BASED CURRICULUM
WRITTEN AND DEVELOPED BY
COVENANT KEEPERS, INC. ®**

Mission Statement

The mission of Covenant Keepers is two-fold. First of all, we desire to facilitate spiritual growth, maturity and victory in the personal lives of those individuals desiring the healing of their marriages. Second, we teach how broken marriage relationships can be healed through applying Godly principles.

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PREFACE

Welcome,

When divorce ended my twenty-seven year marriage I found no place to go to receive healing or encouragement for restoration. As I searched the Word of God the Lord began to instruct me and give me hope for my seemingly impossible situation.

Before long God began bringing others across my path who also needed help. I opened my home and shared what the Lord had taught me.

As a result, Covenant Keepers now has an entire set of curriculum to study. While the truths presented in our materials may be familiar, the application to marital situations should be new and helpful. Each lesson teaches one or more spiritual principles based on God's Word. These principles deal with growth and maturity, spiritual warfare, healing and other areas. Some principles taught include: forgiveness, freewill, double-mindedness, how to avoid strife, patience and sowing and reaping.

I pray the Lord will use these lessons to help bring encouragement, hope and faith to you as you stand for the healing of your marriage.

I want to thank everyone who has worked so hard editing and proofing the lessons and especially Dan Gabel for his help in developing the curriculum.

In covenant love,

Marilyn Conrad

Founder and President

“And the LORD answered me, and said, Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it.” Habakkuk 2:2

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How Long Will It Take To Heal My Marriage?



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How Long Will It Take To Heal My Marriage?

How Long Will It Take To Heal My Marriage?

Covenant Connection

This lesson is intended to provide an understanding of the relationship of time to the fulfillment of a covenant commitment.

Introduction

Houses commonly fall into disrepair. The cause will vary. It may be from abuse of previous occupants, a hurricane, tornado, earthquake, storm with high winds, tidal wave, or just neglect with the passage of time. In every case, the extent of the damage both hidden and obvious must be identified and cost determined before repair can begin. The analogy to shattered marriages is obvious. Just as the time needed to rebuild and to refurbish a house depends on the situation, so God's element of time will vary depending on the depth of healing, forgiveness, and growth that is needed to reestablish the relationship in a way that will bring God glory.

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson you should be able to:

- 1) Describe how God uses TIME in the process of inner transformation.
- 2) List one scriptural principle for men and one scriptural principle for women that will shorten the time needed to restore a marriage relationship.
- 3) State Satan's primary method of delaying reconciliation and the principle to counteract it.
- 4) Explain how the Biblical principle of sowing and reaping relates to TIME in the healing of a marriage.

In the early stages of our marriage crisis, time is often an overwhelming issue to us. How long until my mate changes? How long can I endure this? When is God going to do something? Will I ever get over these feelings and thoughts?

During this lesson we will discuss the importance of our own transformation to reconciliation and how this is related to TIME. Once that is covered we will look at the primary responsibility of both the husband and also the wife in maintaining a fulfilling relationship. We will see how learning to function in this role is important to receiving healing for a wounded marriage. The third area of the lesson will deal with Satan's methods for delaying, stalling, or preventing reconciliation and how to have victory and be successful in overcoming this. The final principle we will study will show how God's universal principle of sowing and reaping applies to our stands. We will learn how time and also the type of harvest we receive from sowing, is related to reconciliation.

NOTES: _____

Transformation Begins With Us

We live in an age where people want instant solutions. It is common to look for a diet to take off extra pounds of weight in days that took months to accumulate. While God is not constrained by time, He most often works through the principles He ordained where time is involved in the process. A study of the root meanings of “season” and “time” in Ecclesiastes 3:1 indicate that these words represent an opportunity for growth where the duration is known to God. Later in the same chapter, God’s Word specifically says that there is a time (or opportunity) to heal and a time to rebuild. Although God does give us the opportunities, it is up to us to receive and use them.

It is not wrong to question God about how long it will take for a situation to come about. David wrote Psalm 13 expressing this sentiment during the time he was being pursued by King Saul and God was working a transformation within him to become the greatest King Israel ever had. But during this time David’s actions were not complaints against God but rather positive steps that we should follow.

Transformation must begin with us.

It is easier to look at the faults and mistakes of our mates than our own, but we must admit that we have no real power (in the natural realm) over them. The only thing we have control over is our thoughts, words and actions. A covenant keeper once shared with his mentor all the hurtful things his mate

was doing and planning. The friend gently responded, “Yes, that is too bad, but you can’t control any of that. The only thing you can control is your relationship with God. What are you going to do about that?”

The Bible provides examples of people who went through a difficult period in their lives so that God could do a deep work in their hearts.

In Genesis 39–47 we see how Joseph was reconciled to his family, but first he underwent a period of growth and transformation in an Egyptian prison. Before Moses was used by God to reconcile the Israelites to the Promised Land, Exodus 2-3 shows he underwent a season of refining and change in the land of Midian. Paul was used by God to bring reconciliation to the Gentiles after he underwent a time of transformation in Arabia (Galatians 1:16-18). While we wish God would do an instant miracle in our situations, we should be willing to learn from these examples. God often uses time to regenerate us and equip us for His purposes. At this point we have a choice to make. Do we resist the work God wants to do in us (as Jonah did) or do we come into agreement with His plan and cooperate with Him in our own transformation?

NOTES: _____

Before He can change our marriage, God must change us! How can we cooperate with Him?

_____ me, O God, and know my _____;
_____ me and know my _____. Point out
anything in me that _____ you, and _____ me
along the _____ of _____.

Don’t copy the _____ and _____ of
this _____, but let God _____ you into a
_____ person by changing the way you _____.

Then you will _____ what God _____ you to do,
and you will _____ how _____ and
_____ and _____ his _____ really is.

Murmuring Delays The Transformation Process

The wilderness experience of the Israelites prior to receiving their covenant right of the Promised Land is a rich area of study for those desiring to receive from God what is rightfully theirs. (Read through Exodus 12-17 before your group meeting.) In the account of the Israelite exodus from Egypt, we see how they complained, or murmured, in the face of God's deliverance. The times of hardship in the wilderness were an opportunity for the Israelites to develop trust and faith that would help them when they entered into the Promised Land.

Without faith not only is it impossible to please God (Hebrews 11:6), but it is also impossible to receive what we ask. Jesus never criticized His disciples for their failures, but He did criticize them for their lack of faith. Murmuring is a complaint that indicates lack of faith that God will do what He has promised. We can learn from God's Word the effect of murmuring rather than experience the resulting delay in our own reconciliation.

Murmuring can be defined as an expression of resentment, dissatisfaction, anger, and complaint by grumbling. **Murmuring is the opposite of praise.** While God inhabits praise - and praise results in freedom, release, and increased faith - murmuring results in discouragement, depression, and diminished faith. Self-pity is a companion to murmuring. The true nature of murmuring is rebellion against God and a stubborn refusal to believe His Word and what He has accomplished for us in the past. Our attitude in the midst of real difficulty must not be judgmental toward God.

Instead of going around in circles as the Israelites did in the wilderness, we can learn from their mistakes and avoid them. God told them His will through Moses, but they were soon

distracted by circumstances. They heard God's words through Moses but they refused to embrace it so that they could be changed by it. For the Word to change our lives it must be IN our lives. While a daily time reading the Bible is important and good, it is not enough for God's Word to have maximum effect. For the transformation we need, meditation is a must! We must not just read, but let our minds think and dwell on Scripture.

Using Exodus 12-17, make a list of the provisions that God made for the Israelites in getting them out of Egypt and another list of the murmuring or complaints made by the Israelites.

PROVISIONS	MURMURINGS
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

NOTES: _____

God’s Principles Govern The Progress And Process Of Reconciliation

God set the physical laws that govern nature in motion in the physical world around us (law of gravity, laws of electricity, etc.). He has also set principles in place that govern the realm of the soul and the realm of the spirit. This can be good news if we use the principles to our benefit, or bad news if we choose not to. The main difference between the cause and effect relationship found in laws of natural science and those laws that govern the soul realm and spirit realm is that the time process is not as well understood. We look for results to manifest in the physical from a process that is taking place first spiritually. We get discouraged when we don’t see the results, but TIME is not the same in both realms. The good news is that the process is taking place. Our role in assuring that it does happen is to believe God and be obedient to do what He shows us.

God holds us accountable for what is entrusted to us. In the parable of the talents (Matthew 25:14-30) each steward was responsible only for what he was given. We need to be responsive to what the Holy Spirit teaches us. As we are faithful to what is revealed, God will then give us more.

God has given us a ministry of reconciliation! The book of Hosea is a beautiful story of the reconciliation of a marriage. Since He has given us His principles and examples, we are now accountable to do what God reveals for us to do.

1 Peter 3 teaches us how a husband and wife are to behave. However, if we read chapter 3 in the context of chapters 2 and 4, they become even more meaningful. In fact, chapter 3 begins with the word “likewise,” meaning “in the same way.” In the same way as what? In the same way that Christ is described in chapter 2. It cost Him to unconditionally love those who did not love Him back, and He submitted to their authority at His own expense. Then chapter 4 speaks to us about the motives that should be behind our behavior. Peter clearly tells us that it will not be easy to live as Christ did, but we have faith that God rewards those who obey.

God would not establish a ministry of reconciliation without providing the principles and process for it to occur. Look up the scriptures given by your group leader to find analogies that we can apply to our marriages and families.

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

- 4) _____

God has given specific instructions that are applicable to us as husbands and wives. Man’s role in the marriage relationship is to LOVE his wife. In God’s Word men are specifically told to love their wives. Men sanctify and cleanse their wives with the washing of the water by confessing and praying God’s Word over them daily. The woman’s role in the relationship is to display **GODLY CHARACTER.**

Pride, Impatience And Logic

Pride is our unwillingness to wait for God to act in His own time and in His own way. Pride rushes in to take matters into our own hands when it appears God is not working fast enough. Pride manifests itself through impatience.

King Saul was drawn into sin because of impatience. The prophet Samuel represents God’s voice. When we first develop a stand for our marriage we must get our Rhema word from God. We need to get direction from God. Samuel was God’s voice to Saul and he was told to wait seven days. But Samuel was late. Saul was being tested to see if he could be trusted, to see if he would obey. Saul looked at the conditions and all appeared hopeless so he offered the sacrifice to God even when it was against God’s law for him to do so. It looked as though Samuel was not coming and Saul became impatient. Can you remember a time when you looked at circumstances surrounding your marriage healing and you took matters into your own hands?

We must learn to get our instructions from God and wait on Him. We must learn to be led by the Spirit and not by our souls (mind, will, emotions). An attitude of impatience overwhelmed Saul and logic told him he had to offer the sacrifice that he was forbidden to do.

The enemy often tells us, as he told Saul, **“Don’t just sit there, DO SOMETHING!”** We fast, pray, bind & loose, and nothing seems to be happening. So then it seems logical that we must do something. We call our mates, drive around their house or apartment, write a letter, etc. Sound familiar? The need to be in control is pride. Pride is independence and humility is dependence on God.

The hardest part of faith is waiting for God to move. God wants us to trust Him, to follow His instructions. Often, right before God is about to work a miracle we try to help Him out. Saul couldn’t wait either. Divine direction was at the door but he wouldn’t wait. When we let patience have her perfect work, the result is that we will be perfect and entire (mature and complete) lacking nothing. **INCLUDING OUR HEALED MARRIAGE!**

NOTES: _____

Write out one scripture that the Lord gave you to stand on for the healing of your marriage: _____

What happened in 1 Samuel 13:10-14 when Saul acted impatiently? _____

According to James 1:2-4, why do trials come our way? _____

And what should be the final product of those trials?

Those who _____ on the Lord will find new _____.

They will _____ on wings like _____.

They will _____ and not _____.

_____.

They will _____ and not _____.

Stolen Seed, Lost Harvest

Satan’s primary strategy for blocking reconciliation is to steal the Word. The “father of lies” and “thief” is known for his ability to deceive and entrap. It is only truth that sets us free from deception. In John 17:17 we are told that God’s Word is truth. If Satan can steal truth, he can keep people deceived. This principle is reinforced in the parable of the sower. (Matthew 13:3-8, 18-23) Satan uses a variety of techniques to steal the Word, but the result is the same.

The battleground is the mind. Satan knows that as we are in our heart (or thoughts) so we will be in our actions. (Proverbs 23:7a) His goal is to prevent us from being in faith to receive what is ours, or to cause us to be double minded. Be sure to explain the term double minded to your group.

We can have victory over doubt through spiritual warfare. We do spiritual warfare whenever we refuse to allow our mind to dwell on thoughts that are not truth. When our mind receives a thought that will diminish our faith, we need to rebuke it in the name of Jesus (see Romans 12:2) and then confess appropriate scriptures. By learning to control our thoughts we can break down the strongholds and deceptive arguments that the world would have us believe.

God established the principle of sowing and reaping, which is in effect as long as the earth remains (Genesis 8:22). A seed contains the ability to reproduce itself, but it is necessary to first plant the seed. This is supported in the eleventh chapter of Ecclesiastes. The term “cast your bread upon the waters” is an expression of the process of sowing. No matter how bleak our circumstances (weather) look, we need to begin and to continue planting seed for future harvests!

The type of seed determines the type of harvest. What kind of “seed” can you sow into the following areas of your life?

1) Physical: _____

2) Emotional: _____

3) Financial: _____

4) Spiritual: _____

The type of seed determines the type of harvest. To have good seed we must have good motives, and to have good motives our heart must be right. What we sow into our lives through our associations, what we read, watch on TV or listen to, does produce a harvest within our hearts. This affects what we do and eventually what we reap in our lives and our marriages.

The period between seedtime and harvest depends on the growth conditions. When the growth conditions are right, seeds make healthy progress to maturity. But remember that you do not control all the growth conditions. Your responsibility is to maintain a sensitive heart towards God. You can cultivate and irrigate through praying the Word. But it is up to God to bring the growth.

Your job is to believe God—His job is to make it happen!

How Can I Have Victory In My Finances?



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How Can I Have Victory In My Finances?

How Can I Have Victory In My Finances?

Covenant Connection

God wants his children to experience the abundant life in all areas of covenant. Every area of covenant is interrelated. Freedom in the financial area of our lives will enhance strength and health in marital relationships.

Introduction

Money is a contributing factor to the breakup of almost all marriages. Financial problems lead to communication problems and worry. Worry is what Satan wants us to substitute for prayer. Money or the lack of it can cause strife that brings confusion and opens the door to the working of the enemy. During the process of separation and divorce and afterwards, many of the communication problems we have are over money, such as child support and alimony. Therefore, many covenant keepers find themselves in a financial bind. Divorce causes women’s income to drop as much as 75 percent, while most men’s income increases.

When we owe money to others we become indebted or in bondage to those creditors. They have a claim on our earnings—which is a claim on our time—which is a claim on our lives. Debts have the effect of restricting and limiting our options. Because of debt, many who are called by God are unable to respond to opportunities that God provides and miss the blessings they would have experienced.

Jesus came that we might be free. It is His desire that we experience wholeness and abundance in every area of our lives. We cannot do that unless we have financial freedom.

Jesus came that we might be free. It is His desire that we experience wholeness and abundance in every area of our lives. We cannot do that unless we have financial freedom.

NOTES: _____

Lesson Objectives
When you have completed this lesson you should be able to:
1) State two Covenant truths that apply to our finances.
2) List three steps to achieve financial freedom.
3) Identify two root causes of financial difficulties.
4) Summarize three scriptural principles for good stewardship and financial management.
5) Describe three areas of giving that result in financial victory and blessing.
6) Explain the role of time and budget in restoring financial health.
7) List three steps to obtain victory in the face of any trial.

Financial Freedom is Part of our Covenant with God

Financial freedom is part of God’s plan for us as one benefit of our blood covenant with Jesus. In the Lord’s Prayer we are to hallow the names of the Lord. One of His names is Jehovah-Jireh. *Jehovah* means Lord of the Covenant and coupled with *Jireh* it means that God’s provision shall be seen. God desires that in **all** things we “*prosper and be in good health*” (3 John 2). It goes on in that verse to say that we will prosper to the extent that our “*soul prospers.*” Our soul is made up of our mind, will and emotions. Obviously our emotions are involved and our soul is not prospering if we are worrying because of debt.

We must be active, not passive, in regard to our covenant to benefit from it. Too many believers have accepted the lie that what-will-be-will-be in their lives concerning God’s will and they believe that God’s love for them depends on what they do. The deception is that they have it exactly backwards. It is the promises of God that are conditional. What we do affects what happens. It does not affect God’s love for us. God’s love for us always remains unconditional!

The entire nation of Israel was in covenant with God when they left Egypt but only **Joshua and Caleb maintained their faith and acted on it to possess the Promised Land.** After forty-five years of “circumstances” those two alone received the manifestation of what they believed (see Joshua 14:9).

Ruth’s mother-in-law was the one who knew the covenant. Yet when Ruth followed the scriptural principles taught her by Naomi and exercised her covenant rights, she married Boaz and entered into the lineage of Christ (see the book of Ruth).

Money is used by Jesus to teach the principle of *active* rather than *passive* response to God’s provision. In the story about the ten servants, the servant that did the least and did not receive a reward was the one who talked the most. It is not just our confessions that will get us out of financial problems—it is faith put into action.

What God has given us by covenant, we have to possess by faith. To expect victory without being willing to fight is foolishness. The struggles we face in overcoming financial adversity are not easy but God will give us wisdom and direction as we seek Him and are obedient to Him.

NOTES: _____

This same _____ who takes _____ of me will _____ all your _____ from his glorious _____, which have been _____ to us in Christ Jesus.

The Bible shows that there are strong links between money and forgiveness. The parable of the debtors found in Matthew 18:23-35 demonstrates how financial problems are a real bondage.

- 1) _____ is bondage just as _____ is bondage.
- 2) Debt can lead to _____ just as unforgiveness leads to _____.
- 3) Just as God wants us _____ through _____, He wants us _____ from _____.
- 4) It is only as we experience _____ that we can experience His _____ the way He _____ it for us.

What God Says about Finances

We must learn what God says in His Word about every problem we face. Finances are just another area in our lives where Satan wants to steal, kill and destroy. Financial freedom allows you to build your job around your family instead of building your family around your job.

Violating scriptural principles of financial management opens the door to destruction. Our fallen nature sees laws, rules, boundaries and guidelines as fences or barriers to our freedom and enjoyment. Nothing could be further from the truth! God has given us boundaries because He knows that we are safe, secure, protected and available to be blessed within them. They are the encircling protection of His loving arms. Disobedience opens the door to destruction by removing us from the protective circle of His arms. When we obey God we trust Him for tomorrow. Our tomorrows are taken care of by today's obedience.

Financial problems indicate other areas in our lives that need correction. **Issues of the flesh come from issues of the spirit.** Scripture provides clear directions for managing finances that will lead to financial freedom.

We must avoid commitments and entanglements with the world. 2 Corinthians 6:14-17 warns us of financial involvement with non-believers.

Debt is a curse that we must also avoid. Just as someone can be trapped by pornography, others can be held captive by greed. It is not just the miser who hoards money who can be enslaved, but also the spendthrift who wastes it. God's Word clearly warns against debt. A vow is an obligation and we are told in Ecclesiastes 5:4-5 to pay our vows. We live in a credit card society. God doesn't want us enslaved by debt and so wrapped up in paying the bills due tomorrow that we are not responsive to His Word today.

Worry is borrowing against tomorrow, so it is another form of debt. Quit using credit cards for purchases when you know there will be no money to pay for them.

Be diligent and not slothful. A slothful person will find sleep as an escape or a bondage that keeps them from being diligent in both physical and spiritual areas. While a proper amount of sleep is essential, scripture indicates that God's primary concern for sleep is not that we get too little, but that we get too much.

What are some effects of financial bondage that God would want us free of?

What issues related to slothfulness are found in the following scriptures?

1) Proverbs 26:16 _____

2) Proverbs 20:4, Proverbs 19:15 _____

3) Proverbs 12:24 _____

4) Proverbs 12:27, Proverbs 24:30-31 _____

5) Proverbs 21:25-26, Proverbs 19:24 _____

6) Proverbs 10:26, Proverbs 18:9 _____

7) Proverbs 22:13 _____

Stewardship

God expects us to be good stewards.

To do that, we must apply scriptural principles to our lives. If we want to be blessed—remember that reconciliation is a blessing—it is vital that we be faithful and sensible stewards in a number of areas.

First, we must be faithful stewards of our time. In the parable of the talents each steward was given the same amount of time. Time is a resource that we share equally and are responsible for. The problems and evils we are facing do not provide an excuse for poor stewardship of time.

Next, we must be faithful stewards of our abilities. The stewards in the parable of the talents (See Matthew 25:15) each had different abilities and were accountable according to their own abilities.

Finally, we are to be good stewards of our material resources. Again in the parable of the talents, the stewards were accountable only for the money that they had. In God’s eyes, the widow was a better steward than the rich even though her contribution was far smaller.

Good stewardship is a part of a healed marriage. Good stewards sow seeds of FAITHFULNESS! If we expect faithfulness in our marriage and our spouse, we must be faithful as stewards. If we are not faithful with the resources of time, ability and money that God has entrusted to us, according to His Word, we cannot expect to be entrusted with our own marriage.

Stewardship means accountability! Just as the stewards in the parable of the talents had to give an accounting, God’s Word tells us that we will kneel before Christ and be held accountable.

Good stewards use kingdom economics to expand their resources. We expand our resources through principles of giving and receiving. Many look on financial stewardship as only a matter of giving, but receiving is just as important. Giving activates the work of God in our financial affairs, while receiving is moving into the provision that God intends for us.

Heavenly Father, I thank you for every resource that You have entrusted to me. I desire that my hope be sure. I desire through faith and patience to inherit what You have promised. I therefore commit to make the best use of the time You have allotted me. Give me the grace to keep this commitment. Help me to use the ability You have given me to further Your kingdom and to bring You glory. Holy Spirit, You are the teacher. I ask You to instruct me through Your Word and in the principles I need to wisely manage what You have provided. I will be diligent in my giving. I will see your direction in receiving and I will be obedient to Your Word in my lifestyle.

I pray this in the name of Jesus. Amen.

What is stewardship?

Stewardship is the _____ of _____ using what God has _____ to us.

The Bible shows there are three areas of giving with distinct differences. They are:

- 1) _____
- 2) _____
- 3) _____

Receiving involves:

- 1) _____ up with God’s _____.
- 2) Possessing _____ in the _____ what is to be ours in the _____.
- 3) _____ to the Holy Spirit’s _____.

Bring In The Tithe

We will expand our resources through tithing. Tithing a portion to God from what he has provided you is basic to financial health. Tithing is an open, visible, external evidence of dependence on, and faith in, God. Tithing is necessary whether you believe it or not because through tithing we are protected financially, nourished spiritually, and learn the fear of the Lord.

God’s purpose for tithes is that we will learn to fear Him. God can provide for His work in many ways. His resources are unlimited. Although He has chosen to provide for His work through tithes, that is not the purpose in His design. It is through the practice of tithing that we learn an essential part of the Christian walk—the fear of the Lord!

Tithes are still valid today. Some Christians believe that tithing is not for today. They feel that tithing was a practice found under the Law of Moses and has been replaced since we have a new covenant through Christ. Although tithing is found in the Law of Moses, it actually came before Moses. Abram (Abraham) paid tithes to Melchizedek who was the King of Peace. Melchizedek was a foreshadow, or type, of Christ.

Jesus told us to tithe. In Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42 He acknowledged that the Pharisees tithed but chastised them for their attitude in other things. This is another example of our actions needing to work in conjunction with our attitudes.

We pay our tithes to Jesus. Tithes are not to take away our guilt nor can they atone for our sins. They are paid to Jesus in His position as our High Priest according to principles in scripture.

Tithes, like taxes, should not be optional. The word for **paying** tithes in Hebrew is *SHALAM* and comes from the same base as the word for peace (Shalom). The meaning of the word *pay* includes: peace, complete, whole, sound, and safe. There are different opinions within the body of Christ on where the storehouse is. If your pastor feels all the tithes should go to the local church, then because you are under his spiritual guidance, you need to pay your tithes to the church where you belong. If that is not the teaching of your church, then diligently seek direction from the Holy Spirit and be obedient to Him.

NOTES: _____

The fear of the Lord:

- 1) _____ us hate _____.
- 2) is essential for _____ and _____.
- 3) brings _____.
- 4) brings us God’s _____.

Bring Your Tithe!

I am the Lord _____ - _____, and I _____ you to put me to the _____. Bring the entire _____ into the _____, so there will be _____ in my house. Then I will open the _____ of heaven and _____ you with _____ after _____.

Tithing Bears Fruit

Every command in God’s Word has been given for our protection and benefit. God’s directives are intended to show us how to live so that the spiritual principles, which rule the universe, will work in our favor. Tithing is one of those principles and how we respond to it will have an impact on our lives. **When we tithe, we benefit from seven blessings.**

1) **The blessing of food in God’s house.** If you are attending a church where God’s Word is taught, but you are not feeling fed from the Word, it is likely that you are not giving God the whole tithe.

2) **The blessing of open windows in heaven.** In Malachi 3:1-12, the term *Lord of hosts* means the *boss of angels*. God will literally open the windows of heaven and send angels to bring us assistance. This link between angelic assistance bringing blessings and tithing is also seen in Genesis 28:12, 17 and 22.

Your name will no longer be “_____ and Childless,” but “Happily _____.” You will _____ the Lord; your _____ will be his bride. Your people will take the _____, just as a young man takes a _____. The Lord will be _____ because of _____, just as a _____ is pleased with his _____.

3) **The blessing of protection from the devourer.** The *devourer* mentioned in Malachi 3:11 is referred to in other translations as an insect, plague or locusts. The insects are the little annoyances that the enemy throws at us. Individually they amount to nothing, but like a housefly, they occupy our time and take us away from more important tasks. Plagues involve the bigger circumstances that Satan uses to destroy what we have worked hard to accomplish in our health, our finances, or our spiritual life.

4) **The blessing of fruit protected from decay.** Destroy means decay or ruin. This is where the enemy tries to cause deception that rots out your stand from within. Examples include circumstances that bring moral decay in our thoughts, believing false reports, unforgiveness, bitterness and hardness of heart.

5) **A full term of life.** Our vine not dropping its fruit can be applied to life not being shortened before the time appointed for our spouse, our children and us. Additional meanings can be applied to our endeavors (especially spiritual ones) not failing prematurely.

6) **The blessing of a Godly nation.** When God’s children tithe, not only are they blessed, but also their country is blessed. The family unit is the key to stability in any country. God promises that our country will be happy and blessed when we tithe.

7) **The blessing of pleasure in marriage.** The word for delight means *pleasure* and the word *land* is used to mean the territory that God desires us to possess. For covenant keepers that is their covenant marriage (See Isaiah 62:4).

God does not need our money; He needs us. When we practice good stewardship in tithing, He has our hearts because He has our treasures. Tithing is the way through giving that we can truly learn to fear God. It is through the fear of the Lord that our stands will be strengthened and gain life.

A Heart For Offering

Tithes and offerings are distinct both in their functions and in attitudes. While we PAY tithes; we GIVE offerings above our tithes. Giving is essential for good financial stewardship. There are blessings that God has attached to offerings. However, none of these promises that relate to offerings apply unless we practice what we learned in the last section about the tithe. Only when our tithing is in order can we receive the blessings from operating in other areas of giving.

Offerings result in God blessing us through others. Offerings are not to teach us to fear the Lord. Deuteronomy 14:22-23 shows that paying tithes teaches us to fear the Lord. According to Malachi 3:10-11, bringing the tithes into the storehouse results in God rebuking the devourer for our sakes. While God certainly pours out a blessing for tithes, He also uses others as the vessel to bless us when we give offerings above our tithes.

Offerings must be given with the right attitude. Correct attitudes are essential in giving offerings. This is shown in the story of Cain and Abel (see Genesis 4:7 & Hebrews 11:4) and also in Jesus' address to the Pharisees in Matthew 23:18-19. God tells us in 2 Corinthians 9:7 that we are to give cheerfully, not grudgingly or resentfully.

Offerings must also be given from a basis of LOVE. The word *gave* in John 3:16 is from the same base word as offerings in the Greek. When we give in an attitude of love, not because of obligation, then we are acting in the same manner as our Heavenly Father. God gives on the basis of righteousness. In 1 Corinthians 13 we are told that if we give all our possessions to the poor but have not love, it profits us nothing.

It is not a contradiction to give freely and from a basis of love and yet expect a return. It is not unscriptural to expect a return. When God gave us the gift of eternal life, He gave it freely yet with the expectation that we would respond and have fellowship with Him throughout eternity. We need to expect in faith that God will keep His Word regarding offerings. The word *diligently* found in Hebrews 11:6 is related to worship. *Rewarder* in the same verse means *remunerator* or *financial provider* in the Greek. As we worship God with our offerings, with the right attitudes, we can have faith that we will receive.

NOTES: _____

Offerings are:

- 1) Offerings are _____ given.
- 2) Offerings are _____ from the basis of _____.
- 3) Offerings represent our _____, they should _____.
- 4) Offerings are given with _____.

Luke 21:3-4 shows that no gift is too small in God's economy. While offerings obviously include money, we are not limited to financial donations. Name some specific areas where you can sow offerings:

Freely Give

Offerings that are freely given to God have an impact that includes both financial and non-financial areas of our lives. There is a spiritual dynamic that God uses through our gifts when we cleanse ourselves of unforgiveness and turn our hearts towards reconciliation. Without this our harvest is blocked. (See Proverbs 28:13.)

Offerings serve as a testimony of our faith that God is performing His will in healing our marriages. Most Christians believe God can heal marriages if He wills.

Through His Word we know that it is His will and we can then demonstrate our faith through offerings. We are more blessed than the leper in John 20:29 in that we can give BEFORE we see the manifestation. The word *give* is related to *cast*, as in transferring a burden (such as laying a foundation). As a concrete foundation is *cast*, when we give we are laying a foundation for others to give back to us.

If we are committed to giving an offering, we need to do so with what we have. It's fine to say, "If I had a thousand dollars, I'd give it." But we need to start completing our commitment with what we do have.

When we are faithful over little, then we will be faithful over much.

Many covenant keepers find themselves like the Christians in the Macedonian churches described in 2 Corinthians 8.

Yet despite extreme difficulties, they were generous and received grace from God that resulted in overflowing joy. When we follow their model in both attitude and action, we will receive the same measure of grace and joy for God is no respecter of persons.

We are giving from a basis of righteousness when our offerings are beyond our tithe and given with the right attitudes. 2 Corinthians 9:9-11, which links righteousness, sowing and the supply of seed, is tied to Isaiah 55:10. It is in the midst of a passage showing that we can claim promises for God's Word to be effective and work on our behalf to create inner joy, peace and a family tree that resembles a cypress instead of a thorn bush! (See Isaiah 55:6-13.)

NOTES: _____

Offerings will bless us in three areas.

- 1) Offerings are linked to _____ and _____ in your life.
- 2) Offerings are linked to God's _____.
- 3) Offerings are linked to _____.

Three guides for giving offerings.

- 1) _____ your _____.
- 2) Be _____.
- 3) Give from the _____ of Godly _____.

As we read, the church in Macedonia had little, but still gave generously. What have you got that you would be willing to sow into God's kingdom work?

Charity

We can also expand our resources through alms. Alms involve meeting the needs of others as God’s representative. The word *alms* is derived from compassion and mercy. Giving alms is ministering to people in their area of need. In our day, we would use the words *charity* or *benevolence* to describe the giving of alms.

Acts of alms must be done with the right motive and should not be given for earthly recognition. While we can be open about our tithe and about offerings, when we meet the needs of others through alms, it is an act that should be known only between our heavenly Father and us.

Alms are done on behalf of our Lord. Alms meet the need of the person. Normally, this is accomplished through money, but money is not mentioned in this passage. Any act of mercy and righteousness to those in need, prompted by the Holy Spirit, is an act of alms. It may be comfort and friendship, to be protected in prayer or volunteer work, but it is done in response to the leading of the Spirit. The story of Peter and John in Acts 3 illustrates that while they did not have silver and gold, they were led by the Spirit to meet the REAL need.

When we perform acts of alms, we not only do it unto God, but also on behalf of God and He will repay us. **God multiplies blessings for sowing alms.** God not only considers alms a loan that he repays, he blesses us and guarantees our reward! This is far better than a government-backed security.

NOTES:

_____ who gives one of my most _____ followers a _____ of cool _____, just because that _____ is my _____, will surely be _____.

Four Ways God Blesses for Sowing Alms

- 1) God multiplies our _____.
- 2) God multiplies our _____.
- 3) God multiplies _____ and _____ in our lives.
- 4) God multiplies our _____ and _____ us with _____.

According to Matthew 25:37-40, what are some ways we can show charity?

And whom does Jesus say we are really blessing when we reach out to the needy?

Think of a time when you were in need, or helped someone else. Briefly record what happened and how it made you feel:

Plan for Financial Victory

Prepare a plan to achieve financial victory. Achieving financial victory takes a *war plan*. God's plan for us is written down in the Bible. We should follow this model and write down our plan. This helps us remain accountable to our goals and measure our progress. The plan must be written down and should include short-term and long-term financial goals, principles that you purpose to follow and a budget that shows your income and expenses.

Commit your plan and your problems to the Lord. Jesus cares for us. We are told in 1 Peter 5:7 to cast our cares and anxieties on Him. When we make a plan and commit it to Him, we should not get into worry. Be obedient and let it be His problem.

Financial health is only a part of healing our whole selves. Jesus does not heal only one part of us. It is His desire to do a complete healing in every area of our lives. God's methods for dealing with other areas of our lives need to be applied in the financial area as well.

God uses time in bringing financial freedom to develop qualities needed to heal our marriages and families. Just as God used the faithfulness of Joseph in financial areas to bring reconciliation, He will do the same for us. Just as Joseph was faithful over little and God made him faithful over much, we must begin in our finances by being faithful with what we have.

Seedtime and harvest are always separated by a period of time. The quality of patience is needed to support and assist the development of strong faith. Our faith is strengthened by patience so when our reconciliation is manifested, we will have the faith needed to see the healing through to completion.

Each adversity is really an opportunity for growth. Every situation that we face as we implement our plan should not be viewed as an obstacle, but as movement toward victory. The first area we gain victory in the face of adversity is over our feelings; **Rejoice in what you know about God!** The second area is to gain victory over the circumstance through faith; **Hold to your faith!** The third area of victory is in our thought life; **Hold your confession regardless of your thoughts!**

Finally, there are three principles we learned about in earlier lessons that we must apply:

- 1) **Fasting helps us achieve financial freedom by suppressing soulish desires.**
- 2) **By being of a single mind, we achieve our goal sooner.**
- 3) **Spiritual warfare must be used to cast down strongholds in the financial areas of our lives.**

Ten Principles For Handling Money:

- 1) God is your _____.
- 2) Seek _____ first in everything.
- 3) Decisions require _____.
(Decisions cannot be unilateral when your marriage is reconciled.)
- 4) _____ is a basic visible evidence of _____.
- 5) Get out of _____.
- 6) Start where you _____ with what you _____.
- 7) Live within your _____.
- 8) To _____ God today is to _____ Him for tomorrow.
- 9) Keep adequate _____.
- 10) Be _____ with God—and with _____.

Removing Resistance To Reconciliation **(How to Replace a Heart of Stone)**



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Removing Resistance To Reconciliation (How to Replace a Heart of Stone)

Covenant Connection

In the process of reconciliation, there often appears to be resistance that is difficult to overcome even though the covenant keeper fasts, prays, and is sincerely open to the working of God in his or her life. It may seem that our mate is so locked into deception that nothing can break him or her free. In these difficult cases, there are obstacles that are preventing restoration and healing. In God’s Word He describes this condition as a heart of stone. The good news is that God has a way of removing the heart of stone that resists all attempts of reconciliation. He has a way that will replace that heart of stone with one of flesh that responds to His Spirit and His ministry of reconciliation.

Introduction

Before every airline flight, the attendant tells the passengers that should the need arise; they should put on their own oxygen mask before trying to assist others. Only when we have life, do we have the energy to help others. This is especially true in the topics covered in this lesson. Our desire is to “help” our mates and the tendency is to apply the principles found in this lesson to our mates rather than ourselves. We try to determine how our mates have acquired obstacles to reconciliation and how we with God’s help can remove them. However, God’s Word tells us in Matthew 7:3-5 and again in Luke 6:41-42 **that we need to apply these principles not to our mates, but first to ourselves.** We need to keep reminding ourselves of this priority throughout the lesson.

Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson you should be able to:

- 1) List at least three characteristics of a “heart of stone.”
- 2) Explain how a heart of stone provides a stronghold for the spirit of deception.
- 3) State a precaution about having a hidden heart of stone.
- 4) Define “inner vow” and state why it causes a heart of stone.
- 5) Identify inner vows and explain how to be freed of them.
- 6) Explain the concept “bitter-root judgments” and how it relates to a heart of stone.
- 7) State two laws of nature that apply to bitter-root judgments.
- 8) List the steps to overcome and remove the effects of bitter-root judgments.

NOTES: _____

The Heart Of Stone

One of the great passages of reconciliation is found in Ezekiel 11:17-20 and also Ezekiel 36:23-28. Many of us have claimed this for our mates and families without realizing the significance of the heart of stone that God promises to remove.

What is a heart of stone? A heart of stone is a defensive wall we build around our hearts. This usually occurs when we are children in sinful response to the hurts and neglects that have come into our lives. *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible* definitions for "heart of stone" show that the basis is to build a foundation or wall that relates to the will and feelings and becomes a central support.

Stone: 68 'eben (eh'-ben); from the root of 1129 through the meaning to build; a stone:

Heart: 3820 leb (labe); a form of 3824; the heart; also used (figuratively) very widely for the feelings, the will and even the intellect; likewise for the center of anything:

Some adults are so hard-hearted it is obvious to anyone. Hearts of stone can be formed later in life, but those formed in childhood are apt to be forgotten and are therefore more powerful.

The breakdown of homes through divorce and separation has resulted in unprecedented problems and development of hearts of stone in a generation of children. Hearts of stone not only impact marital relationships, they can have a devastating effect on the children as well. A covenant keeper who teaches public school noted it is almost impossible to effectively teach children whose homes are torn by separation and divorce. These children are so wounded by their parents' choices that their minds are unable to function effectively enough to learn. The good news is that God is able to heal and protect, and 1

Corinthians 7:14 shows us the protective covering we provide our families as we stand in faithful commitment to God.

And I will _____ you a new _____ with _____ and _____ desires, and I will put a new _____ in you. I will take out your _____ heart of _____ and give you a new, _____ heart.

A heart of stone:

- 1) is a _____ of _____.
- 2) is the result of a process that _____ an inner _____.
- 3) provides a _____ support for one's own _____ position in an area.
- 4) _____, _____ and _____ a person's spirit
- 5) shuts down the _____ capabilities we need for real _____ of heart and mind.
- 6) prevents us from _____ our spirit to be _____ since it _____ too much.

Ask God to show you an area in your own heart where you have been hard, either presently or in the past: _____

A Heart Of Stone Blocks Reconciliation

A heart of stone blocks our communion of spirit. God wants to fellowship with us. The reason He sent His Son was to restore fellowship. Our spirit needs the ability to love and to share another's life for the other's sake. Love is the basis that allows our mate to live with us. A heart of stone acts to blind our spiritual eyes and deafen our spiritual ears. Reconciliation depends on receiving the revealing light of God's spirit and hearing the truth of God's Word. Because a hardened heart cuts off love, it is an obstacle to a continuing loving relationship. In most cases, our mates have a hardened heart that God softens before they can return home.

A heart of stone forms a stronghold for a spirit of deception. Many of us have found that our mates appear to be immune to logic or rational thinking of what God's Word says about divorce. They are in a powerful grip that blinds them and no amount of talking can seem to change their minds. Because of a heart of stone, our mates have become unable to consciously realize and fulfill their role as a companion and experience the completeness that God has intended for them in marriage.

The heart of stone must be dealt with if healing is to come after a couple is reconciled. We have learned this first hand by observing reconciled marriages. In several cases, we believed, prayed and saw God reconcile couples that were active in ministry for Him. In each case, the covenant keeper would not receive ministry and because of their hidden heart of stone, the healing process in their marriage did not continue. The reconciliation in each case lasted for two to five years, but the mate left again.

A "hidden" heart of stone will prevent healing after the marriage is restored. A heart of stone may lie hidden behind a warm and friendly exterior. But it will stop the love and communication that is needed for a relationship to be restored and to grow. Hearts of stone resist change. The heart of stone must be dealt with if ongoing healing and unity is to come after a couple is reconciled. Hearts of stone resist love. They require persistent prayer, love and ministry. As we will see in our next lesson, this cannot be accomplished alone.

Two examples of stony hearts:

One husband, the covenant keeper, was a very successful, out-going professional, involved in civic affairs. After reconciliation, when ministry and healing was so necessary, the husband refused counsel and ministry for himself while continuing to reach out and minister to others. Although his own heart of stone needed to be dealt with, he refused all help. Eventually, after several years, his wife filed for divorce once again.

On the other hand, another couple reconciled where the covenant keeper had been open to the Holy Spirit. She had repented and received healing for her own heart of stone and was able to walk in love and persevere, even when her mate did not want to be set free. He lashed out at her because the heart of stone doesn't want to come to life. (You have to love it back even when the person you are trying to love strikes back!) Her love melted that heart of stone and today he is attending church with her and reaching out for help.

NOTES: _____

Love Melts Stone

Satan does not give up. Unless we maintain diligence and deal with the habits of our old nature, we can stop the flow of healing in our marriage when we are back together again with our mates. **The way to overcome a heart of stone is to melt it with persistent love.** The result will be healing, restoration and growth in the marriage when the mate returns. We then rejoice because the other person is coming to life! This is our joy and reward. Do not get discouraged even though some spouses seem to become meaner and meaner the more their mates express love.

God uses human vessels (us) to love and melt hearts of stone. It is important for covenant keepers to receive persistent ministry (encouragement, hugging, verbal affirmation, prayer, etc) in a safe group of loving believers so that a hidden heart of stone will not develop or will be removed. As our own hearts of stone are healed we will recognize a stony heart in others and extend the love and acceptance that will also melt their stony hearts.

A heart of stone causes us to be affected by the judgments or unforgiveness of others. The words, judgments and unforgiveness in the lives of others can have a negative impact on us. It is the opposite of blessing. But God's Word tells us that we are not helpless victims of these things. Because Israel was in covenant with God, Balaam was unable to pronounce a curse on them. (This story can be found in Numbers 22-24)

As covenant keepers, we must allow the Holy Spirit to shine His light into our own hearts

because more than likely we also have a stony heart. Do you have a heart of stone? Almost everyone does. Stony hearts are very common. Normally, removing a heart of stone is a process (done slowly, over a period of time) rather than an event. The process needs to begin at some point. Allow the Holy Spirit to shine His light into your heart. If the Lord is talking to you about this, at this point ask for prayer and begin the process today!

NOTES: _____

Love is our primary weapon against hearts of stone.
Love is always _____, _____,
_____, and _____.
Love never _____!
Such love has no _____ because perfect love
_____ all _____. If we are _____, it is
for _____ of _____, and this shows that
his _____ has not been _____ in us.

God will protect us from the judgments and unforgiveness of others if our hearts are right.
Like a fluttering sparrow or a darting swallow, an
_____ will not land on its intended
_____.
They had _____ to give food and water to
Israel and had _____ Balaam to call down a
_____ on them. However, our _____ turned the
_____ into a _____.

Inner Vows Part I

While inner vows are usually developed as a result of events during childhood and adolescence, the result causes relationship problems that can not only break up marriages but prevent healing and restoration unless they are dealt with. God’s Word tells us that these inner vows are “of evil.” Satan knows the power of false vows on our beings. He provides opportunities for us to entrap ourselves in snares that will bring problems later when we have forgotten all about them.

An inner vow is a purpose or directive formed in our minds, then sent into our inner being which thereafter controls and blocks our being from energies and actions. They are often spoken with our mouth and they take control over our flesh.

Inner vows are formed when we react to an event and purpose in our hearts. For example, we may vow to “not be like our mother” or “never act like that” or “I won’t share my feelings again!” Our determinations have tremendous power over our bodies physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

Inner vows refuse change. A person may grow up in other areas but not in that area. In the area of the inner vow, the person remains childish and reactive. They do not easily release their hold on us. Inner vows are very common. The distinctive mark of an inner vow is that it resists the normal maturation process.

Inner vows may rest totally forgotten and dormant, until triggered by the right persons or situations. Having forgotten them, we are unaware they exist or could have any effect. Inner vows may not manifest immediately in behavior.

While **some inner vows may seem to be good commitments**, they should be broken and released to the Lord because all inner vows are fleshly, binding and inhibit the freedom of our spirit to interact with the Holy Spirit.

What are inner vows?

- 1) An inner vow is a _____ within the heart of stone.
- 2) Inner vows form _____ for habitual _____ or ways of the _____.
- 3) Inner vows become _____ in our _____ whose specific function is to make us _____, _____ and _____ only as that vow has set the _____.

Or if they make a rash _____ of any kind, whether its _____ is for _____ or _____, they will be considered _____ even if they were not fully _____ of what they were _____ at the time.

NOTES:

Inner Vows Part II

In Numbers 30 we learn that when they become known, authority can break vows. Satan knows the power of vows. He tries to use them to block reconciliation. Just effort or willpower can't keep us from their effect. It takes the power of authority. Another believer conveys this power through Jesus.

Inner vows are broken through prayer by pronouncing forgiveness for the action that caused the formation of the inner vow by the authority of Jesus Christ. It is important to know that with some inner vows, just breaking the vow does not bring freedom. Often character structures remain after the original vow is broken. The results of the inner vow such as a heart of stone, anger, or other habitual behaviors need to be dealt with. Addictions are often the result of inner vows. To break the power of an addictive behavior, an inner vow may need to be revealed and dealt with first.

Inner vows are difficult to self-identify. Sometimes a close group of believers can help us, but it often takes a Christian counselor or pastor to bring complete victory. For example, if molestation occurred as a child, often an inner vow has occurred. The child may have vowed "I'll never share myself with a man," or "I'll get even," desiring to punish any man. As a result, later in life sex is confined to physical stimulation because the spirit does not flow out and nestle with the mate. Pray that God will reveal those areas where you have made an inner vow so that you can repent and be freed from it.

New character structures need to be developed to replace old patterns. This takes patience, compassion and continuous forgiveness. To restore and renew after the destructive effects of inner vows, character must be loved back to life. We need a community of believers to "bear one another's burdens" as we learn new, healthy, constructive ways to live and behave.

NOTES: _____

How can we identify inner vows?

- 1) Inner vows are difficult to self-identify. We can best identify inner vows with the help of others.
- 2) Inner vows are often behind stubborn practices in the old nature. Compulsive behaviors such as drinking, eating or spending often indicate inner vows at their root.
- 3) Inner vows are often not the sole cause of problems, but work in conjunction with hidden resentments and fears.

How can we be freed of inner vows?

- 1) Ask the Lord to forgive you for the inner vow that you formed. **Be specific**, not general, about the area of the vow. If you are not sure, first ask God to reveal it to you.
- 2) Have your pastor, group leader or a mature believer lay hands on you and forgive you and break the vow in the authority of the name of Jesus. They should bind the inner vow and loose you from its power. They should pray healing for the body, mind and emotions. Loose God's will, plan and purpose to be done.
- 3) Continue in fellowship with a group of believers who will love and encourage you and help you replace the habit patterns that developed as a result of the inner vow.

Bitter-root Judgments Part I

When we judge others, we activate two powerful laws of nature. In our own strength we cannot resist the results of these laws. Only the grace and mercy of God can overcome the effects of judging others. Grace is the strength and ability to do God’s will. When we judge others we do not walk in His will. The result is that we defile others (including our mates) and keep them from experiencing freedom in the area where we have judged.

Judgment is a form of unforgiveness. Judgment is more than forming an opinion about something someone has said or done. It is holding them responsible for not measuring up to our specific code of conduct or action.

When we judge someone we hold that person in bondage, which in return comes back on us. Just as a tiny mustard seed grows to produce a large tree, so a seed of judgment increases the longer it remains unrecognized and unrepented of. So we sow a tiny judgment and reap again and again, larger and larger in life. It is *our* judging action that causes others to become defiled and because they are defiled they act in an ungodly manner.

Your own repentance brings cleansing and opens the door for God to work. If fornication occurred before your marriage (regardless of whether or not you were Christian) and you have never repented for the part you played, you need to do so. Next, if you can ask forgiveness from your mate, do so. Sometimes this isn’t possible because of a non-covenant marriage. Perhaps a letter could be written or a phone call made. **JUST USE WISDOM.** A covenant keeper repented of sleeping with her mate the night before their wedding. She called her husband and said, “I know you have felt trapped and I want to ask your forgiveness for the part I played. It wasn’t all your fault.” He forgave her, moved back home a week later and stopped the divorce action he had filed.

What is a bitter-root judgment?

- 1) A bitter-root judgment is a _____ that is _____ as the result of _____ an _____ in our life.
- 2) A bitter-root judgment _____ others to respond in _____ ways that they otherwise would _____.

When we judge, two laws of nature are activated.

- 1) The Law of _____ and _____.
- 2) The Law of _____.

These laws can produce a _____ of problems in _____ when bad seed is sown, but they will create a _____ of _____ and _____ if we sow good _____ and _____.

Ask God to show you if you have made judgments that have formed bitter-roots in your heart. Confess any judgments and invite God to release from bondage anyone you have judged.

NOTES: _____

Bitter-root Judgments Part II

Bitter-root judgments cause a heart of stone. When we have a bitter-root judgment in an area, it blocks our mates from responding in a positive way (in that area) as God would have them respond. Our mate’s response reinforces the negative expectation that is associated with our judgment. We react to their response in a way that builds a dividing wall between us and triggers hardness both in our heart and our mate’s heart.

God’s desire is that we deal with our flesh nature. Our mates are God’s provision to force us to face areas that need His healing and provision. Instead of dealing with problems, we judge and build walls against the mate that God has brought into our lives to polish and perfect us. While the world’s cure is to find someone else (the perfect “soul mate”) God’s answer is to break down the walls that divide us by building bridges of love.

Even though your mate refuses to enter into the process of transformation in the Lord, the good news is that all is not lost. **Because of our covenant with the Lord and with our mates the believing partner sanctifies the unbelieving partner.** What happens in the heart of one affects the other. Eventually it will bear fruit.

Relationship is first learned from our parents. Honoring our parents provides us spiritual protection - dishonoring them by judging them opens us up to relationship problems. Life will go well for us in the areas where we have honored our parents. Life will not go well for us in any area we did not honor them. We will reap judgment in the same areas of life where we have judged our mates (or others). Bitter-root judgments are the most common, most basic sins in all marital relationships. A man and a woman are made up of their experiences in life and their reactions to them. Most couples enter marriage with little or no awareness of what they are bringing with them.

Ask yourself, “What have I done or judged that is reaping the actions I see in my mate toward me?” We do not need to be afraid that we will miss finding a judgment that will block our reconciliation. We can claim the promise in His Word found in Matthew 10:26, *“Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.”* **Jesus has commissioned us to reach out to others and forgive** the sins they have committed so they can experience His restoring presence in every area. (See John 20:21-23)

NOTES: _____

How can I be freed from bitter-root judgments?

- 1) Identify areas you have _____ your _____.
- 2) Identify areas you have _____ your _____.
- 3) Through prayer _____ those for the _____ that caused you to _____ them.
- 4) Receive _____ for _____ and _____ others.

If you _____ others for the _____ they do to you, your Father in heaven will _____ you. But if you don’t _____ others, your Father will not _____ your _____.

So if the _____ sets you _____, you will indeed be _____.

How Can I Experience Joy While Keeping My Covenant?



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How Can I Experience Joy While Keeping My Covenant?

How Can I Experience Joy While Keeping My Covenant?

Covenant Connection

To develop an understanding of how to have joy that will enable us to avoid deception and maintain our covenant commitment.

Introduction

In this lesson we will study the importance of joy to the process of reconciliation and restoration. The call to stand for our marriages is not an easy race to run, but God is faithful to provide the grace needed to reach the finish line. The Apostle Paul faced his own impossible trial when he wrote, *“And he said unto me, **My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.**”* (2 Corinthians 12:9-10) One aspect of God’s grace for us is the joy He wants us to experience in the midst of our most difficult times. We will learn that joy is a choice we make; that joy is not the same as happiness and that joy is not dependant on our circumstances.

There are three themes that run through this lesson. The first theme is that we are soldiers in battle. While we have been taught about various weapons to use in this battle (such as binding and loosing or avoiding strife) we must not remain ignorant of the schemes of the devil. Many of his tactics are not frontal attacks but rather subversive attempts to weaken us from behind. During this lesson we will also discuss seven vital areas where Satan tries to bring deception and defeat. The second theme is that Satan works in each of these seven areas to steal our joy. These are areas that are essential if we are to successfully maintain our covenant commitments. This brings us into the third theme where we will learn the role of joy, how to obtain joy and how to maintain joy that will enable us to walk in victory and avoid Satan’s deceptions.

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Lesson Objectives

When you have completed this lesson you should be able to:

- 1) Explain the difference between joy and happiness.
- 2) Describe the function of joy in avoiding deception.
- 3) List seven vital areas where Satan attacks our joy.
- 4) Understand strategies for getting and maintaining joy.
- 5) Explain the roles of faith and prayer in having joy.
- 6) Identify seven requirements needed to obtain and maintain joy.

The Importance Of Joy

The word joy is found over 155 times in the Bible. It is often associated with worship and also with deliverance and God’s provision. **Joy is not the same as happiness.** Happiness depends on the circumstances or situation around us. It is tied to our emotions and changes constantly. Joy is not related to the circumstances or situations that are around us. Our life can be full of bad circumstances, yet we can still have joy in God. Joy is tied to our spirit. The word translated as joy is also often translated as rejoice. We choose joy. Joy is vital for those who want God’s best in their lives.

Joy is the source of inner strength to endure. New recruits in an army spend a period of time in basic training. One of the functions of basic training is to build up the recruit’s strength. Joy is a source of strength. Without joy we will eventually lose hope, give up and not experience God’s best in reconciling our marriage. That is why the Apostle Peter commands us, *“Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ’s sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed, ye may be glad also with exceeding joy.”* (1 Peter 4:12-13) Choosing to rejoice now, during difficulties, will equip us to be even more joyful when Christ’s glory is revealed. Once again we see the principle of sowing and reaping; sow rejoicing now, reap exceeding joy later!

Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. In Acts 13:52 joy is associated with the filling of the Holy Spirit. Galatians 5:22-23 tells us that joy (as are other good qualities) is a fruit, or by-product, of the Holy Spirit living in us as we walk in the Spirit.

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Making It Personal

Can you think of a time in your life when you experienced joy even though circumstances were difficult? Make a few notes and briefly share it with the group.

To what do you attribute the positive emotions you felt during a negative situation?

Are there any scripture verses that bring you joy?
Write down the references: _____

In light of the things you’ve noted above, do you think that joy just happens or is it a choice we make?

Happiness comes from an _____ source.

Joy comes from an _____ source.

Where Satan Attacks Our Joy

In fighting a war or battle, one vital military strategy is to disrupt lines of communication. Broken lines of communication result in confusion, disorder, isolation, fear, ineffective and even counter-productive actions. To maintain joy we must maintain two lines of communication.

The first line is communication with God. If Satan can break our lines of communication with God, our endurance is weakened and we will soon be deprived of joy. According to John 16:22, joy is a substance that no man can take away from us. Satan works to get us to deprive ourselves of joy. Without this joy he can weaken us and deceive us so that we won't receive God's best.

The second line we need to keep open is communication with the body of Christ. Regular fellowship with other believers, especially with those who are in agreement for the healing of our marriages, provides strength needed to face the challenges which we encounter daily. This means we need to be faithful in attendance at church and in attending these group meetings.

There are also roadblocks to our lines of communication. Satan first tries to stop communication completely. If this doesn't work, his next strategy is to pervert communication. For example, he may try to twist God's Word in our minds or will tempt us to believe nobody understands us and everyone is against us. It is simply not true that NOBODY understands or EVERYONE is against us. When we have the joy of the Lord we are walking with Him and our communication will go through. Pride and iniquity in our hearts are roadblocks to communication.

To maintain our joy we must be under Godly leadership. Just as it is important for soldiers to have competent officers to lead them, we must have Godly, competent pastors and leaders. God's Word says that people rejoice (have joy) when they have righteous leaders. (Righteousness implies both competence and Godliness.)

Both the Old and New Testaments provide examples of leadership that caused God's people to go astray. While the Pharisees of Jesus' day knew the law, they had been robbed of the joy of the Lord and in turn kept their followers from experiencing that joy. We must also remember that no leader or situation is perfect, but that **God's Word provides wisdom and protection for us.**

NOTES: _____

Seven Strategies Of Satan To Rob Our Joy

- 1) _____ our lines of communication with _____ and with those who would _____ up our faith.
- 2) Move us out from _____, competent _____.
- 3) Cause us to _____ our "orders" and so not have a _____ of _____.
- 4) Cut off our supply line of _____ and _____.
- 5) Cause us to become _____ through _____ and compromise.
- 6) Block God's _____ and _____ in our lives.
- 7) Destroy _____ and _____ so we lose faith.

Strategy, Supply And Seed

Can you imagine a battle where the soldiers had no plan of action? Can you imagine their officers sending them to the front line with just general directions to confront the enemy? The troops would not only be confused, but also miserable and demoralized. Each of us is in a real battle. Yes, we know who the enemy is, but that isn't enough. We need a strategy, a battle plan that will provide us guidance and direction.

God's strategy is revealed through His Word. Scripture provides His written strategy. Psalm 119 describes the importance of the Scriptures. Verses 9-16 tell us that when we follow God's strategy our way is clean or righteous. Joy is always associated with righteousness. This is confirmed later where the word "rejoiced" can be translated as joy. It tells us that the joy we have in God's testimonies is just as fulfilling as "all riches." Associated with this is the commitment to meditate and to memorize (not forget) God's Word. When we memorize passages that are appropriate to reconciliation, we then have them ready and can speak them out whenever Satan would try to cause us to lose our joy.

The Holy Spirit helps us to understand the strategy found in God's Word. Each of us needs a unique battle plan because we each face different circumstances. While God's principles will always apply, we need direction in how to apply them in

our individual situation. One function of the Holy Spirit is to reveal and interpret the plan of action that we find in Scripture. He often does this through our spirit as we meditate on the Word.

To maintain joy you must have resources and supplies. A classic battle strategy is to cut off the supply line of your opponent. Without basic supplies like food, fuel and munitions, defeat is certain. One way that Satan tries to defeat us is by weakening our supply lines. Through financial pressure and a lack of resources he tries to discourage us. Without joy we become emotionally, financially & spiritually drained. **Remember that no one can steal our supply unless we let it go.**

Resources and joy are provided through consistent seed planting. Joy is also associated with giving. When we are a joyful giver we will not only reap from our financial seeds, but we will also receive a harvest of joy.

Promises and Principles

You have shown me the _____ to life, and you make me _____ by being _____ to me. Sitting at your _____ side, I will always be _____.

The Spirit _____ what is _____ and will come and _____ you into the full _____.

You have _____ now, but I will see you again; then you will _____, and no one can rob you of that _____. At that time you won't need to ask me for anything. The _____ is, you can go _____ to the Father and _____ him, and he will _____ your request because you use my _____. You haven't done this before. _____, using my name, and you will _____, and you will have abundant _____.

A _____ seeds make a _____ harvest, but a _____ of seeds make a _____ harvest.

Discipline, Healing And A Gal Named Jezebel

There is joy in being faithful and in submission to Godly authority. If the soldiers in an army lack discipline, they will not be an effective unit. If they are not effective they will lack joy and become even more ineffective and demoralized. One of Satan's strategies to have us lose our joy and become impotent in our fight for reconciliation is to have us become undisciplined.

Apathy and compromise cause us to lose our joy. Discipline is not gained or lost as a single event; it is a process that occurs over time. Compromises in small areas are like weeds. At first they are so small they seem insignificant, but through the passage of time they grow, get bigger and gradually get to the point where they choke out and cover what has been established through hard work and diligence.

To have joy you must have healing.

Wounded soldiers are rendered ineffective and must be withdrawn from the battle. Just as we need both health and strength to be able to fight effectively, joy and healing are also inseparable. A *merry heart* means a heart full of joy and rejoicing. A *broken spirit* refers to a wounded or hurt spirit. It is so important that we allow God to heal us from the wounding that occurred because of rejection from our mates and others.

There is a difference between hurts and wounds.

Hurts are often not deep and therefore not difficult to heal. Wounds are deep and require process healing. This type of healing requires time and is not a one-time occurrence but an on-going process. We must stay

open to the Holy Spirit to reveal and deal with wounds that need deeper healing. Forgiving our mates and others does not mean that we are healed. Forgiveness is only the first step in healing. Unless these wounds are healed they open the door for ongoing enemy activity.

In the life of Elijah we find he had an enemy named Jezebel. She was a queen who had deep wounds that were probably caused by close family in her life; wounds that created insecurity and were not healed. As a result a spirit that caused her to be controlling, dominating and manipulative afflicted her. In Revelation 2:20 this spirit is named after her. It is called a Jezebel spirit. While it can operate in either sex, women who have been wounded by their mates or their fathers (figures in authority) are prime targets. Those with the strongest affliction of this Jezebel spirit have the hardest time recognizing it.

NOTES: _____

Symptoms of the Jezebel Spirit:

- 1) Wants to _____ and _____.
- 2) _____ has something to _____.
- 3) They are _____ and will not _____.

Healing from the Jezebel Spirit:

- 1) _____ control and domination as _____ and _____ it.
- 2) Ask God for His _____ and _____.
- 3) Ask God to continue _____ the hurts and wounds and _____ from our mates, parents, or others.
- 4) _____ God and _____ in His provision.

Joy Requires Faith And Prayer

To maintain joy you must have faith. Unless soldiers have confidence that they are fighting for a winning cause, they cannot maintain a good fight. With faith that they will have victory they receive an inner strength that otherwise would not be possible. When we hold forth God’s Word it is a source of faith that we are not keeping our marriage covenant in vain. This provides inner sustenance that allows us to joy and rejoice in our Lord, no matter how the battle seems to be going.

Hope is the container for faith. Without hope we cannot keep our faith. We serve a God of hope who fills us with all joy and peace in believing (faith). One strategy Satan tries to use is to cause us to lose hope. Hope is not only the prerequisite for faith but also for joy.

Impatience results in a lack of joy. Patience functions to undergird and support faith. If we have joy as we face trials that come into our life, then our patience is exercised and strengthened. This then provides a stronger basis for our faith. If Satan is successful in stealing our joy or weakening our patience, he can undermine our faith.

To have joy you must consecrate yourself to prayer. Jesus provided us an example of a man of prayer. He spent much time during his earthly ministry in prayer. It was through prayer that he drew the strength he needed to face his daily challenges. The Bible tells us that there is joy in communicating with God.

In Matthew 21 we read how Jesus cleaned out the Temple of unclean practices. This cleansing of the temple has an analogy to our own lives. We are temples of the Holy Spirit (see Ephesians 2:20-22).

A Chain Of Joy

Joy is linked with _____.

Joy is linked with _____.

Joy is linked with _____.

Five Effects Of Prayer

1) Prayer releases us from _____ & _____.

2) Prayer results in _____.

3) Through prayer, _____ are made _____.

4) Prayer results in _____.

5) Prayer _____ the heart and _____ the mind.

In Matthew 21 we see Jesus declaring what the Temple of God was intended for. Look in the following verses and finish each sentence:

In verse 12, Jesus cleansed the temple so it became a house of _____.

In verse 13, Jesus pronounced the temple would be a house of _____.

In verse 14, the temple became a place where the _____ of God was in effect so it became a house of _____.

In verses 15 & 16, because of the power, God was _____ and the temple became a house of _____.

NOTES: _____

Obtaining And Keeping Joy

Joy always begins with a choice. Our lives are an accumulation of the decisions we make. In 2 Corinthians 7 Paul is dealing with a difficult topic, yet he is stating aloud his choice to have joy in the midst of trouble. If you feel that you are a prisoner of your circumstances, respond as Paul and Silas did when they were in prison. They chose to sing and rejoice (Acts 16:25).

In 2 Chronicles 20:1-30 we find the story of how a king of Judah chose to have joy. Jehoshaphat was literally a prisoner of the enemy. His city was surrounded and under siege yet Jehoshaphat did not murmur. Murmuring is a statement of unbelief. Instead, Jehoshaphat led his people in a choice to have joy and rejoice (verses 21-22). When they did, God provided victory.

To have joy you must commit to the hope of restoration through the work of Jesus. The joy we experience is a result of the hope of restoration that is available through the work of Jesus. The reason we can endure our present “light affliction” is because of the hope of restoration we have. It is only as we are renewed daily with the joy of the Lord that we have strength; strength to not look at temporal things as reality, but strength to truly look at what is eternal and to have joy in our lives.

Joy is cultivated by maintaining an attitude of thanksgiving. The word cultivate is defined “*to prepare and use for the raising of crops, to loosen or break up soil,*” and “*to improve by labor, care or study.*” When we choose to give thanks we are preparing our hearts for a harvest of joy, healing and reconciliation by breaking up the hardened areas. (Ezekiel 36:26) This isn’t always easy, it is work and requires us to study God’s Word so that it can clean and renew us.

Joy’s fulfillment must be found in helping other people as well as in the Lord. Once we have received Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit desires to use each of us in meeting the needs of those around us. He places in each believer gifts of revelation, vocal gifts and gifts of power (1 Corinthians 12:7-11) to be used within the Body of Christ.

The Holy Spirit desires that we be willing vessels through which He can operate in our daily lives, our homes, our churches, at work and in our group meetings. Spiritual gifts are given to benefit others, not to glorify self. An example of this is found in 1 Corinthians 14:3 where we see that the purposes of the gift of prophesy are to edify, exhort, and comfort others. When we function in both the will and the gift provided by the Holy Spirit, we experience a fulfillment and joy not otherwise possible.

What choices did Jehoshaphat and Israel make in 2 Chronicles 20:1-30? _____

What choices can we make that will cultivate joy?

What gifts and abilities do you possess that God wants to use to bless and encourage others?

Joy Is All In Your Head

To have joy you must control your thoughts. The main battlefield is our mind. Whether we are victorious in a large part depends on our thoughts. Joy will flourish in the “thought environment” described in Philippians 4:8.

The way we protect our thoughts is to avoid worldly inputs as much as possible, which would cause us to think on things that are not positive. In daily life we will be subjected to ungodly thoughts. Satan will bring ideas into our mind and it is our job to not dwell on them. One of the mighty weapons of warfare that God has provided is the ability to cast down imaginations. We can and must choose to bring every thought into obedience to Jesus Christ.

To have joyful feelings you must sow joyful thoughts. The principle of sowing and reaping cannot be taught too often. It applies to every aspect of our lives. A wonderful example of how to do this is the glass of water analogy. Do you see a glass half full or half empty? The glass is the same one, yet two people may see it completely differently. Even if a person sees it as half empty, the truth is the glass is also half full. God is always at work in our lives so there will always be signs of His activity, provision, love, etc. But we will only see it if we look for it. If you struggle in this area (always seeing a negative in everything), ask God to open your eyes to the fullness of what He is constantly doing for you. When He shows you something, thank Him! Pretty soon, you’ll see His fingerprints all over your life.

NOTES: _____

Seven C’s of Joy

- 1) Choose to have _____.
- 2) Commit to the hope of _____ through Jesus.
- 3) Cultivate an attitude of _____.
- 4) Comfort and _____ others with the _____ the Holy Spirit provides.
- 5) Consecrate ourselves to _____.
- 6) Control our _____.
- 7) Contribute _____ in the _____ of others to reap a harvest of _____.

In the left column, list thoughts God would have you think on. In the right column, list the contrasting thoughts Satan would want you to think on.

What is some seed that you could personally sow this week that could bring you joy?

So what’s stopping you?

How To Deal With Disputes



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How To Deal With Disputes

Covenant Connection

To develop an understanding of how to have victory and maintain our covenant while in the midst of a dispute with our mate.

Introduction

Separation and divorce result in disputes over many issues including child custody and visitation rights, property settlements, and child and family support. While disputes are always unpleasant, they are not always avoidable. Our Lord told us to “*as much as possible live at peace with all men*” but knowing the nature of man, He has also assured us that when peace is not possible He will be with us, strengthen us, and guide us. This lesson is designed to help learn how to deal with disputes so that the result will bring us closer to reconciliation and healing of the relationships in our lives.

There are four main sections to this lesson. First we will define disputes and learn their root causes. In the second section we will learn the effects and results of disputes both immediately and long term. The third section of this lesson covers five steps or stages of progression that lead to positive resolution of disputes. The last main section covers practical points or principles to consider in disputes.

Lesson Objectives	
When you have completed this lesson you should be able to:	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Define disputes and describe their root causes. 2) Describe the effects and results of disputes. 3) List four common areas of disputes experienced during separation and divorce. 4) Explain how judging our mate relates to disputes. 5) List five steps to resolving a dispute. 6) Identify principles in dealing with common areas of disputes. 7) Describe how healing can occur. 8) Explain why corresponding actions to faith are necessary. 9) Describe how to have peace and rest in the midst of a dispute. 10) Explain why peace is essential to resolving a dispute.

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Roots Of Disputes

Obviously, the breakdown of a marriage is fraught with disputes and unfortunately, separation and divorce provides opportunity for many more disputes. Webster defines dispute as: *“A verbal controversy; debate: quarrel, physical combat.”* Synonyms include: Conflict, feud, strife, confrontation, quarrel, contest, oppose, strife, contend, challenge and struggle. Strong’s Concordance defines dispute as: *“riyb (reeb); or rib (reeb); from 7378; a contest (personal or legal): adversary, cause, chiding, contend (-tion), controversy, multitude [from the margin], pleading, strife, strive (-ing), suit.”*

There are two root causes of disputes. In the spirit realm Satan brings attacks against our minds. Satan loves strife and disputes and is actively involved in bringing assignments against us. The enemy of our souls and marriages is always quick to whisper thoughts of pride, self-defense, offense, bitterness and so on. It is our responsibility to work with God to renew our minds so that we can recognize and cast down these disruptive thoughts. Remember that Satan is also trying to plant these thoughts in our mate’s mind, so don’t react to his voice speaking through them. In the natural, man’s selfishness is also a root cause. We all want to take care of ourselves, protect and pamper our flesh. Again, we must work with God to deny the lusts of the flesh and bring our souls into submission to His Lordship.

Through the blood of Jesus we have victory over Satan. The principles of binding and loosing are very important to use in the midst of disputes in order to come against Satan’s involvement. *“Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.”* (Matthew 18:18-19)

NOTES: _____

Root Causes of Disputes

1) Spiritual attacks from Satan.

For we are not _____ against _____ made of flesh and blood, but against the evil _____ and _____ of the _____ world, against those mighty _____ of darkness who _____ this world, and against wicked _____ in the heavenly _____.

2) Natural man is selfish.

For people will _____ only themselves and their _____. They will be _____ and _____, scoffing at _____, disobedient to their parents, and _____. They will consider nothing _____. They will be unloving and _____; they will _____ others and have no _____; they will be _____ and have no interest in what is _____. They will _____ their friends, be reckless, be puffed up with _____, and love _____ rather than God.

We should think about others rather than ourselves.

Godly Appeals Part I

Our responsibility is, as much as possible, to live at peace with all men. Disputes should be avoided when possible and can sometimes be avoided by making a Godly appeal. One way to respond to the actions or decisions of our mates in a Godly manner is to make an appeal. Making an appeal will not always enable us to avoid a dispute. However, it will ensure that we are operating from the best possible position to bring about healing and reconciliation.

To make a Godly appeal we must be in right standing with the Lord. There are some simple questions we can ask ourselves to ensure we are right with God. Does God hear your prayer? Have you accepted God's Son Jesus as your personal savior? Are you in fellowship with God? Do you have a clear conscience? Have you confessed all known sin to God and entered into Christ's victory over it? Are you under God-given authority? Are you faithful in your church and in fellowshiping with other believers? Have you fulfilled your responsibilities to others? Have you forgiven all those that have offended you?

To make a Godly appeal we must have right motives and attitudes. God always looks at our heart before He considers our actions and we must constantly be open to Him showing us what is really in our hearts. We can be deceived and believe that our motives are good when they may be rooted in selfishness, vengeance and bitterness. Our mate will be able to quickly discern whether our appeal is prompted by a selfish motive. Attitudes are often the deciding factor on whether a response will receive fair consideration.

NOTES:

Seeking Peaceable Solutions

Be _____ with everyone. Don't be _____ and feel that you are _____ than others. Make friends with _____ people. Don't _____ someone who has _____ you. But try to _____ the _____ of others, and do your best to live at _____ with _____. Dear friends, don't try to get _____. Let God take _____.

Motives and Attitudes

- 1) Have you replaced _____ and _____ with a spirit of _____?
- 2) Are you more _____ for the _____ of everyone involved _____ than yourself?
- 3) Do you have _____ for your _____?
- 4) Have you given your _____ to God?

Heart Check

_____ me, O God, and know my _____;
 _____ me and _____ my thoughts.
 _____ out anything in me that _____ you,
 and _____ me along the path of _____ life.

Godly Appeals Part II

To make a Godly appeal we must be sensitive to God's timing. Timing is very important in making a response during a dispute. Satan will often try to bring defeat through improper timing. When we look to our mates as our source of love and affirmation, we will be impatient for reconciliation and act impulsively. It is imperative to realize that God is the source of all that we need so we can wait for God's timing. Queen Esther provides a classic example in presenting a Godly appeal. She and others fasted and prayed until she knew the time was right to present her case. Have you sought God to determine His timing?

A Godly appeal means being truthful. In presenting our case we must be honest. If our mate detects a problem in this area, we will not receive full and fair consideration. The temptation is to present only those facts that would favor our case. We need to be truthful so that we can rely on God as our defender. When we do not live and act above reproach, we are actually attempting to take control of a situation by saying God can't help us if we don't "slant" things in our favor. This ties God's hands and prevents Him from working on our behalf.

A Godly appeal means using the appropriate words. Words are powerful and great care must be taken to choose appropriate words. They can be tools that build relationship or weapons that cut, wound and sever relationship. To avoid an unnecessary reaction by our mates (who are likely hurting, confused and defensive), words must be chosen carefully. Our words should be gracious, humble and free from judgment and condemnation. We must avoid accusations or expressions of blame.

A Godly appeal means maintaining Godly behavior even if we are rejected. The highest test of our true attitudes is not when we make a request or appeal, but our response if our petition is denied. The story of Daniel shows how to respond both when an appeal is accepted and then when it is rejected. In the first instance (Daniel chapter 1), Daniel appealed to eat only fruit and vegetables and displayed Godly character when it was accepted. In the second case (Daniel chapter 6), he was rejected and cast into the den of lions, yet he displayed Godly character and in the end God vindicated him for the victory.

NOTES: _____

Saying It Honestly

- 1) Have you provided _____ information?
- 2) Have you presented your case with _____ the _____ facts?
- 3) Have you presented the information _____ and _____?

Choosing Your Words

- 1) Does your request acknowledge the _____ areas of your _____ position?
- 2) Do you avoid _____ or _____ in your _____?
- 3) Have you considered your _____ point of view in _____ your position?

Spiritual Effects Of Disputes

Each of us was created in the image of God. We have a spirit nature as well as physical and emotional components to our beings. We learned a few lessons back that disputes have their origins or root causes in both the spiritual and natural arena; they also have effects or results that manifest in both the spiritual and the natural.

Disputes create wounded spirits and we need to allow God to heal those wounds. Jesus came to heal the broken hearted. God's healing will come through forgiveness, prayer and reading the Word. The Psalms are particularly good for ministering to wounded spirits.

Because of our marriage covenant we have physical, emotional and spiritual ties to our mates. Four times in God's Word we are told that man and wife are a one-flesh being (See Genesis 2:23-24, Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:3-9, Ephesians 5:31). Disputes tear and hurt that one-flesh entity and we need healing in this area.

God's Word tells us that disputes and strife open the door to "every evil work." (James 3:16) We need to be diligent to shut that door and take authority over the enemy through the work of Jesus Christ. Satan has authority to continue to torment us until we consciously forgive those that have hurt us. Once we forgive those involved, we need to discern any spirits that may be in operation against us. We then need to bind those spirits (identifying them either by their names or by their actions) with the authority of Jesus.

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Spiritual Results of Disputes

- 1) _____ spirit
- 2) _____ of one-flesh _____
- 3) Satanic _____

List some areas where we can be affected spiritually because of being involved in a dispute.

Prayer Points

- 1) Praise Jesus that He understands:
 - Shame and humiliation because he received them at His trial.
 - Satanic attacks because he was tempted in the wilderness.
 - Stigma because he endured the stigma of the cross.
 - Separation, rejection and betrayal because he was rejected by those close to him and separated from the Father.
- 2) Thank Jesus that He not only understands but also is a gentle healer.
- 3) Ask Jesus to reveal His gentleness to each covenant keeper so we will more freely allow Him to mend our spirits, heal our lives, and restore our homes.

Natural Effects Of Disputes

As we have seen, disputes result in many spiritual effects. The natural results of disputes are more evident but are often harder to deal with.

Breakdown in communication is one of the early common results of disputes. Initially it may be a “silent hostility” that results in loneliness, bitterness and more pain. Deep hate can take root and must be guarded against. Until such time when Godly communication takes place, we must be careful not to run ahead of God and initiate our own communication. Ecclesiastes 3:7 says there is “*a time to keep silent and a time to speak.*”

God’s Word warns us that our communication is a reflection of what is in our own hearts. Therefore it is impossible to establish Godly communication unless our heart is right before the Lord. When communication with our mates is difficult and painful, it is helpful to identify ungodly spirits that are in operation. One covenant keeper kept a notepad near the phone and jotted down descriptions of spirits during conversations with their mate. After the conversation ended these spirits were then immediately bound to prevent further influence.

Think of a few steps we can take to counteract the following natural effects of disputes.

1) Communication breakdowns

2) Emotional pain, depression and confusion

3) Financial and material loss

Emotional pain, depression and confusion are a natural result of disputes and closely linked with breakdown in communication. When King Saul was afflicted with depression he found relief by having the great Psalmist, David, play for him. Praise and worship music has the effect of lifting our spirits and emotions. Because it stills the enemy (Satan), it soothes and calms us. Isaiah 61:3 instructs us to “*put on the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness.*”

God’s Word will work within us to give us peace as well as provide stability and guidance when events seem confusing. He is the stability of our times. Fellowship with those who can join their faith with ours is vital. Find a prayer partner who will agree with you in prayer.

Satan comes to kill and destroy. **One area he destroys is our finances and possessions.** The good news is that through Jesus our victory is both for the eternal and the now. If Satan can’t steal our joy, he cannot keep our goods! In Job, Satan complained that he couldn’t get through God’s hedge. In Ecclesiastes it was when the hedge was removed that the serpent (Satan) attacked. God is looking for us to establish a hedge and stand in the gap. Satan is a thief. God’s Word promises that we have the right to have both our possessions as well as time restored to us. We need to claim and establish our faith that these promises will be fulfilled for our families and us.

Sowing And Judging During Disputes

God's promises and principles do not cease operating during disputes. They will be in operation and we need to use them for our benefit. Whether we realize it or not, **we are continually in the planting season.** We can choose to sow good seed, we can sow bad seed or we can neglect to sow at all with a corresponding good harvest, bad harvest or no harvest.

If we desire to prosper, we must honor God with our substance and our earnings. We must resist the temptation to stop sowing in God's work or we will not receive a financial harvest. Indeed we can lose important protection and wind up in a mess (see Malachi 3:8-12). **There are many kinds of seed.** Seed is not always money. When we give of ourselves in our time or possessions, we are sowing seed. The words we speak also are like seed and will result in a harvest. We will be accountable to God for the seeds we plant including the words we speak. We must not give up sowing our seed or we will miss the harvest.

A study of the word judge shows that it means condemning rather than discerning. We are expected to have discernment. The difference between a judge and a jury is the jury discerns the truth, the judge decides the sentence. While we may be diligent in watching to speak only good and to continue sowing good seed in the Lord's work, **it is also vital that we control our thoughts.** We mustn't condemn or judge outwardly or inwardly our mate or others involved in a dispute with us.

God's Word clearly warns us of the dangers of judging others. When we judge we take on a role that is reserved for God. This is a spiritual principle that causes us to become what we focus our attention on. If we focus on the faults of others, we acquire those faults. We need to focus on Jesus so we will be more like him.

When we judge others, we put a spiritual lien on them. A lien is a negative restraint. It is like a rope with two ends, it not only restricts them but because we are tied to the other end, it inhibits our own freedom. Our goal should be to avoid grumbling inwardly or outwardly about others and instead develop and exhibit the quality of love in our lives. Love is not easily angered and does not keep a record of wrongs.

Principles To Sow By

- 1) _____ only _____ seed.

Avoid the temptation to not tithe or sow into the Lord's work.

Make sure your words and actions represent the kind of seed that will result in a good harvest.

- 2) Look _____ to the _____

The best harvests take time to mature and develop strength from weathering adversity.

Rejoice in what you know about God and the faithfulness of His Word. Consider it done!

Consequences of Judging

- 1) We _____ God's _____ against judging.

- 2) We _____ the characteristics we _____ to develop within _____.

- 3) We establish an _____ that can _____ Godly _____.

Focus on allowing God to develop and correct yourself.

Overcome evil with love.

Generational Effects of Disputes

There is another aspect to sowing and reaping that we need to consider. Just as our children can inherit our physical and emotional characteristics from their parents, they can also be affected in the spiritual realm by our strengths and shortcomings, good choices and bad. This applies to the children who have already been born to us, but also to future generations.

Some scholars believe that the “clean house” in Matthew 12:43-45 and Luke 11:24-26 refers to the next generation. Although you have victory over a spiritual assignment or problem in your life, your children, if left unprepared, can face even worse problems in the same area.

Here are some consequences to strife and disputes that we must be conscious of.

- 1) Future generations are affected spiritually by any strife, condemnation or other sin associated with the dispute.
- 2) Financial loss and destruction in the material arena can result in loss of educational or career opportunities that may have been possible.
- 3) Future generations become more susceptible to separation, divorce and disputes.

It is so reassuring to know that on the cross Jesus paid the price for every sin and dealt with every consequence! We do not have to live in fear and defeat for the mistakes and rebellious choices of our past, we can approach the throne of grace with a repentant heart and receive the forgiveness and redemption that is freely given.

“Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.”

Galatians 3:13-14

Prayer For Our Children

Heavenly Father, Thank you for your Word in Galatians 3:13 that tells us that Jesus became a curse so that we can be free from the curse. Thank you that because of the work of Jesus, the curses that would be propagated to our children and our posterity as a result of this dispute (name the issue) are broken in Jesus' name.

In the name of Jesus, we come against strife, condemnation, judgment, anger, bitterness, rejection and retaliation. We claim that these will no longer have any effect on our lives or on the lives of our children.

In the name of Jesus we bind ungodly spirits of poverty, lack and all that affects our material and financial resources. We bind the power of covenant breaking spirits that would bring separation, divorce, disputes and sexual immorality.

In the name of Jesus, we render all ungodly spirits associated with this dispute deaf, dumb and inoperative. We place the blood and the cross between these assignments, spirits, curses and ourselves. We stop any ungodly cycle from further operation and break the chain between the past and future generations. Every curse or assignment stops at the cross in Jesus' name.

Amen

NOTES: _____

Five Stages in Resolving a Dispute Part I

God does not work by the clock but rather through events. Disputes are not resolved as a matter of the passage of time, but as we allow the Lord to bring His will to pass in our lives.

The first stage in resolving a dispute is actually the healing our own heart. While the cliché, “time heals all wounds” applies to physical wounds, the scars last a lifetime. In disputes, scars can last more than a lifetime. Emotional scars can go beyond our mates and us. Emotional scars from disputes can affect our posterity for generations.

When a dispute is resolved in God’s way the healing is complete. No scabs or scars remain when the Lord heals. Healing through Him ends the destruction both in our lives and for our children. Therefore it is vital that disputes be resolved God’s way so His healing will take place.

The next stage necessary is that of developing hope. When we are in the midst of a dispute and hurting badly, we may be afraid to hope. Perhaps we fear that if we hope, we may be hurt and disappointed again. While well-intentioned friends may say, “Don’t get your hopes up,” God wants us to hope. He gives us reasons to hope in His Word.

Hope is the container for faith. Without hope we cannot have faith. Without hope we cannot really be healed. Without hope resolution and reconciliation will not take place. Hope is the emotional component of our belief for something while faith is the spiritual component. Hope is the anticipation that we feel while faith is the confidence that we have something.

It is important to understand the difference between hope and faith. Hope is the confident EXPECTATION that something will happen. Faith is the confident ASSURANCE that something we want is going to happen. Faith is the certainty that what we hope for is waiting for us even though we cannot see it.

NOTES: _____

The Importance of Healing

- 1) God’s healing is _____ to avoid _____ that can _____ our lives and the lives of others. Healing is _____.
- 2) Allow God to _____ you. It is _____ to _____ on to hurt (or _____).

The Importance of Hope

- 1) God _____ that we have _____ and gives us _____ to _____.
- 2) Hope is _____ in order to have _____.
- 3) Without _____ we will not have the _____ needed to complete the _____, needed to _____ the dispute and to ultimately bring _____.

Five Stages in Resolving a Dispute Part II

The third stage in resolving a dispute is to recognize and use the three keys to effective faith.

Faith is a vital ingredient in bringing the healing and resolution of a dispute. Faith must be developed, released and then exercised. We develop faith through God's Word. We release faith by agreeing with God's word. We exercise faith by taking corresponding actions. The promises we claim in God's Word must be mixed with faith in order to be effective.

Another aspect that has a bearing on resolving disputes is that of peace and rest. Although we may be involved in disputes, the effects of those disputes do not have to steal our peace. Jesus was able to sleep during the storm. In Mark 4:35-40, we see that the tempest around Jesus seemed to be a threat both to Him and His disciples, yet He maintained His peace. Jesus (the Prince of Peace - Isaiah 9:6) is with us just as He was with His disciples. Because of that we can have calm within the storm.

The last stage may surprise you since it is so obvious. **The final stage in resolving a dispute is the dispute itself**, since without a dispute there would be no need for resolution or reconciliation! While our focus is on the end result of reconciliation, God is interested in the process. He desires us to be changed and conformed into the image of Jesus.

Each dispute when resolved in God's way will be used by Him to bring Godly change in our lives and to move us toward reconciliation. Don't forget that God knows the end from the beginning. He has always known that you would be in the situation you are in and has had just as long to work out the perfect solution! Since He already sees your dispute as resolved, spend the time letting Him bring changes to your heart.

NOTES: _____

Putting Faith into Action

- 1) Faith comes through _____ the Word of _____.
- 2) Faith without _____ is _____.
- 3) Faith allows us to be _____ - _____ and _____ from the Lord.
- 4) Faith is part of our spiritual _____ and protection for our _____.
- 5) Faith _____ us to walk in _____.

Peace and Rest

- 1) It is the Lord's _____ that we have _____.
- 2) Peace and rest produce _____ and _____ even during the most _____ times.
- 3) This stability is a _____ to others that _____ God _____.
- 4) This stability _____ us to use the _____ and _____ God has given us to the _____ extent.

The Role of Disputes in the Reconciliation Harvest

- 1) Harvest is a _____ of several small _____.
- 2) When we are _____, disputes are _____ by a _____.

Some Practical Advice Part I

Many disputes related to separation and divorce involve working with lawyers and the legal system. While the principles taught earlier in this lesson apply to all disputes, there is practical wisdom to be learned from the experiences of others.

Many Christians are uncomfortable about working with lawyers. They are unfamiliar with the court system and do not have any idea how to select a lawyer or even if they need a lawyer. Don't be pressured to hire an attorney until you have sought the Lord. There is sufficient time to determine if you need an attorney and to find the one that the Lord would have represent you. While it is wonderful to have an attorney who can pray with you, it is more important to have the one God wants to represent you than choosing one solely on the basis that they happen to be a Christian.

You are not obligated to follow the advice of your attorney. Remember, they work for you and their duty is to provide legal services that will best obtain your desires and wishes.

It is vital to do spiritual warfare before any court appearances or decisions are made. God is our source and our defender!

When appearing in court, meeting with lawyers or having other dealings with the legal system, take time to pray and put on the whole armor of God as outlined in Ephesians 6:11-18.

Here are some practical points to consider:

- Do not be pressured by either your attorney or your mate into agreeing to a stipulation that you have not had time to think about and to pray about. It is much easier to make changes before the court approves it rather than come back later.
- Check with your employer to determine what the eligibility requirements are for insurance coverage of your dependents.
- Make sure that the final document complies completely with what you have agreed to. Some changes or omitted sentences can create problems later.
- Once the stipulations have been signed and approved by the court, be cooperative in their implementation. The issue is not what is convenient for you but what is best for the children.

NOTES: _____

Principles for Selecting and Working with Lawyers

- 1) Use _____ in selecting a _____.
- 2) Ensure that the lawyer _____ your _____.
- 3) Your _____ must be in the _____ and not in the lawyer or the _____.

Principles in Dealing with Custody and Visitation Disputes

- 1) Consider the _____ of the children.
- 2) Do not be _____ into signing an _____ or _____ that you have not had _____ to take before the Lord in _____.
- 3) Implement the _____ with _____ and a spirit of _____.

Some Practical Advice Part II

In dealing with property settlements, family support and other financial issues, selfishness and greed often become apparent. We must deal with these areas from a balanced perspective. Even though the love of money is the root of all evil, we cannot run from these issues but must use Godly wisdom.

Everything we have is from God. He is our source. We are appointed to be stewards in charge of the resources that he has entrusted to us. We need to be wise and faithful stewards of those resources. We cannot abdicate our responsibilities to our mates because we want to avoid strife. We cannot abandon our stewardship because we may be involved with an ungodly legal system.

The first step in dealing with disputes in this area is to develop the attitude of a faithful steward. When we are faithful with the resources God has given us, he will entrust us with more.

King Hezekiah got into a very real property dispute with Sennacherib. (See 2 Kings 18 and 19 and 2 Chronicles 32:1-22.) Faced with overwhelming odds, Hezekiah acted as a faithful steward and God blessed him with victory. Hezekiah made both physical and spiritual preparations for the dispute. We can follow his example and apply those same principles to disputes that affect us.

Principles for Dealing with Property and Financial Settlements

- 1) You must have the right _____ regarding your _____.
- 2) Make _____ preparations.
- 3) Make _____ preparations.

*His miracles are marvelous,
more than we can count.
God sends showers on earth
and waters the fields.
He protects the sorrowful
and lifts up those
who have been disgraced.
God swiftly traps the wicked
in their own evil schemes,
and their wisdom fails.
Darkness is their only companion,
hiding their path at noon.
God rescues the needy
from the words of the wicked
and the fist of the mighty.
The poor are filled with hope,
and injustice is silenced.*

Job 5:9-16

Hezekiah first humbled himself. The temptation to react in pride and self-defense is always going to be present when we are attacked or challenged. God requires His children to demonstrate humility as a sign of our submission and trust of His authority.

Hezekiah took the situation before the Lord and sought Godly counsel. Solomon, the wisest mediator of disputes the world has ever known received his guidance from the Lord. (See 1 King 3:6-14) Agreement in prayer multiplies our effectiveness, so we need fellow believers to support us.

He was diligent to take care of any repairs or things that needed to be put right. We need to be sure that everything related to the dispute is in order. Fear and worry will hurt faith. When discouraging reports came, Hezekiah refused to reply but maintained his confidence in the Lord.