

SERIES TWO

Principles
for
Marriage
Healing

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

Mission Statement

Our mission 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.

Cover design by Richard Hight

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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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Will I Stop Hurting?



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Will I Stop Hurting?

Will I Stop Hurting?

Covenant Connection

To develop an understanding of how God functions in covenant with us to take our hurting emotions and bitterness and replace them with His healing and forgiveness.

Introduction

The disappointments, rejection and unfulfilled expectations from a marriage breakup leave wounds that with time develop scabs of bitterness. Bitterness leaves an ugly scar in our lives and makes our spirit less sensitive to God's leading. Left untreated it continues to cause pain both to us and to others. Wounds from broken relationships infect new relationships and provide entry for problems in the future.

A man asked a covenant keeper to accompany him as he went inside to pick up cardiac medicine from his home. He and his wife were in the midst of a domestic dispute and his wife was using the medicine as leverage with him. They were in the process of separating (again) and it was obvious that the hurt and bitterness was totally blocking any rational communication. Where there is strife there is bound to be confusion. The man did get his medicine and as soon as the couple parted, the strife ceased, but **the hurt and the bitterness continued.**

God's desire is to work restoration: to create healthy new supple skin where before there was only a scab and a painful wound. In this lesson we will find how to obtain this deep and complete healing through applying principles found in scripture in three basic areas.

The process of healing the hurt within us and removing it is a primary step toward restoration and reconciliation of a marriage. When we have received healing, we will be more effective in praying for and relating to our spouses as well as others.

While we all have the tendency to focus on the problems of our spouses, the most important aspect of the overall healing of our marriages is the healing and renewing of our own broken hearts. Most of us who have been through a marital breakup are familiar with feelings of rejection within ourselves. Often, wounds that occurred before the marriage, even during childhood, affect marriages. Satan starts early in life to build in problems that will lead to a breakdown of communication and destroy marriages when the children get older.

NOTES: _____

Lesson Objectives

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

- 1) List three requirements that are needed to receive emotional healing.
- 2) Explain how the principle of agreement is needed to stop the hurt.
- 3) State three ways to achieve victory in your thoughts.
- 4) Identify three Biblical principles that will help you walk in love.

No Man Is An Island

Anyone who has flown on an airline is familiar with the directions that are given to passengers before every flight about the emergency oxygen masks: "Parents with small children should first place the masks on themselves and then assist their children." While that sounds almost cruel, it is a fact that an unconscious parent would be useless in assisting their child. This same principle is found twice in the gospels where we are told to, "*First, take the log out of your own eye. Then you can see how to take the speck out of your friend's eye.*" (Matthew 7:3-5 & Luke 6:41-42, Contemporary English Version) It is when we are healed that God can most effectively use us to bring the ministry of reconciliation. That was the mission of Jesus to the world and it is our mission to our families. (See 2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

To stop hurting we need support and agreement from others.

Scripture teaches that when two or more are in agreement, a spiritual dynamic exists that permits supernatural events to occur. In reconciling our marriages we need all God's power at our disposal. It is imperative that we use the power of agreement to assist in the healing process. Just as disagreement helped create the problem, agreement can be used to help bring the solution. Look at Genesis 11:6-7 to see the weakness inherent in discord and Deuteronomy 32:29-31 and Matthew 18:19 to see the power released by agreement.

Three Keys for Healing

What three areas will we study that will bring healing to our broken hearts and renewal to ourselves?

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

Find friends that can be in agreement with you for your healing. When we seek support from individuals who are not like-minded, we invite further hurt, disappointment and discouragement. Don't share your details with those who do not understand or agree with your covenant position. To maintain close friendships with those who take the world's view instead of the Word's view is spiritually dangerous. Sharing with those who don't understand only leads to gossip, discouragement, sympathy and ungodly counsel. Proverbs 10:20-21 provides a contrast of good and poor advice.

At this time you need the support of friends—the right friends! So do not avoid friendships. Proverbs 17:17 says, "*A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*" **Ask God for a friend who will be a prayer partner who will help you function in the power of agreement.** In using the power of agreement it is important that you not only be in agreement with each other, but also in agreement with God's Word. (Matthew 18:19 and Philippians 2:2)

NOTES: _____

Participation Brings Healing

It is important to be faithful in attendance and to participate actively in the ministry of your church. The writer of Hebrews leaves no doubt as to the importance of other believers and commands us not to stop assembling with them, even as he admonishes that some have. *"And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching."* Hebrews 10:24-25

Be an active and faithful participant in your church. As you sow faithfulness and are a blessing to others you will reap a healing in your own life. Just as eating but never exercising will produce an out of shape body, church-hopping, attending but never participating or only watching television ministries will impair your spirit's health.

Diligence and faithfulness in your group is an outward demonstration to God of your inner commitment to your covenant. It is possible the witness that you provide as a faithful participant will be used by God to bring fuller revelation on marriage healing as others see your growth and development. Faithfulness to your covenant group plants seeds for faithfulness in your marriage.

God rewards faithful stewards with grace, peace and joy. Grace, peace and joy are qualities needed for us to be healed and for our hurt to stop.

God heals us so that we can help others. These covenant groups provide a forum where ministry is not only received but is nurtured and developed through ministering to others.

NOTES:

As Christians, we all need to actively participate with other believers in _____, to be _____ and _____, to participate in _____, to have _____, and to be _____.

Read Galatians 6:7-10

The Apostle Paul tells us that what we sow, we will also reap. He also challenges us to not grow weary in doing good, especially to other Christians. As we believe and wait for the restoration of our marriages, what kind of "fruit" should we look for as we sow our tithes, offerings, prayer, energy, time, love, gifts, talents and participation in our local church?

It may seem overwhelming to think of participating when you are feeling so wounded and needy yourself, but a special healing manifests when we bless others. Can you think of a time in your life when you felt incapable of helping or reaching out, yet were blessed and encouraged by stepping out in faith and obedience beyond your own abilities?

Victory In Our Thoughts Brings Healing

To stop hurting we need victory in our thoughts. Our thoughts affect our emotions and our actions. Negative thoughts bring doubt, discouragement, depression, and defeat. It is important to recognize that our mind is a battlefield. It is a battlefield where Satan does have access. God has not left us without defense but has provided us with the means to have victory. Our hearts control what thoughts we accept and what thoughts we reject. With a pure heart we can be single-minded and resist those thoughts on which Satan would want us to dwell.

Refuse to let your mind dwell on negative imaginations. Cast down (rebuke) the negative thought aloud in the name of Jesus. We have victory through Jesus and there is power in using His Name. (See 2 Corinthians 10:4-5) When Satan tempted Jesus in the wilderness, Jesus responded using scripture. We must also speak and pray scriptures out loud to respond when tempted to be afraid, worry, fret, take control, etc. Avoid the circumstance that triggers this type of thought. Satan is not creative. The same patterns and circumstances that he uses once, he will try again.

Provide refuge for your mind by communing with Jesus. Throughout scripture we read that the Lord is our refuge, a sanctuary from trouble.

Praise is a weapon against the enemy and a shelter for your mind. Praise has the effect of shutting up Satan.

Praying in the Spirit provides breathing room when your mind is under attack. Your prayer language is a powerful tool that needs to be used. Your prayer language allows your spirit to interact with the Holy Spirit when you don't know how to pray.

Meditation on God's Word heals and renews your mind. Meditation is more than reading the Bible, it involves thinking on and letting our mind digest the Word of God.

NOTES: _____

Find a verse that applies to the type of imagination or thought that has bothered you that you can use when Satan tempts you and write it below:

According to Isaiah 26:3, what must we do to experience perfect peace?

Divorce, which brings mental torment and causes emotional wounds, is a work of the devil. However, Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). The will of God is that our lives and marriages be healed. It is through God's Word that we gain knowledge after the image of Christ. It is through God's Word that we renew our minds and accomplish His perfect will in our lives. List two scriptures where we see Jesus destroying the works of Satan:

Using Binding & Loosing To Bring Healing

Binding & loosing is the process of securing or stopping Satan's accomplices from carrying out their assignments against us. It occurs in the spiritual realm (see Ephesians 6:12) and looses or frees us from their activity and influence.

Keys represent authority. The kingdom of God is defined as "*righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost*" (see Romans 14:17) not just in eternity but here and now. God has provided us with the keys to receive that peace and joy but it is up to us to unlock the door.

Binding & loosing restrains and ties up Satan's influence. It provides the freedom to choose and respond to righteousness.

Deliverance removes unclean spirits and provides freedom to choose and respond to Christ.

Deliverance is not an area of ministry undertaken by covenant groups. It involves a depth and maturity of ministry that is beyond the scope and training of group leadership. When spirits are cast out and not kept out, the result can be worse (see Matthew 12:43-45).

Deliverance will also occur as a by-product of God's working in our lives. As we learn His principles and apply them in our lives by walking in greater repentance and forgiveness as the Holy Spirit leads, we will find that the powers of darkness lose their ability to influence and torment us. This type of deliverance is often such a gentle work of God that we only recognize it by the changes we see in our attitudes, actions and feelings.

NOTES: _____

How To Use Binding & Loosing	
1) Identify and address the spirit to be bound.	Spirits can be identified by _____. Spirits can be identified by _____ or _____.
2) Speak God's power into effect.	a) _____ b) _____ c) _____ d) _____ _____
3) Keep a record (log or journal) for future reference and trust the _____ to God.	
4) Remind Satan that it is _____.	
5) Ask God to reveal other _____ spirits.	
6) Determine if you have unknowingly released what you have previously bound.	
Example:	_____ _____

Overcoming Evil With Love

"Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away. Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust." Matthew 5:38-45

"If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good." Romans 12:18-21

First, Jesus and then Paul, provide a pretty tall order for us to fill. In our own strength and ability, it is in fact impossible, but *"with God all things are possible."* (Matthew 19:26) **It is through Jesus that it becomes possible to not pay back evil** and we will discover that this actually becomes a powerful key to our healing.

Recognize that your enemy is not your spouse or the person with whom they may be involved. Satan wants us to divert our spiritual energy and emotional strength toward fighting our mate or the person with whom they are involved.

If a family member had a bad case of stomach flu and caused a "mess" that we had to clean up, we wouldn't get upset with them. We would have compassion for them, knowing they were a victim of the sickness. The flu virus, not the patient is the real problem. In a similar way, we need to see past the situation that is causing the pain and the person who is conveying the hurt to us. They are victims of the real enemy. Just as we would treat a patient with love and attack the viral enemy, **we need to return love and attack the spiritual enemy.**

When we release our _____ to Jesus and have an attitude of returning _____ for _____, we experience _____ and _____ in our lives. It is then that we can be most _____ in fighting the _____.

According to Ephesians 6:12, who is our real enemy?

Can you think of a time or incident where you lived out the principle Jesus teaches at the top of the page in Matthew 5:38-45?

Do you recall how it affected you to act this way?

How did it affect the person that you responded to in love?

Avoiding Strife Preserves Our Healing

Make avoiding strife a top priority. The dictionary defines strife as a conflict, contention, struggle and disagreement. Many of us don't need a dictionary when it comes to strife. We've seen it so much that we consider ourselves experts. We know through experience strife brings in confusion, just as God's Word says. However we may not be aware that strife serves as a demonic gateway. According to James, it lets in "every evil work!"

1. The best way to keep out of strife is to not get started in it. See Proverbs 17:14.
2. To avoid strife you need pure (self-less) motives. See Proverbs 26:17.
3. We avoid strife when we exhibit the fruit of the Spirit in our lives. See Philippians 2:3.

Love must be based on right attitudes and can only be conveyed through your actions. Forgiveness is love in action. Just as Jesus healed people physically through forgiveness (see Mark 2:10 and Luke 5:24), He will heal our hurt as we forgive others.

Walking in love means we don't keep track when we are wronged. Avoid judgment and criticism. When we judge others, we will cause our emotions to become dulled and hardened to that thing.

Avoid murmuring and complaining. Complaints and sympathy act to drain our spiritual vitality, sap our strength and weaken our faith.

The Psalms are a source of comfort and encouragement. David learned how to deal with the pain of rejection, and with having his wife and his family taken from him. Although David was deeply hurt, he is an example of a man who kept his heart true. He also recognized that King Saul, who persecuted him for years, was not his enemy, but instead David walked in love and forgiveness. When David's family was taken captive and his friends rejected him, he encouraged himself in the Lord. The Psalms give clear evidence of the thoughts that David had to cast down. The process he used in praising God and meditating on God's Word is clearly seen. The years of walking through hard experiences caused David to learn God's faithfulness.

Forgiveness
Unforgiveness results in _____.
With forgiveness comes _____.
Love forgives without _____.
Murmuring weakens our _____ and delays our _____.
Avoiding _____ demonstrates our trust in God and brings Him _____.
Bringing God glory strengthens our _____ and brings _____.
<i><u>Your heart can't be merry while you are speaking out complaints!</u></i>

NOTES: _____

Will I Stop Hurting?

How To Deal With Deception



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How To Deal With Deception

Covenant Connection

To develop an understanding of how individuals become open to and are influenced by deception and to learn how God frees our mates and us from deception and its effects.

Introduction

Deception plays an important role in the breakup of every marriage. One or both partners become convinced that the "love is gone" and the marriage "will never work." The deception often gets to the point where at least one partner believes that they are divorcing for the good of the other person. Through this unit we will take an honest look at this tool that is so often used to break up families and homes.

By its very nature, deception is difficult to understand. We cannot recognize deception as long as we are deceived. When we have a mate who has entered into deception, we cannot understand their actions. Often we try to reason with them but to no effect.

Lesson Objectives

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

- 1) Explain the nature of deception.
- 2) Describe the process of deception.
- 3) State at least four openings for deception and how to avoid deception.
- 4) List at least three results of deception on your mate and yourself.
- 5) Explain how to remove deception from your life.
- 6) Describe how to help your mate be freed from deception.

Many of us have an unswerving belief in the Word of God. Indeed, as we will see in this lesson, **God's Word does contain the answers.** God's Word provides answers about the nature of deception and how to deal with deception. Satan brought doubt to Eve (see Genesis 3) about God's Word. Because of the doubt and also what she saw, Eve was led into deception. Through deception we too can be led to question God's Word. However, no matter what the appearance or how a situation may seem, we can believe God's Word in Isaiah 54:17 that "*No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper.*" It may seem that deception is like the flood in Isaiah 59:19, but we serve a Lord who can raise up a standard and put the enemy to flight.

We need to understand the enemy's tool of deception so that we will not be overcome by evil or be destroyed by a lack of knowledge. **Instead we will be overcomers!** Only by effectively combating the deception that comes against our mates, our families and us can we experience the abundant life that Jesus bought us.

NOTES: _____

What is Deception? Part I

To learn how to fight deception, it is helpful to understand the nature of deception. Webster's Dictionary defines deception as *"To Deceive, Delude, Beguile, or Ensnare."* According to Webster's, to deceive is *"to cause to believe an untruth: Implies the imposing of a false idea or belief that causes bewilderment or helplessness or furthers the agent's purpose."*

In dealing with a person who is deceived, it is important to realize they are not the enemy. They have believed a lie and the result furthers the purposes of the author of that lie: Satan.

Basic to the condition of being in deception is a lack of realization that you are deceived. In other words, people who are deceived do not know they are deceived. Deception in an area results in a state of confusion or bewilderment, a loss of correct orientation regarding the truth about that area.

Deception is a spiritual condition, but one that manifests itself in the physical realm. We often notice the effects of deception through words that are spoken, but those words are a result of a condition of the heart. Because deception affects the heart or spirit, it affects our sensitivity to hear God's voice in that area. When a person's heart becomes hardened, the result is ungodly actions.

When a person is in deception, it not only affects their actions, but also their perception of the actions and motives of others. Their perception is based on deception.

NOTES: _____

Read Jeremiah 9:4-6 and Isaiah 44:20. (Use the Amplified version if available)

- 1) According to these verses deception is composed of: _____
- 2) According to Isaiah 44:20 can a person get out of deception without outside help? _____

Read Deuteronomy 11:16. What part of a person does deception affect? _____

Read Matthew 12:34, Matthew 15:18, and Luke 6:45. Deception may be manifested through words or actions but what is the source?

Can you recall a time when you now realize you were deceived?

How did it affect your thought processes and perceptions?

How did you get free of the deception?

What is Deception? Part II

Deception is both gradual and subtle. By its very nature deception is difficult, if not impossible, to recognize in yourself. When recognized, deception is usually not where you think it is. In Judges 16 the story of Samson illustrates this.

Because Samson hardened his heart to God with regard to ungodly relationships, he became deceived.

This story illustrates the subtlety of deception. Samson did not realize that he was deceived. Deception blinded him to the nature of the sin that he was in. While he resisted Delilah's many attempts to cause him to compromise, the deception progressed until he became so weary that he told her the true nature of his strength.

Deception gradually robbed Samson of his walk with God

to the point that he was not even aware of the presence or absence of God in his life. In verse 20 we read *"But he did not know that the Lord had left him."* As a result of deception, Samson lost his God-given strength and Israel lost an effective leader against their enemies.

Deception then can be considered a strong, false belief that is the result of a spiritual condition. The stronger the deception, the more confused, bewildered and helpless the person becomes.

Persons in deception become unable to understand the truth about the area where they are deceived. They lose the ability and discernment to recognize what is not of God.

NOTES: _____

Samson and Delilah

Read the story of Samson and Delilah in Judges 16.

What was the weakness in Samson's flesh that opened the door to deception? (See verse 1) _____

Satan's attacks come against us in our areas of weakness. They are often focused at times when we are in a weakened condition. Only reliance on the Lord can **H.A.L.T.** the attack.

H _____
A _____
L _____
T _____

What was Samson's condition when he no longer could resist Delilah? (See verses 16-17) _____

Was the temptation Samson faced beyond what he could endure? _____

What should Samson have done?

The Progression of Deception Part I

Deception is a progressive condition. However, just as in the start of an infection, deception must have a beginning and an opening for it to occur.

Satan works through human weaknesses and through temptation.

Satan tempts us today in the same manner that he tempted Eve. When Eve allowed her desire to respond to the temptation, she opened the door for deception and sin. As with Eve, Satan and his evil spirits locate weaknesses of the flesh in their victims and focus on those weaknesses. As long as we rely on God and walk in His grace, rather than our own strength, we can resist deception (See 2 Corinthians 4:2 in the Amplified version). Psalm 72:14 provides us with assurance that God is able to redeem us from deception. This promise is one we can stand on for both our covenant mates and also ourselves.

Satan entered into deception when he believed in his own strength and power. Through pride, he opened the door to deception and lost his position as chief among God's angels. Pride continues to be a common entry point for deception. In Jeremiah 49:16 the prophet tells us that self-reliance and pride are a source or opening for deception.

Evil imaginations also provide an opening for deception (Job 3:25). Satan will try to have us worry and think about negative situations, about what COULD happen. God's Word tells us that each day has enough troubles of its own (Matthew 6:34).

We are also deceived if we are thinking everything is going fine for our mate while they are in sin. Proverbs 13:15 says that the *"way of the transgressor is hard."* Many returning mates have commented on this. Sin takes you further than you want to go. Sin keeps you longer than you want to stay. Sin makes you pay more than you want to pay.

NOTES: _____

According to James 1:14-15, how exactly does Satan bring deception to a Christian? _____

Hosea 10:13 tells us that a person eats the "fruit of deception" by _____

Read Proverbs 12:20. What is the result of imagining evil? _____

How do we obtain joy? _____

When you _____ this man, I _____ him, too.
And when I forgive him (for _____ is to be forgiven), I do so with _____ authority for your benefit, so that _____ will not outsmart us. For we are very familiar with his _____.

Refuse to let your mind dwell on negative thoughts. Philippians 4:8 tells us the kinds of things our minds should be focused on. Name two of these things that you need to be thinking more about:

The Progression of Deception Part II

Other important openings that enable Satan to bring deception into our lives include: judging others, revenge, unforgiveness, bitterness and refusing correction.

Deception begins in the mind, but unless the thoughts are dealt with, it progresses and finds an opening that will infect our spirit. Deception is progressive in that it intensifies and deepens spiritual blindness and hardness of heart. Deception begins as beguilement: *a readiness to be charmed or persuaded by the deceiver*, and results in delusion: *inability to distinguish between the true and the false*.

Compromise acts as a catalyst that causes deception to strengthen. As a person allows compromise to harden their heart, their ears become deaf to the voice of the Holy Spirit about that part of their life. What starts as a small compromise in one area of their life will cause deception to gradually spread like a cancer until it has weakened their walk with God and they have become spiritually blind and confused.

Initially deception results in actions that look and feel attractive, but have a bitter aftertaste. Dr. Ken Savage has aptly said that, "Sin promises that which it cannot deliver, while God promises that which is already paid for." When a person is tempted, the reward always appears great while the price seems inconsequential. In reality, the prize quickly becomes worthless while the penalty proves to be too great to pay.

While Satan prepares us for deception through thoughts and ideas, he often uses others to accomplish the action that initiates the deception. God warns us to guard against deception through others.

In Proverbs 7:6-27 we see the progression of deception. A young man was enticed but in order for him to succumb to the deception he had to be ready to be deceived. This process began far before the actions. It began in his thought life. Satan works in our minds to prepare us to yield to temptation. Refusing to consider the ideas Satan brings is prevention against temptation and deception. Stopping the deception before it starts is the best way to avoid it.

Read the following references that describe entrances or openings for deception. For each area listed below where deception can result, write the corresponding reference(s).

References: Job 5:17, Proverbs 11:14, Proverbs 16:18, Proverbs 20:22, Proverbs 23:12, Proverbs 29:23, Matthew 7:1-5, Mark 11:23-26, Romans 12:17, Ephesians 4:31, Hebrews 12:15

Openings for Deception: _____

Judging others: _____

Revenge: _____

Unforgiveness: _____

Bitterness: _____

Pride: _____

Refusing correction in our lives: _____

Desires of the Flesh: _____

NOTES: _____

The Effects of Deception

Deception and disobedience cannot be separated. Where you find one, you will have the other. **Where there is disobedience, insensitivity to the Holy Spirit grows.** The Holy Spirit helps us understand God's Word. Without His help we cannot understand or be drawn to God.

A characteristic of someone who is in deception is a misunderstanding of God's Word. The Pharisees in Jesus' day knew the scripture, but because they were involved in deception, they did not understand it or the power of God.

Another result of entering into deception is an inability to keep commitments and tell the truth. When we have a mate who claims to be a Christian and acts like this, it seems incredible. They are blinded and do not recognize the error. Psalm 78:35-37 illustrates how the children of Israel lied and did not keep covenant with God despite acknowledging Him as their Lord. *"And they remembered that God was their rock, and the high God their redeemer. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they stedfast in his covenant."* Psalm 78:35-37

A common theme through scripture is the effect that deception has on eyes. While scripture refers to how deception dulls our spiritual eyes, sometimes it is even noticeable physically. When our eyes are blinded because of spiritual darkness, anger or hatred can result. When we are dealing with someone who blows up or gets angry, remember that anger and hatred are fruits of deception.

When dealing with a mate who is in deception, it is important to guard ourselves against becoming infected. The actions of others can cause hurts or openings in our own lives that Satan will use to bring deception.

NOTES: _____

If we discuss the events and problems in our lives with others, what do we risk? _____

Entering into the _____ of others through _____ can also be a problem. A gossip tells _____, so don't hang around with someone who _____ too much.

Don't _____ yourselves. _____ friends will _____ you. Be _____ and stop _____.

Numbers chapters 13-14 demonstrate how easily people can be infected by the deception (fears) of others. How many spies gave the bad report that caused the whole nation of Israel to faint in fear?

Freedom from Deception Part I

As we have seen, **deception comes after temptation and through an opening.** This opening is usually provided by disobedience in an area of our life. Jesus tells us that we need to do two things to avoid temptation. First, watch and second, pray. As He explains in Matthew 26:41 *"the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak."* A willingness or openness to God is crucial to avoiding temptation, but for us to watch we need to know what to watch for.

Watchmen are warriors who not only protect and defend, but also spy out enemy strongholds and plans. When we follow Christ's command to watch, we serve to guard against deception in our lives and in the lives of our covenant mates. When we recognize the enemy, we pull down his fortresses and loose God's plan, purpose and will to be done. We are called to be aggressive and overthrow and destroy the devil's plans for our lives and our family.

God's Word provides us with the truth and knowledge we need to recognize Satan's schemes. Through His Word, we are equipped to guard against deception.

Jesus is our model. In Him was found NO deceit. We are told to have the mind of Christ. This is only possible as we renew our mind through God's Word and accomplish His perfect will in our lives.

NOTES: _____

Read Colossians 2:1-15 (NASV if available)

Vs 1-5 List two qualities of someone who cannot be deceived. _____

Vs 6-7 List four stages of growth in a walk with Christ the Lord. _____

Vs 8 How does Satan take someone captive?

Vs 9 In whom does the Fullness of Deity dwell?

Vs 12 How were we raised with Him?

Vs 13-14 What did God do about our transgressions?

Vs 15 What did Jesus do to Satan, spiritual wickedness, and deception?

Freedom from Deception Part II

We need to watch against temptation and deception by refusing thoughts and ideas that Satan would bring to our minds. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 tells us *"For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."*

By refusing what is negative and meditating on what is positive, we can guard our minds and allow them to be renewed, transformed and maintained free of deception.

Obedience to God's word is a key principle. The story of Abraham shows that even partial obedience is really disobedience. This opens the door to destructive consequences and inhibits God's blessing.

Read Chapter one of Jonah. God told Jonah to go to Nineveh. **Jonah disobeyed God and deception resulted.** Jonah felt he was avoiding a bad situation by running from God's direction but found himself in a worse circumstance. In verse 5 we see that not only was Jonah's life affected by the disobedience but he endangered those around him. In verse 12 the deception is so deep that Jonah would rather die than obey God. However, God continued to work through circumstances in Jonah's life until he responded to His call.

Chapter three of Jonah mirrors chapter one with a different result. When Jonah decided to take the path of obedience God protected him even in difficult circumstances.

While Jonah learned obedience in action through his experience with a whale, God also needed to teach Jonah about the importance of obedience in attitude. Chapters 2 & 4 show that attitudes are just as important to God as actions. When we are obedient in both actions and attitudes we walk in protection from deception.

NOTES: _____

Keys To Freedom

Read Jonah's prayer of repentance and praise in Jonah Chapter 2.

- 1) Jonah was **O** _____ with God. He told God his _____, his _____ and his _____.
- 2) Jonah was able to **B** _____ that God: _____ him, _____ him and was _____ him.
- 3) Jonah was able to **E** _____ God through _____ and _____.
- 4) Jonah was able to **Y** _____ to God, recognizing that _____ and _____ are from God. He vowed to be _____ and _____ to carry out his vow.

O _____

B _____

E _____

Y _____

The acronym **OBEY** is a great tool to help us remember what is required for our obedience.

How To Avoid Deception

God's Word provides practical instructions in Hebrews 12:1-17 on how to avoid deception. Notice in verses 1-3 that **a race implies both an end and a reward**. Patience is a foundation that undergirds our faith.

We need to look to Jesus to avoid fainting in our minds. When we depend on His grace rather than our own strength, we can avoid subjecting our weakness to temptation.

Reach out and encourage others. When we focus on our own hurts and needs, we block the power of God from working in our hearts to protect us. We invite God's ministry into our lives by reaching out to minister to others who face similar challenges.

It is important to avoid strife. Strife opens the door to Satan to bring in every evil work. We must depend on God's strength and ability (grace) to avoid bitterness because that also opens the door to deception.

Accepting God's correction is necessary for staying free from deception. The writer of Hebrews spends 6 verses explaining the importance and purpose of correction or chastening. First of all, we must realize that God corrects us because He loves us and not because He is mean or capricious. When we do not walk in His ways and principles we open ourselves up to curses and consequences of sin. God corrects us to bring us back to obedience, for He knows obedience leads to blessings, peace, abundance and joy in our lives.

Esau is classified among those who have been deceived and ensnared by Satan and therefore will not inherit the Kingdom of Heaven. He yielded to temptation and sold his birthright, which was later given to His brother through deception.

NOTES: _____

The Bible is full of stories and incidents where people were deceived. Pick out and write down one person or group that fell into deception.

What did they do that opened the door for deception?

What consequences were experienced as a result?

What could have been done to prevent being deceived?

As we believe God for the restoration of our marriages, in what areas are we liable to be deceived?

How can we protect ourselves from being deceived in these areas?

Praying For Someone In Deception Part I

While it is important to watch and be alert in order to avoid temptation and deception, that is only half of what Jesus told us to do. Just as important is the role of prayer. Many of us have mates who are in deception. **Prayer is the key that will unlock the chains of bondage and blindness that Satan has wrapped around them through deception.**

When we pray according to God's will, we have confidence that His will shall be done. Using appropriate scripture verses is an effective way to do this. We know that God's Word is powerful and it will not return void.

Proverbs 19:27 provides an example of how to personalize a verse to make a scripture prayer. The verse reads, *"Cease, my son, to hear the instruction that causeth to err from the words of knowledge."* If you are praying for a person named John, you might personalize this way, "Thank you, Lord, that according to Proverbs 19:27, John ceases to hear instructions that cause him to err from your words of knowledge." Many verses are appropriate to pray for yourself as well as for your mate. Job 6:24 can be personalized to read, "Teach (me / John), and we will hold our tongues: and cause (me / John) to understand wherein we have erred."

When praying to free your mate from deceit be sure to use the principles of binding and loosing. (See "How To Use Binding and Loosing" in the Series One workbook.) God tells us that what we bind on earth will be bound in the spirit realm. We need to bind the operation of deception from working both in us as well as our mates. We need to loose clarity and the ability to discern God's will so that our mates are free to follow God.

One promise you can claim in reference to our enemy, Satan, is found in Ps 101:7. Personalize it, for example: "Thank you, Lord, that according to Psalm 101:7, He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within (my / John's) house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in (my / John's) sight."

Disobedience in regard to food:

a) _____ & _____ - _____ & _____

b) _____ & _____ - _____

Sexual Immorality:

a) _____ & _____ - _____

b) _____ & _____ - _____

Pride in position and/or accomplishment.

_____ & _____ - _____

& _____

Fear because of their mate:

a) _____ & _____ - _____ & _____

b) _____ & _____ - _____ & _____

Obedience in our attitudes can help free our mates from deception. Read 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

What must we avoid? _____

What qualities should we display? _____

& _____

What do verses 25-26 say is the result of our mates coming to knowledge of the truth?

What does John 8:32 tell us is the result of knowing the truth?

Praying For Someone In Deception Part II

A very common tool that Satan uses as a device to deceive is flattery. Often, when the door has been opened by thoughts or temptations, the enemy brings someone into our mate's lives who uses flattery. Daniel, chapter 11, speaks of flatteries. Verse 21 says, "*but he shall come in peaceably and obtain the kingdom by flatteries.*" Verse 32 says, "*And such as violate the covenant he shall pervert and seduce with flatteries*" (Amp). Flattery means: adulation, blarney, praise, cajolery, coaxing, humoring.

The principles we have learned are illustrated in the life of the prophet Hosea. His wife Gomer had a weakness in the area of adultery. Chapter 2 of Hosea describes the deception Gomer experienced. She went after pleasures and possessions that looked attractive and became enslaved by sin. By the standards of society, Hosea had every reason to write Gomer off and go on with his life. However, Hosea responded to a higher standard.

Instead of responding to the deception of the world, Hosea remained committed to God and to his wife. Hosea maintained a pure relationship with God that enabled him to remain free from deception in a nation that was rapidly declining in moral and spiritual values. As a result Gomer was freed from slavery and experienced a restored marriage with Hosea.

Like Hosea, let's maintain a walk of obedience in both actions and attitudes that will result in a close relationship with God. Let's stay in the Word so we can be faithful watchmen, avoiding the enemy's plans and pulling down his strongholds. Let's be faithful to hold up our mates in prayer so they can be freed from deception and the sin that has them trapped.

In conclusion, even though our mates may have been deceived by flattery, the rest of Daniel 11:32 says, "*but the people who know their God shall prove themselves strong and shall stand firm, and do exploits [for God].*" As we end this study, let's pause right now and pray the following scripture prayer on behalf of your mate. Personalize it by putting the appropriate name in the areas that are indicated.

NOTES:

PRAYER FOR FREEDOM FROM DECEPTION

I thank you, Heavenly Father, that your Word will accomplish that which you please and will not return unto you void. I thank you that we have confidence that you hear our prayers and that our prayers are granted. (Isaiah 55:11, 1 John 5:14-15)

Father, in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, and in accordance with your Word, I bind all principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this world and spiritual wickedness in high places. In Jesus' name I forbid them to operate against (your mate) and the (your family name) family. I bind confusion from coming against my covenant mate and declare that its assignment against (your mate) is hereby rendered null and void. (Ephesians 6:12 and Matthew 18:18)

In Jesus' name I bind the blinding stronghold of deception away from my mate. I pray that the eyes of their understanding be enlightened (Ephesians 1:18). I bind and break all strongholds of lust, adultery, rebellion, anger, lying, resentment, bitterness, unforgiveness, deception, pride, doubt and unbelief (add other strongholds that you have identified). I loose honesty, loyalty, sincerity, trustworthiness, clarity of thought, submissiveness, self-control, forgiveness and humility to become active in (your mate's name) life. (Galatians 5:22) In Jesus' name, AMEN.

What Can I Do When My Mate Is In Adultery?



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What Can I Do When My Mate Is In Adultery?

Covenant Connection

To develop an understanding of how God would have one respond to the effects of adultery on a covenant commitment.

Introduction

During this lesson we will discuss the effects of adultery on our lives and the one flesh relationship we hold with our spouses as well as the effect on our spouses. We will look at how we should respond and what God would have us do to come against the negative effects and bring about the reconciliation that is His desire for us to experience.

When a sin such as adultery becomes evident in our spouse's life, it causes a great deal of heartache, personal hurt, and disappointment. How we respond depends on our heart's attitude. Our goal is to be a healed, power-filled vessel that God can use to bring healing necessary in our lives and our marriage! We need to learn to live in victory during this attack because this will enable us to experience victory during the healing process that will follow our reconciliation.

God is a trinity having a three-part nature. Since we are created in the image of God, we also have a three-part nature: spirit, soul, and body (this can be seen in 1 Thessalonians 5:23). Adultery has effects in each part of this nature. During the lesson we will learn how to respond in our soul (mind, will, and emotions), how to avoid some of Satan's traps that affect our spirit, and how to use the provision of Christ to deal with the physical (sexual) part of adultery.

The lesson will initially start with how to deal with the battle within ourselves. Once we have some victory within, we can have more freedom to be effective in helping our mates have victory over adultery. Principles that we will deal with include areas of spiritual warfare, binding and loosing, and fasting. Other equally important topics including the Blood of Jesus and the effect of the Word will be covered separately in the handout to be done at home.

It will take several weeks to complete the unit and important new material will be covered each week. Try to be sure to attend every one of the sessions as the principles that are being taught work together and have a tremendous impact on the restoration of marriage.

NOTES: _____

Lesson Objectives

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

- 1) List three areas that need to be dealt with when your spouse is in adultery.
- 2) Describe three necessary steps to handle your emotions when your spouse is in adultery.
- 3) State the effects of judgment and unforgiveness on both the reconciliation with your spouse and your personal relationship with God.
- 4) Identify three Biblical principles of spiritual warfare that can be used to help you remain victorious.

Handling The Hurt

There is no denying that adultery brings an incredible amount of pain and hurt when it enters a marriage. This pain may manifest in many ways; rejection, anger, feelings of failure and worthlessness, frustration, helplessness, confusion, depression, suicidal thoughts, vengeful attitudes, shame, neediness, dependencies and the list goes on. As humans who have been created to feel and express emotions, we can't deny or ignore their reality. At the same time, we cannot let them control us, for many of them are destructive if left unchecked. We must learn to deal honestly with our emotions.

In the Psalms, David openly and often expressed to God his feelings of hurt, betrayal, rejection, anger and confusion. We, too, must deal honestly with our emotions. We need to follow this model and confess to God our feelings. The important thing is to not stop when we have voiced our complaints, but rather take positive steps to cast our cares on the Lord, trust in Him and allow Him to heal our wounds.

"Rest for your souls" means rest for your mind and rest for your emotions. The way to do this is to give our burden to Jesus and then learn of Him. We serve a God who watches over us, cares about every detail of our lives and delivers us out of **ALL** our troubles!

God's Word provides a primary source of comfort. While God is surely willing and able to heal our emotions, we also have a responsibility to encourage ourselves in the Lord. As we read and study His Word, the Holy Spirit will illuminate specific passages that will minister to our hurts and bring healing and hope. This "illumination" is God making the written words a revelation, or Rhema, to our spirits. This is when His Word truly becomes *"the bread of life"* and a *"lamp unto my feet"*.

NOTES: _____

David Expresses His Hurt

Long after David wrote the Psalms, the Apostle Peter challenged us with the words, *"Casting all your care upon Him for He careth for you."* (1 Peter 5:7) David probably remains our best example of how to do this.

Have _____ on me, Lord, for I am in _____.

My sight is _____ because of my _____.

My body and soul are _____ away.

I am _____ from grief;

my _____ are shortened by _____.

Misery has drained my _____;

I am _____ away from within.

I am _____ by all my enemies

and _____ by my neighbors—

even my _____ are afraid to come near me.

When they _____ me on the street,

they _____ the other way.

I have been _____ as if I were _____,

as if I were a _____.

I have heard the many _____ about me,

and I am surrounded by _____.

My enemies _____ against me,

_____ to take my life.

The Non-Covenant Person

The Word of God is a powerful weapon of spiritual warfare that must be used to experience victory when our mates are involved in adultery. **There is no situation that we face in life that God has not already documented in some way in His Word.** If we ask God to lead us, He is faithful to bring us to those passages and principles that we can then apply to our situations. In scripture there are instances of persons who are not a part of a covenant, residing in the land of the covenant. Those faced with a spouse living in adultery have a similar situation. While the term "alien" is applied in scripture, we can better refer to them as non-covenant persons.

In Genesis 16 and 21 we see Hagar was a non-covenant person. Her relationship with Abraham came into conflict with Sarah's covenant relationship with Abraham. This story is a striking example of how fear (lack of faith) leads to deception, sinful actions and hardened hearts. As a result Hagar and Ishmael (the child born of the non-covenant relationship) had to leave. We do see, however, that God cared for Hagar and Ishmael and sent an angel to speak to them and declare a blessing over them. We must remember that God loves the non-covenant persons just as much as He loves us and He has a plan for their lives and for the lives of children born outside of our marriage covenant. They are not our enemies!

There are four things we must remember about the non-covenant person and children.

- 1) They are made in the image of God.
- 2) Jesus died for them.
- 3) Satan is also their enemy.
- 4) God cares for them and their needs.

Our attitudes and actions toward the non-covenant person will affect our own reconciliation. We should ask ourselves two questions. First, do my attitudes and actions toward the non-covenant person create strife with my mate? Second, how would Jesus respond to this person in this situation?

NOTES: _____

The Word of God is the weapon we use to do battle in the realm of the spirit. Using the scriptures provided, write down the different effects the Word can have on our situations and us.

Psalm 119:11, 1 Peter 1:23, Ephesians 5:25-26, Matthew 4:4, Psalm 119:130, Proverbs 4:20-22, Isaiah 55:11, Psalm 107:20, Romans 10:17, 1 Peter 2:1-2

Our attitudes make a difference!

Look up the scriptures below to discover the four different attitudes we should have towards the non-covenant person.

Proverbs 16:7, Proverbs 25:21-22

1) _____

James 3:17-18, John 14:27, John 16:33

2) _____

Ephesians 4:29-32, 1 Peter 3:8

3) _____

Ephesians 5:2, 1 Corinthians 13:5

4) _____

Avoiding The Judgment Trap

If Satan is unable to get someone to sin, he will attempt to have them judge that sin in another person. Judgment and unforgiveness block healing and affect both you and your mate. In Genesis 18:25 and Hebrews 12:23 God is referred to as THE JUDGE of the earth and of people. Judging is passing sentence on the actions of another. Throughout scripture God reserves this right for Himself. **Only God has the right to judge others.**

Allow the Holy Spirit to be your judge. Often we are tempted to judge and condemn ourselves, but we must be careful with this also. Rather than try to look within and determine "where we blew it," we need to be responsive to the Holy Spirit and allow Him to search out and reveal the areas in our lives where we need to repent and change. When we take over and try to do God's work by becoming introspective, we take on a burden that God does not intend us to bear. We have freedom and righteousness through the blood of Jesus. It is important however to be obedient to any change that He reveals to us.

Satan is the "accuser of the brethren" (Revelation 12:10). Guilt feelings that make us feel miserable are not the result of conviction from the Holy Spirit. Conviction clearly shows us our sins and admonishes us to change. Remember Satan accuses but God convicts! Satan knows us better than we know ourselves. He knows how to trigger a sense of guilt and sin consciousness that will rob us of spiritual victory.

You can come to God with confidence because you have the righteousness of Jesus, under one condition. The condition to have confidence and receive is that we BELIEVE on the NAME of JESUS. When we understand this concept, we can be free of the oppressive guilt that Satan would put on us because of any part that we played in contributing to the involvement of our spouse with another person.

Guilt brings on feelings of:

Forgiveness brings on feelings of:

Our ability to approach God with _____ comes through our _____ with Jesus Christ. Lack of _____ results in a loss of _____. Lack of _____ results in a loss of desire to _____ and _____.

"Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God. And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, That we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment." 1 John 3:21-23

NOTES: _____

Preventing A Critical Spirit

God commands us not to criticize but to forgive. There is a trap in criticism and judgment. When one judges (is critical of another), he opens himself spiritually to weakness in that area. (This is another application of how the principle of sowing and reaping affects us for good or for bad.) The thing to remember is that we must not dwell on the mistakes of others or our own mistakes, but learn from the situations and avoid the trap.

We must forgive quickly. Unforgiveness is a two-edged sword. It traps and binds those involved in the offense and it can keep us from experiencing God's forgiveness in our own lives. It has even been said that unforgiveness is a prison in which we keep ourselves.

We must forgive repeatedly. There is no limit on the number of times we forgive. In the Lord's Prayer we are given a model of how to pray. In that prayer we ask to be forgiven as we forgive others. Just as we continually need forgiveness, so we need to forgive others. Sometimes it may be every five minutes, but whenever the occasion or thought occurs, we need to consciously forgive.

There is no limit on what we are to forgive. Jesus provided us a model in forgiveness. He not only forgave adultery (see John 4:17-39; John 8:10-11), but even forgave those who rejected and crucified Him. We are to conform to (imitate) God's nature of forgiveness.

Hurt is a common clue that there is unforgiveness. Jesus came to heal that hurt, to free us from the bondage unforgiveness brings and allow us to gain new spiritual insight and freedom. We need to admit our hurt and expect Jesus to reach inside and remove the hurt and scars. Through faith, expect to be healed and to feel released as He ministers to you.

Deal with any hidden areas of unforgiveness. Ask Jesus to reach inside so He can show you where you may have hidden bitterness and unforgiveness. As an act of your will verbally tell the Lord that you do forgive. Then thank God for bringing inner healing to you as you are obedient to forgive.

David is an excellent example of someone who had every reason to be critical of others. He wrote Psalm 59 when King Saul was unjustly plotting to murder him. He guarded his heart by pouring out his feelings to God, just as we must do. Repeat this prayer:

Father, just as David came to You with his feelings of hurt, betrayal and rejection, we come to You also.

Lord, we hurt, too, because of the adultery in the lives of our mates.

We give You the hurt, betrayal, rejection, anger and confusion. We release these to You so that Your healing can be released to us.

We see what adultery has done to our children and we hurt for them. We release this hurt, also. Reach inside us, Jesus, and bring inner healing.

Your Word says You came to "heal the broken hearted and to set at liberty them that are bruised."

We receive healing for our broken hearts, wounded spirits and damaged emotions.

We forgive our mates for the adultery and also forgive any others involved.

We ask forgiveness for any wrong responses we have had.

We ask You to continue our healing process and thank You that we are being set free, body, soul and spirit. Amen

Weapons Of Warfare

God is the one who brings victory and our trust must be in Him and not our own efforts. At the same time, we must realize that God does not want us to be passive observers but it is His desire that we be participants. We are to be over comers!

The Lord has provided for weapons to be used against the devices of Satan. We have the choice of putting God's provision into practice or ignoring them and seeing our home fall prey to the storms of adversity. Use the weapons of spiritual warfare to remain victorious and help your spouse get free of adultery. The Christian who fails to take up his weapons against the devil is already defeated.

Take control of your thoughts by refusing ungodly thoughts. Satan cannot force his thoughts upon us against our will. He can and does plant suggestions and his sense of timing is superb. He knows our weaknesses better than we do.

Satan flees when we resist him. Satan will flee from God's Word when we resist him verbally! There must come a time when we make a deliberate choice to use the Word of God against the stronghold of the Devil. It does not happen automatically - we must do the resisting.

Meditate on the Word of God. Meditation is not just reading God's Word or even memorizing it. Meditation is thinking and letting our minds dwell on it. Meditation is the spiritual equivalent to the digestion process in our bodies. Through meditation we extract spiritual nutrients that help strengthen our spirit man. God's Word tells us to think on those things that are pure, lovely and of virtue. We are told that if we meditate on God's Word not only will we gain knowledge, but we will have peace.

NOTES: _____

In Luke 14:30, Jesus said, "Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand?" As we prepare to go to war for our marriages we must know:

(Matthew 13:39) Our enemy is _____,

(2 Corinthians 10:3-5) We don't war in the _____,

our weapons are not _____ but _____,

the strongholds of the enemy are _____, and

we capture _____ to make them _____.

Ephesians 6:10-18 lists the equipment we need for war. What is the one item listed that is not defensive in nature? _____

1) Meditation helps _____ within us.

2) Meditation helps us _____ our _____ & avoid _____.

3) Through meditation we gain _____ and _____ on how to deal with difficult _____.

4) When we meditate God's _____, He promises us _____.

The Weapon Of Our Words Part I

Thoughts are like seeds that create after their own kind. The thoughts that we cultivate in our hearts produce their fruit in our lives. These can result in good fruit or in bad fruit. **We can be overcomers and have victory in every situation through the word of our testimony and the Blood of Jesus.** Our righteousness comes as a result of the power of the Blood of Jesus and the word of our testimony. There is power in giving testimony to what the Word of God says regarding the Blood of Jesus. When we declare the effective work of the Blood on our behalf and on the behalf of our covenant mate, it becomes a faith reality to us and we can live in the power of that Blood.

The mouth is the launching area for our warfare. God has tied the spiritual power of the universe to the human mouth. In Psalm 107 we are told to speak out about our redemption. God will bring us out as His Word promises. You may want to read at least through verse 22 of this Psalm.

Keys represent authority. God has given us the keys (authority) in the kingdom of heaven to bind and to loose as seen in Matthew 16:19 and 18:18. What we bind or loose on earth with our spoken words, SHALL happen in the spirit realm.

Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil. The word for "destroy" in 1 John 3:8 is the same word for "loose" in binding and loosing. When the possessed man in Mark 5:15 was "loosed" from Satan's influence he was in his right mind. John 12:31-32 shows us that without the influence of the ruler of this world, ALL men (including our spouses) will be drawn to Jesus.

According to Ephesians 6:12, we direct our binding against principalities, powers, rulers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places. Our spouse is flesh and blood and therefore **not our enemy. We love our mates and fight the devil!**

NOTES: _____

When we speak God's Word, the power of what we say is greatly magnified. We can pray God's Word by personalizing it for our loved ones and ourselves. For example, we could take 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 and read it this way:

"Father, I thank you that according to your Word, the body of (loved one's name) is the temple of the Holy Spirit, redeemed, forgiven, cleansed, made righteous and sanctified. Therefore, Satan has no place in _____ and no power over _____. I renounce Satan and loose _____ from him by the Blood of Jesus."

Other scriptures you can use in this way are Ephesians 1:7, 1 John 1:7, Romans 5:9 and Hebrews 13:12. Ask God to show you other scriptures.

In our speech it is important that we be:

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

The Weapon Of Our Words Part II

God's Word is effective. We are told in Hebrews 4:12 it is more effective than the weapon that allowed the Roman armies to conquer the entire world (the two-edged sword). **When we pray according to God's will we KNOW that we have what we desire.** God's Word is His will and He has promised that as we speak it forth, it will not return void.

We are not to stop speaking or thinking on God's Word. While all scripture is inspired by God and is profitable, the Holy Spirit can quicken areas of God's Word so that they become especially meaningful for the situation. If you do not have direction on what scriptures to pray in God's Word, ask the Lord. God has directed us to seek and ask and the result will be that we will find.

If you do not have direction on what to pray, **pray in the spirit to strengthen yourself.** The spirit of man needs to know the things of the Spirit of God, so a bridge has to be built between God and man. The divine bridge that God has provided is the bridge of the prayer language. When we speak in an unknown tongue we don't speak to man, we are speaking to God. The prayer language is the communication vehicle ordained by God for the believer.

The mouth is the center of spiritual warfare for the entire universe. Think of the spiritual battling we are doing when we pray in the spirit. Think of the praise and worship that is going forth to the Father. Think of the strongholds that are being attacked and torn down as we spend time flowing in our prayer language. Most believers introduced into the baptism of the Holy Spirit never give God the quality time praying in tongues they ought to.

NOTES: _____

Hebrews 4:12 compares God's Word to the kind of weapon used by Roman soldiers, a concept familiar to individuals at the time Hebrews was written. What does it say that the Word will cut through?

And we can be _____ that he will _____ to us whenever we _____ him for anything in _____ with his _____. And if we _____ he is _____ when we make our _____, we can be _____ that he will _____ us what we _____ for.

Read the following three passages: Deuteronomy 4:29, Proverbs 8:17 and Jeremiah 29:13. They all tell us the same thing. What is it that they say to us?

Through praying in the spirit we:

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

The Practice of Praise

Praise to God is released by a sense of righteousness that comes through the cleansing Blood of Jesus. A consistent daily declaration and testimony concerning His Blood will invariably move you into areas of praise. **God's Word directs us to give thanks.** It is not optional based on how good we are feeling or how great our circumstances may or may not be.

We are to give thanks in every situation; however we do not thank God that our mate is in sin, rather we give thanks for God's answer to Satan's attack. "What was intended for evil, God will use for good."

Prayer takes the problem to God, but praise takes the answer from God.

The time to praise God is when the pressure is the greatest, when the valley is the darkest. That's when praise releases faith. This is not easy to do when we face the trauma of adultery. It requires an act of our will. God does tell us to offer a "sacrifice of praise."

The sacrifice of thanksgiving or praise is the choice of every believer.

It belongs to the will. You cannot be successful as a Christian without recognizing the importance of your will in offering a sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise. Don't allow the devil to make you calloused and bitter. Don't allow him to turn you away from the Father. He will fill your mind with negative thoughts. He will do everything he can to erect strongholds inside of you. But it is precisely at this point that the sacrifice of thanksgiving and praise explodes in your spirit and leads you into the miracle working power of God.

A sacrifice of praise must involve a vocal expression to God. The writer of Hebrews tells us that in Christ we are to offer a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips confessing His name.

The attitude of confession must be one of submission to the will of God and to Scripture. Our confession is the doorway to our faith. Jesus is the High priest of our confession. No matter what pressure comes, victory comes only through "holding fast." As we hold fast in praise, we are releasing our High Priest, Jesus, to operate on our behalf at the right hand of the Father.

Find four verses in the Bible that specifically command us to praise God:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-19 talks about praising God. You will find the answers to the following questions there.

When should we praise God? _____

How much should we pray? _____

When should we be thankful? _____

Why should we do these things? _____

What might happen if we stop? _____

**Praise is taking God's _____
and _____ them over
the _____ from the _____.**

NOTES: _____

The Practice of Fasting

The dynamic of fasting with prayer is similar to God's warfare principle of "one chasing a thousand but two chasing ten thousand" found in Deuteronomy 32:30. Fasting combined with prayer multiplies the effectiveness of warfare in the spirit realm. Some forces in the spiritual realm only yield to power released as a result of fasting.

Just as we saw that Jesus gave us keys to bind and loose, fasting is a key that opens doors and releases captives from bondage. However, **motives must be right for an effective fast.** If fasting becomes a religious work, it becomes invalidated. What is accomplished by fasting is a result of FAITH not works. Effective fasting is done as an act of FAITH demonstrating that we believe in its power in the spiritual realm. Discipline and obedience lead to growth, not to favor with God. Our standing with God depends on what Jesus accomplished, not on our efforts. Fasting is not a method of "earning" but more a way of "learning."

In Scripture Jesus indicated that His disciples are expected to fast. In Matthew 6:16, He said "Moreover **WHEN** ye fast..." (not if). In Matthew 9:15, Jesus said (referring to us), "... then **SHALL** they fast..."

Fasting demonstrates repentance. In Jonah, the people of Nineveh fasted to demonstrate their repentance to the Lord. David fasted to demonstrate his repentance from adultery when the child that resulted was sick and dying.

Like Daniel, we can fast to demonstrate repentance not only for ourselves, but also on behalf of our one-flesh entity. In Job 22:30 we read, "*He shall deliver the island of the innocent: and it is delivered by the pureness of thine hands.*" Fasting can be a faith action that demonstrates our commitment to God that we purpose to remain in the righteousness of Christ so that our mates will be delivered according to His Word.

The most productive fasts are those when you can be alone with God. To persist in a fast, you must take your mind off the physical realm and put it in the spiritual realm. If you work, take your lunch break and find a spot alone to pray. Going without food while not praying is not fasting. Most results appear after a fast is ended. Many like to break the fast by having communion with grape juice and a cracker.

Fasting Facts

- 1) Fasting is NOT a means of gaining God's favor.
- 2) Fasting must not be a display to others of our spirituality.
- 3) Fasting is not a way to inflict oneself to become more spiritual.
- 4) Fast when you are led to do so by the Holy Spirit.
- 5) Fast when you need to seek God's will on a matter.
- 6) Fast to demonstrate your commitment to the Lord in turning from wrong conduct.
- 7) Fast to allow the power of God to be released in the building up of the work of God, not just for ourselves but also for others.
- 8) Fast for protection and deliverance in the physical realm as well as the spiritual arena.
- 9) Fast to humble yourself before God and cast down pride.
- 10) Use wisdom in fasting.
 - a) gradually or limited for first-timers.
 - b) eat lightly before and after.
 - c) spend the "free-time" in prayer.

Knowing God's Voice



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Knowing God's Voice

Covenant Connection

To develop the ability to discern God's voice, a skill essential to keeping our covenant so that restoration is complete.

Key text: *"...and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep ...and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow ...My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow Me:"* John 10:3-5, 27

Introduction

One of the effects of marital breakdown is the emotional and intellectual devastation it inflicts on people. Even normally confident and strong individuals are suddenly insecure, filled with doubt and confusion, questioning every choice they must make and having no sense of direction. At the same time, there are often very important decisions that need to be made. Even when we cry out to God for direction, it seems our condition prevents us from hearing His voice.

Moses was away from his people for a long time when he went up on Mount Sinai to talk with God. While Moses was gone the Israelites became impatient. Lacking direction, they listened to and followed ungodly voices. Many Christians feel they are without direction just like the Israelite camp, but there is a big difference! Although our leader, Jesus, has been gone a long time He has not left us alone. God's voice, the Holy Spirit, is present and does speak to us - usually through our thoughts. Sometimes this occurs during prayer, sometimes while we are reading or meditating on God's Word, but whenever it does occur it's important to recognize what thoughts are of God and to discern the thoughts that are not. As we recognize the voice of the Holy Spirit, the Bible tells us *"he will guide you into all truth:"* John 16:13. It is that truth that will set us free, and the result will be the reconciliation and restoration that is God's will and God's best for our lives.

In the pages that follow, we will discover principles that will enable us to discern the voice and leading of our loving Heavenly Father. If He wants to lead us and we want to be led, nothing can prevent us from learning to know His voice.

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Lesson Objectives

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

- 1) Explain the importance of discerning the voice of God.
- 2) Get to know God better.
- 3) List three characteristics of the voice of God.
- 4) Describe how to become familiar with God's voice.
- 5) State at least four "motive questions" that can help to discern God's voice.
- 6) Ask practical questions we can use to evaluate our thoughts.

Why Is It Important To Recognize God's Voice?

While God's Word provides principles, we often need the Lord's guidance in specific situations. Too many Christians simply accept circumstances as God's will, but "an internal witness is always better than an external circumstance." When we know we have heard God's voice concerning our circumstances we will have peace. Circumstances can change at any moment - but God's peace allows us to remain steadfast. The Word promises God will guide us. *"Thus saith the LORD, thy Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel; I am the LORD thy God which teacheth thee to profit, which leadeth thee by the way that thou shouldest go."* Isaiah 48:17

Although our spirit is the channel God often uses to speak to us, **it is through our thoughts that we recognize His voice.** The enemy tries to influence us through our mind, and we have our own "fleshly" thoughts. While we hear these, it's important that we recognize thoughts that are not from God.

In our marriages, events have taken place that resulted in evil rather than God's blessing. **God promises in His Word that when we are obedient to His voice, He will deliver us.**

To recognize the voice of God is to experience a close level of fellowship with Him that affects every part of our life. The 23rd Psalm is a touching account of the close walk David enjoyed with God.

What do we learn from Psalm 32:8 and John 16:13 regarding direction for specific situations?

As we seek to hear God's voice, we will find competition in our minds. We will get thoughts from:

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

Close fellowship with God has benefits. List some of the benefits you have experienced in your life.

Obedience to the _____ of God brings _____ from _____.

"The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." Psalm 23

NOTES: _____

Characteristics Of God's Voice

Just as human voices have distinguishing qualities or characteristics, so does the voice of God. The voice of God is normally gentle and not pushy. It brings peace and rest to us. "Peace is the umpire for doing the will of God." His peace in our hearts is a confirmation that He is leading us. "*God is not the author of confusion but of peace...*" (1 Corinthians 14:33) Therefore we know that if any voice we hear leads us into confusion, it cannot be the voice of God.

Most of the times we want God to use the voice that can "*break the cedars of Lebanon...*" (Psalm 29:5). **We want Him to shout so we won't miss it.** We want Him to write His words on our walls as He did in Daniel 5. Yet we see in 1 Kings 19:11-12 how he usually chooses to speak. "*And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice.*" We are not to wait for major events, but to obey the still small voice of God.

If we encounter a thought that violates principles set forth in Scripture, it is not the voice of God.

God's voice will always be in agreement with His written Word, the Bible. Since God is Himself truth, it is impossible for Him to lie by contradicting what He has said before.

In the frame below, we see scriptures that apply to certain circumstances or situations. By using these (and other) verses, we can determine if a voice we are hearing is God. God's voice will always confirm what He has already declared in His written Word.

What God's voice says about: forgiveness 1 John 1:9, Psalm 32:1-2, 2 Samuel 12:13, Romans 8:1, Hebrews 8:12; **putting others first** Matthew 22:36-40, Deuteronomy 6:4-9; **seeking revenge** Proverbs 24:8, 20:22, Romans 12:17-21; **divorce & remarriage** Exodus 20:14-17, Mark 10:1-12, Matthew 5:28, 19:3-12, 1 Corinthians 7:10-11, Proverbs 6:25-35, **forgiving those who hurt us** Mark 11:25, Matthew 6:12, 14-15, 18:21-35, **not loving our enemies** Luke 6:35-36, Matthew 5:38-44

The Distinguishing Characteristics of God's Voice

1) The voice of God is the voice of Jesus.

I (Jesus) don't speak on my own _____.
The _____ who sent me gave me his own _____ as to what I should _____. And I _____ his instructions lead to _____ _____; so I say _____ the Father _____ me to say!

2) You must listen for God's voice in order to hear and understand Him.

_____ Me, everyone, and _____: If anyone has _____ to _____, let him _____!

3) God's voice is always in agreement with His Word.

God is no mere _____! He doesn't tell _____ or change his _____. God always _____ his _____.

I (Jesus) am the way, the _____, and the life

Hearing God Requires Knowing God

Experiencing is no substitute for abiding. Neither is passion a substitute for love. To recognize God's voice, it is not enough to know WHAT the characteristics of His voice are. We must know HIM, not just know about Him. Many Christians live a disciplined life and spend regular time in the Word and prayer but lack the fellowship of the LOVE of God in their lives. You must seek God before you can find Him. Spirituality is not the result of discipline. It is possible to have a PASSION for God but to lack LOVE for Him.

Praying to know God's direction is not like instant oatmeal, it takes time. When we need to hear from God, we need to pray. Instead, most Christians worry. **Worry is a substitute for prayer.** It's been said that worrying is like taking a loan out on the problems of tomorrow. Praying is giving those debts (problems) to God and allowing Him to take responsibility for them.

We know God through the working of His WORD in our lives. The Word provides nourishment for growth and just like food for the body, the amount of spiritual nutrients extracted depends on the amount of time we spend digesting it! As we apply God's Word to our lives, we see God prove Himself and His Word to be true in the circumstances that we encounter. This causes our faith to grow.

God gauges our success not by our possessions but by character development. "Christ likeness is the epitome of character development." Love is not defined by feelings. Instead, love is defined in terms that can be evidenced through our actions.

The result of developing the qualities of love (those of Jesus) in our lives is obedience. In John 14:15 we are told that if we love Jesus, we will keep His commandments. The 23rd verse says that as a result of this love we will keep His Word. Galatians 5:13 explains that through love we are to serve each other. Fulfillment in our lives comes when we respond to His voice in service. It is through action and exercise that we grow and our hearing becomes keen.

NOTES: _____

We know God through communicating with Him.

- 1) Pray with your _____ - share your _____ feelings.
- 2) Pray in the _____ - let the Holy Spirit intercede _____ you.
- 3) Quiet time - don't _____, give God _____ to _____ and _____ Him to!

We know God through the working of His Word in our lives.

- 1) _____ His Word
- 2) _____ His Word
- 3) _____ on His Word

We know God through developing the qualities of Jesus in our lives.

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

We know God by _____ to His voice in _____ others.

God's Voice Will Exhibit Godly Motives

Most often, God's voice will be expressed in our thoughts. But often we are not sure whether the thought is God or not. As we learned earlier, our flesh and the devil are competing with God for our attention. So how can we discern His voice from the others? **Godly thoughts will always have Godly motives.** God's voice will lead us to do things that reflect His character, heart and will. If we identify the motives behind the thoughts, we can check to be sure that the thought is from God. God loves to give us our desires when they have Spirit qualities!

Godly motives have qualities of "Spirit Fruit." If we are being led of the Spirit of God, then it becomes obvious that there will be fruit of the Spirit as a result. Galatians 5:22-23 says *"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law."* A voice other than God's will not bear this fruit, but will exhibit the attitudes and actions mentioned in verses 19-21.

Godly motives can become twisted. Godly motives are often twisted when we don't wait on the Lord. An example of a Godly motive that got twisted is the story of Sarah and Hagar. We need to give God time. Ishmael was a result of Sarah's impatience. Remember that Satan is a liar (John 8:44), but his lies are often subtle half-truths and truths that God has declared in His Word can become twisted. "Error is often truth carried to the extreme." God is a God of balance.

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Motive Checklist	
<p>Jesus walked in perfect harmony with our Heavenly Father. He heard God's voice clearly and always obeyed with pure motives. For each of the Fruit of the Spirit listed below, find a scripture or incident where Jesus demonstrated that attitude and action.</p> <p>1) Love _____ _____</p> <p>2) Joy _____ _____</p> <p>3) Peace _____ _____</p> <p>4) Long-suffering (patience) _____ _____</p> <p>5) Gentleness (kindness) _____ _____</p> <p>6) Goodness _____ _____</p> <p>7) Faith (faithfulness) _____ _____</p> <p>8) Meekness (humility) _____ _____</p> <p>9) Temperance (self-control) _____ _____</p>	<p>Use this list to check the motives behind your thoughts as you listen to God for direction in your life.</p>

Discerning Our Thoughts

Thoughts of the soul get you weary and frustrated; thoughts of the Spirit give you peace. Romans 8:13-14 shows us that when we sow to the flesh (soul) we reap death, but when by God's Spirit we die to the things of the flesh, we live.

If we stop and ask ourselves what the motive is, we often can tell if it's from God. **If our motives are pure, then we can say with peace that the Holy Spirit is leading us.** If we feel the need to defend a thought or action - is it God? A defensive heart is not one at peace and not one demonstrating Godly fruit. We must ask God to show us the source of defensive feelings, and repent where we have been wrong in mind-set or deed.

There are many areas where unhealthy motives may be hidden by seemingly good actions. James 4:3 says, *"Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."* God cannot honor selfish motives. Fasting can also be a Godly thought that is twisted through pride. Pride was the sin of Satan but if we want the leading of the Lord we need to be meek.

God's Word tells us that there is safety in a *"multitude of counselors."* (Proverbs 11:14) **If we are not willing to listen to Godly counsel, the thought is probably not from God.**

We can contrast the fruit of the Spirit with other qualities. For example, does it produce love or revenge, joy or heaviness, peacefulness or turmoil, patience or immediate demand? Jesus says that His yoke is easy and His burden is light. The Spirit is gentle. While there are occasions for urgency, the thought should not be a heavy burden and bring a driving pressure. Hold back if the thought is "glamorous" and brings "instant" fulfillment.

The following list is a test for thoughts that come from a pure heart, thoughts that honor God and can be, in turn, honored by Him. *"Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things. Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."* Philippians 4:8-9

Motive Questions to Help Discern our Thoughts

- 1) Does this thought bring me _____ or _____ me?
- 2) What is the motive behind this _____?
- 3) Is this thought for the benefit of _____ or for the benefit of _____?
- 4) Is this thought _____ towards _____?
- 5) Does this thought prove how _____ I am or how _____ another is?
- 6) Is this thought to make me feel more _____ than others?
- 7) Am I willing to receive Godly _____ on this thought?
- 8) Does this thought have the _____ (_____) of the Holy Spirit?
- 9) Does this thought _____ me? Is there a _____ and _____?
- 10) Is this thought " _____?"

Closing Thoughts

In summary, let us look at some basic truths and principles that are important to know as we seek to hear God's voice.

When we hear and respond to the voice of God in our mind, the result will bring life and peace.

God's desire that we be obedient to His voice is more important than what we do in service or in worship.

If the Holy Spirit leads you, you are a child of God.

When we heed God's voice He will teach us to profit, give us direction, provide us with peace, and give us righteousness that is as steady and persistent as ocean waves.

When we fast it sensitizes our spirit so that we can hear God more clearly.

Instead of adapting to the lifestyle of the world, we must use the Word to renew our minds. By doing this we will be better able to follow the voice of God and prove through our lives what is His perfect will.

When we praise the Lord the enemy is stilled so that we can hear God's voice.

When we are obedient to follow what He teaches us (become disciples) then He will open our ears and we will have words to uplift the weary.

A result of calling to God is that He reveals hidden things to us.

Fellowship with Christ occurs when we hear Him knock and then heed His voice.

NOTES: _____

PRAYER:

**Lord Jesus, we lay our lives down.
Without you Lord, we cannot succeed.
God, we need you. We surrender our lives.
We want you Jesus, and we want your will
in our lives. Jesus, have your way.
Separate everything out of our lives that would
hinder or distract or cloud our hearing your voice.
In the name of Jesus, we pray the power of your
blood would break the power of Satan's lies.
Let every deception be exposed, every lie, every
form of distraction, be exposed to the light.
Lord, let your Word divide between
the soul and the spirit.
Let it cut right down to the marrow of our bones,
so we can see that which is of you
and that which is of self.
Remove the selfish desires, every lying
imagination, the luring attractions of the enemy
that have looked so good. We pray they would be
destroyed, in the name of Jesus.
Holy Spirit, come and breathe life into us,
fill us with light. We awake to righteousness –
you said you would give us light.
Flood us with revelation knowledge,
fill us with the knowledge of your will.
We ask for your wisdom and we receive it in the
name of Jesus. Amen.**

**How To Know God's Will
For Your Marriage
(A Study on Covenant)**



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How To Know God's Will For Your Marriage (A Study on Covenant)

Covenant Connection

To gain an understanding, based on God's Word and the principles of covenant, that He not only desires to see our marriages healed but also is motivated to work with us toward that end.

Introduction

When a marriage fails, even if we believe God can heal marriages, it is difficult to believe that God will heal our marriage unless we are convinced that it is His will to do so. Often other believers or pastors tell us "these things (divorces) happen, we all have trials and burdens in this life. Just rely on God for the grace to carry on." We know that divorce is not God's will. We believe that God does work miracles. Yet we remain unsure of God's will regarding reconciling and healing OUR marriage. It is when we know and understand God's will about a matter that we can have faith to see God accomplish it. During this lesson we will first discuss how to determine the basis of God's will.

Lesson Objectives

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

- 1) State how the Bible is related to God's will.
- 2) Explain God's nature in regard to covenants.
- 3) Describe the difference between a contract and a covenant.
- 4) Express God's stance on divorce and remarriage.
- 5) Explain what is meant by a non-covenant marriage.
- 6) List three conditions where divorce is within God's will.

For us to understand God's will in healing marriages, we must have an understanding of God's position with regard to covenants. In today's society, when promises are so easily made and so easily broken, it is difficult for us to understand the true weight of a covenant agreement.

Contracts are usually thought to be the same as covenants. In our culture we are used to contracts where liability is limited and that are often written with loopholes to provide escape from the terms. There is a significant difference with covenants. A covenant carries unlimited liability. In Biblical times and in many cultures today, covenant means strong commitment and loyalty, even to death.

Most people view marriage as another type of contract. However, in God's eyes marriage is much more than a contract, it is a covenant. Because God designed marriage as a covenant, it has implications far beyond those of a contract.¹ To understand marriage as God sees it, and to know what God is willing to do to heal a marriage, we must understand covenant as God sees it. In this lesson we will learn what covenants are, how God functions through covenants, and how these principles apply to healing our marriage.

Recommended for additional study is the book, "Help, My Spouse Wants Out" by Craig Hill. It is available from Covenant Keepers, Inc. PO Box 702371, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74170

Knowing God's Will

Many of us have an unswerving belief that the Bible is the Word of God. We believe that His Word is truth. We believe that it is relevant for our situations today. And indeed as we will see in this lesson, God's Word does contain the answers. God's Word provides answers about His nature and His will.

To know God's will about a situation, it is essential to study passages in scripture that apply to the situation (in this case marriage healing). However, studying scripture by itself is not enough to know God's will. We need to approach the Word with a teachable heart. If we just try to find verses that fit our ideas or support our position, we won't have assurance that God has shown us His full truth about the situation. The Bible tells us, *"All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the LORD weigheth the spirits."* (Proverbs 16:2) Rather than have doubt, pause right now and ask God to open your heart and your mind to His truth. Commit in prayer to allow the Holy Spirit to teach and lead you into the truth.

The benefit of knowing God's Word in regard to marriage healing is that it enables us to have the confidence to receive healing in our marriage. **According to God marriage is a covenant.** Therefore, we can learn

God's will on marriage through studying God's will for covenant relationships.

As we will learn, the wonderful thing about a covenant is that it is not voided by the actions of one individual. In Malachi 2:14 it was the husband who left the marriage. In Proverbs 2:17, it was the wife who left. It does not matter which partner left, God still considers marriage to be a covenant. We will see that God will show Himself strong on behalf of those who are willing to keep covenant and are honest, open and willing to allow Him to work on their behalf.

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When we continue in God's Word what is the result?

Jesus said to the people who _____ in him, "You are truly my _____ if you keep _____ my teachings. And you will _____ the _____, and the _____ will set you _____."

It is when we KNOW God's will that we can ask in confidence and receive it. What happens when we ask according to God's will?

And we can be _____ that he will _____ to us whenever we _____ him for anything in _____ with his _____. And if we _____ he is _____ when we make our _____, we can be _____ that he will _____ us what we _____ for.

Marriage is a covenant relationship. Read Malachi 2:14 and Proverbs 2:17. Marriage covenants are established by vows made before whom?

The Meaning of Covenant

Covenants have existed in every society for thousands of years. They still exist in eastern cultures, but they have lost their meaning in most western societies.

Covenants are sacred commitments that are honored even more than life itself. Native American Indians entered into a covenant with another by becoming a blood brother. According to tradition, Native Americans would kill covenant breakers and their offspring down to the 7th generation. African tribes so honored covenants that they would destroy covenant breakers and their family down to the 5th generation. Even today in many Islamic countries, those who break covenant by changing religions are marked for death.

A covenant is a commitment that is made to another party in the presence of God. A covenant is independent of the performance of the other party. God intends covenant to be a unilateral, irrevocable, unbreakable commitment valid at least until death. Our salvation is based on just such a blood covenant. Jesus offers those who enter into covenant with him the guarantee of eternal life. Entering into covenant relationship means death to independent living. Covenant partners agree to lay down their lives for each other to place the needs of the other partner ahead of their own. We see this illustrated when we enter into covenant with Jesus. Our new life in Christ becomes the all-important factor.

A contract is different than a covenant. A contract is a bilateral agreement between two parties totally dependent upon performance of the agreement. If one person in the contract doesn't live up to their commitment, the other one doesn't have to fulfill the contract.

Because the people became covenant keepers, in 2 Chronicles 15:12-15 what benefit did they receive?

Read Jeremiah 11:2-3. What is the penalty for not keeping covenant?

When they established their covenant, Jonathan gave David special gifts that had significant meaning:

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

If one covenant partner is unfaithful to the promises of the covenant it does not release the other partner of their responsibility to remain faithful. The meaning of covenant is eloquently defined in the "Love Chapter" (1 Corinthians 13:4-7). In The Living Bible it says,

*"Love is very patient and kind, never jealous or envious, never boastful or proud, never haughty or rude. Love does not demand its own way. It is not irritable or touchy. It does not hold grudges and will hardly even notice when others do it wrong. It is never glad about injustice, but rejoices whenever truth wins out. **If you love someone you will be loyal to him no matter what the cost. You will always believe in him, and always stand your ground in defending him.**"*

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God Functions Through Covenants

As we have seen, a covenant is a special type of pact or agreement that binds the parties into a deep and lasting relationship. **God is a covenant maker.** In the Bible we see that God made covenants with several people. A notable covenant is the one that God made with Abraham establishing what would become the Jewish nation.

Since Jesus' death and resurrection, those who receive Jesus as their Lord and Savior are partners in the New Covenant with God. Through this covenant we are freed from the bondage of sin and we have access to the throne of God and all the resources of God. This new covenant enables us to receive God's power and healing work on our behalf.

Jesus is now the mediator of a "better covenant" which was established on better promises. Throughout scripture we see that God remained faithful to His covenant promises even when man, His covenant partner, failed to keep his end of the bargain.

The 17th Chapter of Ezekiel is a riddle that illustrates many aspects of covenant. It illustrates God's view of covenant and the active role He takes in enforcing covenants in which He is a part. A sobering principle is that the breaking of covenants by individuals affects society as a whole. Because the leader of the nation broke covenant, the whole country experienced an increase in servitude and bondage. There is another aspect though that reflects the breaking of covenant with families.

Open your Bible to Ezekiel 17 and read the first six verses. In the allegory of Ezekiel 17:1-6 a covenant was made and a "family relationship" established. Now read verses 7-10. One party to the covenant made an attempt to "divorce" this relationship and establish a new one. Verses 11-21 record God's response. God steps in and takes action to enforce the covenant. God tells us in verses 22-24 that it is when He plants and establishes a relationship that it will prosper. Praise God, we can apply verses 22-24 to our "family tree" in addition to its direct meaning for the nation of Israel.

NOTES: _____

<p>God is a covenant maker and a covenant keeper. Read Isaiah 55:3, 2 Samuel 23:5, and Psalm 89:33-34. How long does the covenant described here last?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>God honors and works on behalf of covenants. Read Joshua 9:3-20. This covenant was entered into with deceit and without consulting God, yet God required that it be honored. Israel did not honor the covenant. According to 2 Samuel 21:1 what was the result?</p> <p>_____</p> <p>In Joshua 9:3-20 a covenant was entered into:</p> <p>1) _____</p> <p>2) _____</p> <p>Would God consider a marriage covenant entered into with deceit still valid?</p> <p>_____</p>

The Covenant of Marriage

Marriage provides us an earthly representation of the covenant between Christ and the Church. When we marry, we enter into an institution that was established by God. Even if we are not born-again Christians, a covenant is established. Matthew 19:6 tells us that a married couple becomes one: *"Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."* God does not give commands like this unless He makes a provision to enable us to keep them. For many, it seems impossible to keep a marriage covenant, especially if their partner wants out. But what is impossible for man is possible with God.

God is a witness to every marriage covenant. However, God's power and strength to keep covenant is only available to those who have a direct covenant relationship with Him. We enter into covenant with God through the blood of Jesus Christ. This releases God's power of reconciliation that breaks down the barrier between God and us. This same power is then available, because of covenant, to work through us and on our behalf with our mates.

Many of us find that when we come to God with our problem marriages, we have violated one or more of His principles regarding marriage. We may have married an unbeliever and violated the admonishment in 2 Corinthians 6:14 to not be unequally yoked with an unbeliever. We may have remarried after a divorce or married a divorced person and violated Matthew 19:9 which according to scripture is a sin of adultery. When we discover that we have gone against God's will in any area of our life, the clear path to follow is to repent, receive forgiveness and go on. The good news is that God's forgiveness is available and if we repent, He will still honor covenant and be strong on our behalf, if we acknowledge and confess our actions as sin.

NOTES: _____

Read Matthew 19:26, Mark 9:23, and Mark 10:27. Marriage healing is considered by many to be impossible. What does God tell us in these verses?

Even if we have violated God's principles of marriage, there is good news. If we _____ our _____ to him, he is _____ and just to _____ us and to _____ us from every _____.

Read 1 Corinthians 7:12-14. If you are unequally yoked, why can God still work in bringing reconciliation?

Assume a person entered into a marriage where a previous marriage covenant was broken (not kept by either party). According to 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, if they repented and confessed it as sin, would God still work on their behalf?

If so, why? _____

Divorce and Remarriage Because of Immorality

Many Christians today have come to believe that there are some circumstances that would allow them to divorce their mates or to remarry another person who is divorced. One common situation that is used is found in Matthew 19:3-10. Sometimes it is referred to as the "Exception Clause."

In Matthew 19:9 it says, *"And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."*

Christians often use the "exception clause," referring to sexual immorality, as valid grounds for divorce. To understand this passage, we can look at it in the context of Jewish culture or do a word study.

In Jewish culture, if a man found out that his bride was not a virgin, either during the betrothal period or on their wedding night, he could arrange a divorce because of sexual immorality (divorces were required to end betrothals). This was what Joseph was going to do with Mary when he learned that she was pregnant during their engagement. In terms of Jewish culture, Jesus said that a divorce in this situation was not adultery.

Applying this to our culture today, it is appropriate to look at the meaning of the words. "Sexual immorality" in Greek is the word *porneia*. This is the same word in Greek that Paul uses to describe an incestuous relationship. *Porneia* is the same base word used in Jude 7 for Sodomy. Sodomite marriage (marriage between two men or two women) is condemned in Leviticus 18. In terms of today's culture, divorce in this case is not adultery.

Early church leaders did not provide any scriptural grounds for divorce and remarriage. The view that divorce and remarriage are permissible for unfaithfulness in marriage can be traced back to the 15th century humanist, Erasmus. Some Biblical scholars take the position that the way the words are arranged in Greek (syntax) does not allow remarriage under any condition while the other partner is still living.²

NOTES: _____

1 Corinthians 7:10-11 provides two choices for someone who has divorced. What are they?

1) _____

2) _____

What sin does Mark 10:11-12 tell us occurs when a divorced person marries another?

Romans 7:2-3 says that a divorced person is free to remarry someone else when _____

Divorce and Remarriage by The Innocent Party

² See page 58 of "The Rebuilders Guide" by the Institute in Basic Life Principles, Copyright 1982.

Another common misunderstanding that is given as valid grounds for divorce and remarriage is called the "Innocent Party." It is tempting to assign guilt and think in terms of an innocent party and a guilty party. However, by looking at God's standards we see that both partners are guilty. God does not have degrees of guilt even if the other partner is the major contributor to the marital problems. The scripture that has been used to support this position is found in 1 Corinthians 7:15, "*But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace.*"

The word "bondage" in this verse is the Greek word "doulos". **Bondage refers to a state of being a slave of someone else and being under their control.** A study of every place this word is used in scripture finds no place where it describes the marriage covenant. The word for the marital bond found in Romans 7:2-3 and 1 Corinthians 7:27, 39 is a different word "deo" which means to be "knit together."

If you study the meaning of this in the context of the chapter, we see that Paul is referring to the sexual obligation found earlier in this chapter. **In marriage our bodies are not our own but are "under the mastery" of our mate** (1 Corinthians 7:4-5). We are not to deny them sexually. However, if our mate leaves, scripture no longer requires that sexual obligation to them.

They are not free to return at will and use scripture as justification to satisfy their desires. However, we must respond with the right motives. It is important in this situation to be sensitive and led by the Holy Spirit.

Believers who suffer the tragedy of divorce have two scriptural options. They can remain unmarried or be reconciled to their mate. Pastors or others who condone remarriage do so many times on the basis of compassion rather than scriptural authority. As we've seen in this study, scripture provides no basis for remarriage while a covenant partner still lives. Perhaps through poor counsel or a lack of knowledge you have remarried. This teaching is not intended to put anyone under condemnation. Forgiveness is available for the asking. God will recognize and establish a new covenant that replaces the broken one.

NOTES: _____

Prayer Of Repentance
(For Remarriage or Marriage to a Divorced Person)

Heavenly Father, I confess to you as sin the adultery I committed through my marriage. I come into agreement with your Word. Thank you for the cleansing blood of Jesus. I receive your forgiveness and mercy. Thank you that according to your Word in 1 John 1:9, my marriage is cleansed from unrighteousness. Thank you for being a partner with me in my covenant marriage to (spouse's name). I recommit myself to my covenant with (spouse's name) and I will rely on your grace and strength to hold my covenant firm. AMEN.

Remarriage After An Interim Marriage

For years, Deuteronomy 24:1-4 has been confusing to divorced couples who feel God has called

them to remarry their original mates despite an interim marriage by one of the partners. Close study of Deuteronomy 24 and the corresponding passage in Jeremiah 3 give insight to this area. While the views are quite different, they both reach the same conclusion.

The parties in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 both disavowed their marriage covenant. The man refuted his vows by instigating the divorce. The woman disavowed her covenant through her remarriage. In the 3rd chapter of Jeremiah we find this same verse is repeated but in reference to God's relationship with Israel.

Israel during the time of Jeremiah required that a divorce take place whenever adultery occurred. **The option to forgive and remain married was not a part of Israel's law.** In view of their culture, God had no choice but to divorce Israel because of her unfaithfulness to Him.

Although God divorced Israel, God's design was not to cut off Israel permanently, but rather to bring her to repentance and restore her to Himself.

In our society today, we often do not have a choice when our mate wants a divorce. The courts routinely grant divorces despite efforts to avoid them. Just as God's grace and heart for reconciliation are displayed toward Israel in Jeremiah, we believe God would have us extend the hand of reconciliation toward our mates. We do not believe that Deuteronomy 24:1-4 applies where the covenant has not been broken by **both** parties but is held by one partner standing with God.

A brief summary of a second view of the Deuteronomy passage is provided in the sidebar on this page. The entire message provides more depth. It is an excellent teaching and is available on audiotape.³

The Non-Covenant Marriage

One of the most difficult questions facing someone who is trusting God to heal their marriage occurs when the mate marries someone else. Does their mate's freewill over-ride their own will

Another View Of Deuteronomy 24:1-4

Craig Hill (founder of Family Foundations International) has studied the meaning of Deuteronomy 24 in the context of Hebrew traditions as well as other Scripture. He feels that Deuteronomy 24 applies to the wedding night or betrothal period.

If a man found that his wife was not a virgin, on the morning following the wedding night he could appeal to the Sanhedrin for a divorce. Weddings at that time were always held on Wednesday since the Sanhedrin met Thursday and the matter could be immediately resolved. The man was required to bring the bedclothes as evidence. Absence of blood on the sheets was proof that the woman had not been a virgin and he had been defrauded.

The woman would then be free to marry another. Later in life, the man could not remarry that woman even though she had become a widow, because he had publicly humiliated her and her family.

Craig Hill feels this verse does not apply to re-marriage and reconciliation following an interim marriage in our culture today.

When Jesus' mother, Mary, told Joseph she was with child, Joseph planned to put her away (divorce her) quietly. This took place during the betrothal (engagement) period and by law a divorce was necessary to sever their relationship.

³"Marriage, Covenant & the Image of God," by Craig Hill. 1993 Covenant Keepers Conference. Audiotape available through Covenant Keepers Inc. PO Box 702371, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74170.

and God's will?⁴ Does this end their stand of faith? While some choose not to continue, others know deep in their spirit that they must continue to honor their covenant. Let's see what God's Word says.

One principle found in scripture is that God is a covenant maker, not a covenant breaker. Since God takes part in creating a marriage covenant (See Malachi 2:14, Matthew 19:6 and Mark 10:9) He will not break an existing covenant in order to create a new one. Legal decrees cannot establish or break covenants. A civil divorce decree revokes a license to rights and responsibilities of marriage, but does not affect a covenant witnessed and honored by God.

A covenant can be broken when both parties no longer hold it. Breaking covenant is sin and harmful consequences accompany all sin, but God in His mercy may recognize and establish a new covenant when a previous marriage covenant is not being held in force by either partner. However, the Lord cannot bless a marriage that takes place when the covenant is still held by one mate. It is in reality a "non-covenant" marriage.

Scripture provides several examples of non-covenant relationships. Genesis 16 and 21 tells the story of Hagar. Although she had a child by Abraham, the Bible is clear that Sarah was his covenant wife. Isaac (Sarah's child), not Ishmael (Hagar's child), was the child of the covenant or promise (See Galatians 4:22-30). Eventually Hagar had to leave.

The book of Hosea provides an allegory of God's marital relationship with Israel. It describes how Hosea stood in faith for his wife Gomer and how she was reconciled to him despite her unfaithfulness. In chapter 2 (verses 2 and 7) we see God, Israel's husband, indicate that Israel had ended her marital relationship with God and found another husband. Verses 18-23 show God's plan to restore His bride and renew their marriage. In chapter 3 God commands Hosea to purchase Gomer out of prostitution and restore her as his wife.⁵

Read 1 Samuel 18:17-30. What event took place in verse 27 and what covenant was established?

In 2 Samuel 3:13-16, David kept the covenant of his marriage with Michal. When the promises of his kingdom were manifested, he insisted that Michal be reconciled to him. What had occurred while David and Michal were apart?

Legal decrees do not establish a covenant. A covenant needs:

- 1) _____

- 2) _____

- 3) _____

⁴The subject of FREEWILL is addressed in "Principles for Marriage Healing," Series One. This is available through Covenant Keepers, Inc. 220 Westinghouse Blvd, Ste 405, Charlotte, NC 28273.

⁵For more information about the situation of a spouse remarrying while you are standing, listen to the CD, "Non-Covenant Marriage" by Marilyn Conrad. Available through Covenant Keepers, Inc.

When Divorce is God's Will

Since God hates divorce, is there ever a situation where divorce is in God's will? From what we have seen, God permits divorce only to end legal relationships, not to break covenant.

In Ezra 9 & 10, through the priest Ezra, God instructed 113 men to divorce their non-covenant wives and return to their covenant marriages. *"Therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the foreign wives and their children, according to the counsel of my Lord and of those who tremble at the command of our God: and let it be done according to the law."* (Ezra 10:3 Amplified Bible) The Hebrew word used for foreign wives "nokriy" is defined in Strong's as "adulterous" wives. These were women who were not under the covenant that God had made with Israel. If you have an Amplified Bible available, be sure to read the footnote to this passage.

Ezra and Malachi were contemporaries. The covenant wives who trusted God to restore their husbands to their rightful place shed the tears in Malachi 2. (See Malachi 2:13 in the Amplified version.)

If you are in the situation where a marriage must end in order to reconcile an existing covenant, it is wonderful to have Christian brothers and sisters who pray in agreement with you. There is power in the prayer of agreement (Matthew 18:19). However, you will find that many Christians do not understand covenant and they don't know how to pray for reconciliation if a mate is married to someone else.

Many believers will not come into agreement with you even though it is a non-covenant relationship. Some even consider such prayers to be witchcraft. In such cases, just ask them to agree with you for God's Kingdom to come and His will to be done in the lives of everyone concerned.

Your stand is a witness to others. They are watching you and the reflection of God that they see through you. Make sure that your motives are pure; that you are not standing to be a martyr or to prove that you're right. "If the motives are wrong... the stand is not strong! If the motives are right... you are equipped for the fight!"

Look up the following references and match each reference with the condition below where divorce is within God's will.

Ezra 10:3, 1 Corinthians 5:1, Jude 7

- 1) Divorce is permitted for incestuous marriages.

- 2) Divorce is permitted for homosexual marriages.

- 3) Divorce is permitted when a prior marriage covenant is still in effect.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father, Thank you for Your Word and that it reveals your truth about your will to heal my marriage. Thank you for the principles that you have established about covenants. Thank you for making provision for me to stand for the reconciliation of my marriage. Help me not to look to others, but to seek your kingdom first. Let the healing begin with me and grant me the grace to face any circumstance. Please show me where my attitudes and actions need to be changed. Remove any obstacle from my life that would hinder reconciliation. My commitment and desire is that my covenant stand will be a witness that will bring you glory. I pray this in the Name of Jesus.

Amen