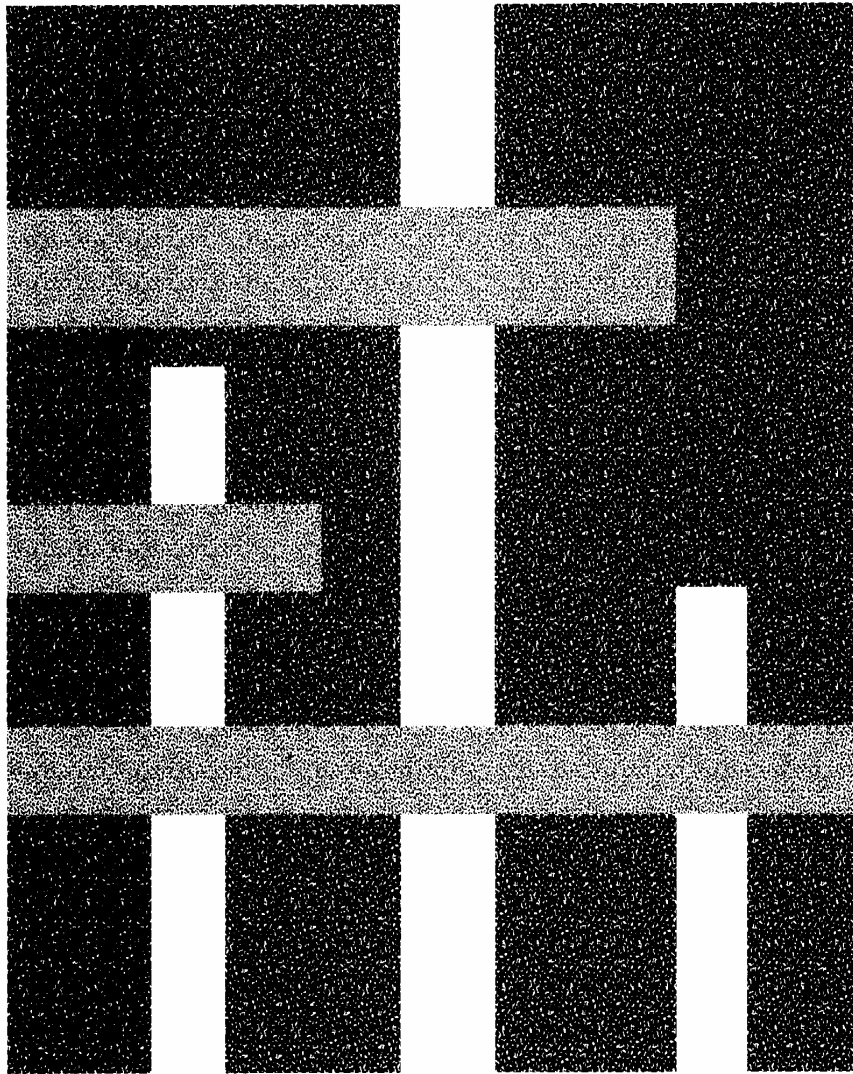


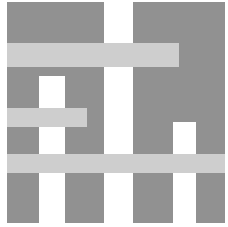
THE CHRISTIAN

Written by
HOWIE & DENNIE
DOWELL



CALLED TO OBEDIENCE†

A Description and Introduction



The Description of the **CALLED TO OBEDIENCE MINISTRY**

OUR MISSION

Called to Obedience is a discipleship ministry designed to equip believers to live a life of obedience through the application of biblical principles.

OUR GOAL

The goal of *CTO* is to develop and maintain ongoing accountable relationships within the Body of Christ which encourage a lifestyle of obedience.

The foundation of such relationships is built on...

seeing life from God's perspective: *Renewing your mind.*

- Being anchored in the Sovereignty of God
- Understanding the call to suffer
- Submitting decisions to the Word of God

practicing biblical love: *Reconciling relationships.*

- Forgiving others – Col. 3:12-15
- Confessing sin – 1 John 1:9; James 5:16
- Seeking forgiveness of those who have been offended – Matt. 5:23-24
- Admonishing in love – 1 Thess. 5:14
- Being free from a root of bitterness – Heb. 12:15

living a surrendered life: *Relinquishing rights.*

- Releasing perceived rights
- Surrendering difficult people and situations to God's control
- Waiting on God and persevering in difficult circumstances

THE MINISTRY DESCRIPTION

Called to Obedience is a process within the context of an intimate discipling relationship which utilizes a combination of personal Bible studies, lessons and practical projects to assist individuals in experiencing the reality of God and His resources. As disciples implement the life changing principles of obedience, they are encouraged to share what they have learned and experienced.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE MINISTRY

The discipling process...

- *CTO* is not just a curriculum or information that is academically taught but truths that are experientially learned.
- *CTO* is not a program or class to be completed but a tool to help develop a biblical lifestyle through modeling, encouragement and accountability of another believer.

The context of an intimate discipling relationship...

- The principles of *CTO* are most effectively learned in the context of personal accountability with another Christian. Therefore, *CTO* is a tool that cannot be separated from an intimate discipling relationship.
- The one-on-one or couple-with-couple relationships provide opportunities for vulnerability, disclosure and discussion about personal issues that are often hindrances to obedience.
- *CTO* is not effectively learned in seminars or a small group format.

A combination of Bible studies, lessons and projects...

- *CTO* directs you to the Word of God as the central focus around which the follower of Christ is commanded to build his life.
- *CTO* provides many practical *how to's* and assignments that are designed to help you apply the biblical principles presented.

A tool to assist in experiencing the reality of God...

- *CTO* is designed to help one experience the intersection of God's grace with obedience.
- *CTO* provides studies and lessons which reinforce what is experienced in the practical projects.

The implementation of principles of obedience...

- *CTO* teaches one how to practically see life from God's perspective.
- *CTO* teaches one how to practice biblical love.
- *CTO* teaches one how to live a surrendered life.

The sharing of God's truths with others...

- *CTO* is not designed to just get the believer through a "crisis" but to develop a lifestyle of obedience.
- The principles presented in *CTO*, when experientially learned, are easily transferable to others.

BIBLICAL DISTINCTIVES

1. God is in the process of transforming us into the image of Christ:

The Christian is called to a new life. (Col. 3:9-10, Eph.. 4:1-2)

2. God has given us all we need to be all that He desires:

The Christian can turn to the sufficiency of Christ. (2 Pet. 1:3-4, 2 Cor. 9:8)

3. God has sovereignly ordained the circumstances of our lives:

The Christian can face life with confidence. (Rom. 8:28-29, Eph.. 1:11-12)

4. God often uses difficult circumstances and people to accomplish His purposes:

The Christian is called to suffer. (James 1:2-4, 1 Pet. 1:6-7)

5. God has given us His Word, His Spirit and His people as resources for change:

The Christian must utilize the resources available. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, Heb. 3:13)

6. God reveals the depth of our sin so we can understand the riches of His grace:

The Christian is called to confession and repentance. (Eph. 2:4, 1 Tim. 1:15-16, 2 Cor. 7:9-10)

7. God has shown us that the primary battle ground is our mind:

The Christian is called to renew his mind. (2 Cor. 10:3-5, Rom. 12:2)

8. God has forgiven us and commands us to forgive others:

The Christian is called to forgive others. (Eph. 4:30-32; Col. 3:12-14)

9. God desires control of our lives to accomplish His kingdom purpose

The Christian is called to live a surrendered life. (Luke 22:42; Gal. 2:20)

CORE VALUES

1. We believe in the sufficiency of Christ and His Word as the basis for
 - a. building a strong, vital relationship with Him.
 - b. using the Bible as the primary resource for providing the solutions to the problems of life.
 - c. understanding that all needs are already met through the believer's relationship with Christ.

2. We believe that Holy Spirit and the Scriptures are
 - a. the agents of change in the disciple.
 - b. the primary teachers and counselors upon which the discipler must rely for guidance and instruction in directing the disciple.

3. We are committed to helping people
 - a. understand that a loving sovereign God has ordained their difficult circumstances.
 - b. seek to live life from God's perspective, not man's.
 - d. have hope in difficult circumstances based on the character of God and His promises.
 - e. understand that God will accomplish His goals for the believer through suffering.

4. We hold the body of Christ to be the primary context for living authentic Christianity; therefore, we give priority to
 - a. the role of the local church.
 - b. the responsibility and authority of elders in shepherding the flock of God among them.
 - c. the practice of identifying and dealing with sin biblically.
 - d. the importance of biblical forgiveness in the *body life* context of the church.
 - e. the priority of personal accountability to the body of Christ in maintaining biblical relationships.

5. We believe that true Christian discipleship is best learned and developed on a life-to-life basis between the discipler and the disciple. It is in this relationship that we
 - a. understand our responsibility as believers to disciple others.
 - b. view role modeling as a primary vehicle for imparting God's truth to others.
 - c. encourage the disciple to pass on what he has learned to others.
 - d. give priority to equipping and providing support to disciplers.

6. We see that the biblical model of discipleship should be part of the normal *body life ministry* of believers. Because of this, we
 - a. do not charge a fee for discipleship time.
 - b. do not allow the *CTO* approach to be used in any "fee" setting.
 - c. do not pursue fundraising programs or activities.
 - d. do not advertise or use promotional means to further the ministry.

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE MATERIALS

The *CTO* materials present God's Word as the central focus around which a disciple of Christ is commanded to build his life. Practical tools are presented to assist in responding biblically to both personal sin and the sin of others. Through his decisions to obey Christ, the disciple will come to know Him more intimately.

***The Christian: Called To Obedience* Lesson Manual**

The *Called To Obedience* manual is the primary resource that is used in the discipling relationship. The Scriptures are filled with God's powerful truths, including His insights, mysteries, commands and promises. The lessons in *Called to Obedience* point the disciple to these truths in a way that gives him a greater awareness and understanding of his sin, which should lead to confession and repentance. As the disciple "puts off" sinful motives, attitudes, thoughts and behaviors, he is also offered many practical tools to "put on" scriptural teachings in his relationship to God and to others (Eph. 4:22-24).

The first part of the manual is designed to help the disciple strengthen his relationship with God through his obedience. It is sequential and developmental in design. The primary focus is on reconciling key relationships by forgiving, confessing sin and renewing the mind. The second part addresses key obstacles to obedience in the believer's life and gives practical steps in dealing with such things as emotional pain, fear and anger. The studies *Who's In Charge*, *Understanding the Controllers* and *When Rights Are Wrong* are included as part of the main CTO Manual.

CTO is filled with scriptures which the disciple is instructed to read and meditate upon. The Word of God is "***living and active and sharper than a two-edged sword...able to expose the thoughts and motives of the heart***" (Heb. 4:12).

The Christian: Called to Obedience manual should be utilized in a one-to-one or couple-to-couple setting. It is not designed for use in a small group, large group or seminar setting. If one chooses to use *Called to Obedience* as a tool to disciple another believer, it is imperative that he is first practicing the principles of obedience as a *lifestyle* before teaching them to someone else. The biblical philosophy of the CTO Ministry is to pass God's truths life to life rather than head to head. .

Bible Studies

Who's In Charge, included in *The Christian: Called to Obedience* manual, is seven self-directed studies focusing on the sovereignty of God in all aspects of one's life. God's call upon the believer to suffer is explained from a scriptural perspective. This is also packaged separately and can be used independently of the *CTO* process. It is very appropriate for a small group Bible study. (Available as a free download in PDF format)

Essentials of the Faith is ten self-directed studies designed to establish a believer in the foundational truths of the Christian faith. This series can "stand alone" or can be used at any time in the discipling process. This study can be used for the unbeliever or for the new believer. (Available as a free download in PDF format)

Additional Studies

Setting Your Marriage on a Biblical Course is a four-week study designed to address the initial struggles in a crisis marriage situation. It includes condensed excerpts from key studies on “Forgiveness” and “Reconciliation” from *The Christian: Called to Obedience*. It also contains studies on Marriage and the roles of the husband and wife, from *The Home: Called to Obedience*. This study is designed to resolve the current crisis and prepare the couple for more intensive Discipling through the main Called to Obedience study.

The Home: Called To Obedience applies the principles learned through *The Christian: Called to Obedience* in the context of the family and the home. The topics addressed are: the single Christian, courtship, marriage, sexuality, the husband, the wife, parenting and the use of the home for ministry.

The Christian: Called to Brokenness is a group of lessons related to living a broken life of dependence upon God. Brokenness is the gateway to a fuller life in the Spirit. The breaking of our self-will leads to confession, repentance, acceptance and submission to God’s authority and sovereign will. It is a humbling and often painful experience, but the breaking is needed so that the Holy Spirit can begin to work within us to strengthen and empower us to go forward in faith! This study includes topics such as: *Walking With God On His Terms, Being Overwhelmed, Thanksgiving and Persevering In Tribulation*.

The Christian: Called To A True Identity in Christ is a group of lessons that helps the disciple identify what living independently of God looks like and then describes how to live dependently upon God. The “wheel” is introduced as a practical tool to help discover one’s idols and false identities that are hindering living dependently upon God.

The Christian: Called to Sexual Purity is a study that sets forth God’s design for sexuality for the married and for the single. It also defines sexual sin from a biblical perspective. Other topics address dealing with motives and feelings, barriers to a God-glorifying marital relationship and redeeming sexual purity.

The Christian: Called To Disciple Training Manual

Called to Disciple is designed as a tool for the believer who has been personally disciplined with the *Called to Obedience* materials and who is implementing biblical principles in his life. This manual will expand on the principles already learned in *CTO* and will give guidance in discipling another in the same manner. It is designed to be taught in a small group setting. (Available as a free download in PDF format)

Called to Disciple offers a scriptural understanding of New Testament principles for discipleship and the use of the Bible as the primary resource for building a relationship with God and for providing solutions to problems. The manual presents concrete ways to encourage a disciple to establish his hope in God and His Word. With these foundations laid, the *CTD* materials then provide specific instructions for leading another through the discipling process. Detailed guidelines are given to help with preparation for each session including suggestions for homework.

The first section, which includes *Intimate Discipleship, The Role of the Discipled, God, the Counselor and Secular vs. Biblical Counseling*, is designed to address the biblical basis and the “*why*” behind the entire approach to *Called to Obedience*. Some lessons include a questions designed to be discussed in a small group setting in which interaction about key issues is encouraged.

The second section, which includes *The Initial Six Sessions, Hope, Data Gathering and Homework*, provide direction for the meeting time with the disciple.

The third section, which includes *Helping a Disciple Forgive, Confess Sin, and Reconcile*, gives guidance in implementing the principles of *Called to Obedience*. See the *Training Process For The Christian: Called to Obedience* diagram.

With the exception of Who’s In Charge and Essentials of the Faith, which are available as free downloads, all of the CTO materials are only available for purchase by those who being disciple or is planning to be discipled by a believer who has already been personally discipled though the CTO materials. To become a “registered user” to purchase materials as well as have access to the many discipling tools we have developed, you can register on the CTO web page at www.ctoministries.org.

SAMPLE LESSONS

The following lessons are provided to give a sample of some of the materials used in *The Christian: Called to Obedience*. They will also give an introduction to some of the perspectives of the *CTO* approach.

Intimate Discipleship – from *The Christian: Called to Disciple*

This is the first lesson in the training manual, *The Christian: Called to Disciple*, which defines discipleship and lays the philosophical foundation behind the *CTO* approach.

Forgiving Others – from *The Christian: Called to Obedience*

This lesson is an example of the biblical teaching and the practical projects for application which are incorporated in all the *CTO* lessons.

Costly Obedience – from *The Christian: Called to Obedience*

This is the concluding lesson in *The Christian: Called to Obedience* which gives a good overview of the perspective behind most of the lessons. It is written in essay form rather than the outline form of the other lessons.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Called To Obedience Ministries. Inc.

P.O. Box 10531

Glendale, AZ 85318-0531

(623) 362-9212

ctomin@az.rmci.net

COSTLY OBEDIENCE

From Called to Obedience

***“In the world you have tribulation, but take courage;
I have overcome the world.”***

JOHN 16:33B NASB

***“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him,
but also to suffer for him.”***

PHIL. 1:29

“I don’t feel like reading my Bible regularly. I’d much rather watch T.V.”

“I won’t get involved in ministering to others. It is too inconvenient and unpredictable.”

“I won’t risk rejection by admonishing. It may cause conflict and I don’t want the hassle.”

“I consider my home my personal domain to be used for my pleasure. I only invite people with whom I am comfortable.”

“I don’t like my in-laws. They are difficult people. I don’t want to be around them.”

“My husband/wife is verbally abusive and angry so much of the time. I want to divorce him/her. I don’t need this grief in my life.”

“My boss is so hard to get along with. I want to quit my job *right now*. I don’t need to put up with him/her anymore.”

“I hate being married (or single). I’m not fulfilled in my role.”

“Me, seek forgiveness of the people I’ve wronged? You’ve got to be kidding. That’s too hard!”

“I’ll charge a new outfit (or whatever) on my credit card. I really deserve it.”

“A lot of other Christians give to the Lord, so my giving won’t be missed. I would rather spend my money on things I want.”

“I won’t submit, graciously, to God’s plan for my life. He doesn’t know what He’s doing.”

The sons of Israel, who had just been delivered from four hundred years of oppressive slavery in Egypt, moaned to the Lord in self-pity that they were sick and tired of God’s provision for them, the manna. Instead of gratitude for their salvation and freedom, they grumbled.

***“We remember the fish which we used to eat free in Egypt,
the cucumbers and melons and the leeks and the onions and the garlic,
but now our appetite is gone. There is nothing at all to look at except this manna.”***

Num. 11:5,6 NASB

Isn't God's provision and care enough for our contentment? "No!" is the frequent response of today's American Christian. Instead of rejoicing in our salvation and the abundant gifts given us, so often the demands of the modern believer escalate: "Give me, give me, give me!" "The Lord exists to make me happy . . . along with everyone else!"

The Lord responded to the Israelites, who were grumbling and complaining.

“. . .and when the Lord heard it His anger was kindled, and the fire of the Lord burned among them and consumed some of the outskirts of the camp.”

Num. 11:1b NASB

Where did we get the idea that the Christian life was to be devoid of personal cost and suffering except perhaps, the type we can easily handle? Suffering, self-denial and persecution are biblical routes to building our character, our intimacy with our Savior and our testimony for Christ. Those who have overcome their difficult circumstances, through the grace of God, have a message to impart to fellow sufferers. That's God's design to spread His Kingdom.

As Americans, we have lost our perspective because we are such a privileged class of people. Our lack of life-threatening persecution, as well as our great prosperity, have bred complacency, apathy and a prevailing view that **costly obedience** for the cause of Christ is totally out of the question. We believe we exist to be pampered, not to be persecuted or denied what we feel we deserve. So we demand and attempt to create a pain-free life. When the unbidden trials do come, we think we have the right to walk out, eliminate them, ignore them, get depressed, get angry and/or insist that God end the difficulty – right now! We believe we have the right to focus on the great injustices we're suffering, which just aren't fair. "No more pressure, no more unlovable people, no more pain, no more heartache – I just don't deserve all this grief."

Many Christians today have little concept of costly obedience because their thoughts are fixed on their temporal existence rather than on eternal realities. We may content ourselves with certain forms of outward obedience that are relatively easy to accomplish because they are motivated and expressed by our natural propensities, inclinations and talents. At times, forms of outward godliness may push us out of our "comfort zones" to willingly take risks because of the satisfaction we receive in return. We may immerse ourselves in ministry because our ego is stroked, we are accepted in the Christian community, we "feel good" about ourselves, we become more knowledgeable, etc. These accomplishments can placate the professing believer, who continues to limp along in his Christian walk, convincing himself and perhaps others, that he has done enough in obeying God. These acts are not motivated by love of God or love of others, but rather, are self-seeking. Thus, they are not empowered by the Holy Spirit.

“People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God – having a form of godliness, but denying its power . . .”

2 Tim. 3:2-5

Our rebellion may take the form of being apathetic, disengaged, uninvolved with the swirl of needy people all around us. We refuse to involve ourselves in eternal purpose by not participating in the lives of others. We anesthetize ourselves into believing we are "good Christians" because our sins are sins of omission rather than sins of commission.

We may “look good” to everyone around us at work, at school, in the church. But we are different people in our homes. The fact is that who we are at home is who we *truly* are. There, we are not motivated to perform in order to be accepted, as we are outside our home.

Obedience to God is costly in the home. It requires self-denial for the sake of others. We are commanded to obey regardless of our pride, fear or desire to protect ourselves from failure, rejection and painful situations. The husband is commanded to be the loving leader; the wife to submit to her husband with a gentle and quiet spirit. The children are commanded to obey their parents. All are commanded to forgive, to be reconciled, to love, to admonish, to speak graciously, to encourage, to be compassionate, to be involved, to be godly role models, to be thankful and grateful, to treat one another as each wishes to be treated. Biblical love is costly.

“Why do you call me ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

Luke 6:46

Costly obedience. . .it is forfeiting our right to ourselves. It is choosing to surrender our wills to God’s will for us. It is relinquishing the right to try to control our world and the people in it. It is turning away from deciding how we will bless ourselves and allowing God to determine how He will bless us through submission to Him. It is accepting pain, persecution, hardship and deprivation, as tools in the hands of our loving Heavenly Father, to mold us for use in His Eternal Kingdom.

Costly obedience requires getting up on our shaky legs and following His commands when everything within us is crying out, “I don’t want to do this!” “This is beyond my ability!” or “This is so frightening!” But we step out to follow our Shepherd and in so doing, yield ourselves to His control. Then His grace and power transport us into realms of experience we could never comprehend when we refused to submit to Him.

“And what more shall I say? I do not have time to tell about Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel and the prophets, who through faith conquered kingdoms, administered justice, and gained what was promised; who shut the mouths of lions, quenched the fury of the flames, and escaped the edge of the sword; whose weakness was turned to strength; and who became powerful in battle and routed foreign armies.

Women received back their dead, raised to life again.

Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison.

***They were stoned; they were sawed in two;
they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins,
destitute, persecuted and mistreated –the world was not worthy of them.
They wandered in deserts and mountains, and in caves and holes in the ground.”***

HEBREWS 11:32-38

What are you refusing to do in obedience to God’s commands?

- Forgive someone who hurt you?
- Seek forgiveness of a difficult person?
- Speak the truth instead of deceiving?
- Admonish someone, for *his* sake, who has the potential to cause further problems?
- Persevere, with godly attitudes, in persistent adversity?

***“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live,
but Christ lives in me.” Gal. 2:20a NASB***

Hear the words of a contemporary, Pastor Kefa Sampangi, who lived under the cruel dictator, Idi Amin, who slaughtered thousands of Christians in Uganda during the 1970's. *"It was true that we had no earthly court of appeal. There were no policemen, soldiers or government officials from whom we could seek help. We had nothing left. We had come so low only God could help us now."*

A friend of Kefa's, Dr. K. prayed *"Father in heaven, we have lost everything, and we have no court of appeal. Only You can help us. We throw ourselves on Your mercy."*

In his book, *A Distant Grief*, Kefa wrote about his relationship to God while living under the unrelenting threat of death. *"My concern for my own safety became secondary to my desire to witness the power of God, and I knew that as a community of believers we of the Redeemed Church were experiencing His grace now more than ever before. We were learning to live in the everlasting now, to let Scripture alone form our expectations and to pray without complaining. It was no longer the days themselves that we desired, but the forgiveness and the love of God. In the uncertainty of our day-to-day existence, we were being delivered from our reliance on methods, from the idols of self-trust and self-pity. We could no longer afford to ask converts, 'Do you believe?' We asked, 'Are you ready to die for Jesus Christ?' "*¹

Which of these risks to further God's Kingdom are you ignoring?

- Sharing the gospel with a co-worker, family member or acquaintance?
- Giving sacrificially of your resources for the Lord's purposes: home, time, possessions, money?
- Stepping out in faith to risk ridicule, security, rejection and discomfort for the furtherance of His Kingdom?
- Living a life that reflects eternal purpose?
- Being a godly role model to your family, friends, acquaintances?

***"Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, ...
but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God."***
2 Tim. 1:8 NASB

***"You are the salt of the earth. . . You are the light of the world.
A city on a hill cannot be hidden.
Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl.
Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.
In the same way, let your light shine before men,
That they may see your good deeds and praise you Father in heaven."***
MATT. 5:13A, 14-16

Mrs. Florence Lubega, a former member of Uganda's parliament sent Kefa this letter. Her husband had recently been murdered.

"Ever since my conversion, I have been praying that God would dispose of Amin. I have wished him dead and when I see his picture in the news I feel sick. Now, I don't know how to pray. After fleeing from Uganda I had nothing. Everything I owned was taken by Amin's soldiers. I lived in Nairobi for almost a year, and I slept in a garage with only

newspapers between my body and the cold cement floor. I had nothing to eat. It was then I learned what I had not learned sleeping on a mattress with a full stomach. I learned to love Jesus Christ, the suffering Savior. Since then, I have come to London and still have been praying for the death of Amin. But should I instead be praising God for raising a man so evil that he took everything I owned and caused me to see the Lord? It is when everything is uncertain that God's face becomes clear.”²

***“But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ.”
Phil. 3:7,8***

***“For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal...”
2 Cor. 4:17,18***

Are you procrastinating in these areas instead of following Jesus?

- Confessing your sin honestly and doing something concrete to turn away from it?
- Being lazy and undisciplined?
- Spending regular time with your spouse and children in ongoing communication?
- Foregoing endless hours consumed in watching T.V. or engaged in other idle pursuits, instead of ministering to your family or to others?
- Living a life devoted to Christ, even though those around you, including Christians, may be threatened or angered by your testimony?

***“... If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”
Luke 9:23 NASB***

When people of the first century church chose to follow Christ, they knowingly chose the probability of torture and death. It is noteworthy that God set the fledgling Church of Christ, not in a pleasant, accepting environment, but in a hotbed of persecution. Nero, the emperor of Rome, **hated** Christians and systemically set forth to destroy the Church. Persecution tends to create iron saints who pass the intense reality of their faith on to others. The Church grows and flourishes during times of hardship and tribulation. Tertullian, who lived from 160 – 240 A.D., said, “*Blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.*”

“People often had to choose between Him and someone they loved very dearly. Christians paid a high price in those days. Some of them were flung to the lions, while others were burned at the stake. Emperor Nero would put pitch on Christians and burn them to light his garden parties. He sewed them in the skins of wild animals and had his hunting dogs tear them to pieces. Believers were tortured on the rack and scraped with pincers. Molten lead was poured on them and red-hot brass plates were put on the most tender parts of their bodies.

Eyes were torn out and parts of their bodies were cut off and roasted in front of them. Hands and feet were burned, and then cold water would be poured on them to lengthen the agony.”³

Think of our scriptural role models who paid the ultimate price to follow Christ.

Stephen: The first martyr, who was stoned for his belief in Christ (Acts 6:8-15)

John the Baptist: Beheaded for standing for Christ by speaking the truth (Matt. 14:6-12)

Apostle Paul: Imprisoned, tortured, frequently endangered and killed for his faith (2 Cor. 11:23-28)

Apostle Peter: Tradition tells us that he was martyred under Nero and chose to be crucified upside down *because* he believed was not worthy of being crucified in the same way his Lord had been.

Are you willing to respond to persecution in a Christ-like manner?

- Not compromise your stand for Christ even if it means loss or persecution?
- Respond to an injustice graciously because it was sovereignly dispensed?
- Consider yourself “blessed” when you are persecuted for righteousness sake?
- Love your enemy?

*“under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God.
But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it?
But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.
To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you,
leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps.”
1 PET. 2:19-21*

*“Blessed are you when people insult you,
persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me.
Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven,
For in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.”
MATT. 5:11,12*

Christians down through the centuries have given their lives to follow Christ. Others have denied themselves security, convenience and wealth to further His Kingdom.

All who have given sacrificially focused their lives on eternal purpose, regarding the tribulation of this world as a means to advance God’s goals. The same call that they gladly accepted is also *your* call.

Meditate on these who **knew** their God and gave sacrificially for His cause.

Polycarp: Bishop of Smyrna, who in 155 A.D. refused to renounce his God and worship the Roman gods. His judge pleaded with him to curse Christ and swear by the emperor. His reply, *“For eighty-six years I served him and he has done me no evil. How could I curse my king, who saved me?”* As he was tied to the stake on which he was to be burned alive, he prayed out loud, *“Lord Sovereign God . . . I thank you that you have deemed me*

worthy of this moment, so that, jointly with your martyrs, I may have a share in the cup of Christ. . . For this . . . I bless and glorify You. Amen.”⁴

Martin Luther: Confronted the Roman Catholic Church about their unbiblical practices in 1517 A.D. The Church demanded that he recant. Luther declared, “*My conscience is captive to the Word of God.*” His stand for truth united the powers of the emperor and the Church against him. He was declared an outlaw, which meant Luther and anyone who assisted him, could lose their lives and property. Through great adversity, he became one of the leaders of the Protestant Reformation, which focused man on the Scriptures as the sole and sufficient rule of faith and practice and on justification by faith alone in Jesus Christ. He died of natural causes, but his uncompromising faith created much tribulation in his life. Author of hymn, *A Mighty Fortress is Our God.*⁵

John Bunyon: Imprisoned in 1660 for twelve years for refusing to stop preaching. Author of *The Pilgrim’s Progress.*⁶

George Mueller: Established orphanages in England, which eventually cared for 2,000 children at the same time. He lived a very sacrificial life and supported his family and all the orphan children in a “faith ministry,” appealing to only God for provision. He took God completely at His Word and never put limits on what He could accomplish and provide for so many.

“Mueller never made an appeal for money. The children never went hungry or ill-dressed. Never a debt went unpaid. Yet there was never any security – except the faith that God knew and would provide. God did so, though often at the very last moment, when there was not a penny in the purse and no food on the tables. Mueller’s homes existed by a never-ending succession of miracles of faith. Their history is largely page after page of answered prayers.”⁷

Hudson Taylor: Gave up the comforts of life in England to evangelize inland China in the late 1800’s. No white man had ever penetrated this area. He looked to God to not only meet all his needs, but also the needs of hundreds of others who would eventually join him as fellow missionaries. He never solicited contributions nor made appeals for his or other’s support, but instead, made his appeals known to the Lord, who faithfully provided for His work in China.”⁸

Amy Carmichael: An Englishwoman who went to India as a missionary in the late 1800’s. She led a life of self-denial as she cared for hundreds of children, many of whom were once used as temple prostitutes. At times, her own life was in danger because she protected these orphans. She saw each trial and obstacle as an opportunity to die to her self-will and to commit her situation to her Lord, in obedience to Him.⁹

Is God asking you to turn away from your self-centeredness to obey Him?

- Quit grumbling, complaining and feeling sorry for yourself?
- Wait, patiently, on the Lord’s timing to answer your prayers?
- Give up trying to control your circumstances and the people in our life?
- Turn away from self-focus to serve God and others?
- Give up your earthly idols whether they be persons, places, possessions or activities?

Is God asking you to *accept* some form of hardship? You need to focus on the bigger picture, **God's picture**, that He is asking so little of you in comparison to so many today and yesterday who have been called to far greater sacrifice. Quit whining! Face your adversity with the grace of God. Make the difficult choices in obedience to Him. Appreciate the great and wondrous gifts God has already given you. And reflect on those who were called to far greater cost and "considered it all joy" in doing so.

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: A Christian in Germany who spoke out against the abuses of Hitler's regime. He died in a Nazi concentration camp, hanged by captors. He taught that costly grace calls us to follow Christ. We are to repent of sin and submit our lives to Him. He based his life on the principle, "*When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.*"¹⁰

Corrie Ten Boom: A woman from Holland, who with her family, hid Jews during the Nazi regime in her home. When the Jews were discovered, she and her sister were sent to a concentration camp. Her elderly father died in prison. Corrie and her sister suffered great abuse and deprivation. After her sister died, Corrie, who was slated for the gas chamber, was released in a very unusual way, which was obviously God's intervention. She realized while experiencing the horrors of Ravensbruck concentration camp, "*There is no pit so deep that God isn't deeper still.*"¹¹

Jim Elliot: Chose to bring the message of Christ to the South American Auca Indians who were a vicious people. He and four fellow missionaries were murdered in 1956. With forgiveness and courage, his widow, Elisabeth, returned to minister to the Aucas and many became Christians.

In her book, *The Mark of a Man*, she speaks of her husband, Jim. "*He who is fully a man has relinquished his right to himself. 'Have my blood,' Jim wrote in his college journal. 'Have It all. Let it be poured out for the life of the world.' When the chance came to take a big risk in obedience to God, he took it at once – he went 'gaily!' I doubt that he remembered the words of that prayer, but the matter had been settled long before. The route to Life had to be the way of Death.*"¹²

Francis and Edith Schaeffer: An American couple who moved to Switzerland and devoted themselves to welcoming people from around the world to share their home which they called L'Abri (the Shelter). Their desire was to demonstrate the reality of Christ through daily living out God's truths in their open home. Their dependency on God included seeking Him alone for their provision and allowing God to sovereignly develop the ministry, which grew to many homes around the world. Their willingness to allow thousands of people over the years to invade their "private world," paved the way to salvation for vast numbers.¹³ Francis wrote, "*L'Abri is costly. If you think what God has done here is easy, you don't understand. It's a costly business to have a sense of community . . .*"¹⁴

What is Christ, the Suffering Savior, calling you to do?

- Allow Him to fill the void left by a loss in your life?
- Take a risk to do something difficult or uncomfortable in obedience to God?
- Quit demanding a near-perfect life and submit to His will?
- Relinquish you perceived rights?
- Demonstrate a gentle, consistent love of Christ to a difficult spouse?

***“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men,
so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
In your struggle against sin, you have not yet resisted
to the point of shedding your blood. Endure hardship as discipline...”***
HEB. 12:3,4,7A

Natasha Vins wrote of the persecution of the Church of Christ in the Soviet Union. In the summer of 1962, her father told her and her little brother that they would no longer be able to go to church. The government forbid all children to go to church with their parents. The following is excerpted from Natasha’s newsletter. She and her father now devote their lives to serving Christ in Russia.

“Very soon after the believers began meeting in the forest, my father started preaching in the services. Eventually he was arrested, and I became a “P.K.” – prisoner’s kid. My childhood memories include trips to the concentration camp to visit papa, house searches, police raids on our worship services, and interrogations at school. All this was very hard. And once our church started meeting in the forest, all of us children could go to the services, too! Our heroes were the Christian prisoners who were standing for God, just like Daniel, Stephen, Peter, and Paul in the Bible. Many of us were getting saved. . .and we dedicated our young lives to serve Him right there in the land of atheism.

Now I can look back. I was a member of the generation that was condemned by atheistic officials and compromising leaders of the registered churches to grow up without God. But how I thank God for the faithful men who wouldn’t let this happen, who courageously chose to obey the Lord, even if it meant prison, because Jesus said, ‘Let the little children come to me!’”

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you participate in the sufferings of Christ, so that you may be overjoyed when his glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Christ, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. If you suffer, it should not be as a murderer or thief or any other kind of criminal, or even as a meddler. However, if you suffer as a Christian, do not be ashamed, but praise God that you bear that name.”

1 PET. 4:12-16

Your brothers and sisters in Christ, who have considered it a privilege to submit in costly obedience to their Savior, march down through the ages into the present day. Christians in different parts of the world continue to be terrorized, persecuted and killed. Many experience severe deprivation. Others step out of comfortable lifestyles to advance the cause of Christ, turning their backs on easy choices and softening things.

Oh, fellow Christian, rejoice that your suffering and hardships are so minimal compared to so many in the world! You need to praise God that He has protected you from life-threatening persecution and has given you such bounty! Accept your trials, accompanied by His abundant grace, “considering it all joy” to suffer for the sake of Christ. Take the risks needed to further His Eternal Kingdom. Obey the commands of the One who sacrificed Himself for you. And experience the blessed reward that comes to those who abandon themselves to Him ~ the sweetness of His fellowship, the fullness of His life!

*From prayer that asks that I may be
Sheltered from the winds that beat on Thee,
From fearing when I should aspire,
From faltering when I should climb higher,
From silken self, O Captain, free
Thy soldier who would follow Thee.*

*From subtle love of softening things,
From easy choices, weakenings,
Not thus are spirits fortified,
Not this way went the Crucified,
From all that dims Thy Calvary,
O Lamb of God, deliver me.*

*Give me the love that leads the way,
The faith that nothing can dismay,
The hope no disappointments tire
The passion that will burn like fire,
Let me not sink to be a clod:
Make me Thy fuel, Flame of God ¹⁵
Amy Carmichael*

FORGIVING OTHERS

“See to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.”

Heb. 12:15

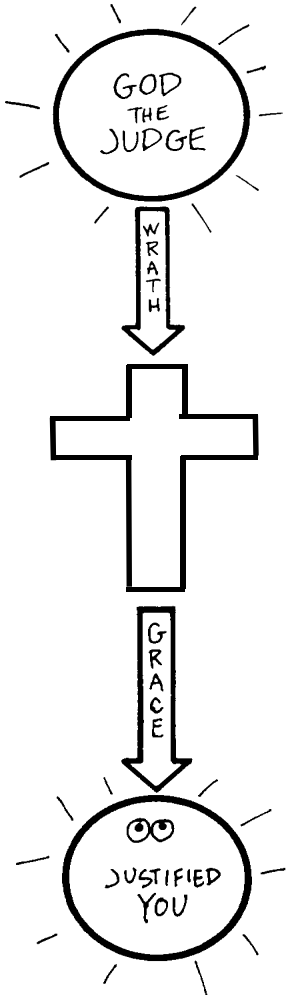
- I. Forgiveness is:
 - A. “Dying to self” by releasing an offender from your bitterness and/or wrath, which he may deserve
 - B. Giving the offender mercy as Christ gives you mercy, instead of the wrath you deserve
 - C. Changing your attitude toward the offender when you *realize* how great God’s love and forgiveness is toward you, an offender
- II. Forgiveness also is:
 - A. A decision of the will
 - B. Not based on your feelings
 - C. **A three-fold commitment to God and the offender:**
 - 1. “I will not bring up the transgression to the offender” (unless admonishment is needed).
 - 2. “I will not bring up the transgression to others” (by gossiping or “venting”).
 - 3. “I will not dwell on the transgression myself” (by having a pity-party).
- III. The forgiven must forgive. (Matt. 18:21-35)
- IV. God explains various aspects of His command to forgive.
 - A. **When** do you forgive? (Mark 11:25) In prayer
 - B. **Whom** do you forgive? (Mark 11:25) Anyone you have anything against
 - C. **How** are you to forgive? (Eph. 4:30-32; Col. 3:12-14)
 - 1. As Christ has forgiven you
 - 2. Completely
 - 3. Repeatedly for the same sins

FORGIVING OTHERS

- D. **What** are God’s responses to your choices, to forgive or not to forgive? (Matt. 6:14,15)
1. God forgives you in a “fellowship relationship” to Him, when you forgive others. (Matt. 6:14)
 2. Your “positional relationship,” in which you are forgiven for every past, present and future sin, remains unchanged. However, your fellowship with God is definitely hindered when you do not forgive. See *Positional/Fellowship* diagram for further explanation. (Matt. 6:15)
- E. **How** do you respond to an offender who seeks reconciliation? (Luke 17:3,4)
1. With daily forgiveness, repeated forgiveness, limitless forgiveness
 2. Without judgment, because love “***believes all things.***” (1 Cor.13:7 NASB)
- V. It is necessary to forgive in the following situations:
- A. When someone seeks your forgiveness, make the commitment to forgive and grant forgiveness immediately. (Luke 17:3,4)
- B. When forgiveness has not been sought by the offender, in prayer say, “I forgive (name of offender) for (the specific offense).” (Mark 11:25)
- C. If there have been multiple offenses over an extended period of time, it is **highly** recommended that you pray, making the commitment to forgive in the presence of a witness. (Gal. 6:2)
1. Make an individual list for *each* person who sinned against you (mother, father, spouse, child and other people).
 2. List **specific** ways that the person sinned against you or hurt you.
 - a. Include character traits that are sinful, such as being arrogant, petty, withdrawn, critical, controlling, selfish and superficial.
 - b. Include other sinful patterns, such as not loving you unconditionally, being an ungodly role model, not turning to God and His Word to solve problems.
 - c. Include *specific* events or incidents that bring resentment to your mind.
 - d. Include things that are not necessarily sin, such as irritating habits. Refer to the checklists at the end of the *Pride and Rebellion* and the *Fear* studies, which will give you more ideas to further develop your list of how the offender sinned against you.

FORGIVING OTHERS

POSITIONAL RELATIONSHIP



The perfect Judge pours out the punishment for your sin on Jesus Christ.

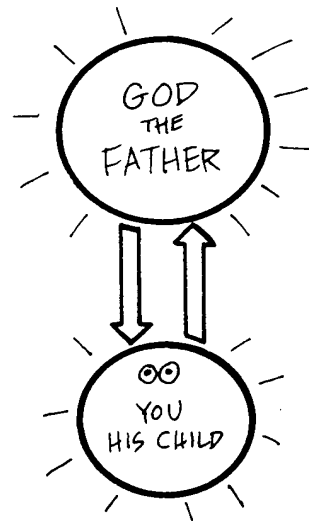
You are justified by faith alone in Christ's finished work on the cross.

Justification is a legal term meaning to be declared innocent or just.

You are forgiven for every past, present, and future sin. (Col. 2:13b)

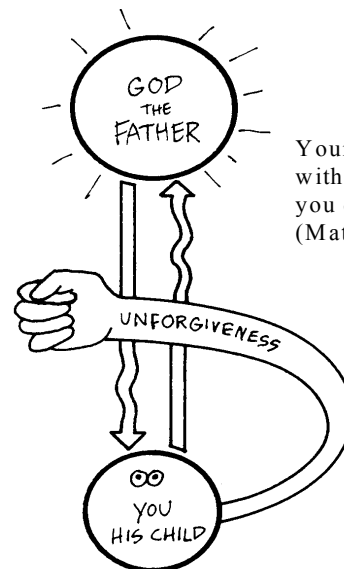
Your positional relationship with God is secure for eternity. (1 Pet. 1:3,4)

FELLOWSHIP RELATIONSHIP



Your positional relationship as a Christian places you in fellowship with your heavenly Father.

BUT



Your fellowship relationship with God is hindered when you do not forgive others. (Matt. 6:14,15)

FORGIVING OTHERS

3. Pray to forgive each specific offense individually, e.g., “I forgive my father for his drunkenness;” “I forgive my father for not encouraging me or praising my efforts.”
 4. Tear up your list so you do not keep a “record of wrongs.” (1 Cor. 13:5)
 5. Implement this process whenever you are having a difficult time forgiving an offender, after having made a commitment in private.
- VI. The commitment to forgive must *be acted upon* in order to be set free and remain free from bitterness. (John 8:31b,32)
- A. Practice implementing the three-fold commitment to forgive on the first page of this lesson.
 - B. “Put off” dwelling on the past sins of others against you. (Is. 43:18,19; Phil. 3:13,14)
 - C. Act on the commitment to forgive by practicing the use of *Renewing Your Mind Memory Outline* whenever resentment or self-pity returns. (Eph. 4:30; Phil. 4:8,9)
 - D. Act on the commitment to forgive by learning to love your enemies or offenders. (Rom. 12:17-21; Luke 6:22-38)
 - E. Forgive the offender again when the same offense is repeated.
- VII. Follow the outline below *at the time* you are facing a difficult situation with an offender.
- A. When an offender has lost control of his anger, is offending you or hurting you in some other way
 - B. When someone ignores you or fails to do what you desire
 - C. When faced with a difficult person, utilize this outline to help you *think* before responding, rather than to *react* sinfully in the tense/hurtful situation.

1-2-3-4-5 MEMORY OUTLINE

1 Corinthians 10:13

1. **Grab hold** of the truth that God has ordained this situation. (Eph. 1:11)
2. **Thank** God for this difficulty. (1 Thess. 5:18; Eph. 5:20)
3. **Forgive** the offender, not verbally, but in prayer. (Mark 11:25)
4. **Ask:** “How can I obey God in this situation?” (John 14:15)

FORGIVING OTHERS

5. **Ask:** “What is God trying to teach me?”

VIII. There are other points related to forgiving.

- A. Do not **verbally** grant forgiveness to another *until it is sought*, but you must forgive the offender in prayer.
- B. Forgive an offender *before* admonishing him, if rebuke is needed, so you can speak the truth in love. (Eph. 4:15)
- C. Discipline, in various forms, may be appropriate even though you have forgiven.
- D. Trust in the offender after forgiving him, may or may not be appropriate, depending on whether or not his character is trustworthy.
- E. Forgiveness *may* include forgetting.
 - 1. You may not forget if the offenses had a big impact on your life or the offenses occurred over a long duration.
 - 2. God says, “***I will . . . remember*** (bring to recall) ***their sins no more.***” (Heb. 8:12) God does not say He forgets, but He does not hold the sin against you nor bring it up again. (Heb. 10:17)

You need to realize that you will be sinned against frequently in the course of your life because all people sin. Develop an awareness of signs, which indicate that you have not forgiven someone who offended you.

IX. There are ways to detect unforgiveness.

- A. There are definite **warning signs** when you have not forgiven. One or more of the following may be manifested:
 - 1. Struggling with disobedience to God without gaining consistency in your spiritual growth
 - 2. Having a persistent anger problem, outward or inward
 - 3. Blaming others for your problems
 - 4. Being moody or frequently depressed
 - 5. Suppressing and “stuffing” feelings; minimizing or excusing others’ sins
 - 6. Being very superficial in relationships
 - 7. Withdrawing emotionally or physically from others

FORGIVING OTHERS

8. Having negative, ungrateful attitudes toward God, situations and others
9. Gossiping and/or “venting” to others about the offender(s)
10. Sensing God’s presence is far from you; fellowship with God is hindered
11. Dwelling on self-pity; feeling victimized
12. Having difficulty forming and maintaining close, meaningful relationships
13. Excusing your sinful **responses** toward others’ offenses
14. Retreating into fantasy to cover the painful realities of others’ offenses

B. There may be several reasons for the above attitudes.

1. You have not attempted to forgive.
2. You do not know *how* to truly forgive.
3. You have made the commitment to forgive, but your forgiveness is incomplete.
 - a. There may be a need for someone to bear your burdens by being a witness to your prayer of forgiveness. (Gal. 6:2)
 - b. You may have to be more specific and detailed about incidents and traits for which you are forgiving the offender.
4. You have truly forgiven, but you have other deep-rooted sins, such as fear of rejection, not accepting God’s plan for your life, not trusting God, etc., which foster sinful attitudes. See *Anger*.
5. You have not **acted** on your commitment to forgive.
 - a. You continue to dwell on the transgressions against you.
 - b. You do not practice renewing your mind.
6. You do not keep current by forgiving new or repeated offenses daily.

X. **Suppression** is Satan’s counterfeit for forgiveness.

A. Signs of suppression

FORGIVING OTHERS

1. You deny and block emotional pain and/or bitterness. You may reach the point where you can no longer identify your sinful emotions.
2. You minimize, ignore, excuse and/or cover up the offender's sin.
3. You may believe you have forgiven because you do not *feel* angry, embittered or resentful. Instead, you have suppressed or "stuffed" your emotions.

B. Solution to suppression

1. Draw on Christ's resources and obey His command to forgive rather than resorting to your own sinful mental strategies for coping. Refer to the first and fourth boxes of *Four Approaches to a Problem* diagram in the *Introduction*.
2. List ways you were/are sinned against even though you have no responsive sinful feelings. Be willing to face emotional pain, which may surface when you write your list or when you make the commitment to forgive.

XI. Anger and bitterness, even if suppressed, will control your life if you do not forgive. (Heb. 12:15)

A. God clearly lays out **consequences** in the Bible for sin of not forgiving.

1. Your relationship with God will be hindered. (Matt. 6:14,15)
2. You grieve the Holy Spirit. (Eph. 4:30)
3. Your relationships with others will be defiled. (Heb. 12:15)
4. You will reap trouble. (Heb. 12:15)
5. You will be turned over to the torture or imprisonment of your own unforgiving spirit. (Matt. 18:34)

B. Whatever controls you is "lord" of your life. If anger controls you, the offender ultimately controls your emotions.

C. You may react sinfully toward

1. the offender.
2. those who remind you of the offender.
3. those who have no direct bearing on the situation. (Heb. 12:15)

D. You may take on the sinful characteristics of the offender.

FORGIVING OTHERS

- E. Your refusal to forgive should cause you to examine your salvation. (Heb. 12:15a; 2 Cor. 13:5-8)

“Not to forgive is to be imprisoned by the past, by old grievances that do not permit life to proceed with new business. Not to forgive is to yield oneself to another’s control. If one does not forgive then one is controlled by the other’s initiatives and is locked into a sequence of act and response, of outrage and revenge, tit for tat, escalating always. The present is endlessly overwhelmed and devoured by the past. Forgiveness frees the forgiver. It extracts the forgiver from someone else’s nightmare.”

Taken from a *Time* magazine article entitled, “I Spoke...As a Brother”

***“Consider him who endured such opposition from sinful men,
so that you will not grow weary and lose heart.
In your struggle against sin,
you have not resisted to the point of shedding your blood.”
Heb. 12:3,4***

XII. Your commitment to forgive may or may not be followed by an immediate release of bitter feelings.

- A. Your willingness to *act* on your commitment by renewing your mind will bring emotional freedom as the Holy Spirit works within you. (John 8:31,32; Jas. 1:25)
- B. Your sinful feelings will usually change to godly ones as you persevere in keeping God’s commands. (Gal. 6:9)
- C. Your obedience, demonstrated by forgiving and by renewing your mind, will lead to:
1. Sinful emotions no longer being present when the offender or offense comes to mind
 2. Sinful emotions no longer being present when you are in the offender’s presence
 3. Your past no longer controlling your present or future
 4. Your demonstration of unconditional love toward the offender
 5. Ceasing to suppress, excuse or fantasize to avoid the feelings of anger
 6. Focusing on God, rather than on the offender and the offense
 7. Developing compassion for the offender
 8. Seeing how God has used the offender as a tool for your spiritual growth and perhaps, how He used the adversity to broaden your ministry

FORGIVING OTHERS

**Your great hope lies in not focusing on the degree
of the problems you have suffered, but on the ability
of the Holy Spirit to free you from the past, as you obey God's Word.**

INTIMATE DISCIPLESHIP

From The Christian Called to Disciple

*“Having thus a fond affection for you,
we were well-pleased to impart to you not only the gospel of God
but also our own lives, because you had become very dear to us.”*

1 THESS. 2:8 NASB

- I. God has **designed** us to be in relationships.
 - A. With Him, because He chose us to have an eternal relationship with Him (Ps. 42:1,2; 63:1)
 - B. With fellow Christians, so we can encourage and support one another to grow spiritually (1 Cor. 12)
 - C. With non-Christians, so we can impart the reality of Christ to those who do not know Him
- II. The command of God, which is firm and unwavering to **all** Christians, is, *“...go and make disciples of all nations.”* **Matt. 28:19**
- III. The life of Paul exemplifies how vibrant individual and church growth took place through intimate discipleship.
 - A. Paul was disciplined by Barnabas, the encourager.
 - 1. Barnabas established a discipler-disciple relationship with Paul.
 - 2. The life of Paul was radically changed, and he became a discipler.
 - B. **1 Thessalonians 2** includes discipling concepts taught and role-modeled in Paul’s life.
 - 1. He imparted his life to others; he was vulnerable with them. (v.8)
 - 2. He pleased God rather than pleasing men. (v.4)
 - 3. He was authentic, genuine and did not hide behind an image. (v.5)
 - 4. He did not use ministry to promote himself or as an escape from dealing with his own problems.

5. He was motivated by genuine love, rather than motivated by self-interest and self-gain (v. 3)
6. He was intimately involved in their personal lives; thus, he knew them well enough to admonish them. (v. 11)
7. He implemented the principles of biblical problem-solving in his own life. Therefore, he knew *how* to impart them to others. (vv. 10-12)
8. His ministry of discipleship was not superficial teaching, but a deeply involved shepherding of his followers. (vv. 7,8)
9. His compassion and tenderness were warmly and openly expressed. (v. 7)
10. He was self-sacrificing and willing to be a risk-taker in obedience to God's command to, "***Go and make disciples of all nations...***" **Matt. 28:19**
11. He had the **goal** of discipleship clearly defined in his mind: to teach others to "*live lives worthy of God.*" (v. 12)
12. He was thankful for and desirous of being closely involved with his people. (v. 17)

C. **Acts 2 and 20** also include these concepts about intimate discipleship:

1. Paul realized that discipleship included confrontation and admonishment so that he might see lives changed. His love was so great that he admonished ceaselessly and with tears. (Acts 20:31)
2. There was no superficiality in his relationships; he loved deeply and was deeply loved in return. He was openly affectionate. (Acts 20:37)
3. Paul intimately discipled Timothy, Titus, the Ephesian elders and the Thessalonians.
4. His churches grew!!
5. The people he discipled reproduced his work by discipling others.

Kefa Sempangi, the author of *A Distant Grief*, was a pastor in Uganda during Idi Amin's regime. Thousands of Christians were slaughtered by Amin. Before the slaughter began, Kefa's church was characterized by superficial involvements, but through deep suffering, this body of believers were brought

into intimacy with one another. Kefa, like Paul and Christ, understood the biblical principles of intimate discipleship. He states, “*Gradually, I came to understand what Mondo (an elder in Kefa’s church) was saying. If I was having a Bible study and disowning my brother, I was not repenting. If I was going to church and keeping my brother at a distance, I was not walking in the light. Without a willingness to live a transparent, broken life before my brethren, our meetings were just another form of alienation. They were religious counterfeits.*”

D. Paul viewed himself as a role-model of godly living and invited people to imitate him. (1 Cor. 4:16)

*“Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me –
put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.”*

Phil. 4:9

IV. The modern church often ignores the biblical model of intimate discipleship, devoting little or no attention to it.

A. Programs, committees, banquets, social events, choirs, etc. may become the major focuses. These pursuits have their place but they cannot replace or duplicate intimate discipleship.

*“It is possible for the church to have so many activities, programs, clubs, projects, committee meetings, banquets and community involvements - so many wheels spinning without really accomplishing anything of eternal significance - that the congregation forgets its primary objective. Many churches are like that impressive invention which had hundreds of wheels, coils, gears, pulleys, belts, bells, and lights which all went around and rang and flashed at the touch of a button. When the inventor was asked about the function of the weird machine, he replied, ‘What does it do? Oh, it doesn’t do anything, but doesn’t it run beautifully?’ ”**Dropping Your Guard Charles Swindoll*

B. Small group Bible studies or sharing groups may include no accountability for personal growth and require no practicing of the truths taught. These activities impart knowledge of Scripture and knowledge of fellow members’ lives, but because of lack of accountability, they are superficial in design and do not duplicate the principles of intimate discipleship.

1. Intimacy, vulnerability and accountability require great risks in relationships, and many Christians are intimidated by deep “body life” as described in 1 Cor. 12.
 - a) God chooses the word “body” to describe His Church, denoting the great interdependency which human body parts manifest in relationship to one another.
 - b) God did not choose the word “organization” to describe His Church. Superficiality in relationships results in an organizational mentality.
2. Spiritual growth may occur in less intimate settings, but usually intimate discipleship will create an atmosphere for much more *rapid* and *radical* changes in the life of a disciple.
3. A basic principle of discipleship is that the disciple will be presented with the opportunity to become like his discipler. The disciple will be disciplined in either of two ways:

- a) By example, he will be disciplined into superficial relationships and an organizational mentality.
 - (1) He will learn to hide his sin problems from others and build a spiritual image.
 - (2) He may become a discipler and thus, repeat the cycle.
 - b) By example, he will be disciplined into intimate relationships and deep body life.
4. Superficial relationships often do not encourage the *practicing* of biblical truths, with accountability. Therefore, often very little change is evidenced in the disciple.

C. Kefa Sempangi understood that church functions, although good, could become a substitute for in-depth discipling relationships within the local body.

“They soon discovered that though they were busy having Bible studies, holding prayer meetings, and attending church services, the things they were doing were not the central message of Christ’s teaching. They had to ask themselves, did Jesus die for our meetings? Or was it for something else? They found that Jesus had given instruction that before they enjoyed their devotional life, they were to be reconciled with their brother or sister whom they might have wronged during the day. It was not for their devotions Christ died. What He had paid the price for was their relationship with God and one another.”

A Distant Grief
Kefa Sempangi

V. Intimate discipleship, which is modeled in the New Testament as foundational to the church, produces fruit.

A. A full-orbed discipleship, covering most aspects of a disciple’s life, is life-changing. It is a radical transformation from world and self-orientation to God and others-orientation.

- 1. Radical change is effected as biblical truths are taught in a sequence and time frame that permit them to be regularly practiced.
- 2. The discipler must have the goal of helping a person learn to be freed from a life which is *motivated* by self-interest (pride) and self-protection (fear) to a life *motivated* by a genuine love for God and others, which promotes intimacy.

B. The sin that trapped your disciple is overcome through the breaking of self-will and the power of the Holy Spirit. The Christian is emotionally freed! (John 8:31b,32)

C. Emotional freedom from the bondage of sin leads to a genuine zeal, motivated by love, for the Lord and His Word, accompanied by a great desire to help others learn the same principles.

- 1. Learning to live biblically, through deep submission to God, must precede a truly effective one-on-one ministry.

2. Ministering from pure motivation, which is love of God and others, rather than self-interest or self-gratification, impacts lives greatly.

a) Genuine zeal is the outflow of walking closely with Christ.

b) Authentic excitement and enthusiasm are generated for God's Word and obedience to it.

c) Great confidence in God's ability to empower and in the Scriptures to impart life-changing truths, is evidenced.

D. The disciple becomes a discipler, knowing how to impart the reality of Christ to others, which may then lead to specific ministries, such as prison, drug and alcohol rehabilitation or other target ministries.

E. The mature disciple will evidence a consistent godly life-style, manifesting the fruit of the Spirit. (Gal. 5:22,23)

Praise God for His blueprint for personal and corporate growth! Intimacy is costly, both to the discipler and disciple. It requires a sustained commitment to releasing the "right" to non-involvement. It requires moving out of your "comfort zone" to form deep relationships. But the reward is great, both to the discipler and the disciple. The fruit of discipleship, the abundant life, will be evidenced in both lives!

***"We continually remember before our God and Father
your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love,
and your endurance inspired by hope
in our Lord Jesus Christ."***

Thess. 1:3