

Healthy Boundaries

APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN COUNSELING AND FAMILY SERVICES

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Introduction To Boundaries

- ❑ Boundaries are also known as limits.
 - ❑ Their purpose is to distinguish one thing from another.
 - ❑ Boundaries are supposed to let the good in and keep the bad out.
 - ❑ Emotionally, boundaries separate what is your responsibility from what is not.
- Much of the material from this presentation is adapted from the book Boundaries by Henry Cloud and John Townsend. Zondervan.

God Created Boundaries

- ❑ **Physical Boundaries:**
 - ❑ In Genesis He separated night from day, water from land, plants from animals, and kinds of animals from other kinds.
- ❑ **Identity Boundaries:**
 - ❑ God identifies Himself by both who He is and who He is not.
 - ❑ He's distinct from creation.
- ❑ **Responsibility Boundaries:**
 - ❑ God clarifies what our responsibilities are by telling us what to do and not to do.
 - ❑ He also clarifies the benefits and consequences of following His commands.

The First Boundary Presented to Human Beings

- ❑ **Genesis 2:16-17**, "*And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden thou mayest freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die.*"
- ❑ **Notice that boundaries have two parts:**
 1. **The Limit:** The "line in the sand"
 2. **The Consequence:** What will occur if the boundary is not respected or is violated.

Examples of Responsibility-Based Boundaries

- ❑ Responsibility for submitting our lives to Him and choosing to turn away from sin.
 - ❑ **Deuteronomy 30:19** "*I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live*"
- ❑ Responsibility for our actions and consequences (positive and negative) for our choices.
 - ❑ **Galatians 6:7-8** "*Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.*"

Loose Boundaries: Chalk lines

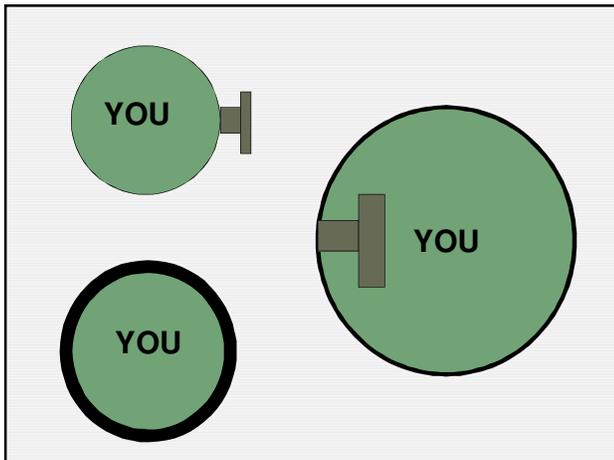
- ❑ Have difficulty saying "No" when they need to.
- ❑ Establish few personal limits.
- ❑ Often "let" others take advantage of them.
- ❑ Often fight burnout and resentment.
- ❑ Can become "menpleasers" (Colossians 3:22).
- ❑ Need to apply **Romans 15:2** "*Let every one of us please his neighbour for his good to edification.*"

Rigid Boundaries: Concrete block walls

- ❑ Often a response by people with loose boundaries who have gotten “fed up” with being “run over” by others.
- ❑ Incorrectly use boundaries as walls.
- ❑ Block out others.
- ❑ Shut both the bad and the good out.
- ❑ Do not allow others into your world.
- ❑ Can lead to intolerance.
- ❑ Have strict limits with no allowance for letting others in.

Healthy Boundaries: Fence with a Gate Door

- ❑ Are Christ-like
- ❑ Say “No” to sin and taking on the responsibilities of others.
- ❑ Say “Yes” to serving others, developing relationships, and helping people with needs.
- ❑ Others have access to you only as you permit.
- ❑ You control access to yourself.



Ten Laws of Boundaries

BOUNDARIES ARE GOVERNED BY
NATURAL LAWS... JUST LIKE GRAVITY

10 Laws of Boundaries

- 1. Law of Sowing and Reaping:** Our actions have consequences; both positive and negative.
- 2. Law of Responsibility:** We are responsible to each other, but not for each other.
(Who is responsible for what? Examples from preaching and counseling)
- 3. Law of Power:** We have power over some things; we don't have power over others (including changing people).

10 Laws of Boundaries Cont'd

- 4. Law of Respect:** If we wish for others to respect our boundaries, we need to respect theirs.
- 5. Law of Motivation:** We must be free to say no before we can wholeheartedly say yes.
- 6. Law of Evaluation:** We need to evaluate the pain our boundaries cause others.
(hurt vs. harm)

10 Laws of Boundaries Cont'd

7. **Law of Proactivity:** We take action to solve problems based on our values, wants, and needs.
(who I am versus who I am not)
8. **Law of Envy:** We will never get what we want if we focus outside our boundaries onto what others have.

10 Laws of Boundaries Cont'd

9. **Law of Activity:** We need to take the initiative in setting limits rather than be passive.
(If I don't set boundaries for myself, others certainly won't do it for me!)
(How long should a meeting go?)
(Who is going to make sure you take a break?)
9. **Law of Exposure:** We need to communicate our boundaries to each other.
(Mindreading is not allowed.)

Circle of Concern versus Circle of Influence

IDENTIFYING WHAT WE
CAN AND CAN'T CONTROL

The Circle of Concern

Represents 100% of
the things that concern
you in life

The Circle of Influence

- ~10% of the Circle of Concern.
- It represents the portion of your concerns that you can do something about right now.
- It is your personal stewardship.

Circle of Concern vs. Circle of Influence

- ❑ Many people spend 90% of their time in the 90% they cannot control.
- ❑ This leads to stress, anxiety, feeling out of control, difficulty letting go.
- ❑ The goal is to spend 90% of your time in the 10%.
- ❑ The Circle of Influence represents your personal stewardship.
 - It is what you can actually do.
 - It is what God expects of you, not more.
 - The challenge is to leave the Circle of Concern up to God!!

From 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey. Free Press.

Responsibility “To” Versus Responsibility “For”

Knowing When to Help

- **Galatians 6:2** “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”
- **Galatians 6:5** “For every man shall bear his own burden.”
- “Burdens” in Verse 2 is referring to heavy weights that someone cannot carry alone – like a boulder.
- “Burden” in Verse 5 is referring to cargo or a person’s daily load or napsack – personal responsibility.
- When we take on another person’s personal responsibility, we either (1) enable them in an unhealthy way or (2) we become emotionally “on the hook” for their choices, or both!

FOR OTHERS:

1. I fix, protect, rescue, control, and carry their feelings.
2. I feel tired, anxious, and fearful.
3. I am concerned with finding the solution, answers, being right, and details.

TO OTHERS:

1. I encourage, show empathy, share, confront, and am sensitive.
2. I feel free and am aware that I have choices.
3. I am concerned with relating person-to-person and the person I care for.

FOR OTHERS:

4. I may control and/or manipulate.
5. I feel responsible for the other person’s behavior and choices.
6. I can’t stand to see the other person make a mistake. I can’t let go.

TO OTHERS:

4. I am a helper and/or guide.
5. I expect the person to be responsible for himself/herself and his/her own actions.
6. I encourage and support, but recognize that experiences (even mistakes) are sometimes the best teachers.

Difficult Relationships

BEING AWARE OF WHO YOU
ARE INTERACTING WITH

Types of High-Maintenance Relationships

1. **The Critic:** Constantly complains & gives unwanted advice
2. **The Wet Blanket:** Pessimistic & automatically negative
3. **The Martyr:** Forever the victim and self-pitying
4. **The Steamroller:** Blindly insensitive to others
5. **The Gossip:** Spreads rumors and leaks secrets
6. **The Control Freak:** Unable to let go and let be
7. **The Backstabber:** Irrepressibly two faced
8. **The Cold Shoulder:** Disengages and avoids contact

Adapted From High-Maintenance Relationships by Les Parrott, Tyndale House.

High-Maintenance Relationships Cont'd

9. **The Green-Eyed Monster:** Seethes with envy
10. **The Volcano:** Builds steam and is ready to erupt
11. **The Sponge:** Constantly in need; gives nothing back
12. **The Competitor:** Keeps track of 'tit for tat'
13. **The Workhorse:** Always pushes and is never satisfied
14. **The Flirt:** Imparts innuendoes, which may border on harassment
15. **The Chameleon:** Eager to please & avoids conflict
16. **Chicken Little:** Always talking about gloom and doom and warning of coming catastrophe

Adapted From High-Maintenance Relationships by Les Parrott, Tynshale House.

Three Problematic Boundary Styles

- ❑ **Compliants:**
 - ❑ Tend to say 'yes' even when they really mean 'no'
- ❑ **Aggressive Controllers:**
 - ❑ Use anger to get their way.
 - ❑ Message: "If you don't do what I want you to do, I'll get mad."
- ❑ **Manipulative Controllers:**
 - ❑ Use guilt to get their way.
 - ❑ Message: "If you really cared (or were a Christian), you'd do it my way."

Reactions to Boundaries

- ❑ Unfortunately, but not unexpectedly, people don't like boundaries to be set with them.
- ❑ Three common responses (remember the Soda Vending Machine):
 1. They may push harder (guilt, etc.)
 2. They may push more frequently
 3. They may get angry.

Action Steps For Dealing with Difficult People

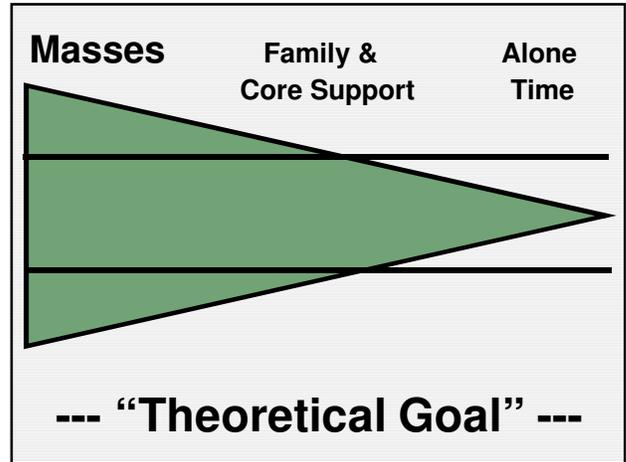
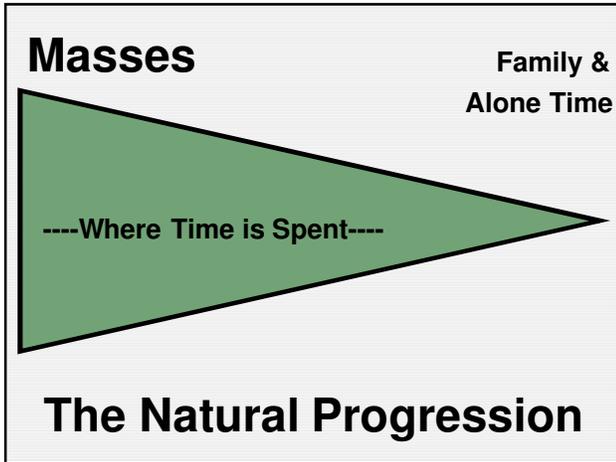
1. Identify where do you see "high-maintenance" characteristics in your own life? Submit them to Christ.
 - *"And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? ... Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye."* Matthew 7:3-5
2. Ask Christ for the grace to interact in love.
3. Set clear expectations and healthy boundaries in your relationships.
4. Remember that you are fully responsible for your own behavior. Let others be responsible for theirs.
 - *Romans 12:18, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men."*

A New
Version of
the Serenity
Prayer

God grant me the
serenity to accept the
people I cannot
change, the courage
to change the one I
can, and the wisdom
to know its ME.

Personal Stewardship

TAKING CARE OF YOUR NEEDS
PHYSICALLY, EMOTIONALLY, RELATIONALLY, AND SPIRITUALLY
SO THAT YOU CAN ADEQUATELY CARE FOR OTHERS



5000 > 12 > 1

JESUS AND TIME

Mark 6:44-46

44. And they that did eat of the loaves were about five thousand men. [5000]

45. And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship, and to go to the other side before unto Bethsaida, while he sent away the people. [12]

46. And when he had sent them away, he departed into a mountain to pray. [1]

Saying “No” to Good things is Hard

- ❑ One of the biggest problems for Christians.
 - ❑ Burnout, lack of desire, resentment, etc. result if we don't limit activities – even good ones!
 - ❑ Prioritizing is essential – It isn't possible to have 100 top priorities!!
- **Acts 6:2-4**, “Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.”

What Is Your Core Ministry?

Core
Medium
Low

Prioritize into Levels

- **Core:** Tasks and role opportunities that only you can do?
 - These are the truly high priority items because they can't usually be delegated.
- **Medium:** Tasks and opportunities that you would like to do.
- **Low:** Tasks and opportunities that you should be "shedding" or having someone else do.
 - Develop a "stop doing" list.

Watch Out for "Moses Syndrome"

- Moses became overwhelmed when he "took on" the "responsibility" of the happiness of the Israelites.
- Moses started focusing on what was not in his control and, instead, became exasperated about what was not in his control.
- His love of the people started out as a noble virtue, but he eventually saw himself as the **solution** instead of being a **vessel**.

Numbers 11:10-17

10. Then Moses heard the people weep throughout their families, every man in the door of his tent: and the anger of the Lord was kindled greatly; Moses also was displeased.
11. And Moses said unto the Lord, Wherefore hast thou afflicted thy servant? and wherefore have I not found favour in thy sight, that thou layest the burden of all this people upon me?
12. Have I conceived all this people? have I begotten them, that thou shouldest say unto me, Carry them in thy bosom, as a nursing father beareth the sucking child, unto the land which thou swearst unto their fathers?

Numbers 11:10-17 Cont'd

13. Whence should I have flesh to give unto all this people? for they weep unto me, saying, Give us flesh, that we may eat.
14. I am not able to bear all this people alone, because it is too heavy for me.
15. And if thou deal thus with me, kill me, I pray thee, out of hand, if I have found favour in thy sight; and let me not see my wretchedness.

Numbers 11:10-17 Cont'd

16. And the Lord said unto Moses, Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tabernacle of the congregation, that they may stand there with thee.
17. And I will come down and talk with thee there: and I will take of the spirit which is upon thee, and will put it upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with thee, that thou bear it not thyself alone.

Delegation is both Hard and Necessary

An excerpt from Exodus 18:13-25

"And it came to pass on the morrow, that Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the morning unto the evening. And when Moses' father in law saw all that he did to the people, he said, What is this thing that thou doest to the people? why sittest thou thyself alone, and all the people stand by thee from morning unto even? And Moses said unto his father in law, Because the people come unto me to inquire of God: When they have a matter, they come unto me; and I judge between one and another, and I do make them know the statutes of God, and his laws. And Moses' father in law said unto him, The thing that thou doest is not good. Thou wilt surely wear away, both thou, and this people that is with thee: for this thing is too heavy for thee; thou art not able to perform it thyself alone."

Sharpen the Saw

- Time away to become refreshed helps increase our effectiveness.
- Maintaining a proper perspective is key to coping and managing effectively.
- It rarely feels like we **have time** to get away.
- Those in ministry, especially, need to remember the biblical principle and command to observe the sabbath.
 - We rest, get perspective with the Lord, and remember that He is in control even when we aren't working.
- If you don't **make time**, you won't **have time**.

From 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by Stephen Covey. Free Press.

Sharpen the Saw

“Suppose you were to come upon someone in the woods working feverishly to saw down a tree. “What are you doing?” you ask. “Can’t you see?” comes the impatient reply. “I’m sawing down this tree.” “You look exhausted!” you exclaim. “How long have you been at it?” “Over five hours,” he returns, “and I am beat! This is hard work.” “Well, why don’t you take a break for a few minutes and sharpen the saw?” you inquire. “I’m sure it would go a lot faster.” “I don’t have time to sharpen the saw,” the man says emphatically, “I’m too busy sawing.”

Quoted from The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People by S. Covey.

Come ye yourselves apart...
Get away!

Mark 6:30-32

“And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while; for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat. And they departed into a desert place by ship privately.”

ACCFS Overview

APOSTOLIC CHRISTIAN COUNSELING AND FAMILY SERVICES

877-370-9988

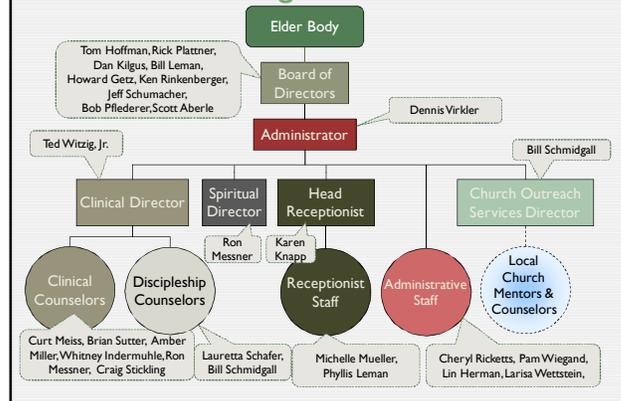
www.accounseling.org



ACCFS Mission Statement

- We will nurture, through counseling and teaching, the spiritual well-being of individuals through God's Word as it relates to their emotional, relational, and mental health needs (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:2).
- Our goal is to alleviate suffering and to promote Christian maturity so that people can grow in their likeness to Christ, experience a deeper relationship with God and enter into a more effective life of service to others.
- The Bible is our authority (1 Thessalonians 2:13) as we apply the gifts that God gives to man (Romans 12:5-8; Isaiah 50:4).
- The services provided will support and strengthen the local elder's shepherding, the brotherhood of the Apostolic Christian Church, and those not affiliated with the church, as resources allow.

ACCFS Organization Chart



Counseling Services at ACCFS

- Counseling is offered to address issues such as depression, anxiety, adjustment difficulties, marital problems, and childhood behavior problems.
- Counseling also provides biblical instruction, direction, and encouragement.
- Counseling can be in-office or remote (telephone or video-conference).
- Counseling is charged on a sliding-fee scale; no one is refused services based on their ability to pay.

Consultations with a Counselor

- ACCFS provides consultations with a counselor to people who are seeking information or help with mental health issues, spiritual issues, relationship problems, etc.
- Consultations are done via telephone and/or email.
- Callers include elders, ministers, family members, and friends of struggling individuals.
- We offer a free, 30 minute triage consult session before starting counseling, if desired.

Counseling Referral Information

- ACCFS provides referrals for those seeking counseling in their local area.
- ACCFS maintains a database of clinical counselors located around each of our churches nationally.
- The ACCFS referral database includes counselors, psychologists, psychiatrists, specialty clinics, and support groups.
- Our goal in providing this service is to help individuals find mental health professionals located near their home area who have strong clinical skills and good credentials, and will be respectful of their religious beliefs and faith backgrounds.

Church Education

- **Seminars & Presentations:** ACCFS counselors can provide presentations to churches or smaller groups (ministers, young groups, etc.).
- Seminars provide a Christian perspective on mental health issues, relationship problems, and/or personal growth areas.
- **Print Materials:** ACCFS has print materials available covering a wide variety of health issues and relationship problems; these have been screened by staff and/or elders.

Mentor Training Program

- The ACCFS Mentor Training Program teaches participants the skills that make for effective mentoring.
 - Understand the purpose and role of mentoring, both as a biblical concept and as a resource tool for use within churches.
 - Learn what a mentor does and gain confidence in undertaking the role of mentoring.
- Mentors can be assigned by an elder to mentor an individual or a couple with a specific need. Examples:
 - Spiritual growth
 - Personal growth and enhancing relationships
 - Marriage, family, or parenting issues.
 - Dealing with singleness, loneliness, anger, etc.

Apostolic Christian Way of Purity and Way of Temperance

- ACWP is a 60-lesson biblically-based accountability program for individuals struggling with sexual temptation, pornography, etc.
- ACWT is a 59-lesson biblically-based accountability program for those struggling with substance abuse (drugs, alcohol, tobacco)
- Each participant is assigned to a mentor who provides support, feedback, and guidance.
- The participant completes daily Bible study lessons which he e-mails or faxes to his mentor.
- Anyone wanting to enroll in the ACWP or ACWT program needs to get the approval of their home elder.
- If you have questions about the programs, call ACCFS or send an e-mail to acwp@accounseling.org or acwt@accounseling.org.

Bible Study Programs

- ACCFS provides Bible Studies for mental health and relationship topics.
- ACCFS works with the Bible Study Development Committee to coordinate Bible Study development, review, and distribution.
- ACCFS currently provides a Bible Study for Biblical Financial Stewardship from Crown Financial.
- These Bible study materials are available through AC Publications (www.acpublications.org)

Website (www.accounseling.org)

- About Us – This gives an overview of ACCFS; charter, policies, history, etc.
- Services – Includes counseling services as well as presentations and other church outreach services.
- Resources by Topic – This includes all of the topic informational pages arranged according to topical subject.
- Resources by Role – This includes many of the topic informational pages arranged according to role or life-stage.
- Get Help – This is a quick link on how to obtain counseling assistance.
- Bookstore – The bookstore contains all of the books that are referenced throughout the site and that are available from ACCFS. These books have been screened and selected for use by our church membership.
- Support Us – This gives information on how to help support ACCFS through donations, and help clients through the Brother's Keeper Fund.

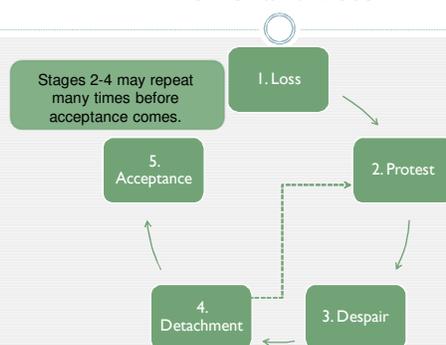
Mental Health Forum

- The Mental Health Forum is our way to connect with members and friends of the church who are going to school or working in mental health-related fields.
- The clinical counselors at ACCFS provide mentoring to individuals interested in going into the mental health field as a career, and fellowship to those who are already working in a mental health-related field.
- Our goal is to offer guidance and encouragement to members and friends of the church, while promoting spiritual safety and accountability.
- The frequency of contacts we have with individuals ranges from one-time phone calls (or visits to the ACCFS office) to long-term mentoring relationships that continue for a number of years.

Funding

- ACCFS is a ministry of the Apostolic Christian Church of America.
- A sliding fee scale based on annual income is used.
- No one is refused services based on inability to pay.
- The remainder of funding is from individuals and churches who support the work of ACCFS.
- Our annual budget is approximately \$850,000. Donations from individuals and churches cover **75%** of this amount.

Grief and Loss



3 Phases of Grief after Loss or Perceived Loss

1. Protest

- Shock, confusion, denial, anger at others, anger at self, anger at God, lowered self-esteem
- Crying, pain, weakness, nausea, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, etc.

2. Despair

- Agony, grief, anguish, depression
- Bargaining and "urge to recover" that which was lost, slowed thinking and actions, continuing physical symptoms.

3. Detachment

- Apathy, indifference, loss of interest, desire to withdraw and "give up"
- Decreased socialization, no new friendships, bland expression, absent spontaneity.

OVERCOMING HURT

BY DR. RALPH WOERNER

From the counseling I've done over the years, I've discovered that many people who seem to be moving through life without a care in the world are suffering from a lot more hurt than most of us realize. They were abused as children. They got a raw deal at work. They experienced the rejection of a recent divorce. They lost a sibling to cancer. Their reputation was slandered. They were betrayed by a friend. They were paralyzed as a result of a head-on collision with a drunk driver. On and on the list goes. Hurts come at us from every direction—in many forms, shapes, and colors.

Some of the hurts which we receive, of course, are only minor in nature. They haven't been intentionally inflicted and amount to nothing more than day-to-day bruises that need to be brushed aside as quickly as they arise. I wish I could say that all the hurts we receive are minor hurts, but they aren't. Many of them are far more serious. They are more like open wounds than insignificant bruises. The pain they cause is deep and lasting.

Hurt inevitably happens to all of us, without regard to our race, background, wealth, or goodness. Hurt can have a positive or a negative effect upon our lives. It can make us bitter, or it can make us better, depending, of course, on how we respond.

THREE WAYS WE RESPOND

When we're the victims of serious hurt, we experience many powerful emotions: anger, grief, shock, confusion, and shame. These negative feelings are our natural responses to pain. They arrive on the scene of our hurt without warning or invitation, and they persistently demand our attention. How we respond to these emotions has a profound impact on our health and well-being because they serve as the springboard for our behavior.

Typically, we react to hurt in one of two ways. Either we'll turn the hurt outward in retaliation, attempting to make the offender feel as badly as we do, or we'll turn the emotion inward, attempting to suppress our feelings. Either of these responses can lead to pretty unpleasant consequences for us and those around us.

Sooner or later, someone or something is going to hurt you deeply. When this happens you can take matters into your own hands and try to even the score, leading to an unending cycle of anger and revenge. Or you can bottle up all the hurt and wind up poisoning yourself with bitterness and hatred.

Fortunately, there is a better way to deal with hurt. You can choose to release the negative emotions with a positive response— forgiveness. It may seem too hard or unfair or impractical or downright unnatural to consider forgiving someone who hurts you, but this is the single most effective response for bringing about healing and health.

RETALIATION: *Hurt Turned Outward*

Retaliation. Eye for eye. Tooth for tooth. Blood for blood. We can give our offender what we think he deserves. We can make sure we hurl back the stones which come our way with greater force than they were received: slash his tires; spread a rumor about him; decide to have an affair with his spouse; punch his lights out; anything to make his life miserable.

It all sounds pretty satisfying to think about getting even, but retaliation only perpetuates evil. Someone does something to you, so you feel you must do something back. You do something to him in your attempt to get even; now he feels he has to do something to you again. As Mohandas Gandhi said, “An eye-for-eye [kind of justice] only ends up making the whole world blind.” Not to mention that revenge is simply not worth the price. Even a grizzly bear understands this. He’s tough enough to whip any animal in the West, but there’s one that he never messes with—the skunk. He knows all he’ll get from that fight is a great big stink.

There’s another problem with retaliation as a response to hurt. If we’re going to get even with our offender in this way, we’re going to have to violate the commands of God. Plus, we’re going to have to usurp His authority by making ourselves the administrators of justice. However, God hasn’t turned the judgment of this world over to us. He’s the Judge of the universe. He’s appointed civil government to be the administrator of justice, and when civil government fails, He promises He’ll handle the matter Himself: “Vengeance belongs to Me. I will repay.”¹ Settling the score is not our prerogative. God alone has the right to do this. And whether He chooses to punish or to forgive is His business. God doesn’t need our help, our advice, or our interference.

If you have confidence in God’s ability to administer justice, revenge becomes unnecessary. God is a better administrator of justice than you could ever be. He is capable of doing His job without your help. So why not defer it to Him?

JOSEPH: *Retaliation v. Forgiveness*

The Bible tells a great story about someone who left justice in God’s hands instead of

taking revenge. It's about a teenager named Joseph. Among 12 sons, he was the favorite. It hurt his brothers to think that their father loved Joseph more than them, and their jealousy was intense. To add insult to injury, Joseph was a tattletale. When he saw his brothers doing something wrong, he ran and told their dad. The brothers were so angry, they decided to get even with Joseph if it was the last thing they did. Finding him in a field, they seized him and sold him to some slave-traffickers who happened to be passing by. Then they went home and told their father, Jacob, that his favorite son had been killed by a wild animal.

The betrayal Joseph felt when his own brothers bartered away his liberties and reduced him to the status of a slave had to have been enormous. Then it went from bad to worse when Joseph wound up getting thrown into jail when he was falsely accused of having an affair with his master's wife. What a terrible shock to lose his freedom twice through no fault of his own! He must have been intensely confused, upset, and angry.

Amazingly, the lemons Joseph got from life made for great lemonade. The Bible says that God was with Joseph while he was in prison.² Eventually, he had a chance to do a favor for the Pharaoh. It made the Egyptian ruler so happy that he rewarded Joseph by releasing him and making him second in command of the entire country.

Meanwhile back in his hometown, Joseph's brothers and father were starving because of a terrible famine. As a last resort, they decided to go to Egypt in search of food because they had heard about the storehouses of grain there. Ironically, the brothers who had treated him so cruelly would now be begging bread from Joseph's hand. If Joseph had nurtured resentment in his heart, this would have been the time for revenge.

Thankfully, Joseph wasn't made of that material. Rather than hurting them, he chose to help them. Instead of the family dying from starvation, they lived to see their broken relationships healed. Forgiveness wiped the slate clean, allowing Joseph and his brothers to love one another again.

GRUDGES

Holding a grudge is a bit like combining both negative responses into one. On the one hand, it's like retaliation. Somehow we convince ourselves that we are punishing an offender with our resentment when, in fact, he probably couldn't care less. On the other, it's internalization. We never directly express our hurt or release it by forgiving.

In his book *None of These Diseases*, Dr. S. I. McMillen said, "The man I hate hounds me wherever I go. I can't escape his tyrannical grasp on my mind. It may be a luxurious car

that I drive along a lake fringed with [trees in] autumnal beauty...[but] I might as well be driving a wagon in mud and rain. When the waiter serves me porterhouse steak with French fries and strawberry shortcake covered with ice cream, it might as well be stale bread and water. My teeth chew the food and I swallow it, but the man I hate will not permit me to enjoy it. I really must acknowledge the fact that I am a slave to every man on whom I pour the viles of my wrath.”

INTERNALIZATION: Hurt Turned Inward

The second way we can respond to hurt is to grit our teeth, hold our chin up, and repress the pain we feel, pretending all is well when it isn't. When hurt is internalized this way, it usually causes resentment, bitterness, and hostility to take root in our lives. Like a toxic waste, it poisons us inch by inch from within. It should always be remembered that a small wound that becomes infected causes far more pain than a large one that heals. If we internalize our hurts, they'll sour our personality. Worse, we can find ourselves in a deep and miserable depression.

It's not always easy to recognize how hurt has been internalized in our own lives or the lives of those we love. It may show up as irritability or anxiety. It can lie at the root of high blood pressure or an eating disorder. It can even be related to feeling tired all the time because it takes a lot of energy to hold in the emotion.

Quite often, suppressing negative feelings is like trying to keep a pressure cooker from exploding. The anger and bitterness often erupt into inappropriate temper tantrums: fuming at traffic, raging at your child's bad grade, lashing out at your coworker because the copier jams.

Although we often suffer hurt at the hands of another person, it can certainly come from the unexplainable, painful experiences of life. Your home is destroyed by a tornado. The father you rely on for wisdom and guidance is diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. You lose a child to miscarriage. Your retirement fund evaporates in a depressed economy. How do you handle hurt when there is no one to blame but God?

JOB & HIS WIFE: *Internalization v. Trust*

The story of Job takes up a full book of the Bible exploring how we humans deal with the pain of loss. God allowed Job and his wife to experience the deepest kind of hurt. The things they worked for all their lives—their servants, their cattle, their camels—were all taken away by invaders in one day. Then came the terrible report that their 10 children had been killed in a violent storm. Their whole world came crashing in

around them. There's no way to fathom the grief they felt. The depth of their pain boggles my mind.

It's incredible to consider Job's response to the news that he had lost everything he had: "The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord."³ Anyone can say, "The Lord has given and the Lord has taken away," because that amounts to nothing more than a statement of fact; however, Job went on to say, "Blessed be the name of the Lord." Obviously, Job's love for God wasn't contingent upon any pain he would endure or blessings he would receive. Job determined to go right on trusting and honoring God no matter what.

Not long after, Job found himself covered with sore boils from the crown of his head to the soles of his feet. Although we have only one verse on record from Mrs. Job, it's easy to see her hurt in every word. Apparently, she'd been brooding over the loss of her children and possessions, and seeing her husband like this was more than Mrs. Job could bear. She hissed, "Why are you still trying to stay innocent? Curse God and die!"⁴ It's logical to conclude that Mrs. Job had unresolved anger in her heart due to the tremendous tragedy in her life. She hadn't done anything to deserve what had happened, and now here was more suffering at her doorstep. How could anyone go on trusting God's goodness in light of the circumstances?

Through a series of conversations with his best friends, Job tried to make sense of what's happened, but the experience of suffering was beyond his understanding. Still, Job refused to curse God as his wife ordered.

Rather, he chose to trust God—a positive response in a terribly negative situation. Thus, we've come to know the "patience of Job" as a desirable virtue and a powerful way to overcome hurt.

IT'S YOUR CHOICE...

The story is told of two men who traveled through life with sacks on their backs. Each time a hurt was received, they would place it in what became known as their "injury sack." One man's sack became so bulging and heavy that he couldn't walk without difficulty or pain. The other man's sack was empty and light. A stranger asked the second man why his sack was so light, wondering how it was possible for him not to have ever been hurt.

"Oh, I've been hurt many times," the man replied. "As my sack grew too large and heavy to bear, I asked a friend one day if he would help me carry the load. 'No one can help you carry the load of hurt,' he replied, 'but there is a way for you to rid yourself of it. Take the

scissors of forgiveness and slit the bottom of your sack, and your load of hurt will fall away.' That's what I chose to do that day. Since then, I take all the hurts which I receive and place them into my 'injury sack' as before, but now they simply slide out the bottom. That's one load I choose not to carry."

WHAT GOD EXPECTS

We look at the lives of Bible figures like Joseph and Job and may come away thinking, *that's fine for them, but you don't know how badly I've been hurt. God cannot possibly expect me to forgive the person who hurt me. He can't honestly expect me to keep on trusting Him.* Clearly, it's tempting to hold on to our righteous indignation, but it's also evident from the teachings of Christ that He expects us to forgive others and trust Him completely.

When His disciple Peter⁵ asked Jesus if He thought a person should forgive one who has wronged him as many as seven times, Jesus answered, "Not seven times, but seventy times seven." Then He went on to illustrate His answer with a story about a man who owed a king a very large debt—10,000 talents—an amount that would have taken 15 years of wages to settle. Because he begged for mercy when the payment was due, the king was moved with compassion and forgave the debt. This same man who had been forgiven so much went out and found a man who owed him 100 denarii—a sum which could be worked off in a day. When the debtor couldn't pay up on the spot, the man had him thrown into prison, notwithstanding his pleas for mercy. When the king heard what had happened, he was angry. He took back his forgiveness and threw that ungrateful soul into prison until all was paid.

Jesus also addressed forgiveness when He taught His disciples how to pray. He said that we should ask God to forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who have trespassed against us. "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive yours: but if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive yours."⁶

Jesus went on to show us the power of forgiveness, not with words or stories, but with His own life. Evil men accused Him falsely and convicted Him unjustly. They beat Him unmercifully and mocked Him cruelly. Then they spiked Him to a cross and hanged Him up to die. With blood running over His forehead, down His arms and over His feet, and with His back whipped unmercifully, Jesus looked down from the cross at the hostile crowd and prayed, "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."⁷ Not a twinge of bitterness, but only love and forgiveness were in His heart toward those who had put Him there.

FORGIVE BY CHOICE

Someone confessed to me recently that he didn't feel like forgiving the person who had injured him. No one ever does. If we wait until we feel like forgiving, we never will—not any more than if we wait until we feel like cleaning out the garage or changing a dirty diaper. Forgiveness isn't a feeling. It's something we choose to do by an act of the will. It's not a matter of can or can't. It's a matter of will or won't.

Some people refuse to forgive because they don't want to be healed. They would rather talk about their problem—use it as a crutch so they can walk with a limp, get sympathy from others, and draw attention to themselves. It would be incredibly difficult to honestly confront this attitude in your own heart, but imagine what life would be like if you were emotionally healthy enough to walk without that crutch! Forgiveness is a great place to start that healing.

Another reason we don't want to forgive is that we'd have to give up our right to an apology. Yet this is the spirit of retaliation, seeking your own justice rather than relying on God to judge. True forgiveness releases others whether they ever acknowledge the hurt or say they're sorry.

This is one reason why forgiveness is usually so difficult, because the cost is always borne by the one who does the forgiving. If I owe you \$1,000 and you forgive me the debt, the amount you forgive is the amount you lose. Forgiveness doesn't restore the goods which were stolen or the marriage that was broken up. It doesn't repair the damage which was done; it writes it off.

When we forgive, we're releasing our offender from any obligation to suffer consequences, apologize to us, or make amends for what he has done. This doesn't mean we automatically feel better about what happened, nor does it mean the damage wasn't real. Forgiveness means we've chosen to let go. Thus, the decision to forgive or not to forgive is a decision which you alone can make.

FORGETTING: Moving Forward After Hurt

Some people say they're willing to forgive a person for what he's done, but they're unwilling to forget. If they mean by this they're never going to stop holding a grudge against the individual for what he's done, they haven't forgiven him at all. So long as we hope our offender will be miserable in his new marriage or get fired from his job, there's no need pretending that we forgave him.

So why the phrase "forgive and forget"? Forgiveness doesn't cause our memory to fail. As long as our mind is clear, we'll be able to remember the hurts we've received. I believe

that forgetting is one of the most important parts of forgiveness. Forgetting after a hurtful incident means getting on with our lives and leaving the other party to get on with his or hers.

This doesn't mean that we'll always want to re-establish a close relationship with someone who hurts us, like going back into business with someone who's swindled a sum of money or becoming intimate friends with someone who's betrayed a confidence. Rebuilding wholeness in a broken relationship may mean that certain behaviors or attitudes must change before you can trust a person fully, and that's not always possible. Nor does forgiving mean that the one who's guilty won't have to answer to the law for his actions. Even though you've forgiven him the wrong he's done, the justice of the court may still need to be satisfied. The drunk driver who kills a child can be forgiven, but he still needs to satisfy his debt to society.

As you go about forgetting, it's important to remember that even though forgiveness is extended by an act of the will in a moment of time, getting over our wounded feelings may take a while. Sometimes we have to keep reminding ourselves that we have forgiven our offender for what he's done and we don't intend to harbor resentment against him anymore. Otherwise we'll be tempted to mull over previous hurts and take our forgiveness back. This will cause the pain to begin all over again. After our emotions finally get the message about what our will has done, we'll wake up one morning and be able to remember the incident without feeling any pain or a desire for revenge. Then, we'll know forgiveness is complete.

WHEN YOU'RE THE OFFENDER

As you've been reading this booklet, you may have recognized that you have played a part in hurting someone else. If you have, it's up to you to begin the healing process. First, ask God for His forgiveness. He promises that if you confess when you do something wrong, He will forgive you and give you a fresh start.⁸

Then you must take the next step and ask the person you've hurt for his or her forgiveness. Don't be dismayed if he refuses to accept your apology. God doesn't hold you responsible for how others respond. Unless something needs to be returned or repaid, offering a sincere apology will allow you to move forward, with or without the other person.

In the end, whether you have been hurt or have hurt someone else, forgiveness is the only choice that moves us past the pain. The decision is yours to make. What will it be?

BIBLICAL REFERENCES: 1) Deuteronomy 32:35. 2) Genesis 41:40. 3) Job 1:21b. 4) Job 2:9. 5) Matthew 18:21-35. 6) Matthew 6:14-15. 7) Luke 23:24. 8) 1 John 1:9.