

***My Relationship  
With God***

Spiritual Area of Life

**S.A.L.T.**

**Seven Areas of Life Training<sup>®</sup>**

SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING (S.A.L.T.) SPIRITUAL AREA –  
MY RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD, Version 2.0

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## **Dedication**

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*All of us at VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING INTERNATIONAL give God the praise for these SALT materials and dedicate this series to the discipleship of believers worldwide.*

*Thank you to all past and present VCLi staff members. You have played a vital role in developing, teaching, and helping others apply these diagrams, concepts, and lessons.*

*Special thanks go to Rocky Nystrom. Your vision and creativity made this series a reality, your determination brought it to completion; and your heart for people to be free energized us along the way.*

## **About this Series**

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### SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING

Learning how to live victoriously in all seven areas of life is the goal of this comprehensive discipleship series.

This small group or self-study book is simple, yet dynamic. Biblical truths are visually illustrated with powerful diagrams.

Solid Biblical truth is taught in each lesson with a challenge to apply that truth to your life. It is when you apply that truth and share it with others that your life will be profoundly changed.

## **About this Book**

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The *Spiritual Area of Life* deals with your relationship with God.

In four powerful chapters, you will find challenges to get real with God and start enjoying a dynamic relationship with your Creator.

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## I AM NOT GOD

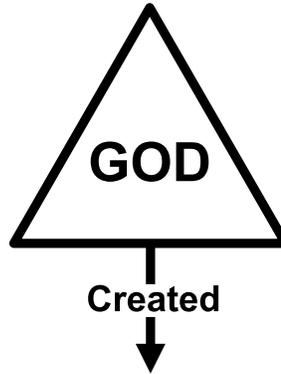
*“For thus says the Lord, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: ‘I am the Lord, and there is no other.’”*

**Isaiah 45:18** (NKJ)

The Bible does not tell us where God came from or offer any proof of His existence. It simply says “In the beginning God created...” The question we are left with is, “Do I believe God created everything even without proof?”

*“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”* **Genesis 1:1** (NKJ)

The following diagram illustrates the scripture that *God created all things*.



**Q1.** What do you believe about how the world and all living creatures came into being?

Throughout the ages people have claimed they do not believe God exists because they can't see Him.

The Bible says God can be seen by looking at what He has created.

*“From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. **They can clearly see his invisible qualities** – his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.” **Romans 1:20** (NLT)*

**Q2.** What have you learned about God by observing His creation?

Another reason some people claim they don't believe God exists is because of the consequences of believing. When someone creates something, like a book, he/she is the author or has authority over it. If God exists and He made everything, then He has the right to rule His creation, including all the people in it.

**Q3.** Does it bother you that someone may have the right to rule over you? Explain.

People may want to believe there is no God because they want to do as they please. The problem with people doing as they please is that their choices result in chaos.

*“When they refused to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their evil minds and let them do things that should never be done. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, fighting, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.”*  
**Romans 1:28–29** (NLT)

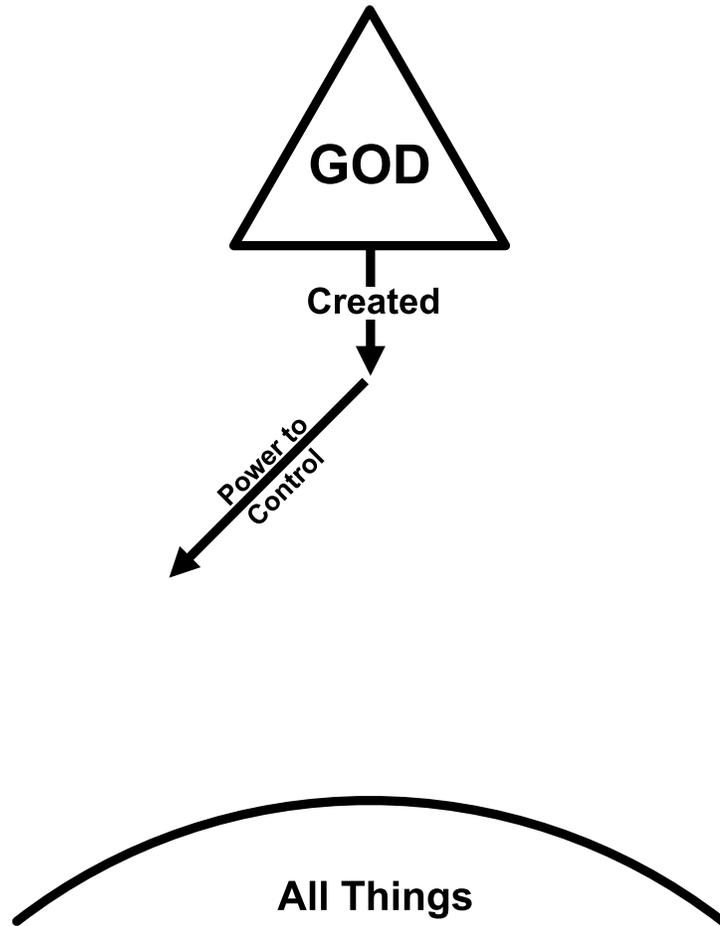
If God created all things, then He possesses power and privileges that are *exclusively* His.

### **Power to Control**

God has the power to control all the things He created.

*“All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. **He has the power to do as he pleases** among the angels of heaven and with those who live on earth. No one can stop him or challenge him, saying, ‘What do you mean by doing these things?’”* **Daniel 4:35** (NLT)

God's *power to control* is illustrated on the diagram below.



**Q4.** Do you believe God has the power to control everything in creation?

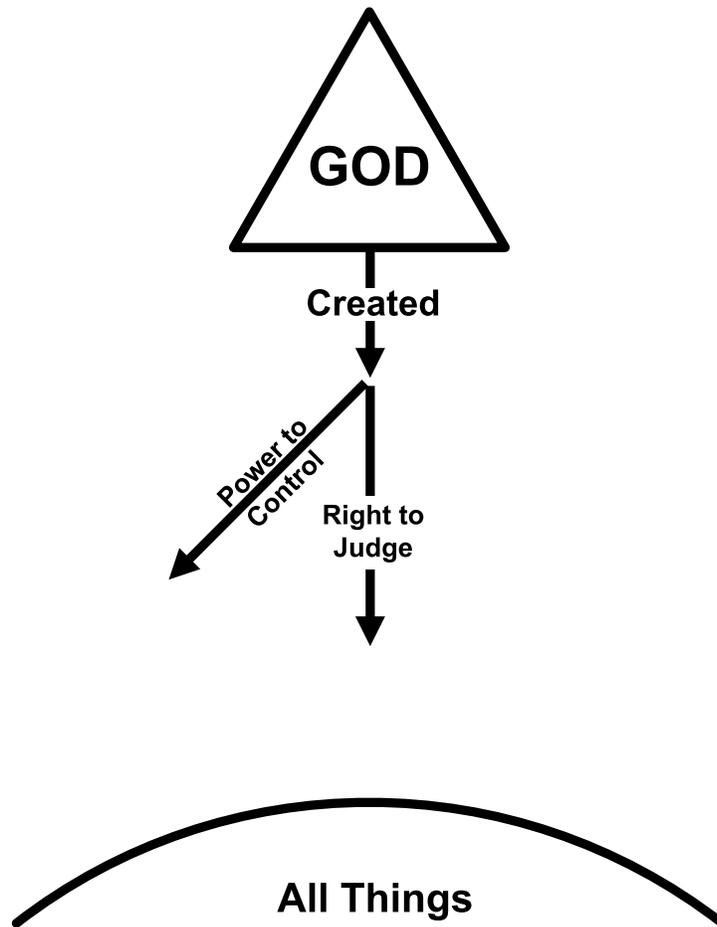
**Q5.** Are there things you think escape God's attention?

### **Right to Judge**

Because God created all things, He has the exclusive right to determine standards of conduct for all people and to judge all people by those standards.

*“There is only **one Lawgiver and Judge**, the One who is able to save and to destroy...” James 4:12 (NASB)*

God’s *right to judge* is illustrated on the diagram below.



- Q6.** Do you believe God has the exclusive right to determine standards of conduct for mankind?
- Q7.** Do you believe He has the exclusive right to judge every person? Explain.

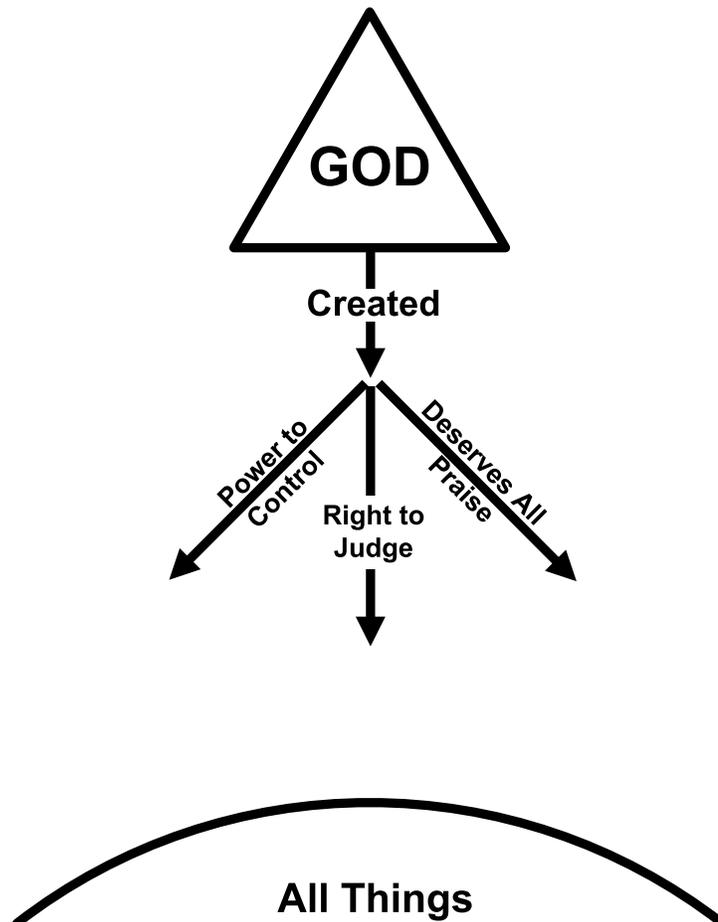
***“God has every right to exercise his judgment and his power, but he also has the right to be very patient with those who are the objects of his judgment...”***  
**Romans 9:22** (NLT)

### **Deserves All Praise**

Because God created all things, He deserves the praise of all creation.

***“You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created.”*** **Revelation 4:11** (NKJ)

The truth that God *deserves all praise* is illustrated on the diagram below.



Only God has the power to control all things. He is completely independent and needs help from no one.

Only God has the right to judge all things, determine standards, and reject those that are disobedient to those standards.

Only God deserves all the praise, worship, and approval from all the things He created.

**Q8.** Do you agree that the rights just listed are God's exclusive rights? If not, explain why not.

### **Satan Tried to Be God**

Though God is the One who has the power to control, the right to judge, and deserves all praise, there are others who have tried to take these rights. It started with Satan.

*"How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer...you have said in your heart: 'I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.'" Isaiah 14:12-14 (NKJ)*

Lucifer, one of the angels God created, decided he could be like God, the Most High. By trying to take God's place, he became God's enemy, known as Satan.

Here is what he said, from the above verses:

"I will ascend into heaven." It sounds like he wants to take *control* and do what he pleases.

"I will exalt my throne." It sounds like he wants people to bow at his throne and *praise* him.

"I will sit on the mount of the congregation." It sounds like he wants to rule and *judge* from a seat of authority.

### **Man Tries to Be God**

Trying to be like God did not end with Satan. Satan (in the form of a serpent) successfully tempted Adam and Eve to follow his rebellion of trying to be like God.

*“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and **you will be like God**, knowing good and evil.’” **Genesis 3:4–5** (NKJ)*

Adam and Eve chose to follow Satan in trying to be like God, rather than acknowledging God as God and obeying Him. That pattern of behavior passed to all mankind.

- Q9.** Whom else do you know who has been deceived into thinking he/she could assume the rights of God?

### **Personal Survey**

Take a moment and answer the following questions.

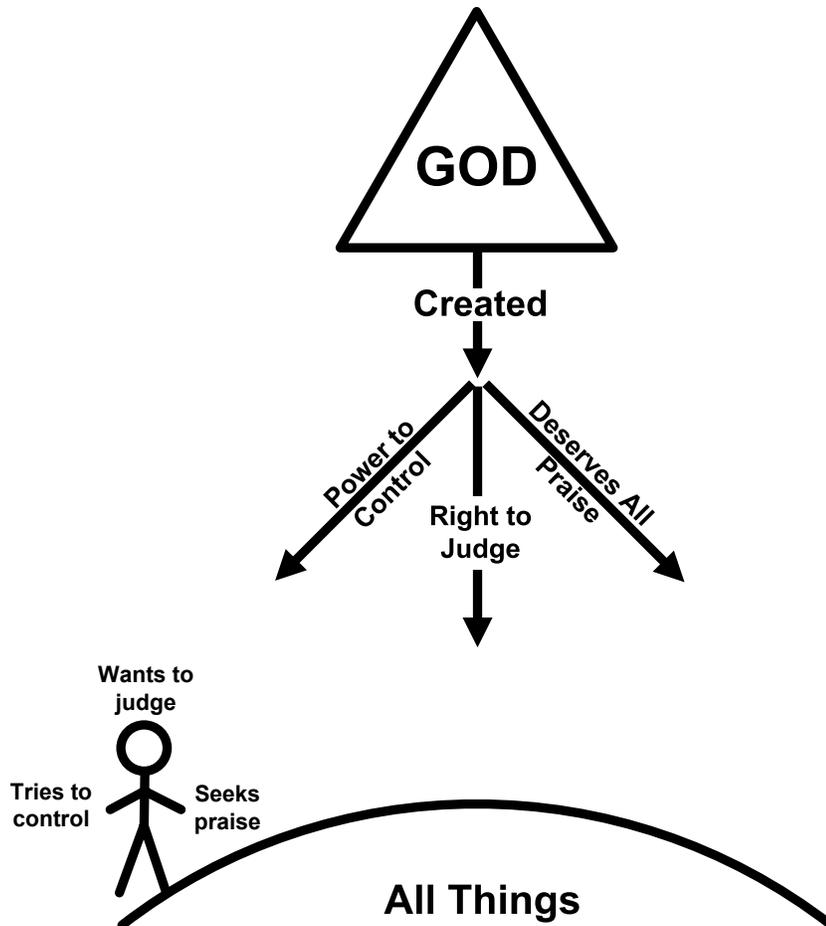
Do you **ever** experience any of the following? Circle your answers. If your answer is “yes” and “no,” circle both.

Does it bother you when you're not in control?	Yes	No
Does it bother you when things don't go your way?	Yes	No
Do you have trouble asking for help?	Yes	No
Do you get impatient when people don't do things right?	Yes	No
Does it upset you when you don't get good service?	Yes	No
Do you try to change people?	Yes	No
Do you look for approval or thanks from others?	Yes	No
Do you try to keep people happy?	Yes	No
Do you reject those who mistreat you?	Yes	No

If you answered “yes” to **any** of these questions, even if your “yes” depended upon your situation, that is an area where you are trying to be like God in your own life or the lives of others.

**Q10.** You may never have realized that you are trying to be like God. However, what do your answers reveal?

The following diagram shows man's attempt to be God. Man *tries to control*, *wants to judge* (others, self, and God), and *seeks praise*.



The things that were created can never take the place of the Creator.

Now let's step through the personal survey questions to clarify how they reveal man's attempt to take God's place.

### **Tries to Control**

Man wants to control people and the outcome of things but only God possesses that kind of power. He has the ability to control you, yet He

gave you a free will. When you use that free will to try to control life around you, you are taking God's place.

**Q11.** Does it bother you when you're not in control? Why?

The attempt to control things that are beyond your power to control produces anxiety, stress, and worry.

*“Can all your worries add a single moment to your life?  
Of course not.”* **Matthew 6:27** (NLT)

**Q12.** Does it bother you when things don't go your way? Why?

If you are bothered when things don't go your way, it reveals that you think God isn't doing things right.

*“Then the LORD answered Job from the whirlwind, ‘Are you going to discredit my justice and condemn me so you can say you are right?’”* **Job 40:6, 8** (NLT)

**Q13.** Do you have trouble asking for help? Why?

You may have trouble asking for help because of pride. Some people hope to look good to others by being self-sufficient. They try to control circumstances so they can be independent and not need help. Only God is independent and doesn't need anyone else's help.

*“Has the LORD ever needed anyone's advice? Does he need instruction about what is good or what is best?”*  
**Isaiah 40:14** (NLT)

*Being controlling* can result in unpleasant emotions like frustration, anger, exhaustion, depression, fear or worry.

**Q14.** Have you been experiencing any of these emotions? Which ones?

You don't have the power or the resources to control everything in your life because you are not God.

*"Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding."*

**Isaiah 40:28** (NLT)

### **Wants to Judge**

Man wants to judge and condemn others but only God who created man has the right to judge mankind. You may even be judgmental of yourself. Only God has the right to be your Judge.

**Q15.** Do you get impatient when people don't do things "right?" "Right" according to whom?

Your impatience shows that you have standards and are judging the people who violate those standards.

*"God alone, who made the law, can rightly judge among us. He alone has the power to save or to destroy. So what right do you have to **condemn your neighbor?**"*

**James 4:12** (NLT)

**Q16.** Do you try to change people? Whom are you trying to change?

Trying to change people reveals that you have a standard of how they should be and you want them to conform to it.

*"Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love."* **Ephesians 4:2** (NLT)

**Q17.** Does it bother you when you don't get good service? Why?

Thinking you deserve better service leads to judging the person that gave you poor service. You might also be bothered by the fact that you can't control how you were treated.

*“Who are you to judge another’s servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for God is able to make him stand.”*

**Romans 14:4** (NKJ)

*Wanting to judge* creates feelings of irritation, disgust, and disappointment with people. The Bible teaches that you are to love others. Have you ever noticed how hard it is to love people when you are judging them?

*“Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. Stop criticizing others, or it will all come back on you. If you forgive others, you will be forgiven.”* **Luke 6:37** (NLT)

### **Seeks Praise**

Man seeks people's praise even though everything he has (looks, talents, possessions, and abilities) comes from God. Only God is worthy of praise from those He created.

**Q18.** Do you look for approval or thanks from others? Why?

Looking for approval or thanks from others is actually redirecting praise to yourself that should go to God.

*“I am the LORD; that is my name! I will not give my glory to anyone else. I will not share my praise...”*

**Isaiah 42:8** (NLT)

**Q19.** Do you try to keep people happy? Is it so they will like you or not get angry? Explain.

Trying to keep people happy can be a way of seeking praise. All praise belongs to God. You are not capable of being the source of someone else's happiness. This is also a subtle form of control. True joy comes from the Lord.

*"...In Your presence is fullness of joy; At Your right hand are pleasures forevermore."* **Psalm 16:11** (NKJ)

**Q20.** Do you reject those who mistreat you? Give an example.

Rejecting back when you are mistreated is a form of vengeance. Vengeance is another way of playing God because you are punishing the person for not treating you the way you wanted to be treated.

*"For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,' says the Lord. And again, 'The Lord will judge His people.'"* **Hebrews 10:30** (NKJ)

People who *seek praise* and live for the acceptance of others may feel hurt, rejected, unappreciated, or insecure. Pride is at the root of seeking praise. The Bible teaches to be humble instead of proud.

*"...As the Scriptures say, 'God sets himself against the proud, but he shows favor to the humble.'"*  
**James 4:6** (NLT)

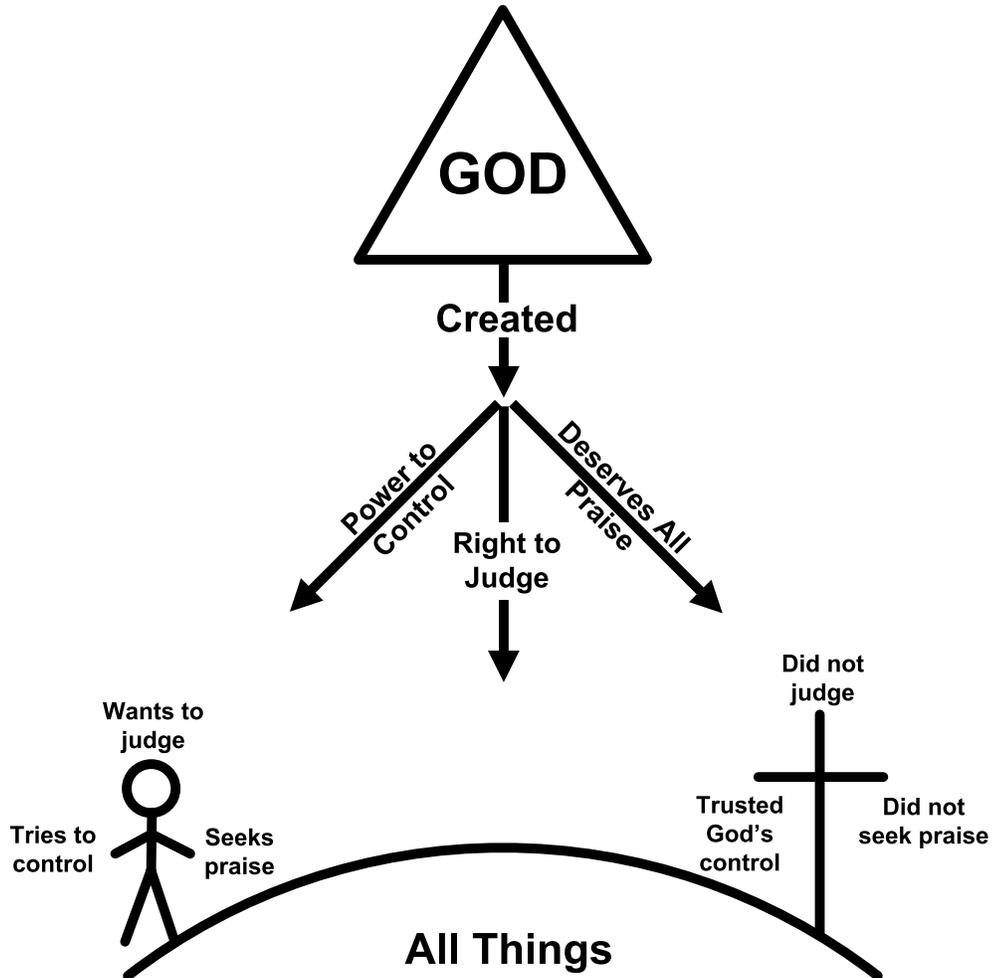
### **Jesus Gave Up His Rights**

The life of Jesus, the Son of God stands in stark contrast to Satan and Adam. Although He Himself is God, He gave up His rights as God and became a man.

*"Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God."* **Philippians 2:6** (NLT)

In the next diagram, the cross represents Jesus Christ and His life on earth. Instead of trying to control, wanting to judge and seeking praise, Jesus *trusted God's control, did not judge or seek praise*. He acknowledged that God is over all things.

## God is Over All Things



### He Trusted God's Control

Jesus didn't try to control people or His circumstances. He trusted God's control.

*"And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept **entrusting** Himself to Him who judges righteously."*

**1 Peter 2:23** (NASB)

## He Did Not Judge

Jesus was not judgmental. He did not condemn.

*“If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I **do not judge him**; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.” John 12:47 (NASB)*

The Bible teaches Jesus came to save and forgive those that weren't doing what was pleasing to God. He did not seek revenge or pay back evil for evil.

*“Jesus said, ‘Father, **forgive** these people, because they don't know what they are doing...’” Luke 23:34 (NLT)*

## He Did Not Seek Praise

Instead of trying to get the praise of man or worrying about His reputation, Jesus humbled Himself and came to serve others.

*“[Jesus] made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He **humbled** Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.” Philippians 2:7–8 (NKJ)*

Jesus' life pleased God.

*“And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.’” Matthew 3:17 (NKJ)*

When you try to be “god” of your own life, not only is it following Satan, but it is going in the opposite direction that Jesus went. Your state of rebellion stands in the way of your relationship with God. This rebellion is **sin**.

## Repentance

If you have seen through this lesson that you have been controlling, judging others or seeking praise, now is the time to repent. Think of repentance as turning to follow Jesus' way, instead of trying to play God.

*“I pondered the direction of my life, and I turned to follow your statutes.” Psalm 119:59 (NLT)*

**Q21.** Are you ready to repent of trying to take God's place?

If so, perhaps taking the following steps would be helpful to you.

**Share with God:**

- The specific areas or people you have tried to control.
- The times when you have been judgmental of others, yourself or God.
- Your attempts to seek man's praise.

**Agree with God** that you have been wrong for trying to take His place.

**Tell God** you choose to trust His control, His judgment, and you acknowledge that He is worthy of all praise.

# God is Over All Things

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*



# Chapter 2

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## I AM “IN CHRIST”

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJ)*

In the previous chapter, you saw man’s attempt to take God’s place by exercising rights that only God possesses. In contrast, Jesus, the Son of God, laid down those same rights and lived in a way that was pleasing to God.

Is your life pleasing to God? Have you been trying to take God’s place? Satan became God’s enemy by trying to sit in God’s place. Are you behaving like God’s friend or God’s enemy? God’s enemies don’t have a good future.

*“But the wicked will perish. The LORD’s enemies are like flowers in a field – they will disappear like smoke.”*  
**Psalm 37:20 (NLT)**

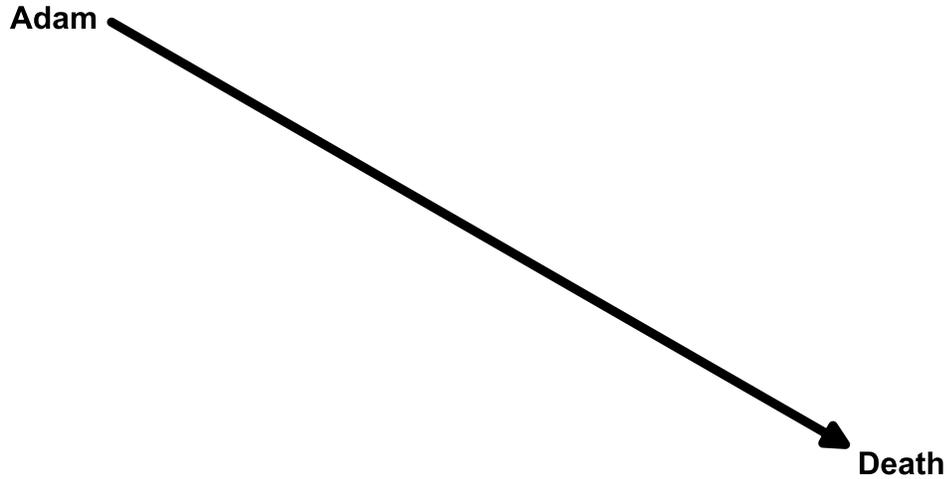
Adam and Eve were created to be God’s friends. They walked and talked with Him. But when they followed Satan’s rebellion they were acting like God’s enemies. Their rebellion cost them the intimate relationship they had with God and eventually led to their death.

*“But the LORD God gave him [Adam] this warning: ‘You may freely eat any fruit in the garden except fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat of its fruit, you will surely die.’”* **Genesis 2:16–17 (NLT)**

## Adam's Line

Adam's sin led to his death. It also led to the *death* of every person born after him.

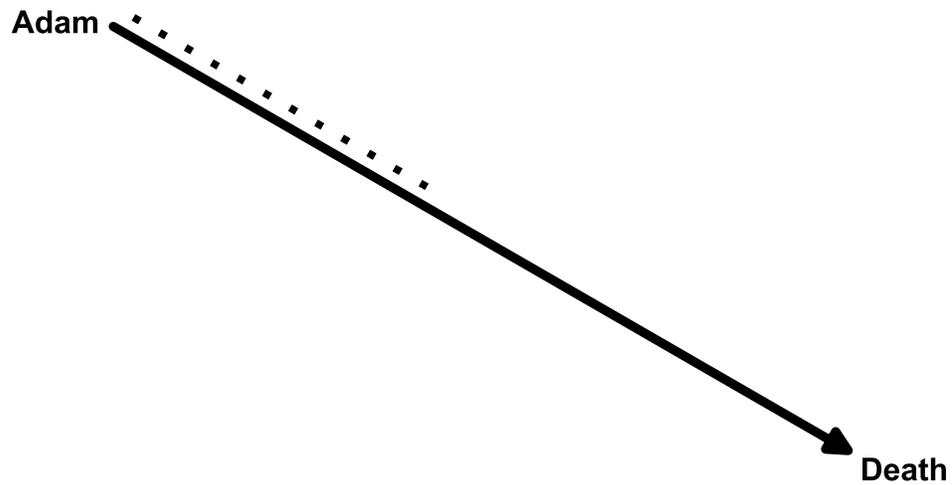
*"Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus **death** spread to all men, because all sinned."* **Romans 5:12** (NKJ)



Everyone born into this world inherits sin from Adam and is separated from God.

*"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."*  
**Romans 3:23** (NKJ)

In the next diagram, the squares leading down from Adam represent following generations born into sin.



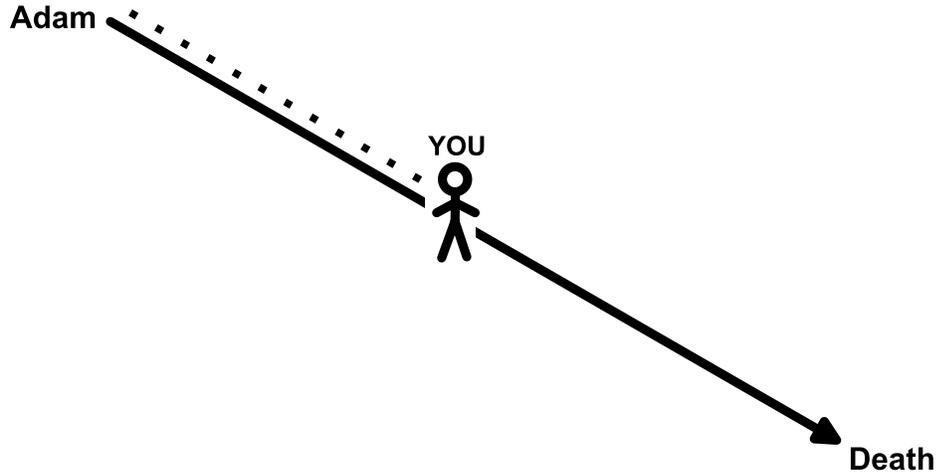
The punishment for sin is death.

*"For the wages of sin is death..."* **Romans 6:23** (NKJ)

**Q1.** Have you ever sinned? In what ways have you tried to play God?

## You

Did you know that *you* inherited sin from your father, who inherited it from his father, who inherited it from his father, and so on all the way back up to Adam? That heritage made *you* God's enemy.

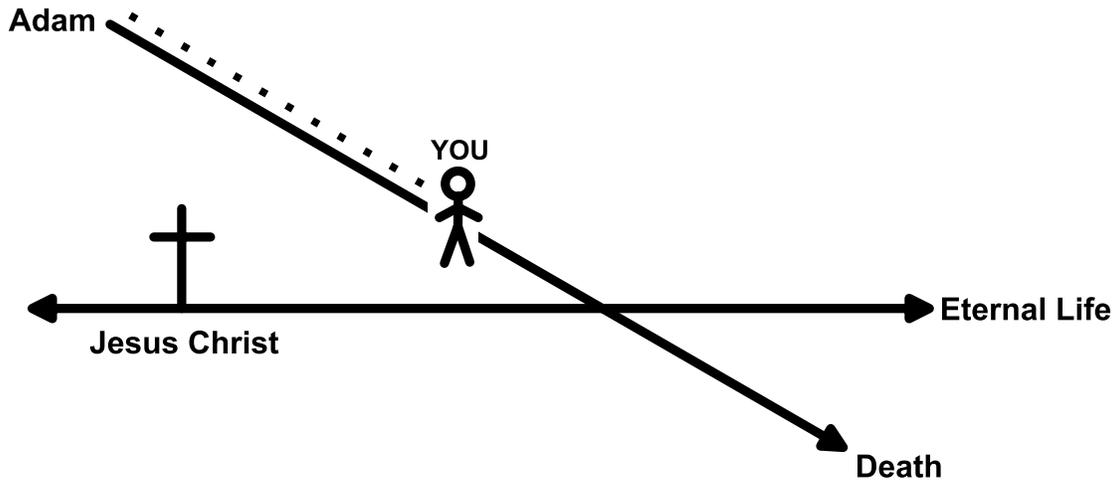


Because you are a child of Adam (“in Adam”), you have the identity of “sinner.” *You* can't change that identity no matter how hard you try. You are a sinner and death is in your future. As long as your identity is that of sinner, you will act like God's enemy.

- Q2.** What do you think you must do to escape the consequences of being a child of Adam (“in Adam”)?

## Life of Jesus

On the following diagram, the life of *Jesus Christ* is shown intersecting the line of *Adam*. *Jesus Christ's* line leads to *eternal life*. *His death* is shown as the cross.



The life of Jesus Christ has no beginning and no end. Jesus has always existed.

*“Jesus Christ is the same **yesterday, today, and forever.**” Hebrews 13:8 (NLT)*

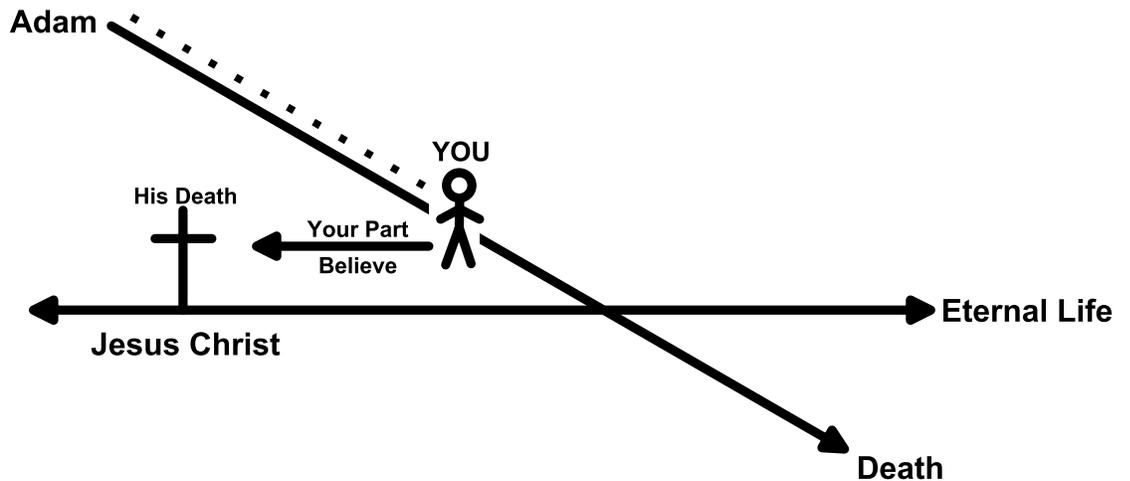
The good news is that Jesus came to take your punishment for being God's enemy, a sinner, and died in *your* place.

*“But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still **sinner.**” Romans 5:8 (NLT)*

## Escaping Death

To escape the line leading to death, you must BELIEVE that Jesus took the punishment for your sins.

*“For God sent Jesus to take the punishment for our sins and to satisfy God's anger against us. We are made right with God when we **believe** that Jesus shed His blood, sacrificing His life for us...”* **Romans 3:25** (NLT)



- Q3.** Have you made the choice to believe Jesus took the punishment for your sins? If so, when?

If you have not, would you like to do that now? You could say a prayer similar to the following:

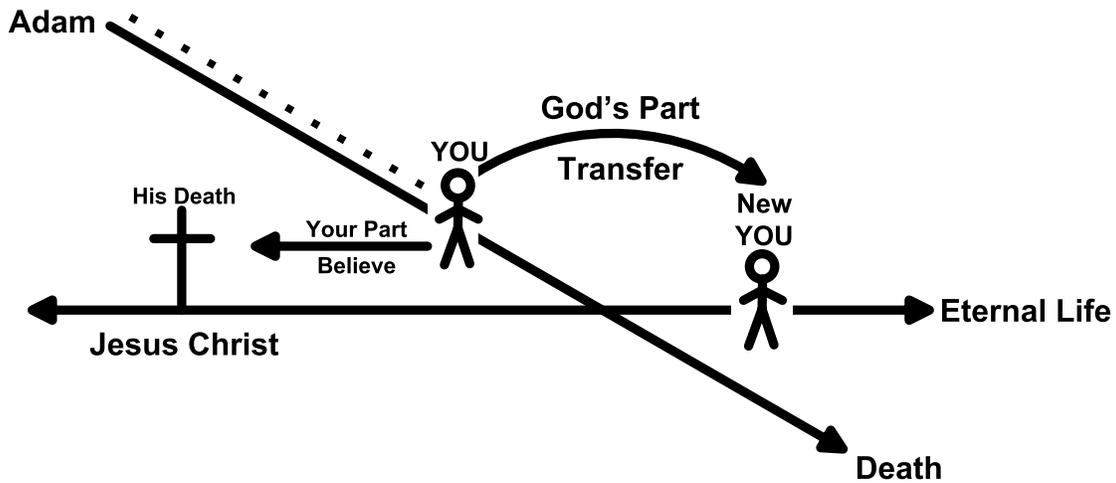
### Prayer

“Jesus, I acknowledge I am a sinner and can do nothing to save myself. I believe that Your death on the cross was the full payment for my sins. I put my trust in what You have done for me. I give up all of my rebellion. Thank you for forgiving me. I receive You into my life. You are my new Leader.”

## The New You

After you have done your part of *believing* that Jesus died for your sins, God's part is to *transfer* you into Christ's line. As soon as you are transferred into Christ's line, God gives you a *new* identity.

*"For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son."*  
**Colossians 1:13** (NASB)



When you believe in what Jesus did for you on the cross, you are no longer a sinner; you have escaped death. You have been placed "in Christ."

## Born Again

Since you are "in Christ," you are a brand new person. Your parents gave you physical life. God gives you spiritual life; it is called being "born again."

*"For you have been **born again**. Your new life did not come from your earthly parents because the life they gave you will end in death. But this new life will last forever because it comes from the eternal, living word of God."* **1 Peter 1:23** (NLT)

**Q4.** What does it mean to you to be born again?

### **New Creation**

You are a new creation “in Christ;” all that you were has passed away. You are not the same person anymore.

*“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a **new creation**; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NKJ)*

### **New Future**

Instead of death and separation from God, you have a new future. You have eternal life with God.

*“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have **everlasting life**.” John 3:16 (NKJ)*

### **New Past**

Look back at the diagram and notice that the *new you* has a different past. That past is not who you used to be or what you used to do. Your new past is what Jesus did on the cross.

*“**I have been crucified with Christ**; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.” Galatians 2:20 (NKJ)*

**Q5.** How does having a new past benefit you?

Your sinful past is wiped out. There is no more reason to feel guilty.

*“Therefore there is now **no condemnation** for those who are in Christ Jesus.” Romans 8:1 (NASB)*

**Q6.** Have you been condemning yourself for the things you have done wrong in the past? Explain.

*"No, dear brothers and sisters, I am still not all I should be, but I am focusing all my energies on this one thing: **Forgetting the past** and looking forward to what lies ahead." **Philippians 3:13** (NLT)*

If you have been condemning yourself, talk to God right now and share with Him your feelings of guilt. Ask Him to help you believe what He says about you. Thank Him for giving you a new past.

You have been made right with God. Nothing you can do or have done will ever change that fact.

*"Therefore, since **we have been made right** in God's sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us."*  
**Romans 5:1** (NLT)

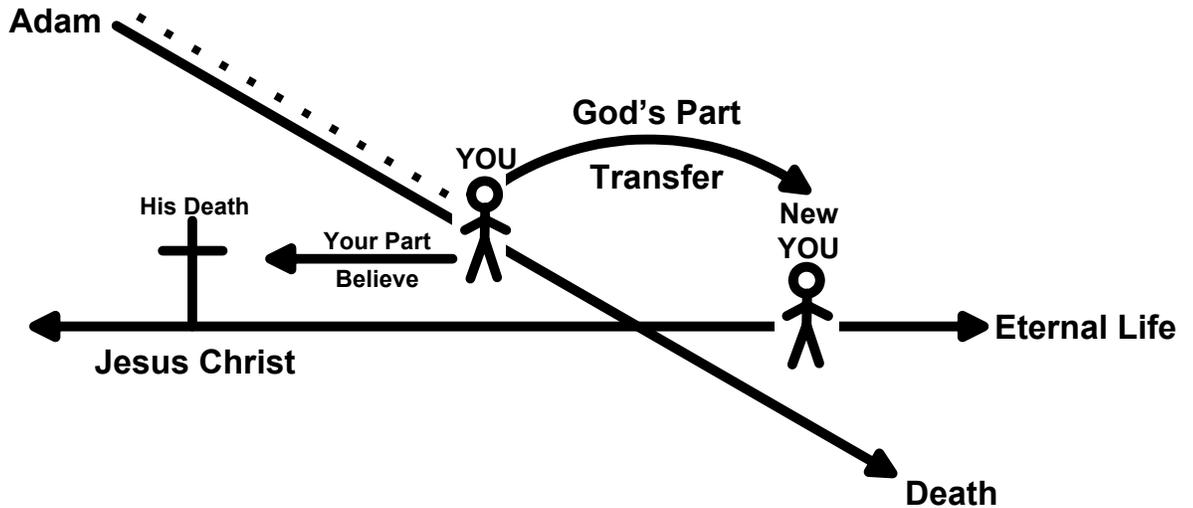
### **God's Child**

Now that you are "in Christ," you are no longer Adam's child. You have become God's child.

*"But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become **children** of God, to those who believe in His name." **John 1:12** (NKJ)*

**Q7.** What are the benefits of being God's child?

## “In Christ”



Because you are God's child, you inherit everything God made.

*“And since we are his children, we will share his treasures – for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours, too...”* **Romans 8:17** (NLT)

### God's Friend

You are no longer God's enemy; you are His friend.

*“For since we were restored to friendship with God by the death of his Son while we were still his **enemies**, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God--all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us **friends** of God.”*

**Romans 5:10–11** (NLT)

**Q8.** What does it mean to be God's friend?

## A New Identity

Now that you are "in Christ," you have it made! You have a new future and a new past. You have a new identity - God's friend and child. You are a new creation.

Don't be fooled into holding onto old identities based on your past failures or *successes*.

- Q9.** Are there "good" identities that you have held onto because they made you feel significant or worthwhile? (For example: your education, your talents, heritage or your profession) Explain.

## Apostle Paul

Before Paul the Apostle was "in Christ," he found his significance in his successes. After he was born again, he no longer cared about what he had accomplished on his own. He preferred to be identified with Christ.

*"I once thought all these things were so very important, but now I consider them worthless because of what Christ has done. Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it all as garbage, so that I may have Christ and become one with him. I no longer count on my own goodness or my ability to obey God's law, but I trust Christ to save me. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith."* **Philippians 3:7-9** (NLT)

Your identity "in Christ" will endure and can never be taken away from you.

## Personal Application

**Tell God** where you have been trying to find significance in your past successes, as well as, the areas where you have experienced guilt and failure.

**Thank God** that because you are "in Christ," you have a new identity from Him.

## **“In Christ”**

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Chapter 3

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## I AM NOT MY FLESH

*“For the flesh sets its desire against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; for these are in opposition to one another, so that you may not do the things that you please.” Galatians 5:17 (NASB)*

If you are “in Christ,” you are a completely new creation; you have a new future and a new past. You are God’s child. You have His forgiveness; therefore, you are holy and blameless. You are God’s friend so what is it that pulls you toward behaving like God’s enemy?

*“For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find.” Romans 7:15, 18 (NKJ)*

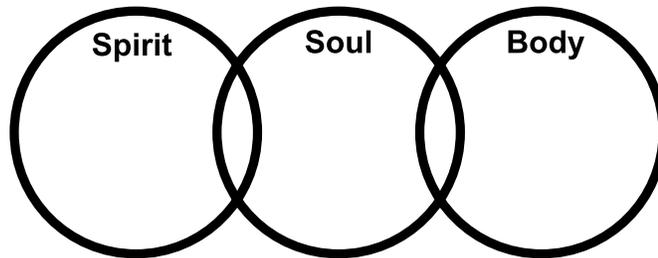
- Q1.** Have you experienced an inconsistency between what the Bible says is true about you and how you act? Describe.

## Your Design

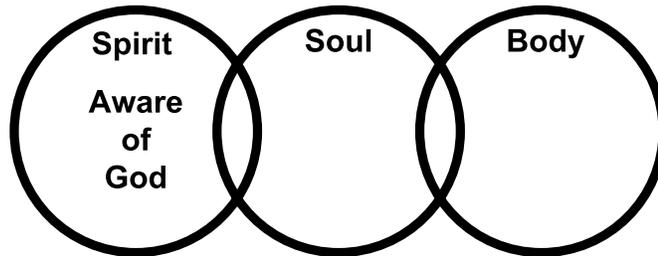
Understanding how you were designed may help your behavior line up with your new identity. The Bible describes man's design as having three parts: a spirit, a soul, and a body.

*“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole **spirit, soul, and body** be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” 1 Thessalonians 5:23 (NKJ)*

This diagram illustrates those three parts of your being - **spirit, soul,** and **body.**



Your spirit communicates with God; it is **aware of God.**



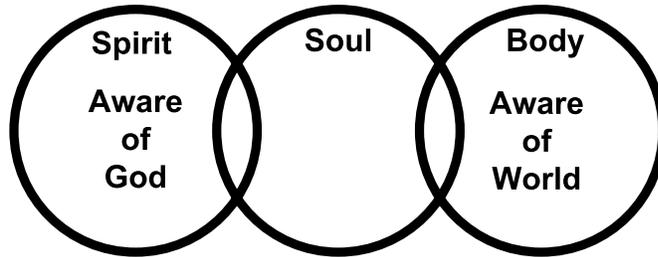
A person that has *not* been born again is dead spiritually.

Your spirit comes alive when you receive Jesus as your Savior. God puts His Spirit into your spirit.

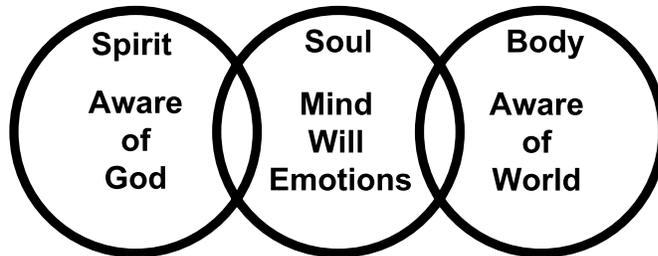
*“When you were stuck in your old sin-dead life, you were incapable of responding to God. God brought you alive - right along with Christ! Think of it! All sins forgiven.” Colossians 2:13 (MSG)*

**Q2.** Have you been born again? If so, when?

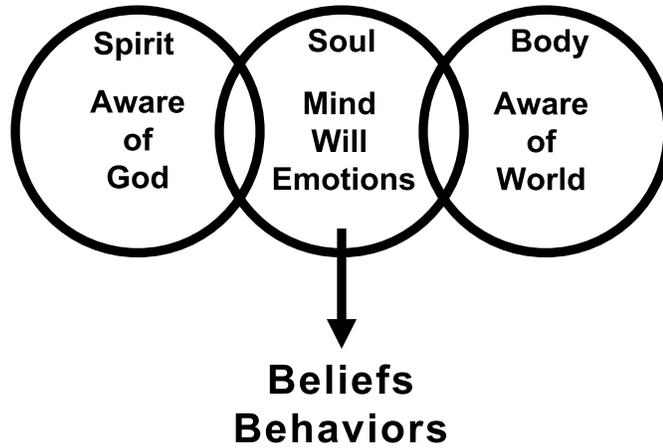
Your body is the physical part of you. It is **aware of the world** around you through your five senses – sight, touch, taste, smell, and hearing. You live in your body.



Your soul is made up of your **mind, will, and emotions**. Your soul thinks, decides, and has feelings.

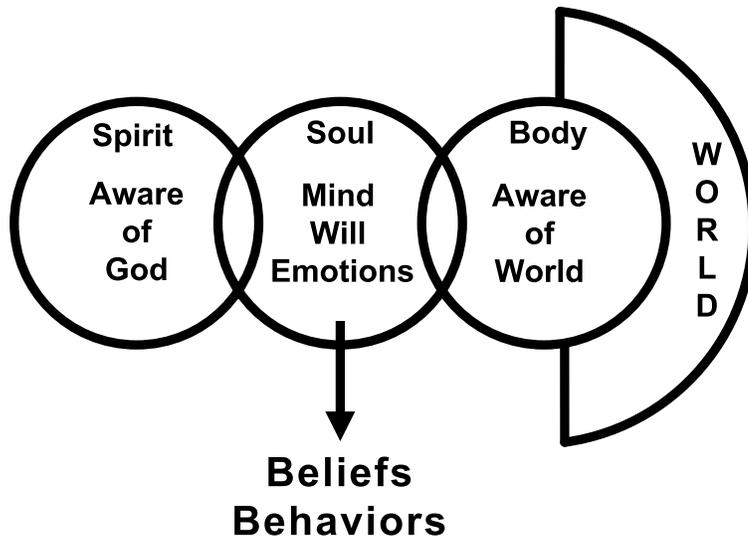


Your soul is influenced by the data it receives. It determines your **beliefs** and **behaviors**. The question is this; "Is your soul going to be defined and influenced by God or the world?"



### The World

Even though you have an awareness of God, you also have an awareness of the **world**. The world and its influences are all around you, as the next diagram shows.



### Satan

You receive input from the world through your five senses. The problem with the input from the world is that God's enemy, Satan, is actively influencing the world.

*"You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the power of the air. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God."* **Ephesians 2:2** (NLT)

Satan wants you to think the way the world thinks and love what the world has to offer. The Bible warns against being influenced by the input from the world.

*“Don’t love the world’s ways. Don’t love the world’s goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world—**wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important**—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out...” 1 John 2:15–17 (MSG)*

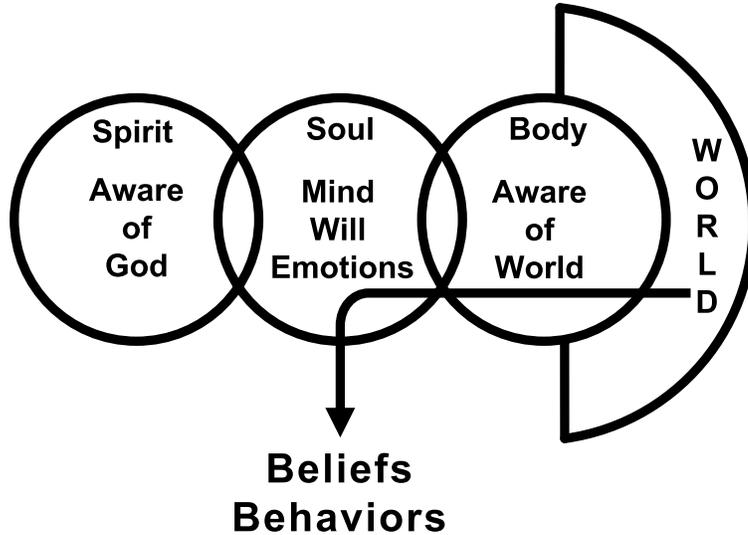
**Q3.** What is your most recent example of wanting your own way, wanting something for yourself or wanting to appear important?

Wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, and wanting to appear important are examples of competing with God.

### **The Flesh**

Remember it was Satan who first tried to be like God. Then he tempted Adam and Eve to be like God. There’s something inside of you that wants to be like God. The Bible calls that something **the flesh**.

Don’t think of the flesh as skin and bones. The flesh is the part of you that can be enticed to sin and rebel against God. It is the selfish desire to meet your needs apart from God and to get your own way. The flesh is in everyone.



When you choose to follow your flesh your **beliefs** and **behaviors** will be influenced by the world. This produces evil results:

*“...Your lives will produce these **evil results**: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin.”*

**Galatians 5:19–21** (NLT)

**Q4.** Which of these evil results have you seen in your life?

There is absolutely nothing good about the flesh. The flesh wants its own way. It is always looking for fulfillment, but is never satisfied. It is greedy and proud. Influences from the world catch the flesh’s attention.

The message from the world is, “You need possessions to make you happy, you need success to be significant, and you should do whatever you can to make yourself feel good or be comfortable.”

The world says, “If you possess enough ‘good things,’ you will be happy.” Which things on the following list are you waiting for so you can be happy?

## I Would Be Happy If Only

### Family and Friends

\_\_\_ I was married (or I wasn't married).

\_\_\_ I had children (or didn't have children).

\_\_\_ I had a best friend.

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Money and Possessions

\_\_\_ I made \$ \_\_\_\_\_ or could buy whatever I wanted.

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Job and Position

\_\_\_ I had a better or different job.

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Location and Leisure

\_\_\_ I lived somewhere else or could take a vacation or get some time for myself.

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Service to the community or your church

\_\_\_ I could help enough people, be in ministry or find a good church.

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

### Personal appearance

\_\_\_ I could lose weight, had a new wardrobe, or looked different.

\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Thinking you will be satisfied if you get one of these things is what the world tells you, and your flesh believes it.

The flesh leads you to try to find satisfaction in having good looks, things or relationships. The truth is: your flesh will *never* be satisfied, no matter how good you look, no matter how much you have or how enjoyable your relationships.

King Solomon, the richest and most successful man in the world, wrote these words:

*“...I had everything a man could desire! But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, **it was all so meaningless**. It was like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere. It’s all vanity.”*  
**Ecclesiastes 2:8, 11** (NLT)

### Dealing with Disappointment

Like Solomon, when you follow your flesh and go after the things of this world, you will end up disappointed. That disappointment leads to doing things to cope with your unhappiness and pain.

Which of the following things do you do when life disappoints you?

- Eat food to fill the emptiness.
- Use drugs or alcohol to relieve the anxiety or depression.
- Try to figure it out with your mind.
- Get angry to get results.
- Call a friend for advice.
- Buy something to distract you from the pain.
- Get educated to solve problems.
- Work harder to overcome.
- Get overly busy to forget.
- Get divorced or get a new relationship.
- Escape into sleep.

**Q5.** Have the results you were looking for been achieved by doing these things?

These things only create more problems and you are *still* following your flesh. Over time, following the flesh leaves you feeling exhausted, disappointed, and disillusioned.

Even when you attempt to do “good” things while following your flesh, they are not pleasing to God because your flesh is really only trying to please itself.

*“...When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags...”* **Isaiah 64:6** (NLT)

- Q6.** Have you been doing good things so God or the people around you will give you praise? Give an example.

### **You Are Not Your Flesh**

The good news is YOU ARE NOT YOUR FLESH. As a believer, your new identity doesn't want to sin and try to take God's place. You are *not* a sinner; you are a child of God. The flesh is in you, but it is not who you are and you don't have to follow it.

God has made a way out for you. Jesus has set you free from the power of the flesh.

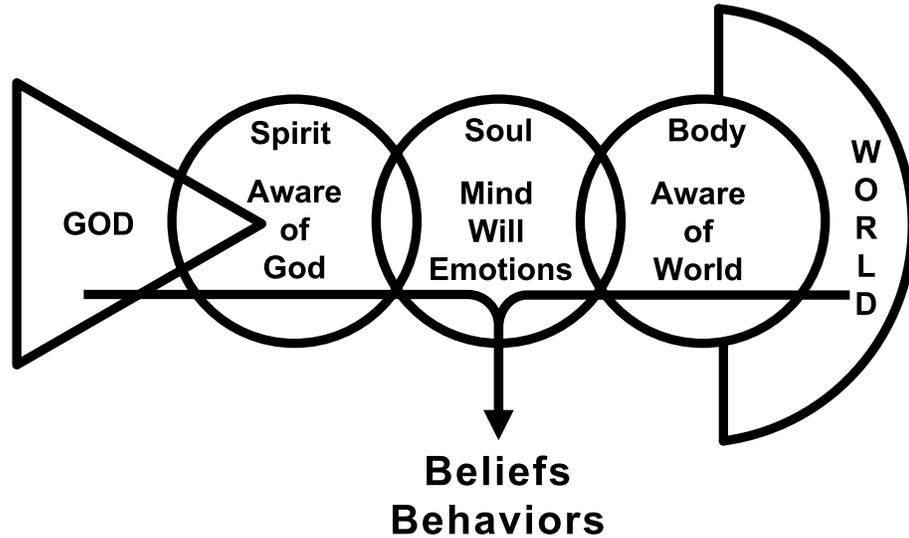
*“Oh, what a miserable person I am! Who will free me from this life that is dominated by sin? Thank God! The answer is in Jesus Christ our Lord. So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.”*

**Romans 7:24–25, 8:1** (NLT)

The only way the world and Satan can influence you now is when you make a *choice* to follow your flesh. If you choose to follow your flesh, your behavior will be the same as the world.

## God is in You

The following diagram illustrates that the world *surrounds* you; however, **God is *in* you!** He wants your beliefs and behaviors to be influenced by Him.



You receive input from God when you are “in Christ.” God’s Holy Spirit lives inside of you and He is speaking to you. You can make decisions based on what He says instead of what the world says.

*“And I will put my Spirit in you so you will obey my laws and do whatever I command.”* **Ezekiel 36:27** (NLT)

- Q7.** Have you ever been aware of God communicating with you? Describe.

## **God's Message**

God's message to you is completely different from that of the world. He doesn't say, "You need possessions to make you happy." Instead He says, "Let Me give you what you need."

*"And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus." **Philippians 4:19** (NLT)*

**Q8.** Has it been hard for you to trust God to give you everything you need? Explain.

God does not say you need to do anything to be important to Him. Instead He says you are already important to Him. He loves you and even rejoices over you.

*"For the LORD your God has arrived to live among you. He is a mighty savior. He will rejoice over you with great gladness. With his love, he will calm all your fears. He will exult over you by singing a happy song."  
**Zephaniah 3:17** (NLT)*

## **Walk After the Spirit**

If you allow the input from the world to define what you believe and how you behave, you will believe lies and behave badly. This is called "walking after the flesh."

If you allow the input from God to define what you believe and how you behave, you will believe truth and behave like Jesus. This is called "walking after the Spirit."

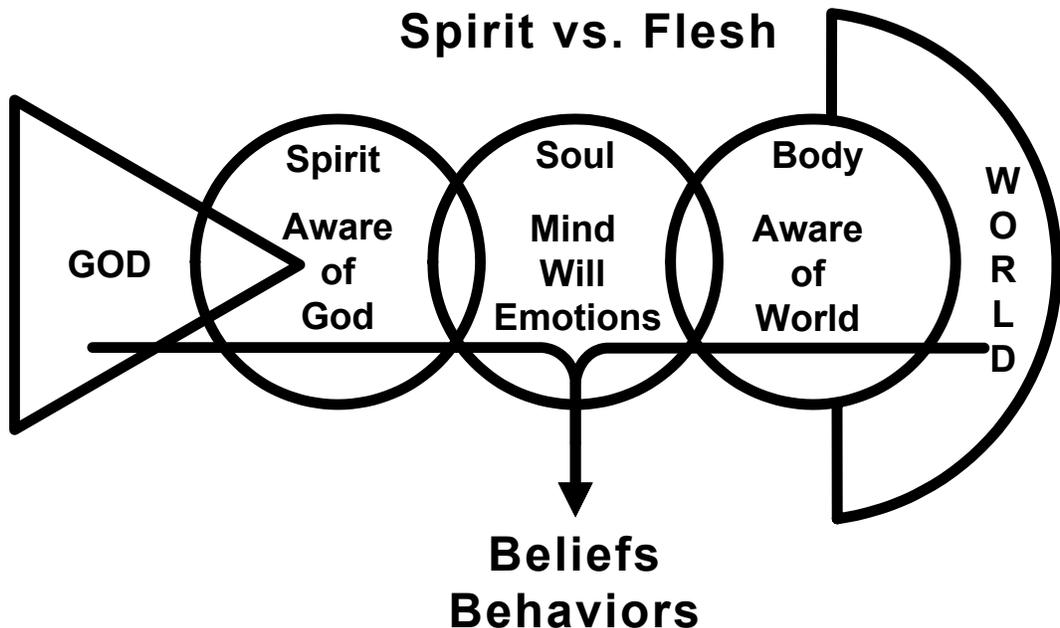
*"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is." **Romans 12:2** (NLT)*

**Q9.** What input from this world is affecting your beliefs and behaviors?

**Q10.** What input are you receiving from God that will transform how you behave?

### The Battle

As long as you are in this world, as a believer, you will have two opposing sources of input, **Spirit and flesh**. For this reason you have a battle inside your soul as these two sources of input compete for your attention.



*“So I advise you to live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won’t be doing what your sinful nature [flesh] craves. The old sinful nature [flesh] loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature [flesh] desires. **These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict.**”*

**Galatians 5:16–17 (NLT)**

*Walking after the Spirit* doesn't mean you won't be tempted to follow your flesh; it means you choose not to give in to temptation. Being tempted doesn't mean you aren't holy. Being tempted means you have flesh. You will have flesh until you die.

*Walking after the Spirit* also means your life is about following Christ. It means choosing to believe God is all you need for true fulfillment instead of thinking you would be satisfied if only you had something in the world. It means choosing to seek His way and what He desires not your way and what your flesh desires.

Satan wants you to put your mind on the things of this world, which aren't going to last. God wants you to put your mind on things like Him, heaven, and His Word, because those are the things that are going to last forever.

*“While we **do not look** at the things which are **seen** [the world], but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal.”*

**2 Corinthians 4:18** (NKJ)

**Q11.** Has God shown you an area where you have been walking after the flesh? Explain.

### **The “Real You”**

Your flesh wants to believe the world. The “real you” wants to believe God.

Your flesh wants to get praise. The “real you” wants to praise God.

Your flesh wants to be in control. The “real you” wants to trust God's control.

Your flesh wants to rebel against God. The “real you” wants to obey God.

You are not your flesh!

**Q12.** Are you ready to stop listening to the world and listen to what God says?

If so, perhaps the following steps would be helpful to you.

**Repentance**

**Agree with God** that you have been wrong for walking after the flesh in the area you listed in Q11. Share with Him the ways your motives have been for your own selfish interest. Repent of trying to play God.

**Thank God** that you are not your flesh. Choose to believe you have a new identity “in Christ” and that the “real you” wants to follow God.

**Tell God** you are going to listen to His voice and obey what He says.

**Ask God** to speak to you now. Write what He shows you.

# Spirit vs. Flesh

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*



## I AM ACCEPTED

*“...We have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.” Romans 5:16 (NLT)*

In the last chapter, you learned you are not your flesh. It is in you, but it is not who you are. Your soul receives input from two sources – the world and God. If you have listened to the input from the world and walked after the flesh, does God still accept you?

Some people wonder how they can be good enough for God. They feel guilty and unacceptable. Others think it is hard to obey God’s authority, so they rebel. These negative emotions and attitudes may come from a wrong view of God and how to gain His acceptance.

A wrong view of God often comes from experiences you’ve had with an earthly authority.

**Q1.** How does the world say you gain the acceptance of those in authority?

### **World’s Way**

Your whole life you have had authorities like parents, teachers, and bosses. Authorities are in charge and have the right to tell you to do certain things. In the following diagram, the arrow indicates how their relationship with you starts from a position of **authority**.



## Authority

**Q2.** What authorities have you had in your life?

Authorities tell the people under them what to do and hold those people **accountable** for doing or not doing what they are told.



## Authority Accountability

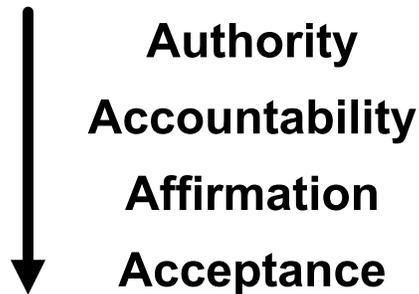
**Q3.** How have the authorities you listed in Q1 held you accountable for your actions?

If you do what you are told, your authorities might praise you or give you a pat on the back and if you don't, you might get belittled, receive a failing grade or lose your job. Authorities usually affirm hard workers and withhold **affirmation** from those who do not perform well.



**Q4.** Were you ever praised for doing things right or belittled for having done things wrong? How did you feel?

If you do things right and keep doing things right, you may finally receive that authority's **acceptance**.



**Q5.** Were there authorities in your life that made you think you couldn't do enough to receive their acceptance? Explain.

When people in authority withhold acceptance to get you to do what they want, it is a way of exercising **control**. Instead of feeling accepted, you usually end up feeling rejected.

## CONTROL



**Authority**  
**Accountability**  
**Affirmation**  
**Acceptance**

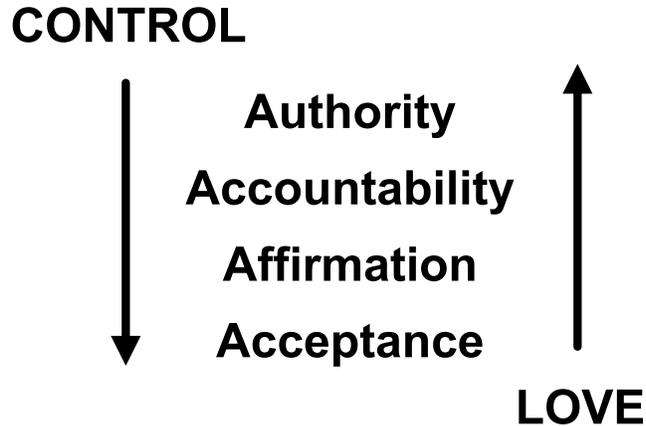
- Q6.** Have you ever felt rejected by an authority? How did you react (for example: did you rebel or try harder to please)?
- Q7.** Do you believe God accepts or rejects you based on your obedience to His authority? Why?
- Q8.** What do you think you need to change before God will accept you?

### **God's Way**

God's way of exercising His authority is totally different than the world.

*“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” declares the LORD.”* **Isaiah 55:8** (NASB)

The world is motivated by its desire to control you. God is motivated by His **love** for you. Love makes the diagram go in the opposite direction.



### Acceptance

God's way starts with **acceptance**. He accepts you right now before you *do* anything. He doesn't accept you based on your ability to obey His commands. You are accepted because Christ's death on the cross made you acceptable.

*"...We have the free gift of being **accepted by God**, even though we are guilty of many sins. The sin of this one man, Adam, caused death to rule over us, but all who receive God's wonderful, gracious gift of righteousness will live in triumph over sin and death through this one man, Jesus Christ." **Romans 5:16–17** (NLT)*

You have been made right with God. You have nothing to prove. It's done because He did it.

*"For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ." **2 Corinthians 5:21** (NLT)*

**Q9.** When you sin, how do you think God reacts toward you? Do you think God gets angry and rejects you?

You have been accepted by God because of Christ! If you believe that, then you understand your behavior does not affect His acceptance of you.

If God allowed your behavior to determine your acceptability, you would *never* be accepted. You *can't* be good enough. Your acceptance is determined by your spiritual birth.

Is it okay to continually sin? No, of course not. The Lord wants you to have victory over sin because He loves you.

### **Affirmation**

Since God accepts you, He **affirms** His acceptance by telling you how much He loves you.

*“And may you have the power to understand, as all God’s people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love really is. May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God.”*

**Ephesians 3:18–19** (NLT)

**Q10.** What do these verses say about how much God loves you?

When God speaks to you, His words affirm that you really are His child and He loves you. Quiet your own thoughts and ask Him to share His thoughts with you.

*“For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God’s children.”* **Romans 8:16** (NLT)

### **Accountability**

Because God loves and accepts you as His child, He shows you things you need to start doing and things you need to stop doing.

**Q11.** How do you feel about God telling you what to do?

*“You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God’s likeness – righteous, holy, and true.”* **Ephesians 4:24** (NLT)

Accountability involves God training, disciplining, and holding you responsible for your behavior. He wants the best for you. When you make bad choices, it hurts you.

*“For the Lord **disciplines** those he **loves**, and he punishes those he **accepts** as his children.’ As you endure this divine discipline, remember that God is treating you as his own children. Whoever heard of a child who was never disciplined?” **Hebrews 12:6–7** (NLT)*

**Q12.** How do you think God wants you to view His discipline?

*“Happy are those whom you discipline, LORD, and those whom you teach from your law.” **Psalm 94:12** (NLT)*

Nothing you do causes God to change His mind about you. You are always accepted in His eyes. Your identity in Christ does not change. He will never reject you. He loves you no matter what.

God’s desire is for you to obey Him because you love Him. That is how to respond to His love.

*“We love Him because He first loved us.”*  
**1 John 4:19** (NKJ)

## **Authority**

God holds you accountable based on His position as the ultimate **authority**. He created everything, including you, for His purposes. Therefore, He has the right to tell you what you can and can’t do.

Following God’s authority becomes easier when you realize His plan is for your benefit. He is good and He loves you! When you yield to God’s authority, He doesn’t treat you like a slave; He treats you like His much loved child.

*“So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God’s very own children, **adopted** into his family – calling him ‘Father, dear Father.’” **Romans 8:15** (NLT)*

**Q13.** Have you believed that God’s authority is like man’s authority?  
How?

## World’s Way vs. God’s Way

**CONTROL**



**Authority**  
**Accountability**  
**Affirmation**  
**Acceptance**



**LOVE**

### **Faith**

When you believe you are accepted because of what Jesus did for you on the cross, you are walking by faith. But when you believe your acceptance is based on your behavior, you are walking by sight.

*“That is why we live by believing and not by seeing.”*

**2 Corinthians 5:7** (NLT)

Consider this definition of faith: Faith is a decision to believe what God says even though it may not “feel” true.

The truest things about you are what God says about you, not what the world says about you or even what you might think about yourself.

*“What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us? Since God did not spare even his own Son but gave him up for us all, won’t God, who gave us Christ, also give us everything else? Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has given us right standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? Will Christ Jesus? No, for he is the one who died for us and was raised to life for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us. Can anything ever separate us from Christ’s love?”*

**Romans 8:31–35** (NLT)

When you take action based on what God says is already true, you will begin to experience how good His authority really is!

### **Take Action**

If you have believed God only accepts you when you are “doing good things,” **confess** that wrong thinking to God.

If your view of God’s authority has been wrong, discuss that with God. **Ask Him** to give you a proper perspective.

**Thank God** for accepting you.

**Thank God** that He is good and His plan is for your benefit.

# World's Way vs. God's Way

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Sharing S.A.L.T. with a Friend

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“...And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.” **1 Peter 3:15** (NLT)

*Meet in a location where your friend feels comfortable sharing.*

## **The Purpose:** Encouragement

How do you encourage your friend? By sharing Biblical truths that have impacted you.

*Ask “Could I share some things with you?”*

## **Sharing with a friend (an informal meeting)**

- Ask, “What’s going on in your life?” or “How are you doing?”
- Listen.
- If necessary, ask questions that help you better understand your friend and his or her situation. For example: “How are you feeling about that?”
- Then share what God has been teaching you as it relates to your friend’s situation.
- If the opportunity allows, draw and explain the S.A.L.T. diagram that is relevant. *This can even be done on a napkin.*
- Encourage your friend and offer to pray.

*Share with an attitude of humility and kindness.*

## **Sharing with a friend (on a regular basis)**

- Make sure your friend has a book.
- Read, study, and answer all questions individually.
- Share your answers with each other and talk about the lesson.
- Draw and explain the diagram for each other.
- Encourage each other to personally apply the lessons.
- Pray together.

*Be sensitive about when to share and the length of your sharing.*

## **Helpful suggestions:**

**Be transparent.** Share your own story. When you are real, other people realize they can be honest too.

**Be a “safe place.”** Information your friend tells you should be kept confidential. Don’t condemn, instead encourage.

**Be a good listener.** Give your friend your full attention. Make eye contact, and, at appropriate times, repeat back what you hear your friend saying. Ask good questions that encourage your friend to talk.

**Be a true friend.** Speak the truth in love.

## **Books in the Seven Areas of Life Training (S.A.L.T.) Series**

### **Titles in the S.A.L.T. Series:**

- Spiritual – My Relationship with God
- Psychological – My Mind, Will, and Emotions
- Social – My Relationship with Others
- Physical – My Body
- Financial – My Money
- Marital – My Relationship with my Spouse
- Parental – My Relationship with my Children
- SALT Instructor's Guide with PowerPoint CD of Diagrams
- SALT Training DVD for Group Leaders

### **About the Authors**

A team of authors at Victorious Christian Living International (VCLi) wrote this book.

For over 25 years, VCLi has been helping believers grow and be successful in all seven areas of life. VCLi trains people and provides materials for effectively ministering to others, including comprehensive church discipleship programs, prison and inner-city ministries, and family ministries. We are headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona with offices in Alabama, Illinois, Guatemala, and Cuba.

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***My Mind, Will,  
And Emotions***

Psychological Area  
of Life

**S.A.L.T.**

**Seven Areas of Life Training<sup>®</sup>**

SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING (S.A.L.T.) PSYCHOLOGICAL  
AREA – MY MIND, WILL, AND EMOTIONS, Version 2.0

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## **Dedication**

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*All of us at VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING INTERNATIONAL give God the praise for these SALT materials and dedicate this series to the discipleship of believers worldwide.*

*Thank you to all past and present VCLi staff members. You have played a vital role in developing, teaching, and helping others apply these diagrams, concepts, and lessons.*

*Special thanks go to Rocky Nystrom. Your vision and creativity made this series a reality, your determination brought it to completion; and your heart for people to be free energized us along the way.*

## **About this Series**

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### SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING

Learning how to live victoriously in all seven areas of life is the goal of this comprehensive discipleship series.

This small group or self-study book is simple, yet dynamic. Biblical truths are visually illustrated with powerful diagrams.

Solid Biblical truth is taught in each lesson with a challenge to apply that truth to your life. It is when you apply that truth and share it with others that your life will be profoundly changed.

## **About this Book**

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The *Psychological Area of Life* deals with your mind, will, and emotions.

In four powerful chapters you will find challenges to get real with yourself and start enjoying life as God designed it for you.

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## WHO TO KNOW

*“Oh, that we might know the LORD! Let us press on to know him! Then he will respond to us as surely as the arrival of dawn...” Hosea 6:3 (NLT)*

The psychological area of life deals with the mind, will, and emotions. We call this area the “soul.” The New Testament word for “soul” comes from the Greek word “psuche.” In fact the term “psychology,” the study of the mind, will, and emotions, comes from this word.

We refer to the *mind* as what you think; the *will* as what you choose, and the *emotions* as your feelings. What you think, the way you choose, and how you feel are important because they affect every area of your life.

How would you describe your life? Some people would say they are enjoying life; others might say they are struggling just to survive.

Most people believe that if they could just eliminate the negative circumstances in their life, they would be happy.

**Q1.** Have you tried to eliminate all of your negative circumstances? Explain.

The fact is you will never be able to eliminate all your problems.

*“I have told you all this so that you may have peace in me. Here on earth you will have many trials and sorrows. But take heart, because I have overcome the world.”*  
**John 16:33** (NLT)

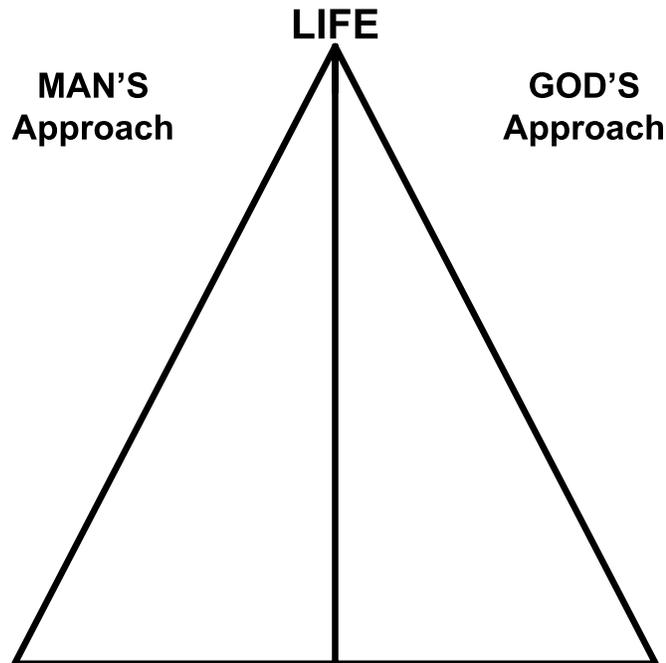
Since you can't eliminate all of your negative circumstances, what does it take to get through them? This chapter covers how you can be mentally and emotionally equipped to deal with life.

## Two Approaches

There are two approaches to knowing how to deal with life – man's approach and God's approach.

Both approaches agree that to be mentally and emotionally equipped, requires a proper foundation. However, each approach is totally different in terms of what that foundation should be.

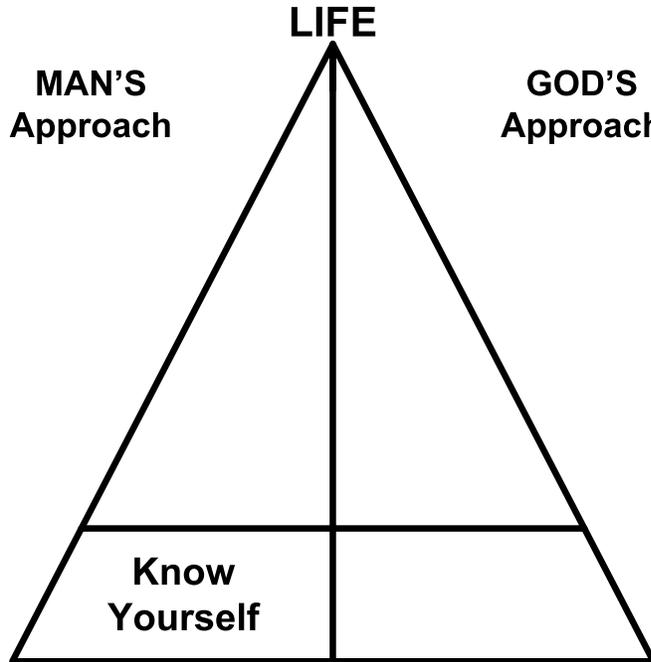
Life is shown at the top of the following diagram. The line down the middle of the triangle shows the division between the two approaches.



There is an old expression that says, "It's not *what* you know that helps you most in life. It's *who* you know." Who do you need to know to succeed in life?

## Man's Approach

This diagram illustrates the foundation of man's approach is to **know yourself**.



**Q2.** Who are you? Write a few words to describe yourself.

## Know Yourself

Man's approach presumes that understanding yourself is the first step to understanding how to deal with life. This approach says, "You need to understand why you think the way you think, feel the way you feel, and act the way you act."

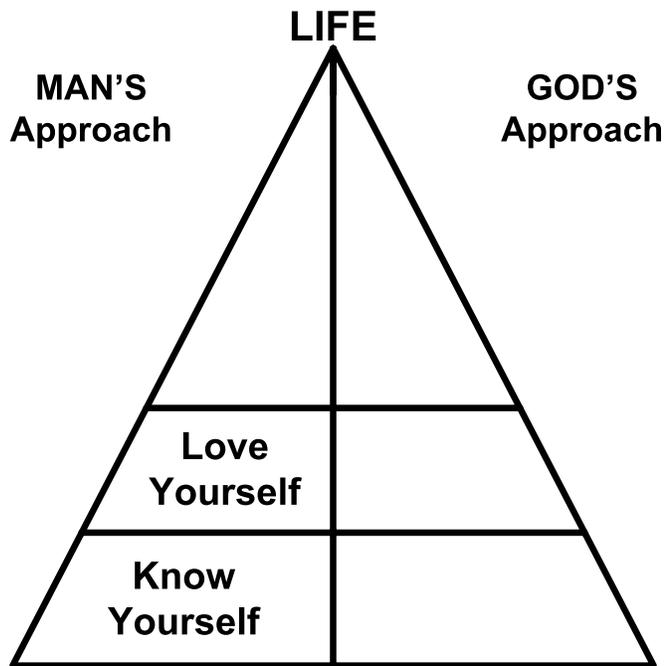
Man's approach attaches labels to you that describe your past, your behavior, and your personality. For example: You are a victim, an addict or a perfectionist. These labels could describe you for the rest of your life.

**Q3.** How much time do you spend thinking about yourself?

Q4. Has life gotten better as a result of thinking about yourself?

### Love Yourself

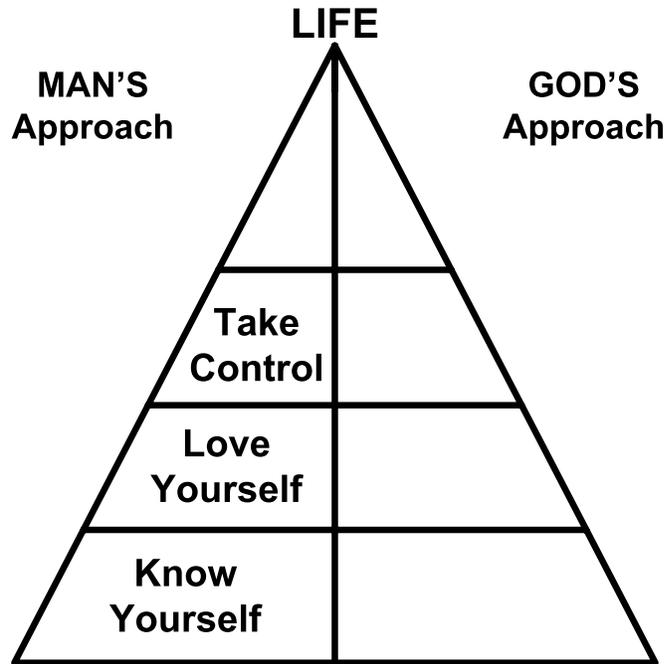
The next step in man's approach to dealing with life is learning to **love yourself**. Once you know who you are, you need to embrace who you are. This approach may include the following thinking: "You need to believe in yourself and accept yourself. Stop punishing yourself. If you don't love yourself, you will allow people to take advantage of you. You should focus on what is good about yourself."



Q5. Have you been trying to love yourself more? Has life gotten better?

### Take Control

After you learn to love yourself, man's approach encourages you to **take control** of your life. "You have to start controlling your situations, your future, and getting your needs met. You can do it. You have the power inside you." For example, if you have trouble with anger, you need to stay away from anything that makes you angry.



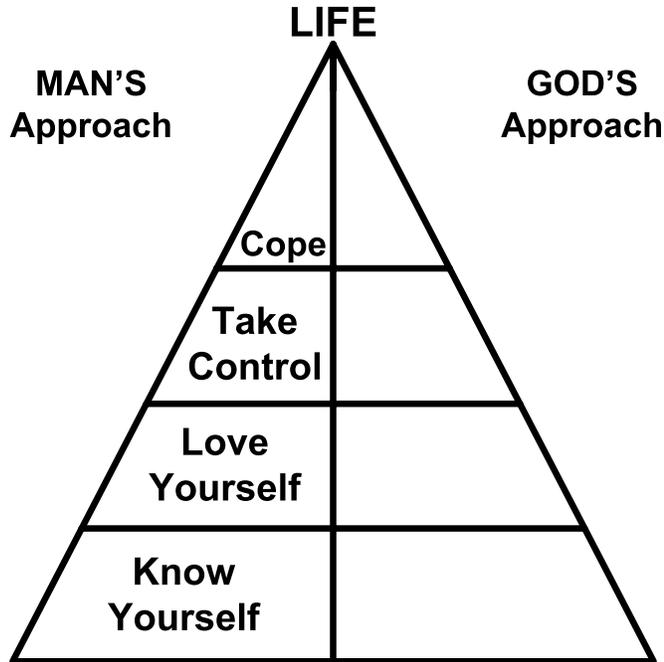
This approach encourages you to figure out what and who should be in your life and keep everything and everyone else out. You need to protect yourself.

- Q6.** What are the *circumstances* you think need to change before you have your life under control?
  
- Q7.** Who are the *people* you think you need to get out of your life before you can be happy?
  
- Q8.** Have you tried this strategy? How is it working for you?

Man's approach presumes that if you know yourself well enough, you will understand why you do what you do. After you understand who you are, you must learn to love yourself. Loving yourself gives you the confidence you need to control your life.

## Cope

The end result of following man's approach is that you will be able to **cope** with the circumstances in your life.



**Q9.** Have you been successful at coping with your life circumstances?

**Q10.** Are you enjoying your life? Explain.

The problem with man's approach is that it is self-focused. This kind of self-focused love leads to unhealthy behavior and the Bible warns against it.

*"For people will love only themselves...They will be boastful and proud, scoffing at God, disobedient to their parents, and ungrateful. They will consider nothing sacred. They will be unloving and unforgiving; they will slander others and have no self-control; they will be cruel and have no interest in what is good. You must stay away from people like that." 2 Timothy 3:2–3, 5 (NLT)*

If you've been following man's approach to dealing with life, you are being cheated out of a better way.

*“Don't let anyone lead you astray with empty philosophy and high-sounding nonsense that come from human thinking and from the evil powers of this world, and not from Christ.”* **Colossians 2:8** (NLT)

## God's Approach

God's approach to dealing with life doesn't begin with thinking more about yourself and getting to know who you are; it begins with knowing who He is. When you learn about yourself, you discover you are not so great; but when you learn about God, you discover He is wonderful.

*“Let not the wise man gloat in his wisdom, or the mighty man in his might, or the rich man in his riches. Let them boast in this alone: that they truly know me and understand that I am the LORD who is just and righteous, whose love is unfailing...”* **Jeremiah 9:23–24** (NLT)

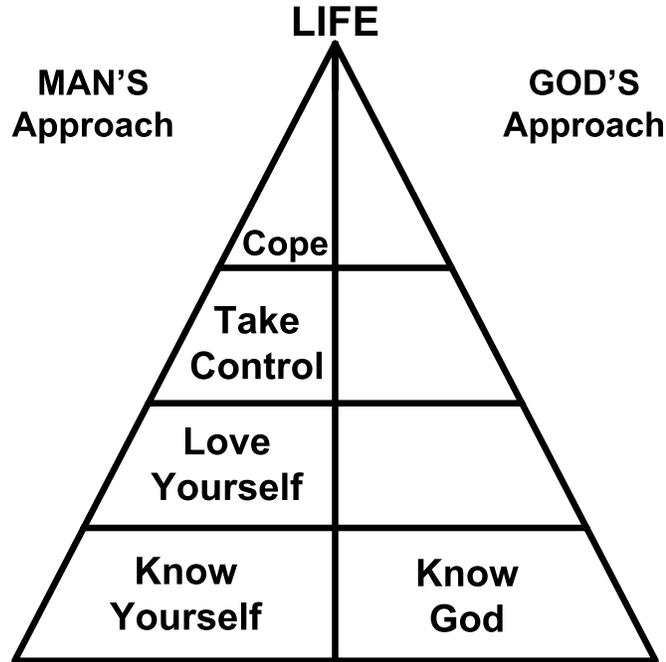
## Know God

The Bible says knowing God is the first step to knowing anything else.

*“Fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in understanding.”* **Proverbs 9:10** (NLT)

Since God created life, knowing Him is the best foundation for dealing with life.

*“Have you never heard or understood? Don't you know that the LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of all the earth? He never grows faint or weary. No one can measure the depths of his understanding. He gives power to those who are tired and worn out; he offers strength to the weak.”* **Isaiah 40:28–29** (NLT)



When you get to know God, you discover that He has the power to help you in every circumstance of your life.

You can get to know God by talking and listening to Him and by reading or hearing His Word.

**Q11.** How much time do you spend getting to know God?

### **Know God's Love**

As mentioned earlier in this lesson, man's approach to dealing with life is for you to love yourself. Man has figured out the fact that you *need* to be loved. However, your love is limited and always changing. The good news is there is Someone Who loves you infinitely more than you can love yourself and He never changes.

*"But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners."*

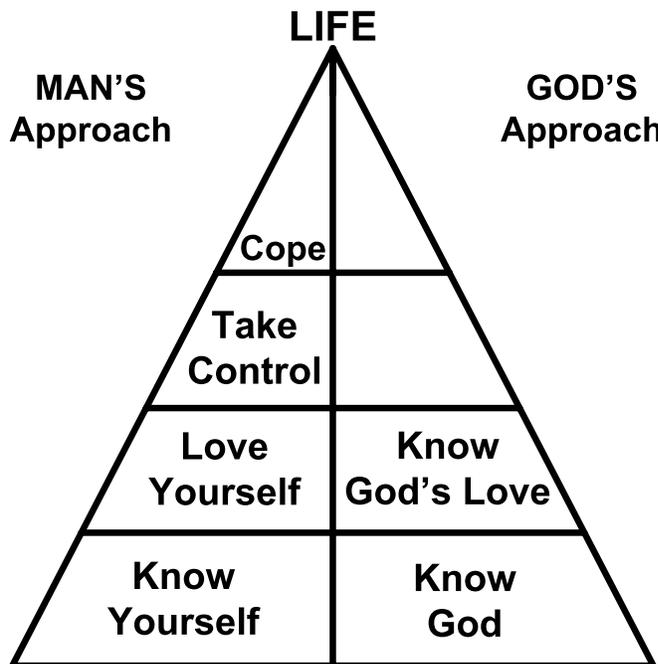
**Romans 5:8** (NLT)

Jesus was willing to be humiliated, rejected, and crucified for you. There is only one reason for His sacrificial behavior. He is in love with you. God loves you now and He always will. Even your sin, no matter how big it is, isn't bigger than God's love.

**Q12.** Do you believe that Jesus died for your sins?

If you believe that Jesus died for your sin and have received Him into your life, then you are God's child.

*“But as many as **received** Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who **believe** in His name.” **John 1:12** (NKJ)*



Man gives you *labels* based on your past, your behavior or your failures. God sets you free from man's labels. God gives you the *identity* of "His child" when you are born again. Can any identity be more important than that one? That identity has the power to override any label the world has given you.

*“Words like Jewish and non-Jewish, religious and irreligious, insider and outsider, uncivilized and uncouth, slave and free, mean nothing. From now on everyone is defined by Christ, everyone is included in Christ.”*  
**Colossians 3:11** (MSG)

God's love for you is so great that *nothing* can keep His love away.

*“And I am convinced that **nothing can ever separate us from his love**. Death can’t, and life can’t. The angels can’t, and the demons can’t. Our fears for today, our worries about tomorrow, and even the powers of hell can’t keep God’s love away.” **Romans 8:38** (NLT)*

Your troubles today or tomorrow can’t separate you from God’s love. God wants you to know and believe He loves you.

**Q13.** What does it mean to you that God loves you?

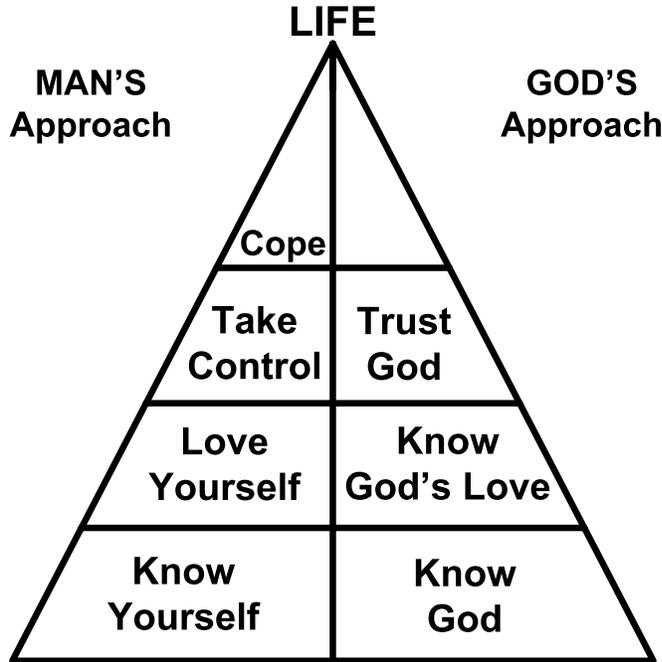
**Q14.** Have you had an experience that caused you to doubt God’s love for you? Explain.

*“If you are really wise, you’ll think this over – it’s time you appreciated God’s deep love.” **Psalm 107:43** (MSG)*

### **Trust God**

Man’s approach says you need to take control of your life; God’s approach says you need to trust His control. You can trust God because He loves you. He can take care of you much better than you can take care of yourself.

*“‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the LORD. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’” **Jeremiah 29:11** (NLT)*



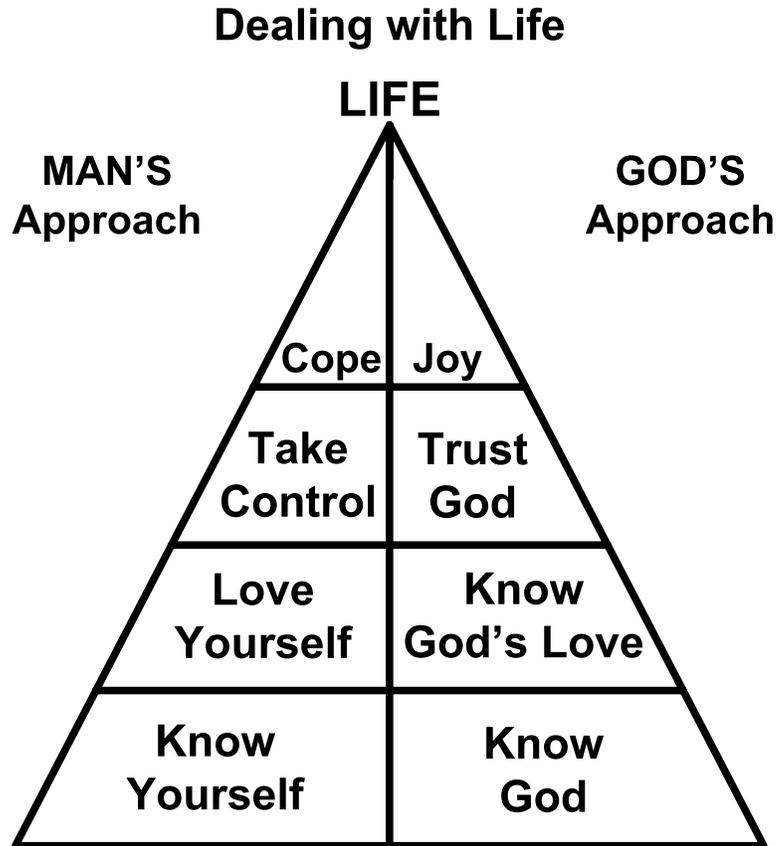
**Q15.** What would it take for you to trust God in every area of your life?

### **Joy**

The exciting news is that when you trust God because you know Him and know how much He loves you, you can have **joy** in spite of any troubles in your life.

*"I am overcome with **joy** because of your unfailing love, for you have seen my troubles, and you care about the anguish of my soul."* **Psalm 31:7** (NLT)

Joy, contentment, and peace are outcomes that man's approach never achieves.



### **The Challenge**

God created life. Doesn't it make sense that He knows best how to live it?

God loves you. How can you love yourself as much as He does?

God promises to take care of you. How can you take care of yourself as well as He can?

Many brilliant people have promoted man's approach to dealing with life but God's approach is wiser than any human plan.

*"So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made them all look foolish and has shown their wisdom to be useless nonsense. This 'foolish' plan of God is far wiser than the wisest of human plans..." 1 Corinthians 1:20, 25 (NLT)*

Talk to God and tell Him you want to know Him and His love for you. Decide to trust God and start enjoying life.

# Dealing with Life

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*



# Chapter 2

## WHERE TO FOCUS

*“Don’t copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.”* **Romans 12:2** (NLT)

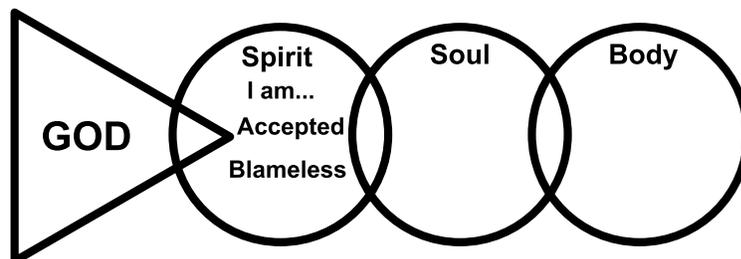
The last chapter illustrated how vital it is to know God and His love for you. When you believe those truths, you are able to trust God in spite of life’s troubles.

This chapter will point out how much your thinking affects how you feel. If you experience frequent emotional ups and downs, your feelings *reveal* where your mind is focused.

### Your Spirit

In the following diagram, the three interlocking circles represent a person as a three-part being. God is in this person’s SPIRIT.

When God is in you, your spirit is alive. God tells you that you are **accepted** and **blameless** before Him.



You are **accepted** because of what Jesus Christ did for you. God says He accepts you regardless of how you look, what you can do or your past failures.

*“...We have the free gift of being **accepted** by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.” **Romans 5:16** (NLT)*

God also says you are **blameless**. Jesus bore your punishment for sin and rebellion against God. You are chosen, holy, and without fault.

*“...Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and **without blame** before Him in love.” **Ephesians 1:4** (NKJ)*

**Q1.** Do you believe you are accepted and blameless?

**Q2.** If not, what **do** you believe about yourself?

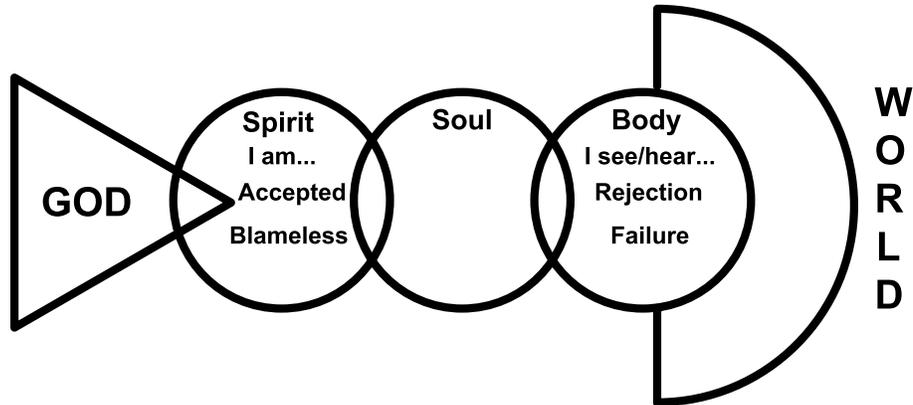
If you don't believe you are accepted and blameless, it could be because you are receiving input that is contradictory to what God says. Where is the source of this contradictory input? It's coming from the world and you receive this input through your body.

### **Your Body**

You receive information from the world through your body's senses.

Satan is at work in the world to deceive you, and your senses are receiving this input. Even though God approves of you and says you are accepted and blameless, Satan wants you to believe you are rejected and a failure.

Notice in the following diagram how the body might receive negative input from the world. “I **hear** rejection” or “I **see** failure.”



Not every message you receive from the world is true, so you cannot trust your sense data. God wants you to experience life and victory. Satan wants you to experience death and defeat.

*“The thief’s [Satan’s] purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.”*

**John 10:10** (NLT)

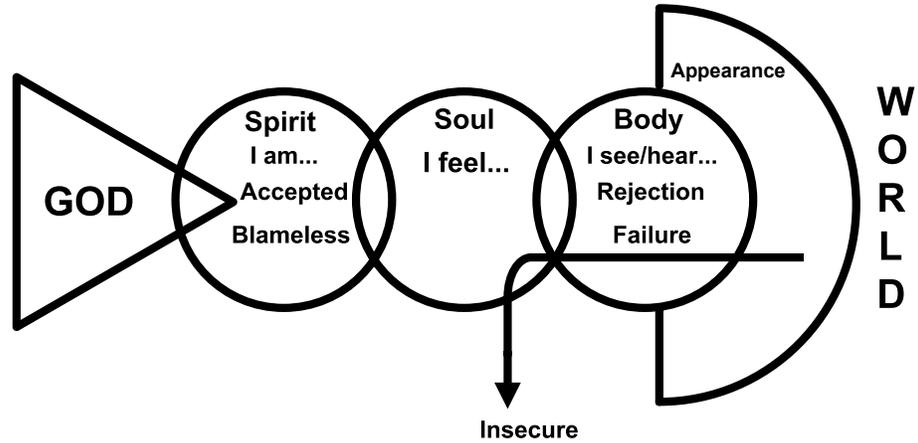
God communicates victory to you through your spirit. Satan communicates defeat to you through your senses.

### **Your Soul**

Satan tries to persuade you to look for approval from the world. When your mind is focused on things in the world, you will experience negative feelings in your SOUL.

### **Appearance**

The world gives approval based on your **appearance**. Are you attractive enough? Are you too fat, too thin, too weak, too old, the wrong height or not fashionable enough? When you are not attractive enough, the world rejects you.

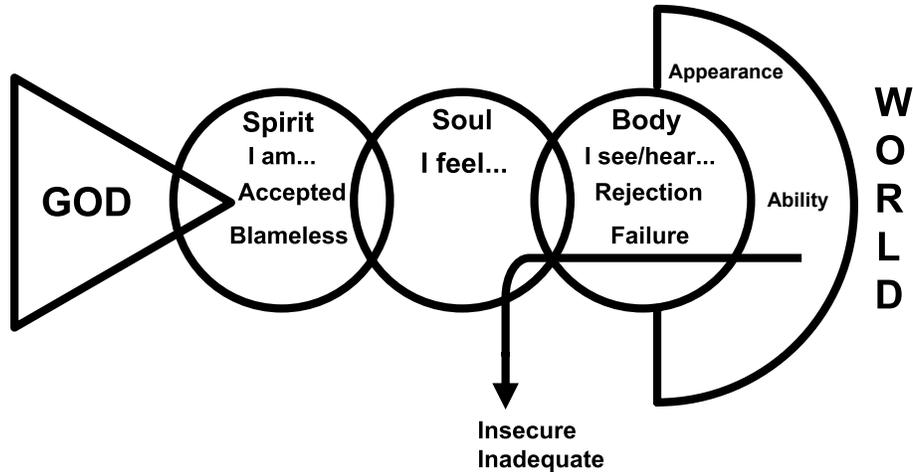


Focusing on your appearance will leave you feeling **insecure**. If you look to the world for approval and agree with the importance placed on appearance, a feeling of insecurity is a natural outcome when your appearance doesn't measure up to the standard of the world.

- Q3.** Is there something you wish you could change about your appearance? Explain.
- Q4.** Do you spend large amounts of time or significant portions of your budget to improve your wardrobe, stay fit, or use surgery to improve your appearance, believing that it will cause you to feel less insecure? Explain.

### **Ability**

The world also gives approval based on your **ability**. Are you talented enough? Is there someone who is smarter, more artistic or athletic, better organized or more successful than you are? When you aren't talented enough, the world rejects you.



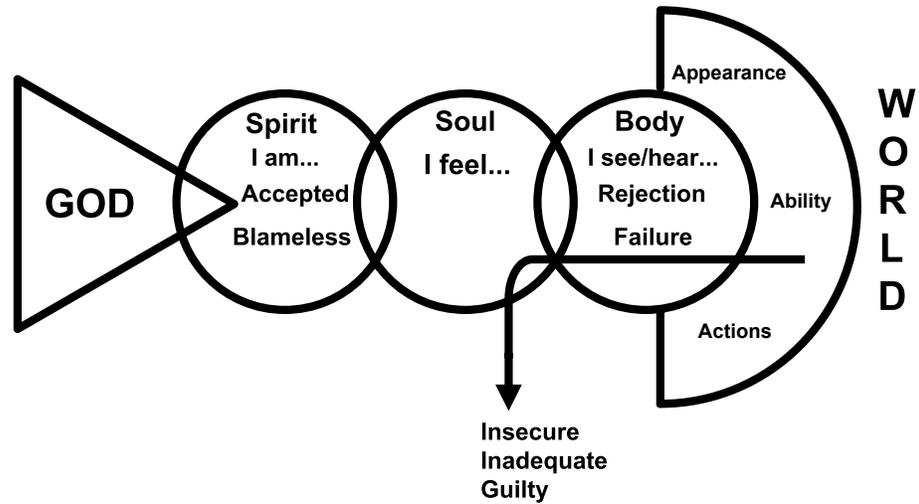
Focusing on your abilities will leave you feeling **inadequate**. When you believe you have to deal with every challenge in life with only your abilities, a feeling of inadequacy is the natural outcome as you realize you can't do something or can't do it well enough.

**Q5.** What do you think and feel when you are asked to do something you don't know how to do?

**Q6.** How do you feel when you can't do something very well? Give an example.

### **Actions**

The world gives approval based on your **actions**. But have you always done everything right? Have you been a good parent, spouse, boss, employee, student, citizen, and friend? When you fail, does the world forgive you?



Focusing on your actions may leave you feeling **guilty**. Guilt is the natural outcome of failing and not experiencing forgiveness.

**Q7.** In what ways have you felt guilty as a result of your actions?

**Q8.** Do you see yourself as a failure? Explain.

### **Mind Set on the Flesh**

The things that are true in your *spirit* come from God; you *are* accepted and blameless. However, when you focus on the world, what you feel in your *soul* will seem to contradict this truth. It is easier to believe what your *body* sees and hears.

If you have a tendency to believe your feelings, as opposed to what God says about you, you will be frustrated. The life God has for you will never become your living experience. Focusing your mind on the world is the same as your mind being set on the flesh.

*“For the mind set on the flesh is death...”*

**Romans 8:6** (NASB)

Do you experience emotional ups and downs? When your mind wavers between believing God or your senses, you become confused and unstable.

“...*He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.*”  
**James 1:8** (NKJ)

### **Consequences in Your Soul**

Your mind can either be set on God or the world, the Spirit or the flesh, truth or lies. *You* decide. When your mind is focused on the world, your soul will experience wrong thinking, wrong choices, and negative emotions.

Which of the following do you experience in your mind, will, and emotions?

**Fears**

Fear occurs when you focus on the unknown or things outside of your control.

**Fantasies**

Fantasies are a way of dealing with problems by escaping from reality.

**Obsessive thoughts**

These are thoughts that haunt or trouble the mind on a continual basis.

**Wrong decisions**

Decisions based on what you see and hear, not what God says.

**Depression**

Depression occurs when you focus on the negative experiences of the *past*. You have lost hope.

**Anxiety**

Anxiety occurs when you focus on the uncertainty of the *future*. God is not being trusted.

The conflict between what is true in the spirit and what is experienced in the soul can be a source of frustration and/or shame to most Christians.

It is embarrassing when you say you believe you are a new creation in Christ but fail to live like it. With each failed attempt to “live out” who God says you are, the frustration increases. You begin to believe you are a “failure” and then you do and say more things that bring about failure.

**Q9.** Can you relate to this conflict in your own life? If so, how?

It is as though there is a blockage that stops the good things in your spirit from affecting your soul. Actually it is just a problem with your focus. Negative thoughts, feelings, and choices are indicators that you have been focused on the world.

### **Input from God**

How do you change your focus and listen to what God is telling you? God uses His Spirit and His Word to speak truth to you. You *can* hear His voice.

*“My sheep hear My voice, and I know them and they follow Me.”* **John 10:27** (NKJ)

You have Christ dwelling within you giving you power to change your focus, make godly choices, and obey His commands.

*“For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.”*  
**Philippians 2:13** (NLT)

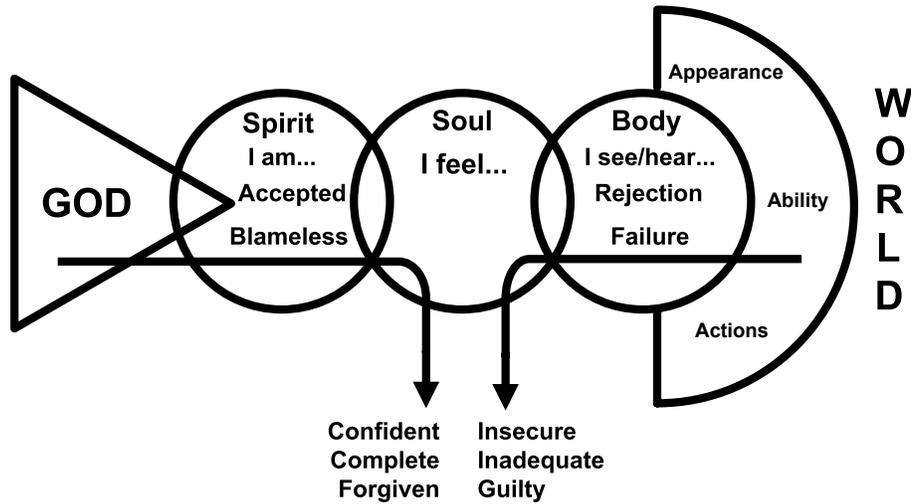
When you quit focusing on the world for approval, you can start focusing on the approval that God has already given you. It’s hard to hear what God says when your mind is focused on input from the world.

Believing what God says changes the way you feel in your soul because God speaks words of encouragement to you.

**Q10.** What is the Spirit telling you when you listen?

*“The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.”* **Romans 8:16** (NKJ)

This next diagram illustrates how your soul is affected when you focus your mind on the Spirit and believe what God says.



The input from God is always the same; you are accepted and blameless. The input from the world is always the same; you will get approval if your appearance, abilities, and actions are good enough. You may still see and hear rejection and failure.

However a big change takes place in your *soul* when you quit focusing on the world and focus your mind on what God says instead.

### Confident

Instead of feeling insecure, you feel *confident*. You no longer base your acceptance on what the world values but on what God says.

*“This **confidence** is like a strong and trustworthy anchor for our souls...” Hebrews 6:19 (NLT)*

Your confidence comes from understanding you have God’s favor.

*“What can we say about such wonderful things as these? If God is for us, who can ever be against us?” Romans 8:31 (NLT)*

**Q11.** How does knowing that you have God’s favor affect you?

### **Complete in Christ**

Satan wants you to think you are defective or missing something, and therefore you are inadequate. God wants you to know that because of your relationship with Him, you are *complete*.

*“...You are **complete** through your union with Christ...”*  
**Colossians 2:10** (NLT)

- Q12.** Do you believe there is anything still lacking if you are “in Christ?” Explain.

God doesn't expect you to face life with your own abilities. He says your adequacy comes from Him.

*“Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our **adequacy is from God.**”* **2 Corinthians 3:5** (NASB)

### **Forgiven**

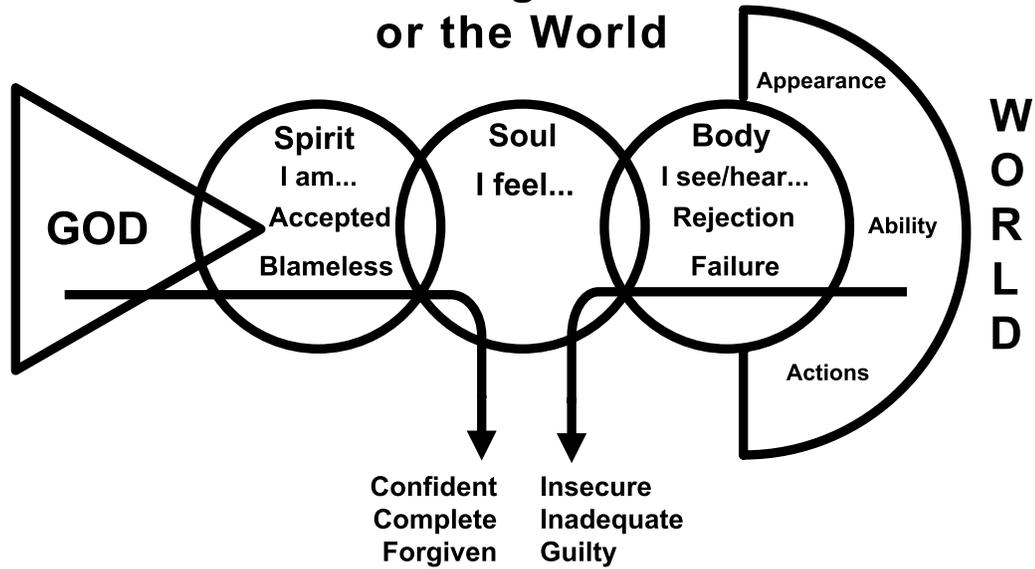
Satan wants you to be living in guilt over your sins, failures, and actions. Jesus has already been punished for your sins and failures so you can experience *forgiveness*.

*“I am writing to you, my dear children, because your sins have been **forgiven** because of Jesus.”*  
**1 John 2:12** (NLT)

- Q13.** Do you feel guilty? Why?

- Q14.** Do you believe you were forgiven because of Jesus? Explain.

## Focusing on God or the World



Your *mind* is renewed each time you *chose* to believe what God says instead of what the world says.

*“And do not be conformed to this world, but be **transformed** by the **renewing of your mind**, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:2 (NKJ)*

Your *will* is able to make right choices when your mind is focused on the Spirit and you are depending on God.

**Q15.** How are your mind, will, and emotions affected when *you* listen to and believe what God says?

You are no longer unstable but stable. Your mind is set on God’s truth and His truth doesn’t change.

*“You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you!” Isaiah 26:3 (NLT)*

## **Conclusion**

**Ask God** to reveal to you how the world and/or Satan have influenced you. Write the things He shows you.

**Repent** of the ways you have looked for approval from the world through your appearance, abilities, and actions. Repent of lies you have believed about yourself.

**Accept** the truth about who God says you are and begin focusing on Him instead of the world.

**Thank** God for what He has given you.

# Focusing on God or the World

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*



# Chapter 3

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## HOW TO DECIDE

*“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life, that you and your descendants might live!”* **Deuteronomy 30:19** (NLT)

Emotions come from where you focus your thoughts. Negative emotions come from focusing your mind on the world’s input. Positive emotions come from focusing on God’s input. Choosing where to focus your mind is a *decision* in the psychological area of your life.

Life is filled with decisions. You decide everything from what to eat for lunch to whether you will marry. A seemingly small decision can have long lasting ramifications.

Do you think God is interested in every decision you make? Is there a way to know whether you are making right choices or not?

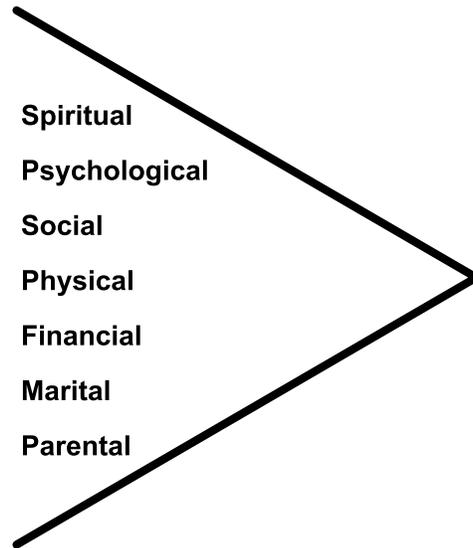
Let's step through the "decision making" process beginning with listing the areas of life that require decisions.

### **Seven Areas of Life**

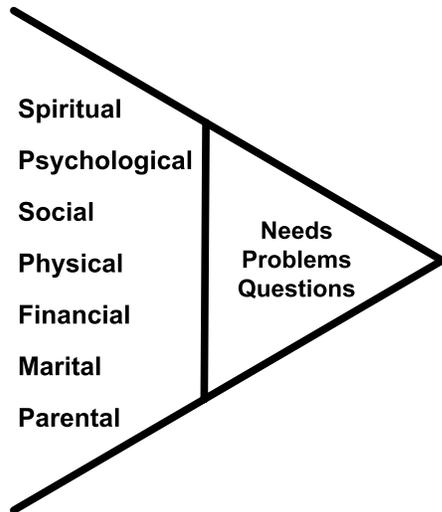
Life consists of seven different areas.

- **Spiritual area:** your relationship with God.
- **Psychological area:** your mind, will, and emotions.
- **Social area:** your relationships with others.
- **Physical area:** your body.
- **Financial area:** your money.
- **Marital area:** your relationship with your spouse (if you are married).
- **Parental area:** your relationship with your children (if you have children).

Every day you make numerous decisions. These decisions will take place in one or more of those areas. One decision might involve several areas. The seven areas of life are listed in the following diagram.



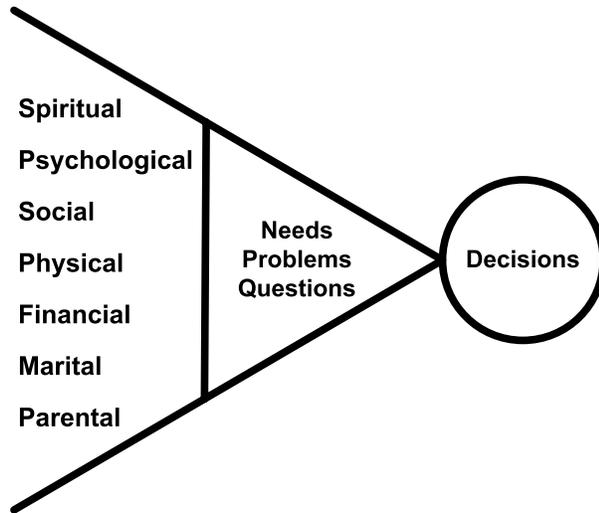
As shown next, you will eventually have needs, problems, and questions in these seven areas.



**Q1.** What needs, problems, or questions are you facing in the seven areas of life?

## Decisions

Needs, problems, and questions lead to the point of having to make a decision.



- Q2.** List a *specific* decision you need to make in one of the seven areas of life.

## Life and Death

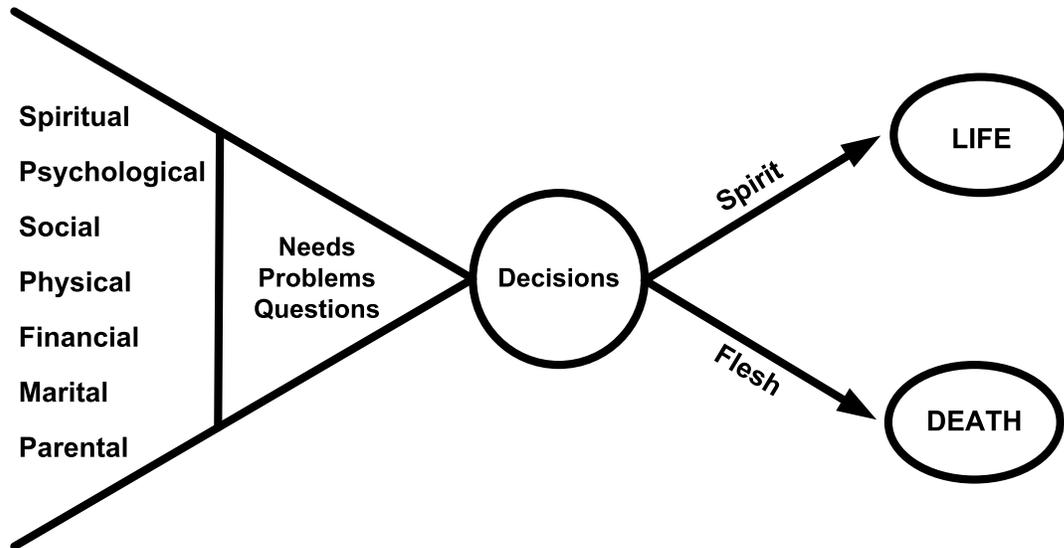
At this point, there are two paths you can take. One path leads to life and one path leads to death.

*“Today I have given you the choice between **life** and **death**...Oh, that you would choose life...”*

**Deuteronomy 30:19** (NLT)

God’s desire is for you to choose life. Choosing life means choosing to do what God’s Holy Spirit wants.

Choosing death means choosing to do what your flesh wants. The “flesh” is the selfish desire to meet your needs apart from God and to get your own way.



You will experience life or death based on your decision.

The *life* you experience will be joy and peace. For example: If you follow the Spirit in the financial area of your life, the life you might experience is having enough money to meet your needs, give, and invest.

The *death* you experience will be frustration and loss. For example: If you follow your flesh in the parental area of your life, you might experience death in the form of a broken relationship with your child. If you follow your flesh in the physical area of your life, you might be enslaved to addictions.

*“For the mind set on the **flesh is death**, but the mind set on the **Spirit is life and peace.**” Romans 8:6 (NASB)*

**Q3.** Are you experiencing death in any area of your life? Explain.

No matter which area of life it is, God cares about the decision you make. God has given you a free will. His desire is that you use your will to choose to follow His Spirit and not your flesh.

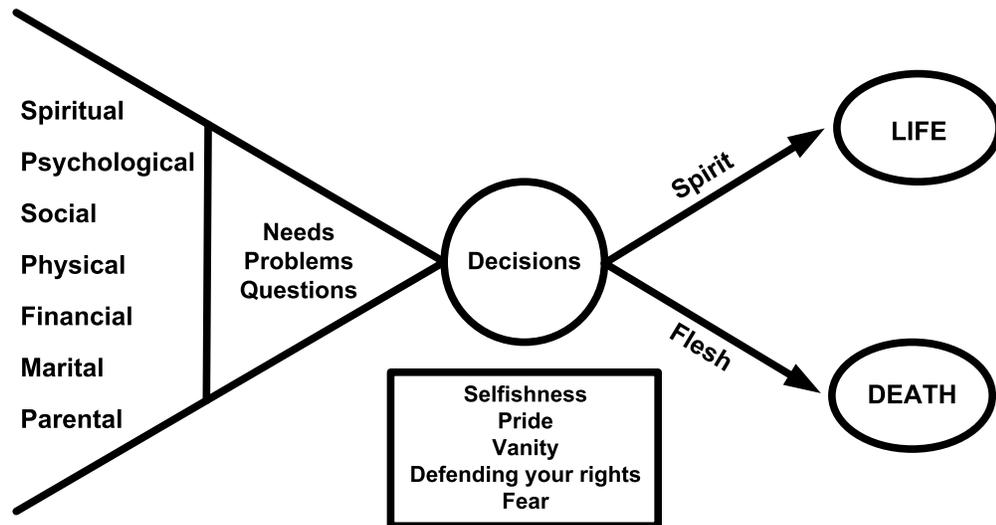
## Flesh

No one wants to make decisions that end in death but that's what happens when you follow your flesh.

*“Don't be misled. Remember that you can't ignore God and get away with it. You will always reap what you sow! Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.” Galatians 6:7–8 (NLT)*

It's important to understand and recognize the motives of your flesh.

The following diagram lists possible motives behind deciding to follow the flesh instead of the Spirit.



Mark the motives behind your past decisions.

\_\_\_ **Selfishness.** Wanting everything for yourself or thinking your life (body, money, and time) is your own.

\_\_\_ **Pride.** Being independent or thinking you are superior to others.

\_\_\_ **Vanity.** Seeking praise, wanting to appear important or look good.

\_\_\_ **Defending your rights.**

\_\_\_ **Fear.**

When you make a decision based on any of these motivations, you are following the flesh.

- Q4.** Are there fleshly motives that are affecting your decision on Q2? Explain.

### **Spirit**

Decisions based on what the Spirit wants will not be based on fleshly motives. The Bible is clear that your motives should not be selfishness, pride or vanity.

*“Don’t be selfish; don’t live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself.”* **Philippians 2:3** (NLT)

Furthermore your motives should not be based on defending your rights.

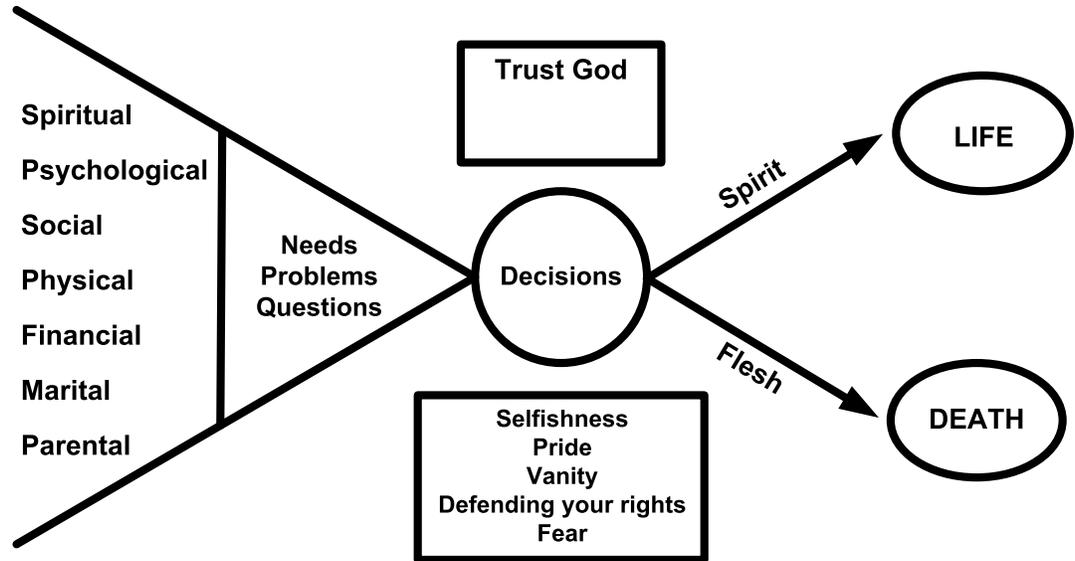
*“Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form.”* **Philippians 2:5–7** (NLT)

Lastly your motives should not be based on fear.

*“For God has not given us a spirit of fear...”* **2 Timothy 1:7** (NKJ)

Jesus is our example and He never made His decisions based on selfishness, pride, vanity, defending His rights or fear.

The following diagram shows what the Spirit wants when you are making decisions based on your *needs*.



### Trust God

God wants you to **trust** Him when you face **needs** in your life. However in the midst of a need, it's common to forget how able God is to meet your needs.

*"And my God shall supply all your **need** according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."* **Philippians 4:19** (NKJ)

Trusting God is learning to wait on God to meet your needs. God is waiting for you to trust Him.

*"But the LORD still waits for you to come to him so he can show you his love and compassion. For the LORD is a faithful God. Blessed are those who wait for him to help them."* **Isaiah 30:18** (NLT)

**Q5.** Are you waiting on God to meet your needs or are you getting impatient? Explain.

Many people are so impatient that they don't want to trust God. They make decisions just so they don't have to wait.

God is all wise and all powerful. God knows the best plan and the best possible timing. The best thing you can do for yourself is choose to trust God.

*"...He [God] is able to accomplish infinitely more than we would ever dare to ask or hope."* **Ephesians 3:20** (NLT)

**Q6.** What would it look like to trust God with all your needs?

God wants you to trust Him with your needs *and* with your problems.

### **Thank God**

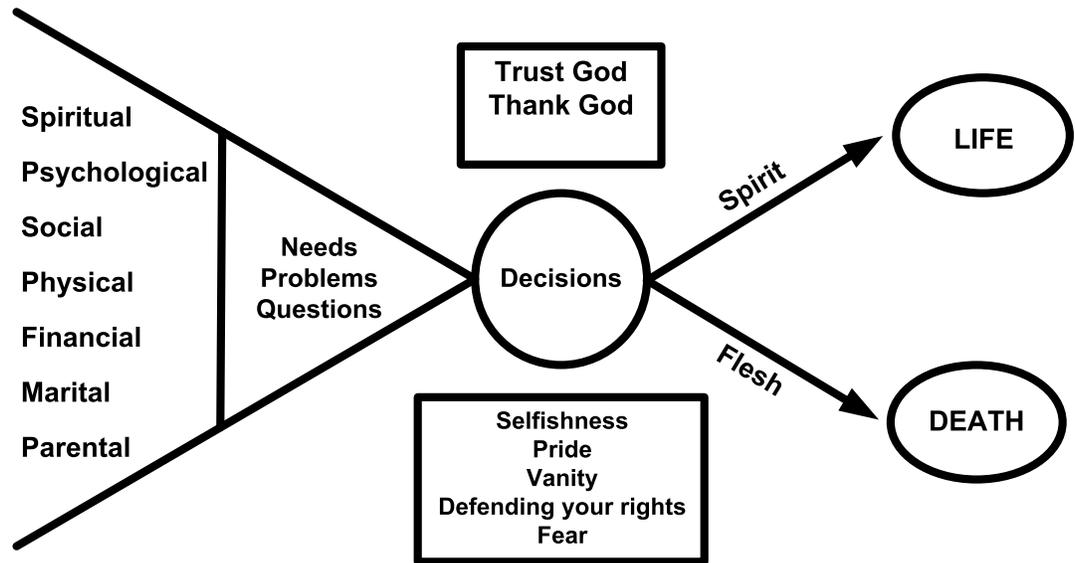
When God does great things for you, what should you do? Thank Him.

When you face **problems** in your life, what should you do? **Thank God!**

*"**Thank God** no matter what happens. This is the way God wants you who belong to Christ Jesus to live."*  
**1 Thessalonians 5:18** (MSG)

Thanking God for the things you like is simply "good manners." However, thanking God for the things you don't like proves you know Him and trust Him. It builds your faith.

*"**And we know** that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them."*  
**Romans 8:28** (NLT)



- Q7. Are there problems you need to thank God for instead of complaining about them? Explain.

Focusing on God and not your problems enables you to thank Him. When you focus on your problems, they seem too big for even God to handle. However, when you focus on God, you realize there is nothing too difficult for Him.

Many people believe that their problems are making them depressed. However *everyone* has problems but not everyone is depressed. The following verse explains one cause of depression.

*“Yes, they knew God, but they **wouldn’t** worship him as God or even **give him thanks**. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. The result was that their minds became **dark and confused**.”*

**Romans 1:21** (NLT)

“Dark and confused minds” sounds like depression, doesn’t it? Notice what behavior leads to a dark and confused mind. They wouldn’t worship God as God or give Him thanks.

Could it really be that simple? If you don't give God thanks, you will get depressed. Try thanking God for all things and see how much better you feel.

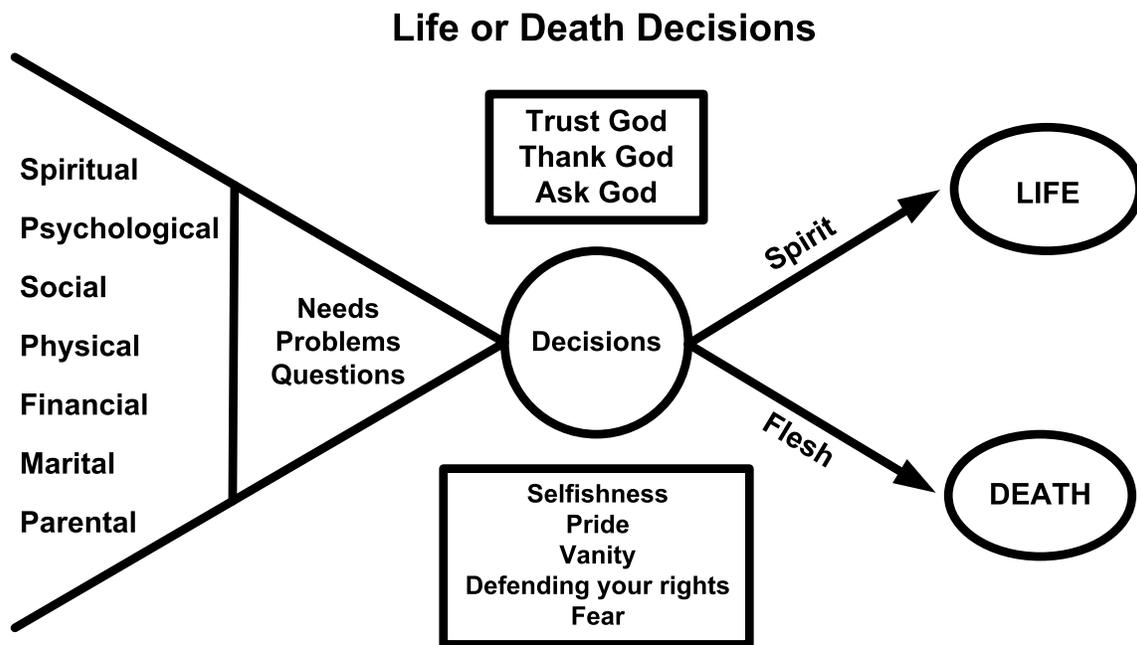
*“Giving thanks **always for all things** to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”*

**Ephesians 5:20** (NKJ)

**Q8.** Do you believe that God will eventually cause all your problems to work together for good? If so, are you willing to start thanking Him **now**?

### Ask God

Trust God with your needs. Thank God for your problems and when you have **questions, ask God.**



How do you make a decision when you don't know what to do? If you are afraid to make a decision, your indecision is a decision motivated by fear. Sometimes you may not know simply because you haven't asked God.

**Q9.** Have you asked God for direction in your current decision? Why or why not?

*“If you need wisdom – if you want to know what God wants you to do – **ask him**, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking.” **James 1:5** (NLT)*

When you acknowledge God in every area of your life, He will show you what to do.

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and **He shall direct your paths.**”  
**Proverbs 3:5–6** (NKJ)*

You will experience life when you do what He shows you to do.

### **Conclusion**

Every decision you make is a life or death decision. Life comes from choosing to follow the Spirit.

**Stop** making decisions based on:

- Selfishness
- Pride
- Vanity
- Defending your rights
- Fear

**Start** making decisions by:

- **Trusting God** for your needs.
- **Thanking God** for your problems and everything else.
- **Asking God** for wisdom concerning your questions.

*“Don’t worry about anything; instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank him for all he has done. If you do this, you will experience God’s peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.”*

**Philippians 4:6–7** (NLT)

# Life or Death Decisions

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*



## WHAT TO BELIEVE

*“...Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right...”* **Philippians 4:8** (NLT)

The last chapter illustrated how making decisions after the Spirit brings life and making decisions after the flesh brings death.

The world and Satan are continually speaking lies. God’s Spirit and His Word are continually speaking truth. What you believe determines how you behave.

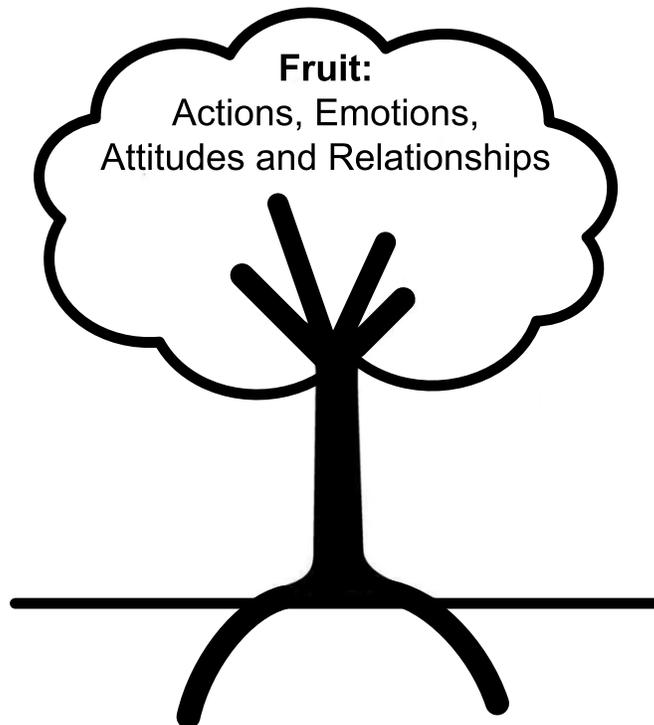
Your life can be depicted as a fruit tree. A fruit tree has fruit, branches, a trunk, and roots.

### **Fruit**

Using this analogy, your actions, emotions, attitudes, and the condition of your relationships are the **fruit**.

People who believe what the Lord says are like a flourishing tree producing good fruit.

*“Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, and whose hope is the LORD. For he shall be like a tree planted by the waters, Which spreads out its roots by the river, And will not fear when heat comes; But its leaf will be green, And will not be anxious in the year of drought, Nor will cease from yielding fruit.”* **Jeremiah 17:7–8** (NKJ)



God wants your life to produce good fruit. Yet bad fruit may be a part of your everyday experience. Understanding where your fruit comes from may help reduce the bad fruit and increase the good fruit in your life.

If you are being controlled by God's Holy Spirit, your fruit will be good.

*"But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control." Galatians 5:22–23 (NLT)*

If you are being controlled by your flesh, your fruit will be bad.

*“When you follow the desires of your sinful nature [flesh], your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin...”*

**Galatians 5:19–21** (NLT)

Bad fruit includes:

Negative **actions** like rage, eating disorders, addictions, sexual immorality, lying, and profanity.

Negative **emotions** like fear, anxiety, depression, shame, and unrelenting grief.

Negative **attitudes** like complaining, unforgiveness, greed, and prejudice.

Negative **relationships** can be ones that are abusive or broken.

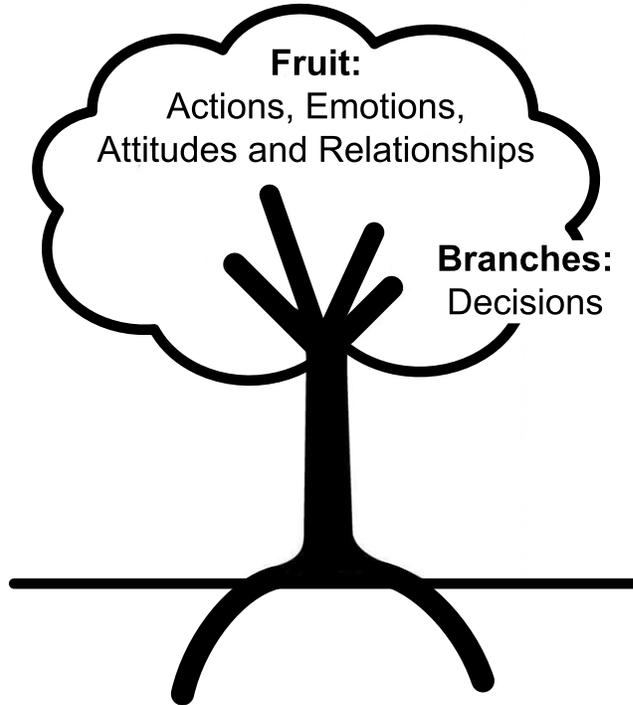
**Q1.** What bad fruit do you see in your life?

Most Christians are bothered when they see bad fruit in their lives. So they try to remove it, but it often just grows back.

**Q2.** What have you done to try to remove the bad fruit from your life?

## **Branches**

Fruit doesn't just appear on a tree; it grows on branches. The branches represent your **decisions**.



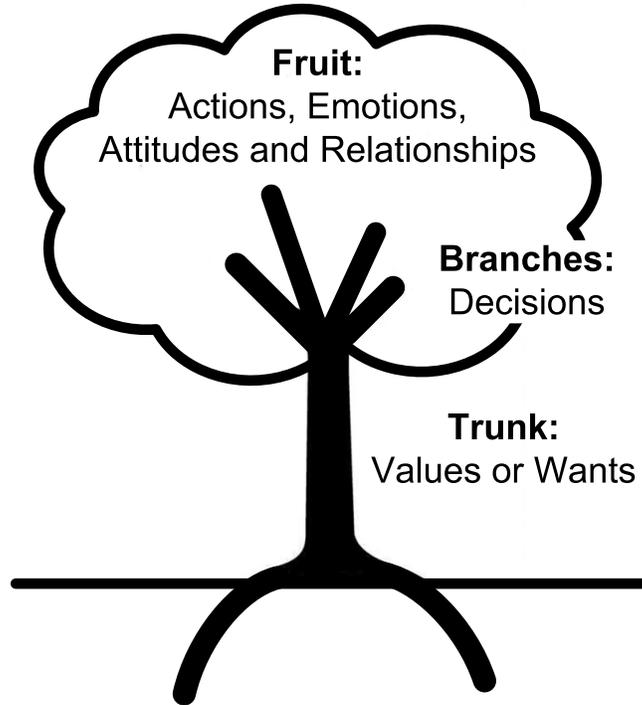
Choosing to follow the Spirit or the flesh produces a crop.

*“...You will always reap what you sow! Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful desires [flesh] will harvest the consequences of decay and death. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit.” Galatians 6:7–8 (NLT)*

**Q3.** What *wrong* decisions have you made that led to negative fruit?

### **Trunk**

Why did you decide to do what you did? What motivates your decisions? The branches on a tree are attached to the trunk. The trunk of the tree represents your **values or wants**. The typical values someone might have are to be loved, accepted, significant or safe. People are created with needs but they tend to value the ones they haven't consistently received. What you deeply value or want influences what you decide.



Your values or wants may not be evil but the way you seek to satisfy them can be. God created you and only He is able to provide what you truly want and need. But if you do not believe He can or will provide what you need, you will attempt to provide for yourself.

*“...The reason you don’t have what you want is that you don’t ask God for it. And even when you do ask, you don’t get it because your whole motive is wrong – you want only what will give you pleasure.”*

**James 4:2–3** (NLT)

- Q4.** What is it you value or want (For example: To be loved, accepted, significant, safe, etc.)?
- Q5.** What have you done to fulfill your desires?

When you look to other people or yourself to gain love, acceptance, and significance, it leads to making bad choices which produce bad fruit. For example: You *want* to be accepted so you *decide* to have an immoral relationship which produces the *fruit* of shame, lying, and broken relationships with others.

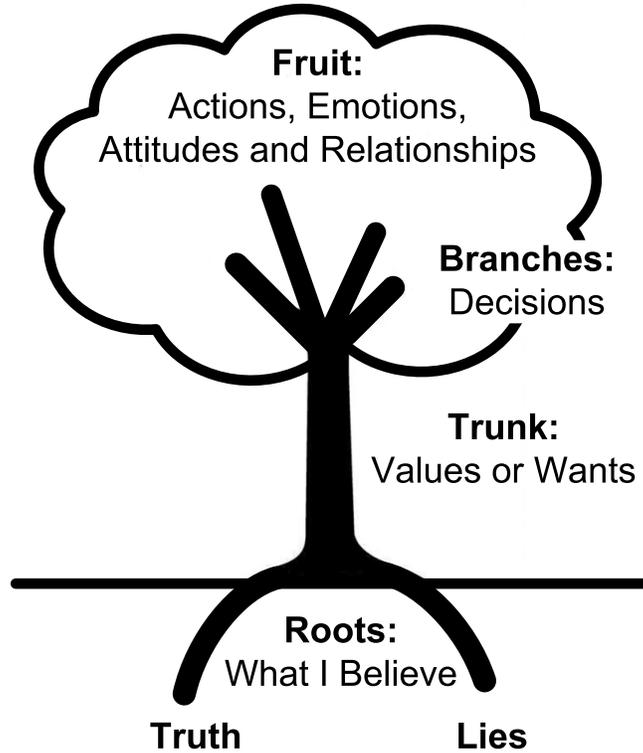
God has a better plan but you will miss out on it by trying to meet your own needs.

*“...Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD. For he shall be like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see when good comes, but shall inhabit the parched places in the wilderness...”* **Jeremiah 17:5–6** (NKJ)

## **Roots**

The trunk of the tree draws from its roots. The roots of the tree represent **what you believe**. Your roots don't determine your values but they do determine how you choose to pursue your values.

What you believe about God, yourself, and others affects your values, decisions, and actions. You will either draw from truth or lies.



Truth comes from God and He is the Author of life. Believing truth results in life.

*"Let your roots grow down into him and draw up nourishment from him, so you will grow in faith, strong and vigorous in the **truth** you were taught..."*  
**Colossians 2:7** (NLT)

Lies come from believing Satan and the world. Satan tries to plant lies in your life through what you see, hear, and experience in the world.

*"...[Satan] has always hated the truth. There is no truth in him. When he lies, it is consistent with his character; for he is a liar and the father of **lies**."* **John 8:44** (NLT)

Believing lies causes you to doubt what God says and results in death.

*“When they refused to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their evil minds and let them do things that should never be done. Their lives became full of every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, fighting, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip.”*  
**Romans 1:28–29** (NLT)

**Q6.** Do you think you believe lies? What does your fruit tell you?

Since believing lies produces bad fruit, it makes sense that you need to remove them.

### **Lies about God**

Instead of believing that God is good, He cares for you, He desires a close relationship with you, and He loves you unconditionally, you might believe a lie regarding His character. You may have based that lie on some experience you have had but your experiences don't change the nature of God.

*“Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like...”* **Romans 1:21** (NLT)

**Q7.** Ask God to reveal the lies you have believed about Him. Record what God shows you.

### **Lies about Yourself**

Instead of believing God loves you and you are accepted by Him, you may believe lies such as you're unloved or you're a failure. You may believe the labels or input from the world saying: you are stupid, you were born this way or you are an addict and you always will be.

**Q8.** Ask God to uncover the lies you have believed about yourself. Record what He shows you.

**Q9.** What bad fruit eventually came from that belief?

**Q10.** When did you begin believing these lies?

### **Lies about Others**

Everyone is loved by God and valuable to Him. God's desire is for you to love people and pray that His plan will be accomplished in their lives. However you could believe lies regarding other people for instance: they are inferior to you, they are out to get you or they will never change.

**Q11.** Ask God to uncover the lies you have believed about others. Record what He shows you.

**Q12.** When did you begin to believe those lies?

### **Gideon**

Consider the life of Gideon (**Judges 6:11–18**), who was afraid of Israel's enemies, the Midianites. One day while Gideon was hiding, the Angel of the Lord appeared to him saying,

*"...The Lord is with you, you mighty man of valor [courage and bravery]!"* **Judges 6:12** (NKJ)

**Q13.** What was God saying about Gideon?

When God told him he would deliver the Israelites from their enemies, Gideon said,

*“...O my Lord, how can I save Israel? Indeed my clan is the weakest in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father’s house.”* **Judges 6:15** (NKJ)

**Q14.** What lies did Gideon believe about himself?

Gideon wasn’t very different from us. He was focused on his appearance, ability, and actions. Even though God declared him a mighty man of valor and would use him to deliver Israel, Gideon didn’t believe the things God said. They seemed impossible. Gideon thought his family was small, insignificant, and powerless. He allowed his experiences and status to determine what he believed about himself.

Notice what Gideon says to God in the following verse.

*“...O my lord, if the Lord is with us, why then has all this happened to us? And where are all His miracles, which our fathers told us about, saying, ‘Did not the Lord bring us up from Egypt?’ But now the Lord has forsaken us and delivered us into the hands of the Midianites.”* **Judges 6:13** (NKJ)

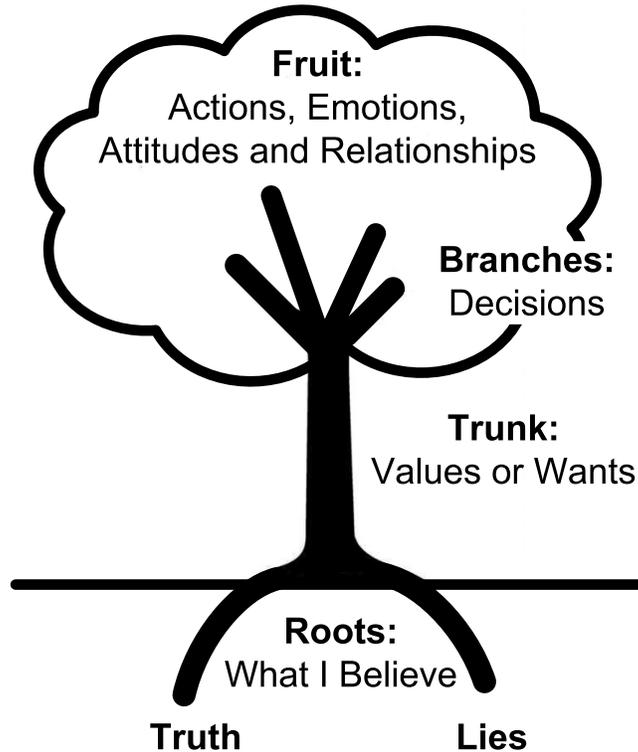
**Q15.** What lies did Gideon believe about God?

Gideon believed God had forsaken the nation of Israel. From Gideon’s perspective, God was not living up to his reputation.

The lies Gideon believed about himself and God resulted in the fruit of fear and unbelief. Thankfully God is a very patient teacher. It took Gideon a while to get rid of the lies he believed so he could believe what God said. Through a series of miracles, God confirmed His Word was true. The fruit of fear in Gideon’s life was replaced with peace and confidence.

*“So Gideon built an altar there to the Lord, and called it The-Lord-Is-Peace...”* **Judges 6:24** (NKJ)

## Belief Tree



### Replacing Lies with Truth

Don't let your experiences define what you believe. Instead let God define your experiences.

Don't try to hide your *bad* fruit. Don't try to remove your bad fruit, just to see it grow back again. Deal with the root cause.

Are you ready to get rid of the lies you have believed and replace them with truth? Depending on what the Lord has shown you, take steps to:

**Confess** the lies you have believed about God, yourself, and others.

**Repent** of wrong decisions you have made as a result of the lies you believed.

**Replace** the lies you have believed with truth. Choose to set your mind on God's truth instead of the lies from the world.

### Essential Truths about God

Although knowing God is a never-ending pursuit, there are five essential truths that you need to believe.

### *God Exists*

The *first* truth you need to believe is that *He exists*.

*“So, you see, it is impossible to please God without faith. Anyone who wants to come to him **must believe that there is a God** and that he rewards those who sincerely seek him.” Hebrews 11:6 (NLT)*

### *God is All Powerful*

The *second* essential truth you need to believe is that not only does He exist, but *He is all powerful*.

*“Look, God is **all-powerful**. Who is a teacher like him?” Job 36:22 (NLT)*

He knows everything. He is everywhere. He is in command and in control.

### *God is Good*

The *third* essential truth to believe about God is that not only is He there and all powerful, but also *He is good*.

*“The LORD is **good**. When trouble comes, he is a strong refuge. And he knows everyone who trusts in him.” Nahum 1:7 (NLT)*

God is full of compassion, kindness, and mercy. He is not evil.

### *God Loves You*

The *fourth* essential truth about God is *He loves you*.

*“We know that **God loves you**, dear brothers and sisters, and that he chose you to be his own people.” 1 Thessalonians 1:4 (NLT)*

God chooses to love you and His love is unconditional.

### *God Promises*

The *fifth* essential truth about God is, *He promises to cause everything in your life to work together for good*.

*“And we know that **God causes everything to work together for the good** of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”*

**Romans 8:28** (NLT)

God has *never* broken a promise!

## Truths about You

The truest things about you are what God says about you:

### *You are Accepted*

*“...We have the free gift of being **accepted** by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.”* **Romans 5:16** (NLT)

### *You are Holy and Blameless*

*“...He has brought you into the very presence of God, and you are **holy** and **blameless** as you stand before him without a single fault.”* **Colossians 1:22** (NLT)

### *You are Forgiven*

*“...God made you alive with Christ. He **forgave** all our sins.”* **Colossians 2:13** (NLT)

## Truth about Others

God sent Jesus to die for the whole world. He loves everyone. God wants you to see people through His eyes.

*“So **accept each other** just as Christ has accepted you; then God will be glorified.”* **Romans 15:7** (NLT)

## Good Fruit is Supernatural

Finally, don't focus on trying to change the fruit in your life; instead focus on knowing and believing God. Good fruit will be the *supernatural* outcome.

*“...Those who remain in me [Jesus], and I in them, will produce much fruit. For apart from me you can do nothing.”* **John 15:5** (NLT)

# Belief Tree

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Sharing S.A.L.T. with a Friend

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“...And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.” **1 Peter 3:15** (NLT)

*Meet in a location where your friend feels comfortable sharing.*

## **The Purpose:** Encouragement

How do you encourage your friend? By sharing Biblical truths that have impacted you.

*Ask “Could I share some things with you?”*

## **Sharing with a friend (an informal meeting)**

- Ask, “What’s going on in your life?” or “How are you doing?”
- Listen.
- If necessary, ask questions that help you better understand your friend and his or her situation. For example: “How are you feeling about that?”
- Then share what God has been teaching you as it relates to your friend’s situation.
- If the opportunity allows, draw and explain the S.A.L.T. diagram that is relevant. *This can even be done on a napkin.*
- Encourage your friend and offer to pray.

*Share with an attitude of humility and kindness.*

## **Sharing with a friend (on a regular basis)**

- Make sure your friend has a book.
- Read, study, and answer all questions individually.
- Share your answers with each other and talk about the lesson.
- Draw and explain the diagram for each other.
- Encourage each other to personally apply the lessons.
- Pray together.

*Be sensitive about when to share and the length of your sharing.*

## **Helpful suggestions:**

**Be transparent.** Share your own story. When you are real, other people realize they can be honest too.

**Be a “safe place.”** Information your friend tells you should be kept confidential. Don’t condemn, instead encourage.

**Be a good listener.** Give your friend your full attention. Make eye contact, and, at appropriate times, repeat back what you hear your friend saying. Ask good questions that encourage your friend to talk.

**Be a true friend.** Speak the truth in love.

## **Books in the Seven Areas of Life Training (S.A.L.T.) Series**

### **Titles in the S.A.L.T. Series:**

- Spiritual – My Relationship with God
- Psychological – My Mind, Will, and Emotions
- Social – My Relationship with Others
- Physical – My Body
- Financial – My Money
- Marital – My Relationship with my Spouse
- Parental – My Relationship with my Children
- SALT Instructor's Guide with PowerPoint CD of Diagrams
- SALT Training DVD for Group Leaders

### **About the Authors**

A team of authors at Victorious Christian Living International (VCLi) wrote this book.

For over 25 years, VCLi has been helping believers grow and be successful in all seven areas of life. VCLi trains people and provides materials for effectively ministering to others, including comprehensive church discipleship programs, prison and inner-city ministries, and family ministries. We are headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona with offices in Alabama, Illinois, Guatemala, and Cuba.

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**Phoenix, AZ**  
**[www.vcli.org](http://www.vcli.org)**  
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***My Relationship  
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**S.A.L.T.**

**Seven Areas of Life Training<sup>®</sup>**

SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING (S.A.L.T.) SOCIAL AREA – MY  
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## **Dedication**

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*All of us at VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING INTERNATIONAL give God the praise for these SALT materials and dedicate this series to the discipleship of believers worldwide.*

*Thank you to all past and present VCLi staff members. You have played a vital role in developing, teaching, and helping others apply these diagrams, concepts, and lessons.*

*Special thanks go to Rocky Nystrom. Your vision and creativity made this series a reality, your determination brought it to completion; and your heart for people to be free energized us along the way.*

## **About this Series**

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### SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING

Learning how to live victoriously in all seven areas of life is the goal of this comprehensive discipleship series.

This small group or self-study book is simple, yet dynamic. Biblical truths are visually illustrated with powerful diagrams.

Solid Biblical truth is taught in each lesson with a challenge to apply that truth to your life. It is when you apply that truth and share it with others that your life will be profoundly changed.

## **About this Book**

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The *Social Area of Life* deals with your relationships with others.

In four powerful chapters you will find challenges to get real with others and start enjoying dynamic relationships that once seemed impossible.

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## REJECTION

*“Don’t repay evil for evil. Don’t retaliate when people say unkind things about you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God wants you to do, and he will bless you for it.” 1 Peter 3:9 (NLT)*

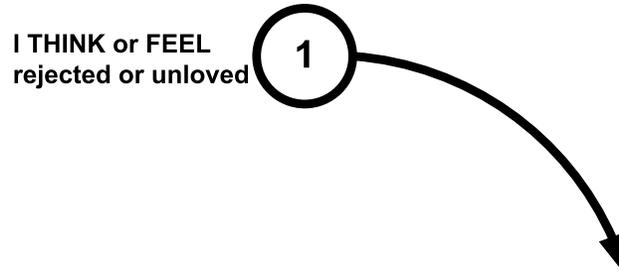
The social area of life deals with your relationships with people. God says to love everyone, even your enemies. But when people reject you, do you feel so hurt that you want to hurt them back?

Everyone gets hurt and rejected by others. **Rejection can be defined as knowingly or unknowingly withholding love.** You will not be able to avoid being rejected in this world. However, you can change the way you react to rejection. The way you handle rejection will either lead to abundant life or living death.

### **The Rejection Cycle**

The following diagram begins building the Rejection Cycle. It illustrates how you may react to being rejected. In step 1 of the Rejection Cycle, an incident occurs and **you think or feel you are rejected or unloved.**

## Rejection Cycle



### Feeling Rejected

Rejection can take many different forms. You could feel rejected when people say or do unkind things to you. You could feel rejected when someone you care about ignores or overlooks you. Another painful type of rejection is feeling judged or condemned by others. Rejection can be intentional or unintentional.

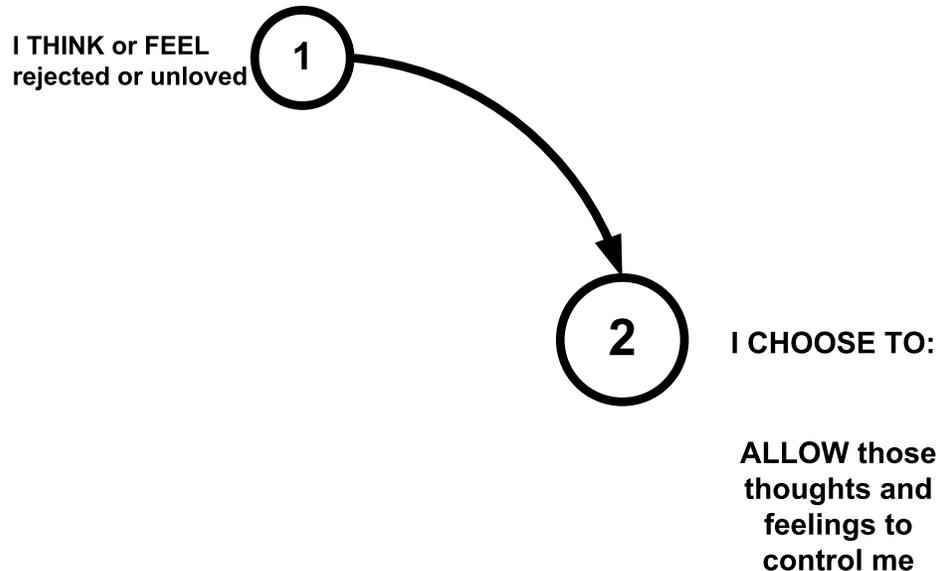
**Q1.** Describe one *specific* time when you were hurt or rejected.

**Q2.** What did you think and feel about the incident?

## Controlled by Thoughts and Feelings

At step 2 of the Rejection Cycle, **you choose** how you are going to react.

### Rejection Cycle



At step 2, you make a choice to allow your thoughts and feelings of rejection to control you. You are aware of the fact that you don't like rejection and you don't want to experience it again.

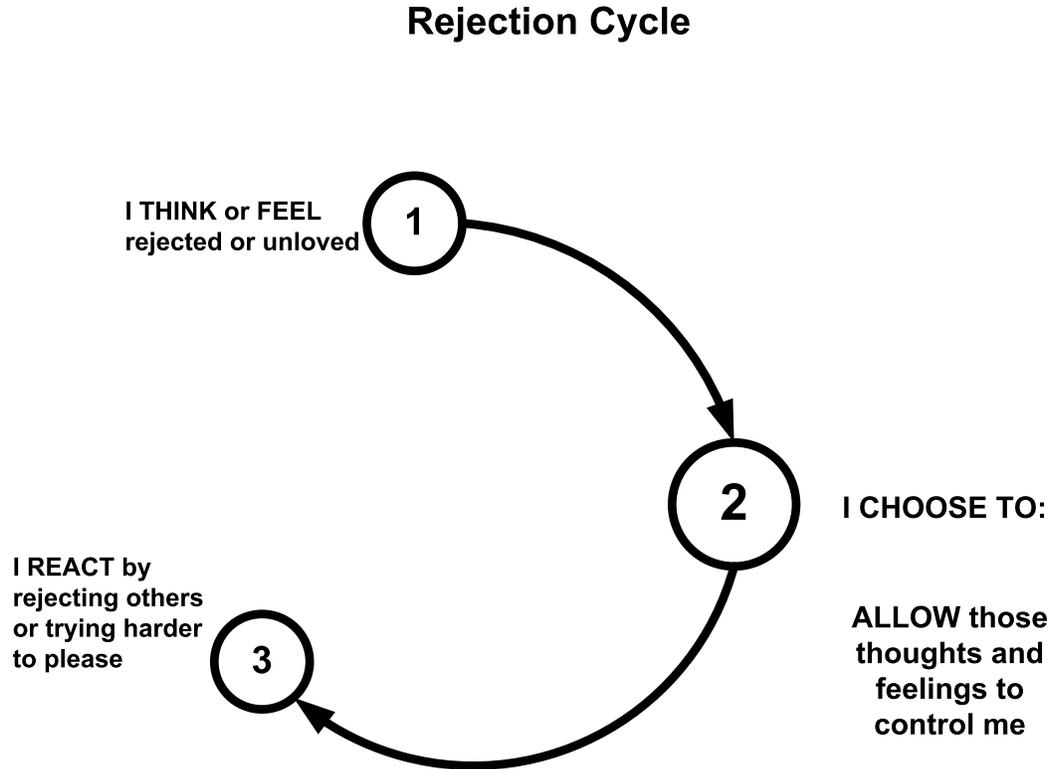
When you focus on the negative thoughts and feelings of rejection, they will control you. For example: Several people say something kind to you and one person belittles you. Which comment do you focus on? If you choose to focus on the rejection, you are allowing those negative thoughts and feelings to control you.

What the other person did to you might have been very wrong, but what you choose next determines if you are going to be wrong also.

*"Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate when people say unkind things about you..." 1 Peter 3:9 (NLT)*

## Your Reaction

In step 3 of the Rejection Cycle, **you react by rejecting others or trying harder to please.** You may even reject yourself.



There are two different ways that you might react.

1. You reject back.
2. You try harder to please to avoid being rejected in the future.

These reactions are the result of the choice you made at step 2.

You might find yourself at step 3 so quickly that you may be unaware that there was a step 2. But you did make a choice.

## Rejecting the Rejecter

The following is a list of how a rejected person may react to his or her rejecters. Check the reactions you have seen in your own life.

- I refuse to communicate with them.
- I have difficulty tolerating them.
- I say only what I think they want to hear.
- I am critical and judgmental of them.
- I spend little time with them.
- I build emotional walls for self-protection.
- I don't trust them.
- I abuse them physically.
- I say hurtful things to them.
- I reject anyone who reminds me of them.
- I try harder to get people to accept me.

**Q3.** In what other ways have you rejected (withheld love from) the person who has rejected you?

*“When you follow the desires of your sinful nature [flesh], your lives will produce these evil results...hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger....”*

**Galatians 5:19–20** (NLT)

**Q4.** In what ways have you attempted to avoid rejection by trying harder to please?

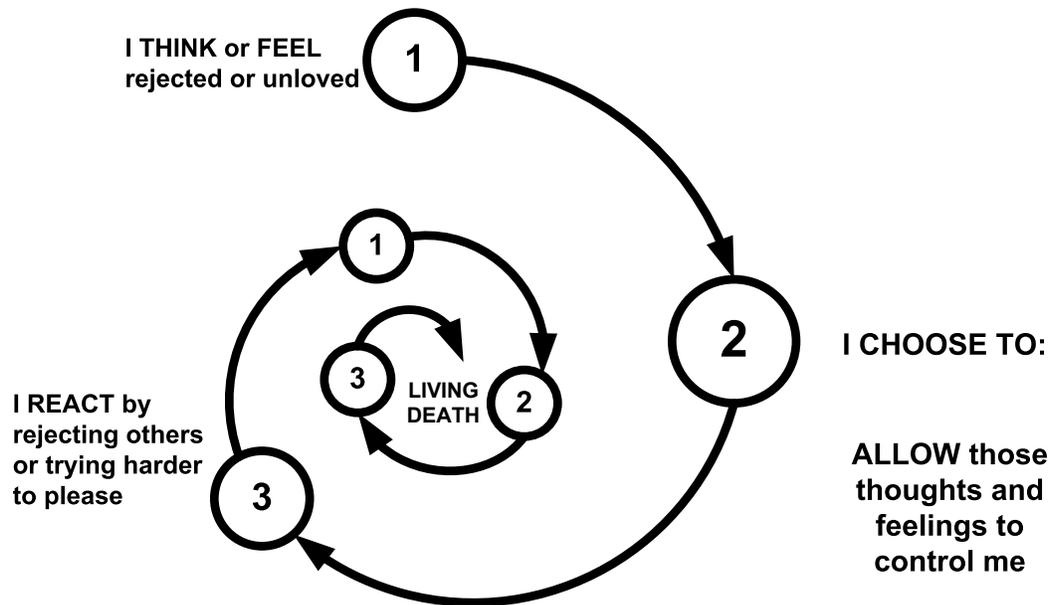
When you react to rejection by trying harder to please, you will discover you can never do enough. You are focusing on gaining acceptance from others but what you will experience is hurt, loss, and more rejection.

*“For where envy and **self-seeking** exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.” James 3:16 (NKJ)*

### Living Death

Inevitably, your reactions bring on more rejection. This cycle continues until it ends in **living death**.

### Rejection Cycle



If you react to somebody by rejecting him/her, then that person will think or feel rejected and react by rejecting you back. Your step 3 becomes another person’s step 1. Both of you are spinning down the Rejection Cycle.

**Q5.** Have you seen this pattern of rejection in your relationships? Describe.

*“But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Beware of destroying one another.” Galatians 5:15 (NLT)*

The Rejection Cycle illustrates the outcome of thinking, “You reject me and I’ll reject you.”

**Q6.** What things do you continue to do that bring on more rejection?

### **Living in the Rejection Cycle**

The following list describes how someone stuck in the Rejection Cycle may experience a living death. Check the statements you see in your own life.

\_\_\_\_\_ I take personally everything people do or say.

\_\_\_\_\_ I cling to people who accept me.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am filled with worries, doubts, and fears.

\_\_\_\_\_ I feel guilty.

\_\_\_\_\_ I try too hard to please.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am a perfectionist. “If I’m perfect I won’t be rejected.”

\_\_\_\_\_ I am irresponsible and undisciplined. “I don’t care anymore.”

\_\_\_\_\_ I think that life “isn’t worth it.”

- Q7.** Are you living in the rejection cycle and experiencing a living death? Explain.

### **Reversing the Rejection Cycle**

Fortunately you **can** stop or reverse this cycle of rejection. This reversal doesn't come by denying or ignoring the rejection from others or by trying harder to please. Rather, the solution is found in making different choices.

### **Choose to Believe**

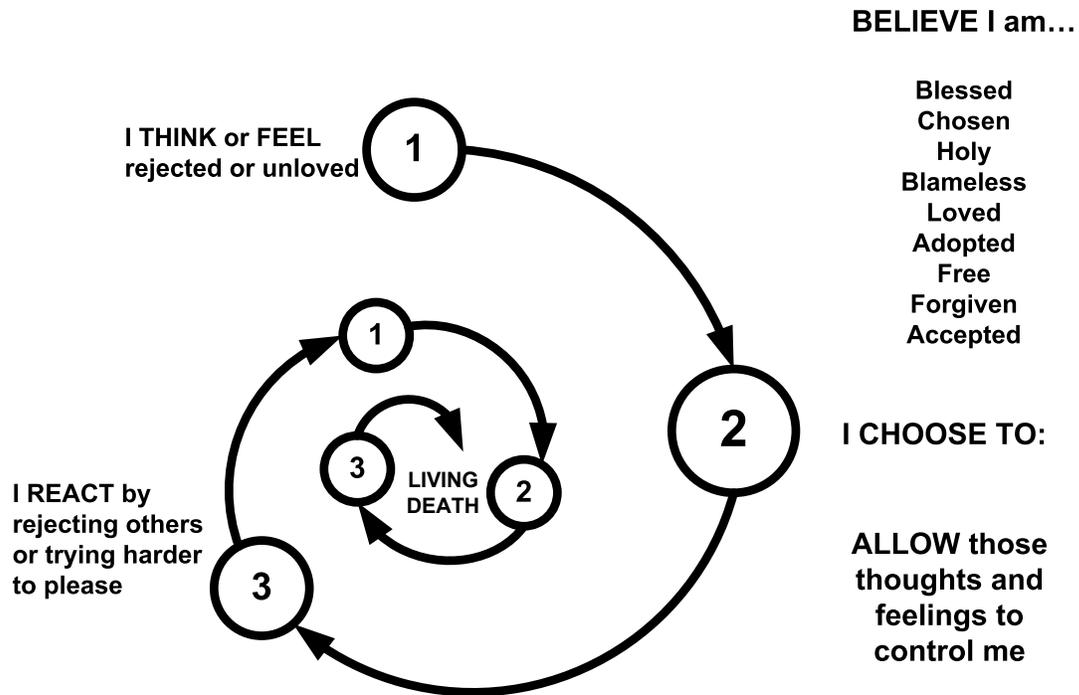
Notice in the diagram that step 2 is a larger circle. That is because it is the key step to reversing the Rejection Cycle.

Rather than choosing to allow your thoughts and feelings of rejection to control you, you **choose to believe** who God says you are. God says many good things about you, if you are "in Christ." He says that you are **blessed, chosen, holy, blameless, loved, adopted, free, forgiven, and accepted.**

At step 2, you choose to focus on what God says about you, rather than how people treat you.

*"...If God is for us, who can be against us?"*  
**Romans 8:31** (NLT)

## Reversing the Rejection Cycle



If other people are saying things about you that are different from what God says about you, choose to believe God.

Read the following verses.

*“How we praise God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has **blessed** us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms because we belong to Christ. Long ago, even before he made the world, God **loved** us and **chose** us in Christ to be **holy** and **without fault** in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to **adopt** us into his own family by bringing us to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. So we praise God for the wonderful kindness he has poured out on us because we belong to his dearly loved Son. He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our **freedom** through the blood of his Son, and our sins are **forgiven**. He has showered his kindness on us, along with all wisdom and understanding.”*

**Ephesians 1:3–8** (NLT)

*“...We have the free gift of being **accepted** by God, even though we are guilty of many sins...”* **Romans 5:16** (NLT)

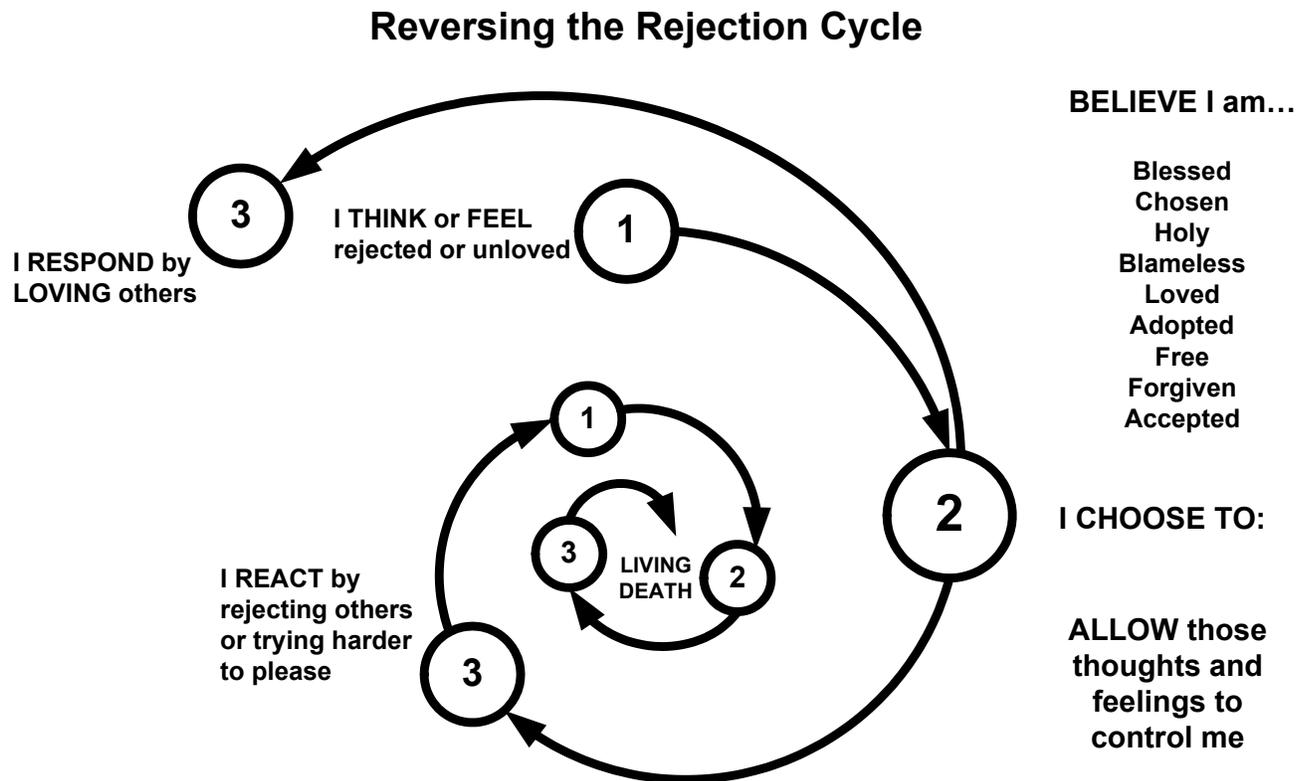
**Q8.** Write out what God is saying to **you** in these verses.

What God says is true. Nothing anyone else says will ever change the truth of what He says about you. If you believe what God says, rejection won't control you.

By believing who God says you are you are enabled to make good choices consistent with your true identity “in Christ.”

## Respond with Love

Notice in the diagram that the cycle is reversed when you choose to believe who God says you are. Now rather than reacting by rejecting others or trying harder to please, you can **respond by loving others**. You are taking action on what God says. The action is that of loving others, even those who have hurt you. Instead of a living death, you experience abundant life!



What makes it possible for you to respond in love to the people who have hurt and mistreated you? First of all, you are deeply loved by God! You no longer require anyone else's acceptance. When you believe this truth, it produces an overflow of love and acceptance toward others, regardless of how they treat you.

The second reason you can respond in love to the people rejecting you is because you can trust God's control. God will cause even your hurts to work out for good.

*“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”*

**Romans 8:28** (NLT)

Consider Jesus’ response to rejection.

*“...Christ, who suffered for you, is your example. Follow in his steps. He did not retaliate when he was insulted. When he suffered, he did not threaten to get even. He left his case in the hands of God, who always judges fairly.”*

**1 Peter 2:21, 23** (NLT)

Jesus was never caught in a cycle of rejection. Jesus lived in the approval of God, not the approval of man. Jesus knew His true identity. He was His Father’s Son and He knew how much He was loved.

He trusted God to use His suffering for good. Jesus chose to love and forgive others, not threaten or reject back.

**Q9.** Are you ready to be set free from the Rejection Cycle?

If so, the following steps may be helpful.

### **Set Free from the Rejection Cycle**

**Tell God** how you have been thinking and feeling unloved and rejected.

*“O my people, trust in him at all times. Pour out your heart to him, for God is our refuge...”* **Psalm 62:8** (NLT)

**Renew your mind** daily with the truth that you are totally accepted by God.

*“Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. You must display a new nature because you are a new person, created in God's likeness – righteous, holy, and true.”* **Ephesians 4:23–24** (NLT)

**Start** treating the people who reject you the way God wants you to treat them.

*“Don’t repay evil for evil. Don’t retaliate when people say unkind things about you. Instead, pay them back with a blessing. That is what God wants you to do, and he will bless you for it.”* **1 Peter 3:9** (NLT)

God is pleased with you when you love your enemies.

*“When a man’s ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him.”*  
**Proverbs 16:7** (NKJ)

# Rejection Cycle

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Chapter 2

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## JUDGING OTHERS

*“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned.” Luke 6:36–37 (NASB)*

In the last chapter, you learned how you can respond in love to the people who are rejecting you. It is by choosing to believe what God says about you. In this chapter, you will see that there is a connection between judging others and rejection.

- Q1.** Do you feel frustrated or annoyed when people don't do things right? Explain.

You were not made right with God because you were without fault. You need God's mercy and forgiveness. Yet do you have a tendency to be intolerant of others when they fail? Perhaps you think, "I'd never do that!" What does the following parable teach about that kind of judging?

*“Also He spoke this parable to **some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others**: ‘Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, ‘God, I thank You that I am not like other men--extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector. I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.’ And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, ‘God, be merciful to me a sinner!’ I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.’” **Luke 18:9–14** (NKJ)*

The Pharisee had an attitude of superiority, trusted in himself and thought he was better than the tax collector.

**Q2.** What was wrong with the Pharisee’s view of the tax collector?

**Q3.** What was wrong with the Pharisee’s view of himself?

This type of **judging** involves condemning others. This attitude of superiority and faultfinding fosters thinking things like “I’m better than you” and “I wouldn’t do what you’re doing.” Faultfinding is overlooking one’s own shortcomings while assuming the role of judge in regard to the sins of others.

**Q4.** Think about a time when you have judged another person. What was going on in your mind when you were judging?

The Bible teaches that you condemn yourself when you judge others because you are guilty of the sins you see in them.

*“Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you **condemn yourself**; for you who judge practice the same things.”* **Romans 2:1** (NKJ)

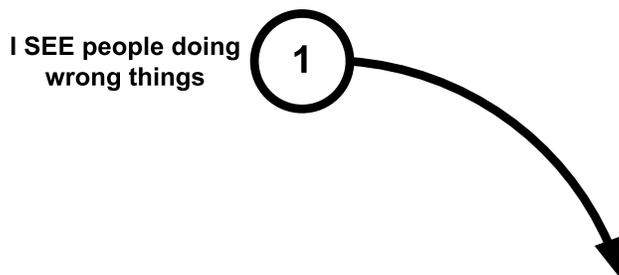
If you think it is right to judge people because what they do seems worse than what you have done, you don't understand how God views sin.

*“And the person who keeps all of the laws except one is as guilty as the person who has broken all of God's laws.”* **James 2:10** (NLT)

### The Judgment Cycle

It is easy to get pulled into a cycle of judging. It begins with observing people doing wrong things. Step 1 happens all the time.

### Judgment Cycle



### Seeing People Doing Wrong Things

At step 1, I see people doing wrong things. They are not following my standards and/or God's standards.

**Q5.** Have you recently seen someone doing something wrong? What was it?

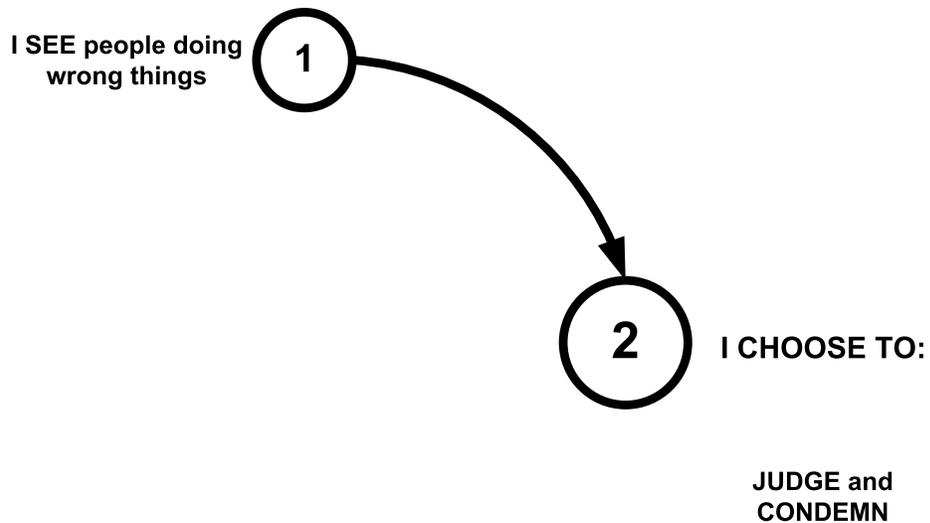
**Q6.** Whose standard was this person breaking? Yours or God's? Explain.

If people are breaking your standard, are they really wrong for not keeping it? The next diagram reveals what you might do after you observe others not doing things right.

### **Choosing to Judge**

At step 2 of the Judgment Cycle, you make a choice. You **choose to judge and condemn them**.

## **Judgment Cycle**



You make a conscious choice to judge someone as guilty for what they did wrong. Some people seem to be well deserving of your judgment because they are breaking God's standards. However, when you judge others, you are taking God's place.

*"There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?"* **James 4:12** (NASB)

- Q7.** How have you been justifying your judgments of others?
- Q8.** List the people in your life who enjoy being judged by you.
- Q9.** Do you enjoy being judged by others? Describe why or why not.

### **Example of Judging Others**

Jesus' disciples were caught in this cycle of judging others. They had gone into Samaria to make arrangements for His visit, but they were not well received.

*"And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of spirit you are of.'"*

**Luke 9:54–55** (NKJ)

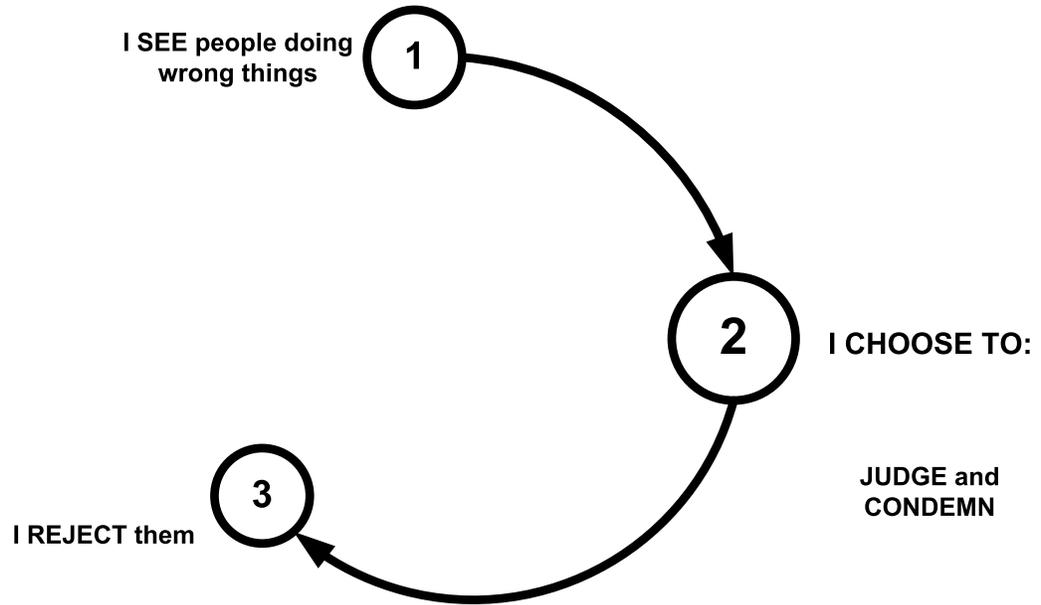
The Samaritans were wrong when they did not welcome Jesus, but Jesus responded by continuing to love them. James and John chose to judge the Samaritans and wanted to see them die. Jesus rebuked James and John. He wanted to see the Samaritans saved.

*"If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world."* **John 12:47** (NASB)

## Rejection

At step 3 of the Judgment Cycle, you react to the people you have judged by **rejecting them**.

### Judgment Cycle



**Q10.** In what specific ways have you rejected those people whom you have judged?

**Q11.** What happened when you rejected others? Did it improve their behavior?

When you choose to judge others and reject them, they will reject you back. This leads to the same living death that the Rejection Cycle does.

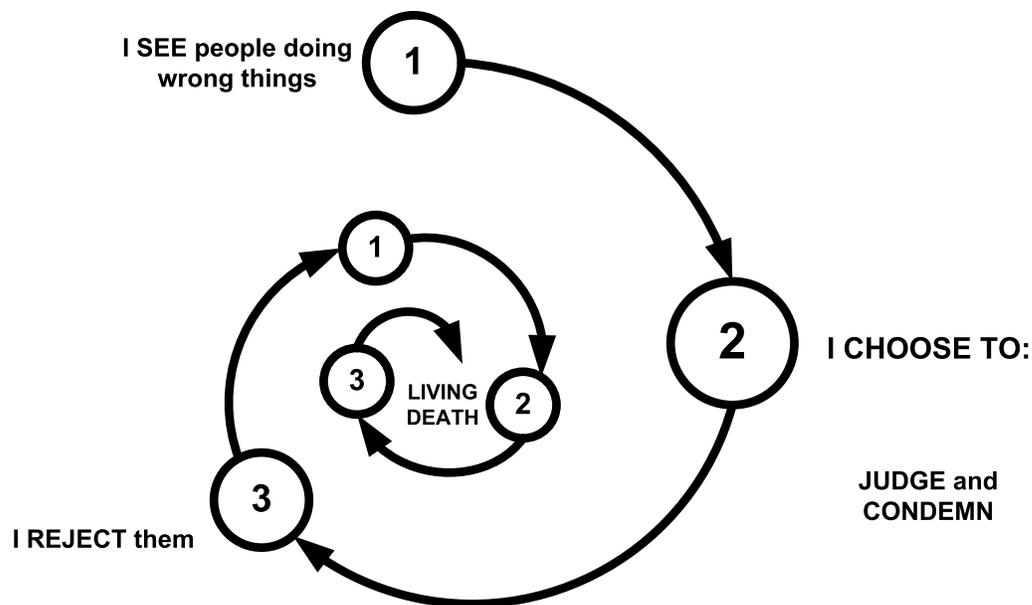
*“Don’t pick on people, jump on their failures, criticize their faults – unless, of course, you want the same treatment. That critical spirit has a way of **boomeranging**.”*

**Matthew 7:1–2** (MSG)

## Living Death

Judging others becomes a lifestyle that spirals into **living death**.

### Judgment Cycle



The following is a list of what the Judgment Cycle produces. Check the things that you can relate to:

- I try to control people and their circumstances so they will do the “right” thing.
- I notice other people’s faults all the time.
- I have periods of feeling frustrated, angry, and depressed.
- I have trouble admitting I’m wrong.
- People say I’m judgmental, intolerant or opinionated.
- I don’t try to understand people, I only want to see if they know what they are talking about.
- I have never found a church or job that suits me.
- I call people bad names or mentally curse them.
- I have a hostile relationship with former friends or family.
- I do the same things I judged others for doing.

If you checked anything on the previous list, it may be the direct result of judging others. You cannot live in the Judgment Cycle without making others around you miserable.

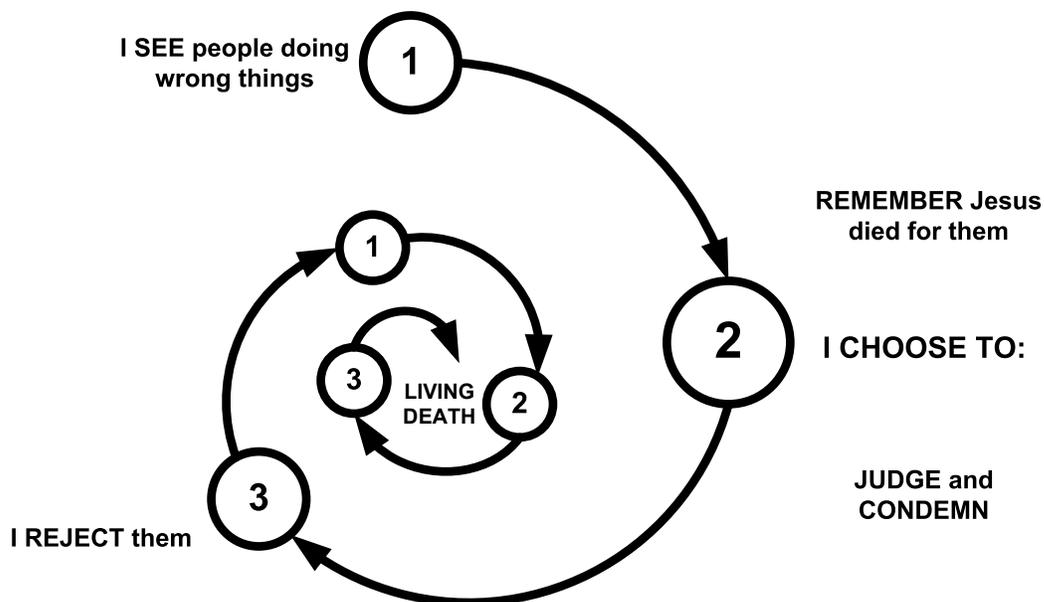
**Q12.** Ask the Lord if you have been making people around you miserable by judging them. What did He tell you?

## Reversing the Judgment Cycle

You do not have to spiral down the Judgment Cycle into a living death when you see people doing wrong things. There is a different way to respond to people's failures.

The following diagram shows you the way out. At step 2, you make a different choice.

### Reversing the Judgment Cycle



### Remember Jesus Died for Them

At step 1, you still see people doing wrong things. However, at step 2, instead of choosing to judge them, you **choose to remember that Jesus died for them**. You choose to see them the way God sees them. He loves them and wants to help them.

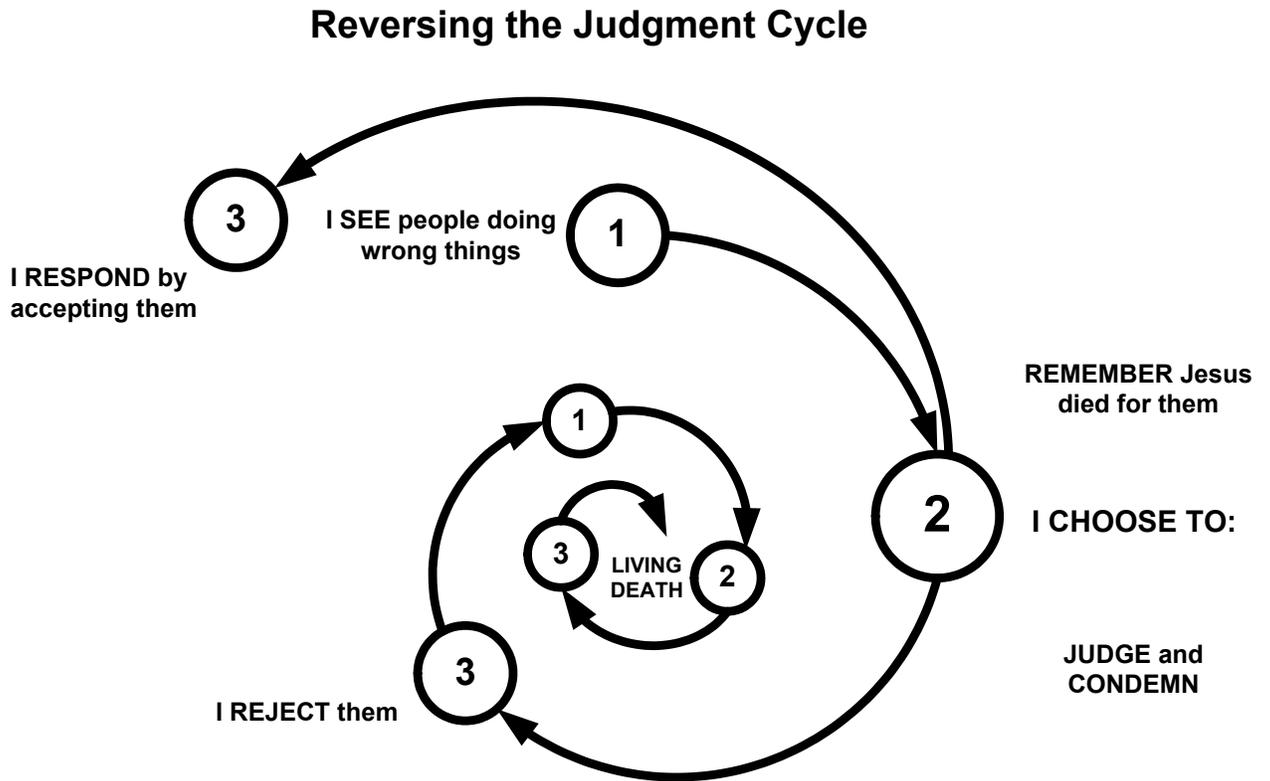
If it seems difficult to make this choice at step 2, it may be because you think you are better than the person you are judging. The reality is that Jesus came to save the person you are judging just like He came to save you.

Another reason it may be difficult not to judge is because you don't want to see them get away with the wrong things they have done.

*"I knew that you were a gracious and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. I knew how easily you could cancel your plans for destroying these people."* **Jonah 4:2** (NLT)

### Accept Them

Once you choose to remember that Jesus died for the people you have been judging, you can respond to them with love and acceptance. Not because they are right but because God loves them.



In the Bible account of the woman caught in adultery, Jesus modeled accepting others when they sin. When the scribes and Pharisees dragged the woman before Jesus and asked if they should stone her, He said to them,

*“...He who is without sin among you, let him be the first to throw a stone at her.”* **John 8:7** (NKJ)

One by one they left until only Jesus and the woman were standing there alone. Then He said to her,

*“‘Woman, where are they? Does no one condemn you?’ ‘No one, Master.’ ‘Neither do I,’ said Jesus. ‘Go on your way. From now on, don’t sin.’”* **John 8:10–11** (MSG)

Jesus didn’t overlook the woman’s adultery; He merely chose not to condemn her like the religious leaders. Jesus accepted her and spoke the truth to her in love. That is how your Heavenly Father has chosen to treat you.

*“...We have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.”* **Romans 5:16** (NLT)

Showing love to others is making allowance for their faults instead of judging their faults. You can’t love people when you are judging them.

*“Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.”* **Ephesians 4:2** (NLT)

When you stop choosing to judge, you will see fewer faults in others.

## Speaking the Truth

Once you have repented of your judgments and have God's perspective on the person you have been judging, God may ask you to take an active role in seeing this person set free from his or her sin. The best thing you can do is pray for him or her. On some occasions, God may lead you to **speak the truth in love** to the person.

Speaking the truth in love may involve helping the person see how his or her behavior is wrong and encouraging the person to change.

God gives guidelines in the Bible for how to talk to people when they are breaking His standards. Before going to them, you are warned to be humble and have the right attitude (not judgmental and critical). Remember you are susceptible to the same temptations, as well as, pride. Share with them what God gives you to say, not to condemn or put them down, but to restore and help them.

*“Dear brothers and sisters, if another Christian is overcome by some sin, you who are godly should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself.” Galatians 6:1 (NLT)*

*“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck from your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye?” Matthew 7:1–4 (NKJ)*

## Repentance

**Confess to God** that you have been wrong for setting standards, judging and condemning, and having an attitude of superiority.

**Tell God** you choose to trust Him as the only Judge over your life and the lives of others.

**Ask God** to use you to love and accept the one you have been judging.

# Judgment Cycle

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*



# Chapter 3

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## FORGIVENESS

*“Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do.”*

**Colossians 3:13** (NKJ)

In the last chapter, you learned about the damaging affects of living in the Judgment Cycle. When you choose to judge people, they feel rejected. When you choose to remember that Jesus died for them, you can accept them in spite of their faults.

This chapter will illustrate that you can experience freedom through forgiving others. Do you have feelings of anger, resentment, or hatred toward someone who has hurt you? Do those feelings torment you? Learning how to truly forgive will set you free.

**Q1.** How would you describe forgiveness?

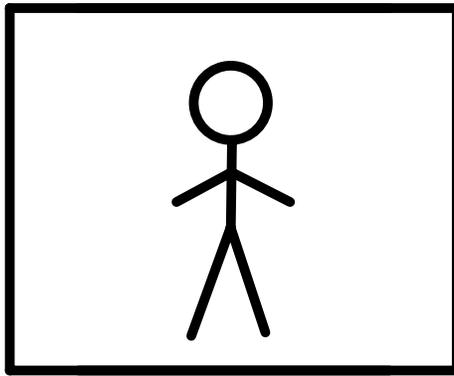
Forgiveness is **not** simply trying to forget. It is not just letting time pass after an offense happens. It is not disregarding the wrong another person has done against you or even pretending that an offense did not matter. This is not true forgiveness and you will not experience freedom.

## Prison of Unforgiveness

The hurts you have experienced from others could be one-time offenses or repeated wrongs done to you. The person who has offended you may or may not know that you were hurt. Regardless of how the offense happened or who did it, if you don't forgive, you will never be truly free. Your offender was in the wrong but you are the one who ends up in bondage.

This bondage is illustrated as the **prison of unforgiveness**.

## Prison of Unforgiveness

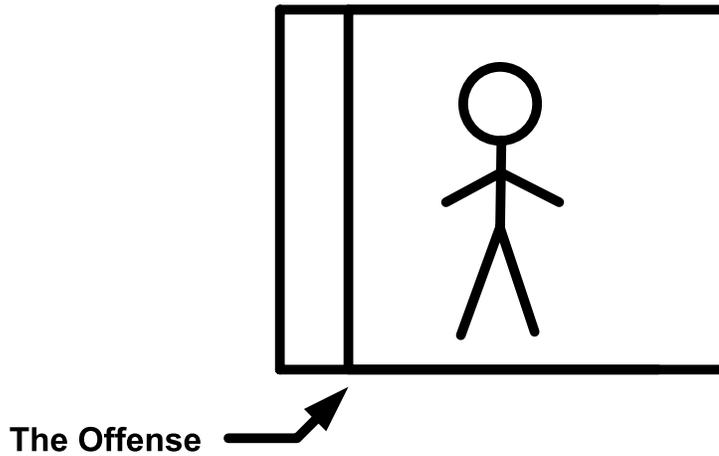


- Q2.** Is there someone who has offended you that you have not forgiven?  
Who is it?

### Bar #1 – The Offense

This prison of unforgiveness has four bars. The first bar of the prison is **the offense**. This is the wrong the person did to you.

### Prison of Unforgiveness

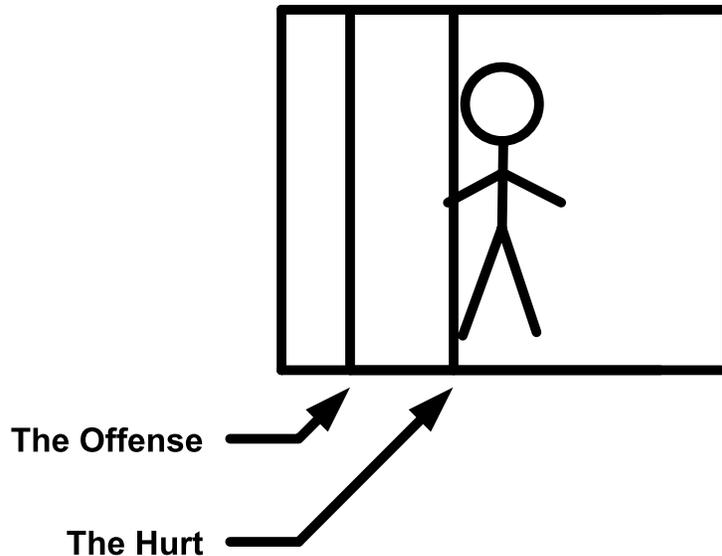


Q3. What was the *offense* the person committed?

### Bar # 2 – The Hurt

The second bar of the prison is **the hurt**. This is how you felt emotionally as a result of the offense. You may have felt betrayed, embarrassed, rejected, belittled, unimportant, depressed, angry or devastated.

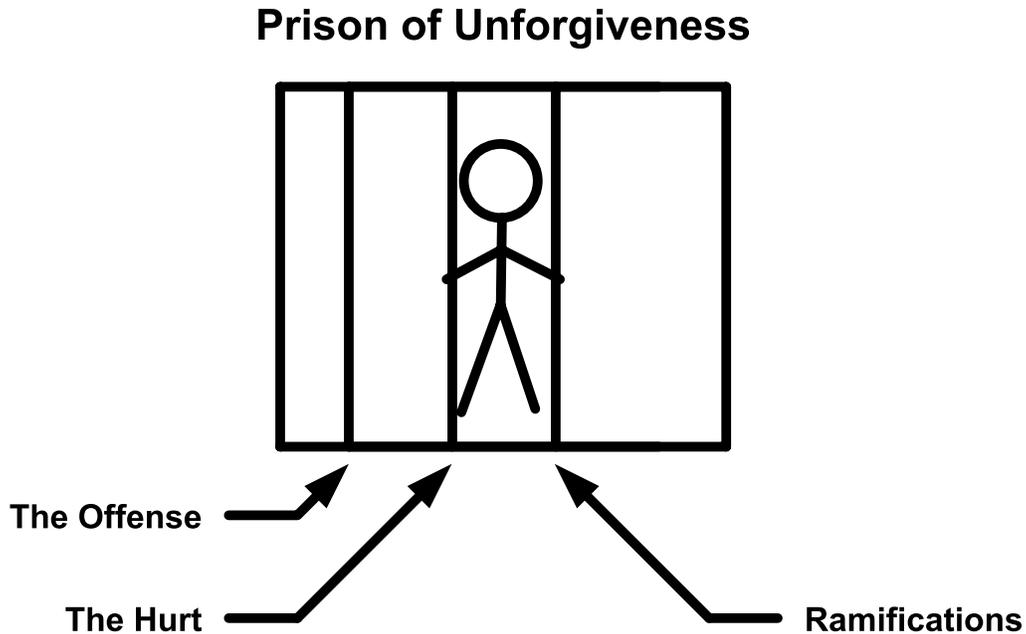
### Prison of Unforgiveness



**Q4.** How did you *feel* about the offense from the previous question? What were your emotions?

### Bar #3 – The Ramifications

The third bar to the prison is **the ramifications** of the offense. This is how the offense affected your life afterwards.



The offense is like a rock thrown into a pond; the hurt and ramifications are the ripples into the other areas of your life. Ramifications of an offense may affect your relationship with God, your mind, your health, your relationships, your finances, your marriage, and your children.

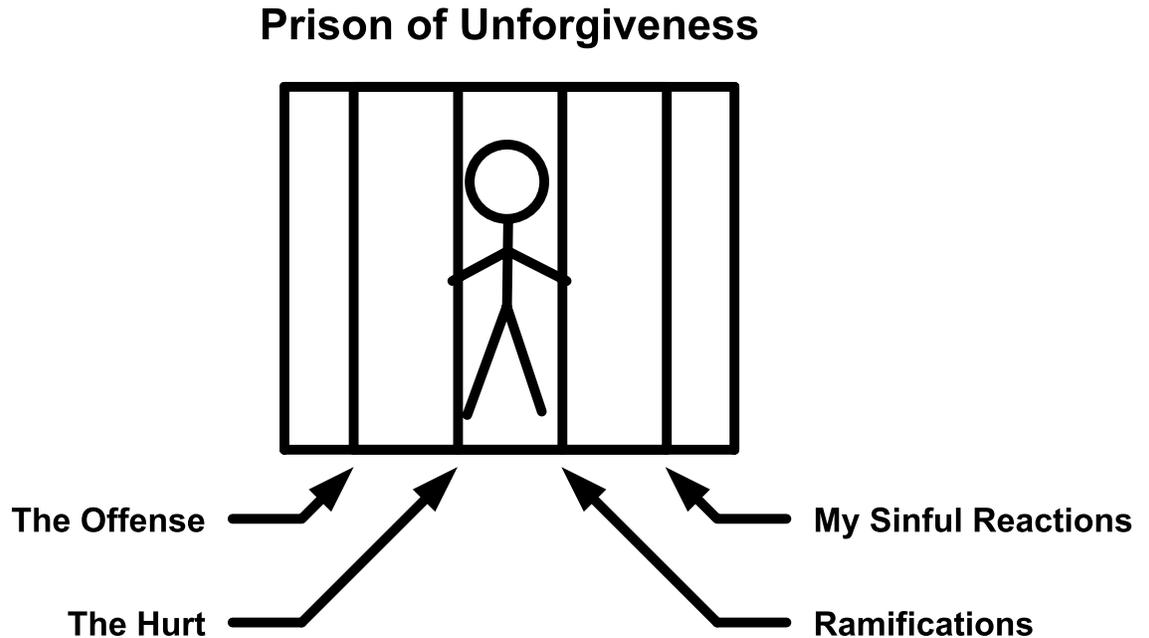
For example: If someone stole from you that would be the *offense*. The *hurt* may be feelings of being cheated and betrayed. The *ramifications* may include not having enough money to pay your bills and having to take a second job. The fact that you have to work a second job takes time away from your family and causes problems in your marriage. All these ramifications happened because someone stole from you.

**Q5.** What are the *ramifications* of the offense you previously listed?

The ripples from the offense continue to grow larger over time.

### Bar #4 – My Sinful Reactions

The fourth bar of the prison is your **sinful reactions**. These are the wrong choices *you* made as a result of the offense.



You were wronged but did you react in a sinful manner? This would include gossip, slander, rejecting, and judging your offender. It could also include wrong choices you made long after the offense.

For example, perhaps you were sexually abused as a child. The abuse was the sin of your offender, but you may have gone on to make sinful choices yourself. These sinful reactions might have included sexual promiscuity, not trusting anyone, or substance abuse.

**Q6.** What were your sinful reactions as a result of the offense?

You may have built your Prison of Unforgiveness to protect yourself, but the bars keep you bound to your offender. How do you forgive an offense when you know someone must pay?

### **Jesus' Payment for All Sin**

God does not forgive sin by pretending that it did not happen or ignoring it. He sent His only Son to pay for sin. God made the forgiveness of sin possible through the blood of Jesus. God requires the shedding of blood for **any** sin or offense to be forgiven.

*"...Without the shedding of blood, there is no forgiveness of sins." Hebrews 9:22 (NLT)*

Jesus became the complete payment for sin. His blood was shed only once, but was powerful enough to cover every sin throughout all the ages.

*"The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, 'Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away **the sin of the world!**'" John 1:29 (NKJ)*

- Q7.** Does the blood of Jesus take away your sins? Explain.
- Q8.** Is the blood of Jesus powerful enough to cover the sins of the person who offended you?

*"All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the Lord has laid on Him **the iniquity of us all.**" Isaiah 53:6 (NKJ)*

God accepted Christ's blood as payment for **all** sins.

If all offenses were paid for by what Jesus did on the cross, His blood is potent enough to cover your offender's sin against **you**. Your offender may still need to receive God's forgiveness or be legally responsible for what was done, but as far as you are concerned he or she is no longer guilty when you forgive.

Jesus tells a parable about a king who forgave a servant of a great debt. Later that servant wouldn't forgive the small debt of a friend.

*“Then the king called in the man he had forgiven and said, ‘You evil servant! I forgave you that tremendous debt because you pleaded with me. Shouldn’t you have mercy on your fellow servant, just as I had mercy on you?’ Then the angry king sent the man to prison until he had paid every penny. ‘That’s what my heavenly Father will do to you if you refuse to forgive your brothers and sisters in your heart.’”* **Matthew 18:32–35** (NLT)

- Q9.** What is the reason the master gave for expecting the servant to forgive?

Jesus’ parable of the unforgiving servant makes the point that God’s children are commanded to forgive, because God has forgiven them.

**True forgiveness is choosing to accept the blood of Jesus as the full payment for what your offender did.** Choosing to forgive is an act of your will; forgiveness is not based on your feelings.

- Q10.** What is keeping you from forgiving your offender?

The Bible gives the account of Joseph in Genesis 37. He was wronged and offended by his brothers. They threw him into a pit and sold him into slavery. Joseph experienced tremendous hurt because of his brothers, but he forgave them. When he was eventually reunited with them, he treated them kindly and said,

*“...As far as I am concerned, God turned into **good** what you meant for evil.”* **Genesis 50:20** (NLT)

- Q11.** Can God turn what has happened to you into good?

*“And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to his purpose for them.”*

**Romans 8:28** (NLT)

You may be trying to protect yourself or get revenge by choosing not to forgive. Nevertheless as you have seen, *you* become the one in bondage, not your offender. *You* become the person in the wrong when you do not forgive someone who has offended you.

*“...Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”*

**Ephesians 4:32** (NLT)

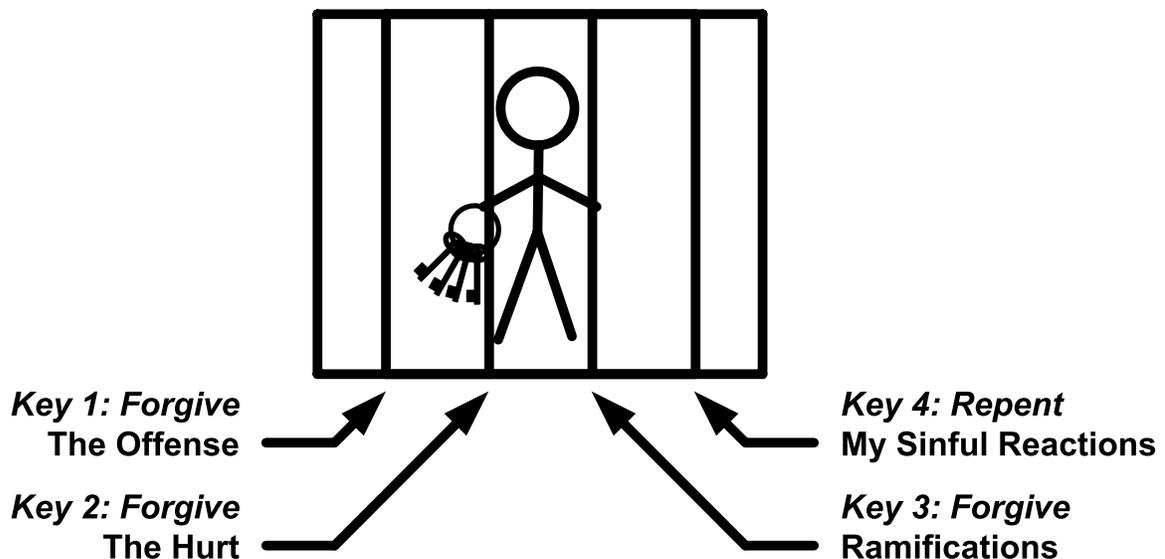
**Q12.** What does this verse say about forgiveness?

God wants to heal your hurts and set you free from bondage.

### **Keys to Forgiveness**

Notice that the keys to unlock the Prison of Unforgiveness are *in* your hand. There are four keys.

### **Prison of Unforgiveness**



### **Key 1 – Forgive the Offense**

You choose to forgive the person for the wrong that he or she did to you. Remember, you are accepting the blood of Jesus as full payment for what the offender did. You are choosing to no longer hold them guilty for the offense. You might pray something like this, “Heavenly Father, I *choose* to forgive (name the person who offended you) for what he/she did to me (be specific and name the offense) I believe the blood of Jesus covers their sin.”

### **Key 2 – Forgive the Hurt**

After you forgive the offense, take the time to forgive all the hurt feelings you have experienced. “I *choose* to forgive him/her for the feelings that I experienced because of the offense.” (Be specific and list the emotions you experienced.)

### **Key 3 – Forgive the Ramifications**

You choose to forgive the offender for how the offense affected all other areas of your life. “I choose to forgive him/her for all the ramifications (list them) caused by the offense.”

### **Key 4 – Repent of Your Sinful Reactions**

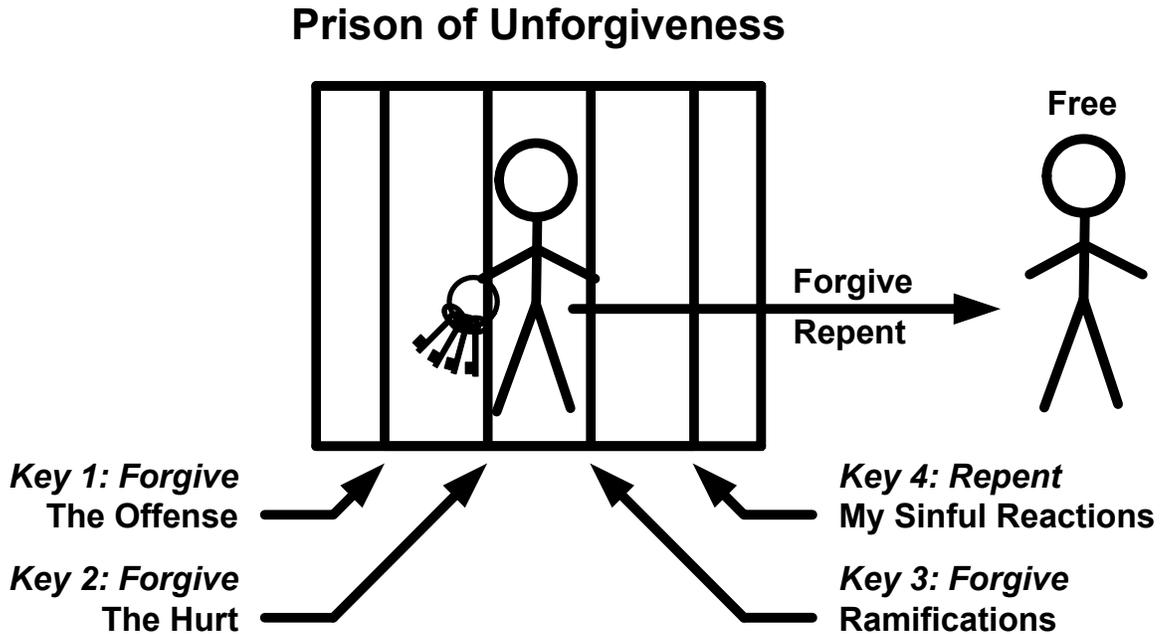
You repent of your own sinful reactions. “Lord, I acknowledge that I have sinned too. I confess my sinful reactions (be specific). Thank You that the blood of Jesus covers my sins and that I am forgiven.”

**Q13.** Are you ready to be free from the Prison of Unforgiveness?



## Freedom

After you have chosen to forgive, you are **free** from the prison of unforgiveness.



*“God [Jesus] has purchased our freedom with his blood  
and has forgiven all our sins.” Colossians 1:14 (NLT)*

Christ’s blood frees you from the punishment for your sins. Christ’s blood is also the basis for forgiving others, which frees you from the Prison of Unforgiveness.

Lastly, as you used the fourth key (Key 4: Repent of your sinful reactions), you may have seen ways that you have hurt others.

**Q14.** Have you been someone else’s offender? Who is it and what did you do?

*“So if you are standing before the altar in the Temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be **reconciled** to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.”*  
**Matthew 5:23–24** (NLT)

## Seeking Forgiveness

Part of being *reconciled* to others, is seeking forgiveness when you have wronged them. Even if their wrong seems bigger, you need to take responsibility for your unkind words and actions.

Seeking forgiveness is:

- seeing how you have hurt another person by your *words* or *actions*. The other person has been offended by what you did not by what you were thinking. Your sinful *thoughts* about that person are between you and God. Repent of those to Him.
- going to or calling that person. Be sure you have completed the process of forgiving that person before you go.
- saying, “**I was wrong** for what I did (state your offense). Would you please forgive me?”
- doing everything that you can to make restitution. For example: if you stole something, pay it back. It might mean being willing to rebuild trust and show yourself as reliable.
- responding quickly.

*“Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible.”* **Romans 12:18** (NLT)

# Prison of Unforgiveness

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

## LOVING OTHERS

*“For you have been called to live in freedom – not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature [flesh], but freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Galatians 5:13–14 (NLT)*

In the previous chapters, you have learned how to be set free from the Rejection and Judgment Cycles, as well as how to forgive people who have offended you.

This chapter will examine the commandment to love others and confront the hindrances to obeying it.

### Competing with God

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God. It makes sense that you should love God since He made you and has the power to control the universe. He has the right to tell you what to do and He deserves your praise.

*“Jesus replied, ‘You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.’ This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’” Matthew 22:37–39 (NLT)*

Do you love God or do you compete with Him? There are three ways that you may compete with God, by seeking praise from people, trying to control people, and judging others.

*“...I alone am God. There is no other God; there never has been and never will be.”* **Isaiah 43:10** (NLT)

### **Selfishness**

When you are trying to take God’s place, you are not loving Him *and* you are not able to love others. Love puts others first. Seeking praise, trying to control, and judging others puts self first. Selfishness destroys relationships.

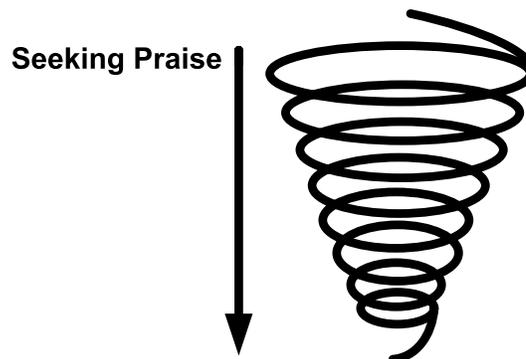
*“For wherever there is jealousy and **selfish ambition**, there you will find disorder and every kind of evil.”*  
**James 3:16** (NLT)

Everyone knows that selfishness destroys relationships. But did you know that when you seek praise, try to control or judge others, you are behaving selfishly?

### **The Downward Spiral**

The following diagram illustrates that selfishness causes your relationships to spiral downward. *Seeking praise* in your relationships is one example of selfishness.

### **My Relationship with Others**



### **Seeking Praise**

Seeking praise might look like wanting to be told that you do things well, that you look good or that you are appreciated.

- Q1.** Do you feel hurt when you are not thanked for the things you do for others? Give an example.

**Q2.** How do you feel when people don't pay attention to you?

**Q3.** Do you try to win friends through flattery or giving gifts?

Seeking praise is selfish because it is an attempt to *take* something rather than *give* something to the relationship.

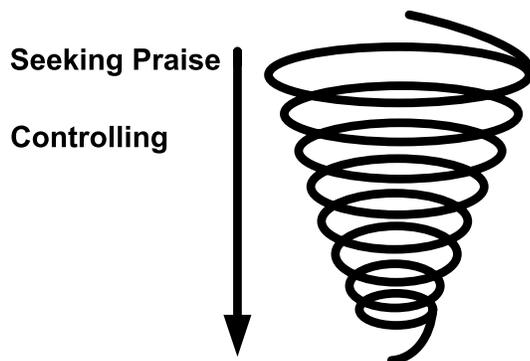
*“Never once did we try to win you with flattery, as you very well know. And God is our witness that we were not just pretending to be your friends so you would give us money! As for praise, we have never asked for it from you or anyone else.” 1 Thessalonians 2:5–6 (NLT)*

Another way you might exercise selfishness in a relationship is by being *controlling*.

### **Controlling**

Controlling others might look like manipulating people so they will do what you want, the way you want, when you want. You may also try to control others so they will do the “right” thing. You do not have the power to make everyone around you do what you want. As a result, you may experience negative feelings like anxiety, stress, worry, and frustration. There will probably be strife in the relationships that you try to control also.

## **My Relationship with Others**



- Q4.** Have you ever been in a relationship where someone tried to manipulate you? How did you feel?
- Q5.** Have you tried to get people to do what you thought was “right”? How did they react?

Some people may try harder to please you but usually they want to get out of the relationship or rebel against your control.

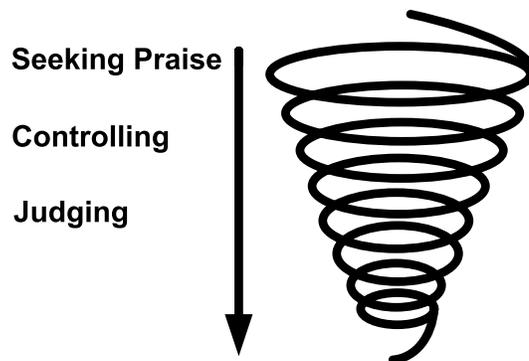
*“If you help, just help, don’t take over; if you teach, stick to your teaching; if you give encouraging guidance, be careful that you don’t get bossy; if you’re put in charge, don’t manipulate...”* **Romans 12:7–8** (MSG)

Another way of behaving selfishly in your relationships is when you *judge* others.

### **Judging**

When you see the people around you acting in a way that you do not approve of or that seems “wrong,” you may begin to judge them. Judging others creates in you the negative emotions of irritation, impatience, and disgust. Others see you as fault-finding, critical, nagging, and constantly correcting.

## **My Relationship with Others**



**Q6.** Are there people you are always criticizing or correcting? Do they enjoy being around you?

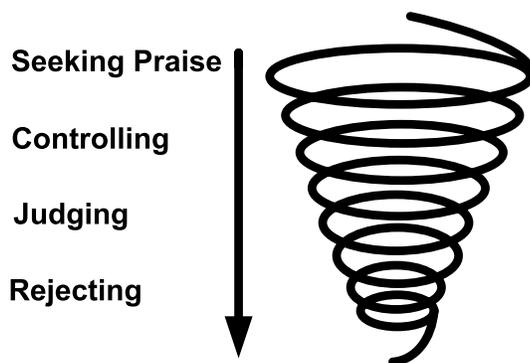
*“Don’t grumble about each other, my brothers and sisters, or God will judge you. For look! The great Judge is coming...” James 5:9 (NLT)*

Seeking praise, controlling, and judging others leads to *rejecting* people.

### **Rejecting**

Your relationships will collapse when you reject or withhold love from others. People that feel rejected often do hurtful things in retaliation. These offenses can leave you with feelings of bitterness and unforgiveness. Rejecting others may look like making sarcastic comments to them, trying to hurt them, ignoring them or stopping all contact with them.

### **My Relationship with Others**



Selfishness causes conflict and quarrels in relationships.

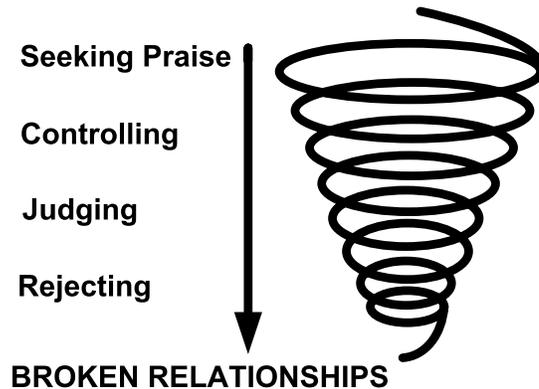
*“Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves.” James 4:1 (MSG)*

## Broken Relationships

Selfishness is a downward spiral that inevitably ends in *broken relationships*.

*“It’s harder to make amends with an offended friend than to capture a fortified city. Arguments separate friends like a gate locked with iron bars.” Proverbs 18:19 (NLT)*

### My Relationship with Others



Q7. Do you have any broken relationships in your life? Explain.

### Love Is

When you are seeking love from others, you will relate to others with a selfish motive. Giving love is the opposite of selfishness. God isn't selfish in His relationship with you. He loves you.

When you believe God's love for you is inexhaustible, you won't need to go to others to *get* love; you can go to others to *give* love.

As an illustration: If you needed money, you might go to your friends to get some. However if your father gave you a million dollars, instead of going to your friends to get money, you could go to your friends to give them money.

The following verses describe the kind of love that God gives you.

*“Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance. Love will last forever...”*

**1 Corinthians 13:4–8** (NLT)

- Q8.** What stands out to you in this passage? Why?
- Q9.** What would others experience if you related to them with love instead of selfishness?

### **When You Love Others**

Instead of being proud and boastful (seeking praise), you are humble and satisfied with God’s acceptance.

Instead of demanding your own way (controlling), you are hopeful and trusting God.

Instead of keeping a record of wrongs (judging), you are patient and kind.

Instead of giving up on a relationship (rejecting), you endure through every circumstance.

Instead of a broken relationship with them, you have a relationship that lasts.

### **Christ’s Example**

Jesus Christ modeled this kind of love in His relationships. He was not competing with God; He was God. Jesus had every right to receive man’s praise, control man’s behavior, and judge man. However He gave up those rights, humbled Himself, became a man, showed us how to live and love others.

*“Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form.”*

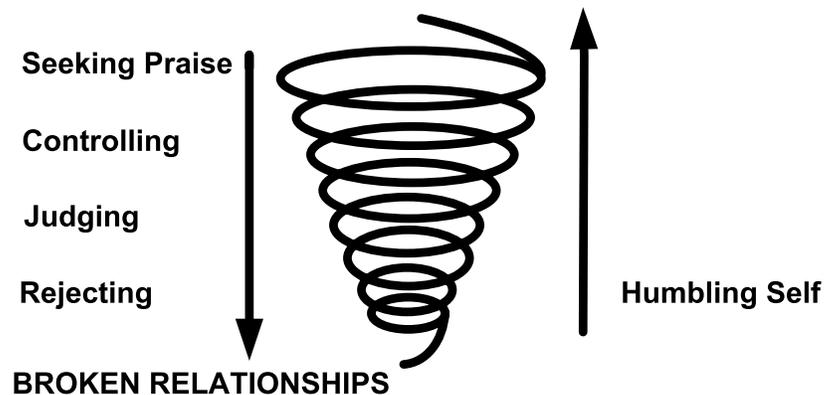
**Philippians 2:5–7** (NLT)

### **Humbling Self**

The first step on the upward spiral of My Relationship with Others is having an attitude of *humility*. Rather than seeking praise from others, you consider others as more important than yourself.

*“Don’t be selfish; don’t live to make a good impression on others. Be **humble**, thinking of others as better than yourself.”* **Philippians 2:3** (NLT)

### **My Relationship with Others**



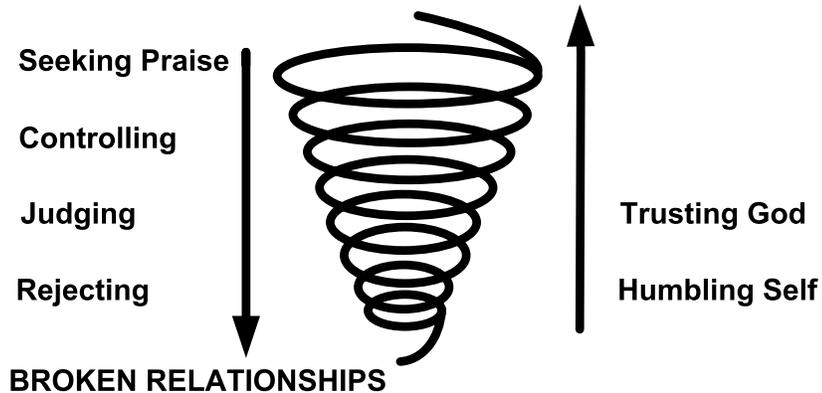
When you are aware of how important you are to God, you won't need others to treat you like you are important. Instead you can treat them like they are important no matter how they treat you.

- Q10.** Is there someone in your life who would feel loved if you treated him or her as more important than yourself? Who is it?

## Trusting God

Instead of trying to control the people around you, you can *trust God* with them. God has a plan for them and will work it out in His timing.

### My Relationship with Others



Trusting God in relationships looks like thanking God for those people and praying for them. You can be confident that God will do what He wants with them.

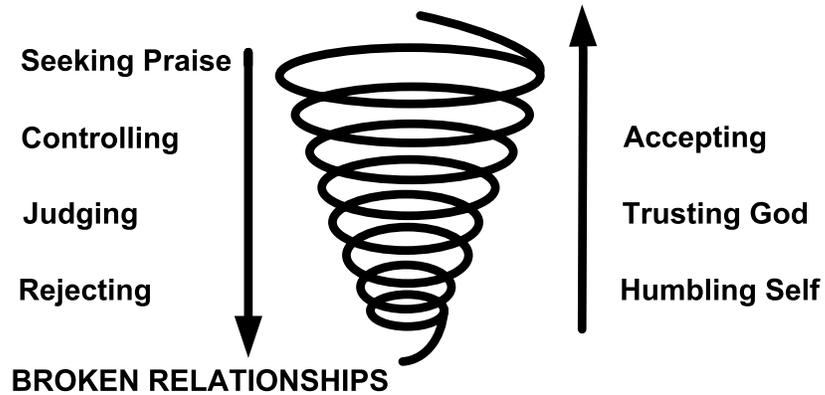
*“Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. I always pray for you, and I make my requests with a heart full of joy...I am sure that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on that day when Christ Jesus comes back again.”* **Philippians 1:3–6** (NLT)

**Q11.** Can you trust God with the people you have been trying to change? Why or why not?

## Accepting Others

Instead of judging others and faultfinding, you can respond by *accepting* them.

### My Relationship with Others



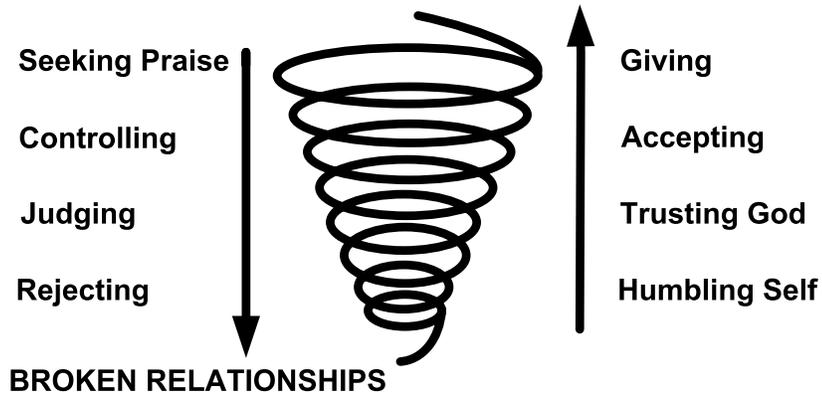
*“Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.”* **Ephesians 4:2** (NLT)

**Q12.** Who in your life would feel more loved if you were patient and made allowances for his or her faults? Describe.

## Giving

Instead of rejecting or withholding love from others, you can love them by *giving* to them.

### My Relationship with Others



Jesus explains that when you are giving to others, you are loving God.

*“Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in; I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’ And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, **you did it to Me.**”*  
**Matthew 25:34–40** (NKJ)

**Q13.** After reading these verses, do you believe there is something God is showing you to do?

Loving others will always cost you something.

*“But if anyone has enough money to live well and sees a brother or sister in need and refuses to help – how can God’s love be in that person? Dear children, let us stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions.” 1 John 3:17–18 (NLT)*

**Q14.** What did loving you cost Jesus?

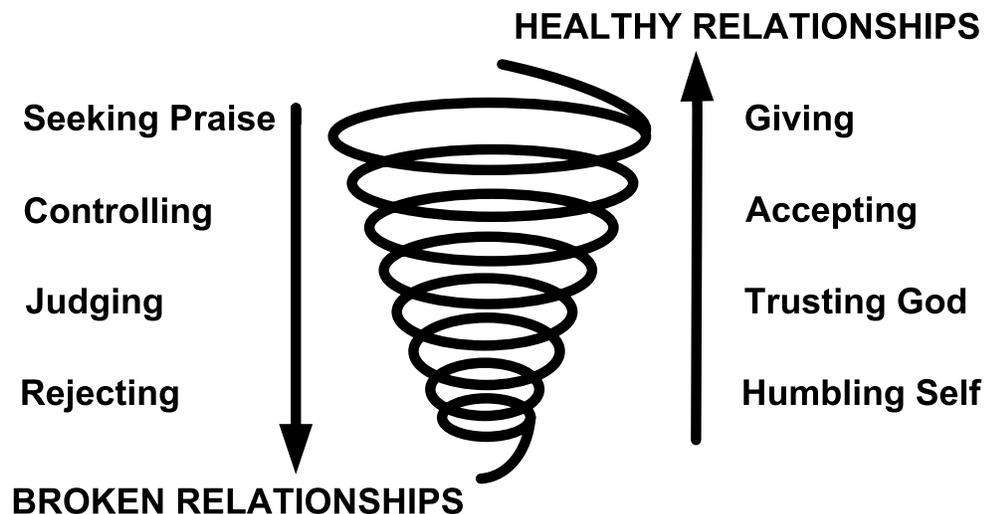
*“We know what real love is because Christ gave up **his life** for us. And so we also ought to give up our lives for our Christian brothers and sisters.” 1 John 3:16 (NLT)*

### Healthy Relationships

The result of loving others is *healthy relationships*.

*“How wonderful, how beautiful, when brothers and sisters get along!” Psalm 133:1 (MSG)*

## My Relationship with Others



Instead of broken relationships which come from selfishness, you can have healthy ones because of love.

Your relationships are not based on others filling a void in your life. If you let God fill you, you won't be giving to others out of a need to feel good about yourself. You will be giving to others out of your abundance in order to bless them.

Healthy relationships start when you are secure in God's love for you. You don't need anyone else's love for your security.

*"May you experience the love of Christ, though it is so great you will never fully understand it. Then you will be filled with the fullness of life and power that comes from God."* **Ephesians 3:19** (NLT)

You can love others even if *they* are insecure. However God doesn't want you to be their source of security. He wants His love to be their source of security. God wants you to love others but He does not want you to be their God.

### **Choosing to Love**

Loving others does not require feelings. It is best described as a decision to *act* lovingly toward others. You can offer a loving act even if you don't feel like doing it. The greatest act of love was Jesus going to the cross. Do you think He felt excited about giving His life?

*"Saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.'"*  
**Luke 22:42** (NKJ)

The person you act lovingly toward will *feel* loved as soon as you act. Later you may find that your feelings have caught up with your actions.

*"Dear children, let us stop just saying we love each other; let us really show it by our actions."* **1 John 3:18** (NLT)

**Q15.** Is there someone that you need to show love to even though you don't *feel* like it?

**Q16.** Ask God to show you what *action* He wants you to take to love that person. Write down what He shows you. Then do it!

# My Relationship with Others

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Sharing S.A.L.T. with a Friend

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“...And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.” **1 Peter 3:15** (NLT)

*Meet in a location where your friend feels comfortable sharing.*

## **The Purpose:** Encouragement

How do you encourage your friend? By sharing Biblical truths that have impacted you.

*Ask “Could I share some things with you?”*

## **Sharing with a friend (an informal meeting)**

- Ask, “What’s going on in your life?” or “How are you doing?”
- Listen.
- If necessary, ask questions that help you better understand your friend and his or her situation. For example: “How are you feeling about that?”
- Then share what God has been teaching you as it relates to your friend’s situation.
- If the opportunity allows, draw and explain the S.A.L.T. diagram that is relevant. *This can even be done on a napkin.*
- Encourage your friend and offer to pray.

*Share with an attitude of humility and kindness.*

## **Sharing with a friend (on a regular basis)**

- Make sure your friend has a book.
- Read, study, and answer all questions individually.
- Share your answers with each other and talk about the lesson.
- Draw and explain the diagram for each other.
- Encourage each other to personally apply the lessons.
- Pray together.

*Be sensitive about when to share and the length of your sharing.*

## **Helpful suggestions:**

**Be transparent.** Share your own story. When you are real, other people realize they can be honest too.

**Be a “safe place.”** Information your friend tells you should be kept confidential. Don’t condemn, instead encourage.

**Be a good listener.** Give your friend your full attention. Make eye contact, and, at appropriate times, repeat back what you hear your friend saying. Ask good questions that encourage your friend to talk.

**Be a true friend.** Speak the truth in love.

## **Books in the Seven Areas of Life Training (S.A.L.T.) Series**

### **Titles in the S.A.L.T. Series:**

- Spiritual – My Relationship with God
- Psychological – My Mind, Will, and Emotions
- Social – My Relationship with Others
- Physical – My Body
- Financial – My Money
- Marital – My Relationship with my Spouse
- Parental – My Relationship with my Children
- SALT Instructor's Guide with PowerPoint CD of Diagrams
- SALT Training DVD for Group Leaders

### **About the Authors**

A team of authors at Victorious Christian Living International (VCLi) wrote this book.

For over 25 years, VCLi has been helping believers grow and be successful in all seven areas of life. VCLi trains people and provides materials for effectively ministering to others, including comprehensive church discipleship programs, prison and inner-city ministries, and family ministries. We are headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona with offices in Alabama, Illinois, Guatemala, and Cuba.

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# ***My Body***

Physical Area of Life

## **S.A.L.T.**

**Seven Areas of Life Training<sup>®</sup>**

SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING (S.A.L.T.) PHYSICAL AREA –  
MY BODY, Version 2.0

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## **Dedication**

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*All of us at VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING INTERNATIONAL give God the praise for these SALT materials and dedicate this series to the discipleship of believers worldwide.*

*Thank you to all past and present VCLi staff members. You have played a vital role in developing, teaching, and helping others apply these diagrams, concepts, and lessons.*

*Special thanks go to Rocky Nystrom. Your vision and creativity made this series a reality, your determination brought it to completion; and your heart for people to be free energized us along the way.*

## **About this Series**

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### SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING

Learning how to live victoriously in all seven areas of life is the goal of this comprehensive discipleship series.

This small group or self-study book is simple, yet dynamic. Biblical truths are visually illustrated with powerful diagrams.

Solid Biblical truth is taught in each lesson with a challenge to apply that truth to your life. It is when you apply that truth and share it with others that your life will be profoundly changed.

## **About this Book**

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The *Physical Area of Life* deals with your body.

In four powerful chapters, you will find challenges to get real in the physical area of life and start enjoying the body God gave you.

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## YOUR EARTHLY TENT

*“Or don’t you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.” 1 Corinthians 6:19–20 (NLT)*

The physical area of life is about your body and how it relates to the world around you. Your body can be used as a tool for good or evil.

The physical area of life is important because the body was created by and for God. When you believe your body does not belong to you, but rather to God, it leads to using your body as God intends.

However, most people think that their body is their own and they can do with it as they please.

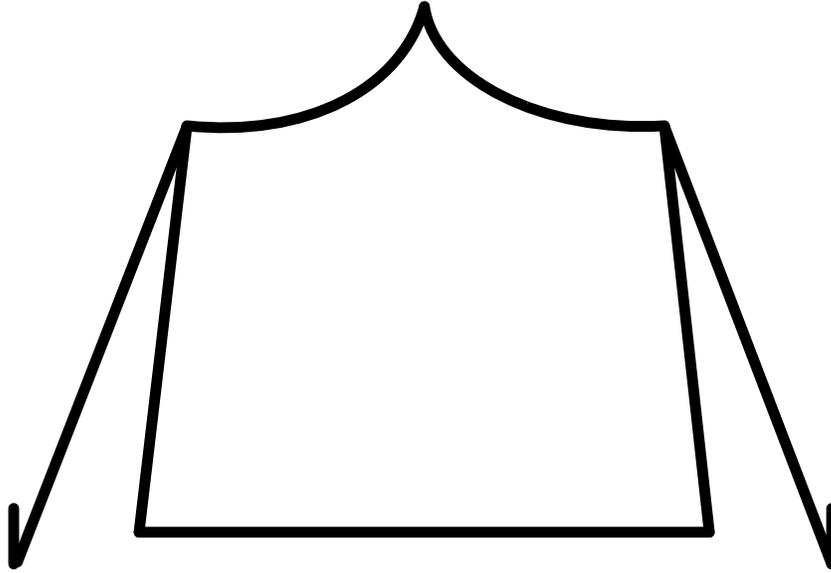
**Q1.** Do you behave like your body belongs to God or to you? Explain.

### Your Earthly Tent

At times, the Bible compares your body to a tent you inhabit while you live on earth. The body is inhabited by your soul and spirit. Just like the person living in a tent is more important than the tent, your body is not the most important part of you either.

*“For we know that when this **earthly tent** we live in is taken down – when we die and leave these bodies – we will have a home in heaven...” 2 Corinthians 5:1 (NLT)*

**Your Earthly Tent**



The Bible teaches that your body is not the most important part about you. Believing otherwise can cause you to attempt to gain significance through how your body looks or what it can achieve.

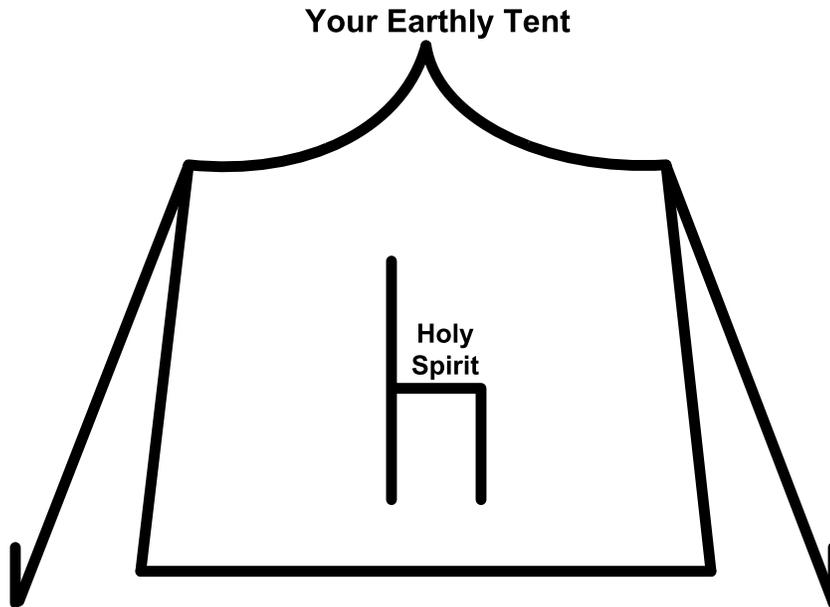
- Q2.** How much effort do you make to improve your body?
- Q3.** Is the motivation for improving your body a desire to be noticed or accepted by the people around you? If not, what is your motivation?

*“This is what the LORD says: ‘Let not the wise man gloat in his wisdom or the **mighty man in his might**, or the rich man in his riches.’” **Jeremiah 9:23** (NLT)*

## Holy Spirit Inside

The Bible also teaches that His Holy Spirit lives inside of you.

*“The Spirit of God, who raised Jesus from the dead, **lives in you**. And just as he raised Christ from the dead, he will give life to your mortal body by this same Spirit living within you.”* **Romans 8:11** (NLT)



This truth is shown in the diagram above with a throne on the inside of your tent. The Holy Spirit is seated on the throne showing He is inside of your life.

The Holy Spirit comes into you when you receive forgiveness for your sins and invite Jesus to enter your life. God doesn't live in a building here on earth. He makes His home in our hearts.

*“Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who **lives in you** and was given to you by God?”* **1 Corinthians 6:19** (NLT)

## Wonderfully Made

When God created man, God formed his physical body first and then breathed life into him.

*“And the LORD God formed a man’s body from the dust of the ground and breathed into it the breath of life. And the man became a living person.” Genesis 2:7 (NLT)*

God said the creation of mankind was “very good.”

*“Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was **very good**. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.” Genesis 1:31 (NKJ)*

Before their rebellion against God, Adam and Eve enjoyed fellowship with God and that fellowship was experienced in their physical bodies.

There is nothing evil about the human body. Remember Jesus had one!

You use your body to articulate your prayers, praise, and love for God. Throughout the Bible the body is seen as a marvelous gift from God.

*“I will give thanks to You, for I am fearfully and **wonderfully made**; Wonderful are Your works, And my soul knows it very well.” Psalm 139:14 (NASB)*

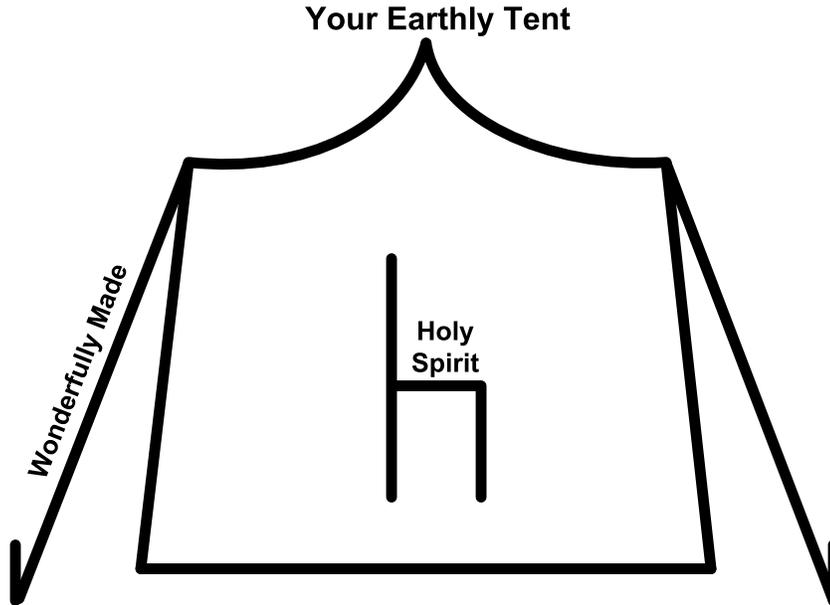
This verse says the response to God is one of thanksgiving for the creation of your body.

However, some people dislike their bodies (tents) or wish their bodies were different. “If I could improve my body then I’d feel better about myself.”

**Q4.** Are you satisfied with how God made you? Explain.

*“Who in the world do you think you are to second-guess God? Do you for one moment suppose any of us knows enough to call God into question? Clay doesn't talk back to the fingers that mold it, saying, ‘Why did you shape me like this?’”* **Romans 9:20** (MSG)

- Q5. Are you willing to thank Him for your body? Explain.
- Q6. Have you taken care of the body God has given you? Explain.



### **Belongs to God**

Not only did God create you but because mankind sinned and turned away from Him, God had to buy you back with the death of His Son Jesus.

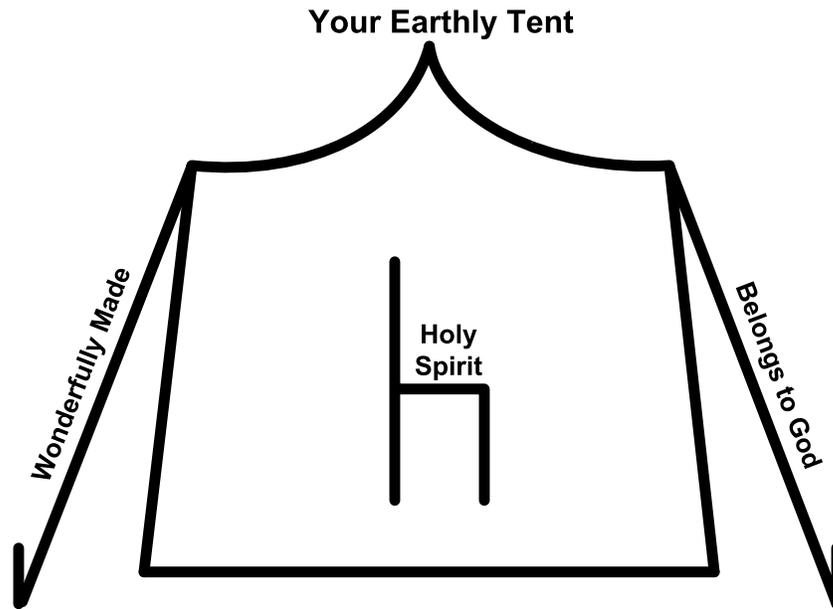
*“...For God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.”* **1 Corinthians 6:20** (NLT)

*“He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life will no longer live to please themselves. Instead, they will live to please Christ, who died and was raised for them.” 2 Corinthians 5:15 (NLT)*

- Q7.** What do these verses say your response is to be regarding the fact that God bought you?

Your body isn't for your own use, to gain praise or acceptance. It is a tool given to you by God to accomplish His purposes. Your body is an instrument to bring praise to God not to bring praise to yourself.

*“...The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to...you. **God owns the whole works.** So let people see God in and through your body.”*  
**1 Corinthians 6:20 (MSG)**



You can use your body as a tool to do wrong things or as a tool to do right things.

*“Do not let any part of your body become a tool of wickedness, to be used for sinning. Instead, give yourselves completely to God since you have been given new life. And use your whole body as a tool to do what is right for the glory of God.”* **Romans 6:13** (NLT)

God’s will for you is to know Him and let people see Him through your body by doing the things He wants you to do.

- Q8.** If you think of your body as a tool for God’s glory, how does that affect what you do with it?

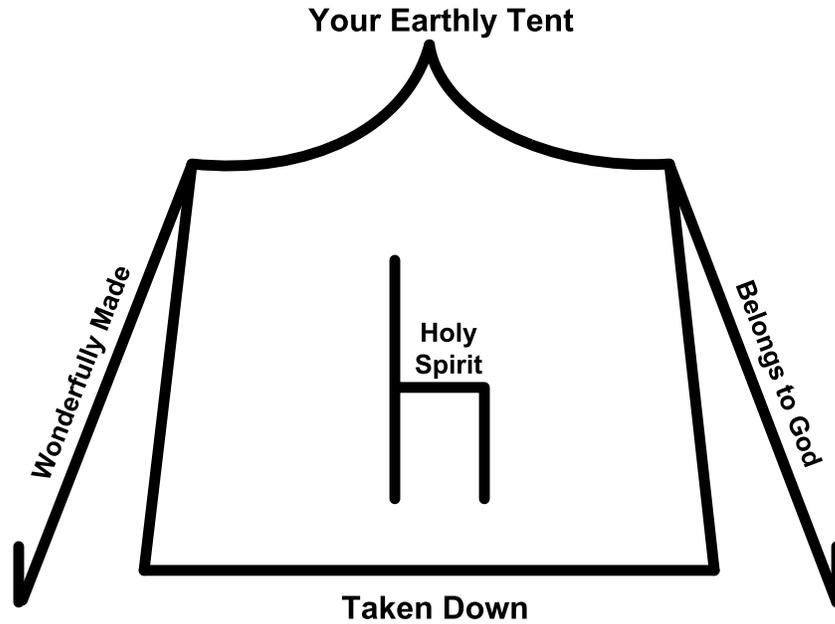
*“And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice – the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask?”*  
**Romans 12:1** (NLT)

### **Taken Down**

God’s original plan was for mankind to never die but when Adam and Eve sinned, death entered the world. Their bodies began to decay and die. Our physical bodies are decaying and passing away too. Your earthly tent will be taken down.

*“For we know that when this **earthly tent** we live in is **taken down** – when we die and leave these bodies – we will have a home in heaven, an eternal body made for us by God himself and not by human hands.”*  
**2 Corinthians 5:1** (NLT)

*“Our dying bodies make us groan and sigh, but it’s not that we want to die and have no bodies at all. We want to slip into our new bodies so that these dying bodies will be swallowed up by everlasting life.”*  
**2 Corinthians 5:4** (NLT)



**Q9.** How do you feel about death?

**Q10.** Did you realize that God is making you an eternal body that will live forever?

You will receive a new body like the one Jesus received when He was resurrected.

*“But the fact is that Christ has been raised from the dead. He has become the first of a great harvest of those who will be raised to life again. So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, Adam, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man, Christ. Everyone dies because all of us are related to Adam, the first man. But all who are related to Christ, the other man, will be given new life.”*

**1 Corinthians 15:20–22** (NLT)

**Q11.** What difference does knowing that you will receive a new body make in your everyday life?

*“Jesus said to her, ‘I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.’”*  
**John 11:25** (NKJ)

**Personal Application**

Take time to **acknowledge God** as the Creator and Owner of your body.

**Thank God** for His wonderful creation of your body.

**Dedicate** your body to God.

**Q12.** What does He want you to do and not do with your body?

# Your Earthly Tent

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Chapter 2

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## GOD'S PLAN FOR YOUR BODY

*"It is absolutely clear that God has called you to a free life. Just make sure that you don't use this freedom as an excuse to do whatever you want to do and destroy your freedom..." Galatians 5:13 (MSG)*

There is freedom in living your life the way God planned it and bondage when you do not. People who follow God's plan have joy, peace, and satisfaction. Sin spoils those good things in your life.

God created all things and everything God created is good. So where does evil come from? God did not create evil. Evil is simply a perversion of something that God intended for good. Good things taken outside of God's plan become perverted.

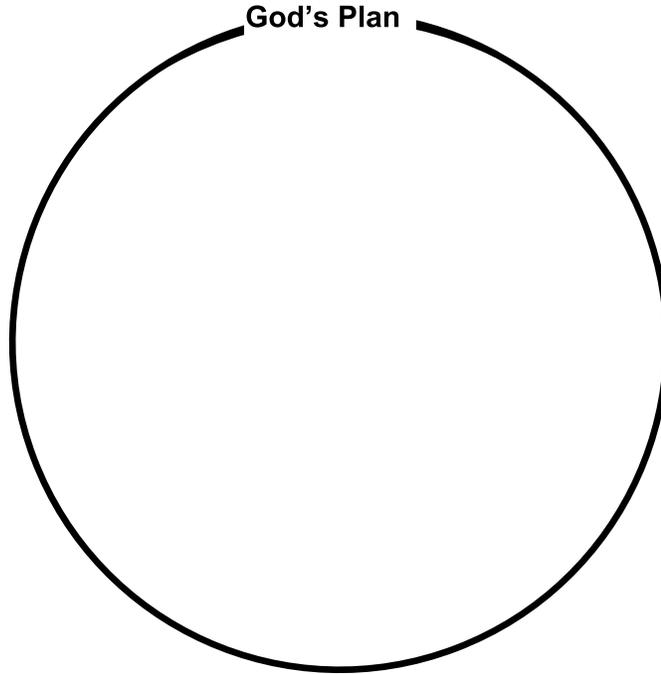
### **"Good" Taken Beyond the Bounds**

God has established boundaries or rules for you to follow. When you remain inside of those bounds, life is good.

*"God has called us to be holy, not to live impure lives. Anyone who refuses to live by these rules is not disobeying human rules but is rejecting God, who gives his Holy Spirit to you." 1 Thessalonians 4:7-8 (NLT)*

- Q1.** What are some of the boundaries or rules God has established for your life?

Q2. How well do you stay inside of those boundaries?



This large circle represents the boundary of God's plan. Inside of His plan are many good things He has created for you to enjoy.

In the Garden of Eden, God provided everything Adam and Eve would ever need but He also gave them a boundary they were not to cross. God gave freedom with boundaries.

*"And the woman said to the serpent, 'We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"*

**Genesis 3:2–3** (NKJ)

Unfortunately, just like Adam and Eve, we often go outside of God's plan to get what we want. God has given us everything we need for a good life, but we get deceived into believing He will withhold good from us.

*“Then the serpent said to the woman, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.’ So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.”*  
**Genesis 3:4–6** (NKJ)

**Q3.** What do you believe about God meeting your needs?

### **Enjoyment**

God doesn't want you to live a boring life. He wants you to enjoy all He has given you.

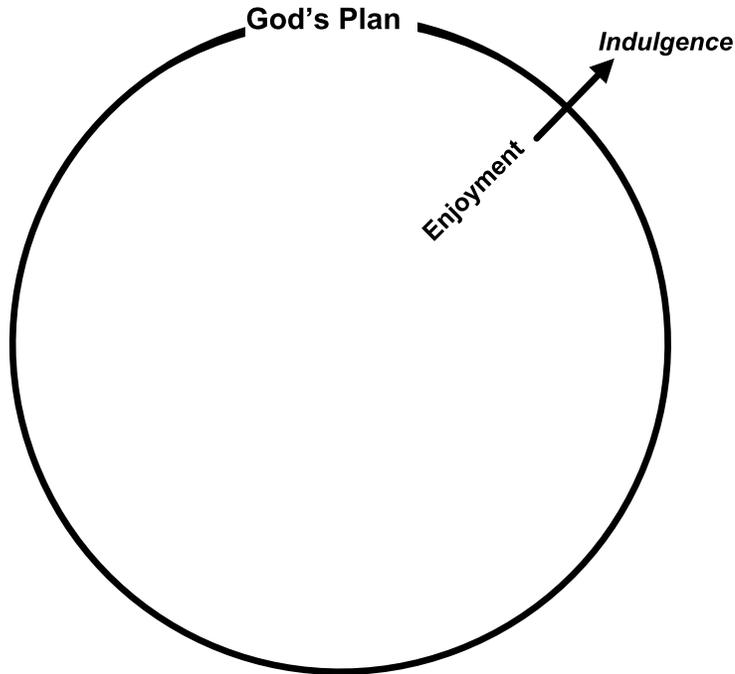
*“...Trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our **enjoyment.**”* **1 Timothy 6:17** (NLT)

**Q4.** Do you have trouble enjoying life? If so, what keeps you from that enjoyment?

Enjoyment of life is inside of God's plan. However, when you take enjoyment to the extreme, it becomes indulgence. It is a good thing that has become twisted or perverted. *Indulgence* is outside of God's plan and bounds.

*“But let the Lord Jesus Christ take control of you, and don't think of ways to **indulge** your evil desires.”*

**Romans 13:14** (NLT)



The diagram above shows how taking enjoyment of life beyond the boundary of God's plan becomes indulgence.

- Q5.** Do you take good things like parties, hobbies, or entertainment too far? Explain.

### **Diligence**

When God created Adam, He gave him work to do. Adam was to care for the garden and name the animals. God has work for you to do too.

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”* **Ephesians 2:10** (NLT)

- Q6.** Do you believe you were designed to do good things? Explain.

The Bible says to be *diligent* as you work. Work hard cheerfully not grudgingly. You will experience joy as you work for the Lord.

*“Work hard and cheerfully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people.”*

**Colossians 3:23** (NLT)

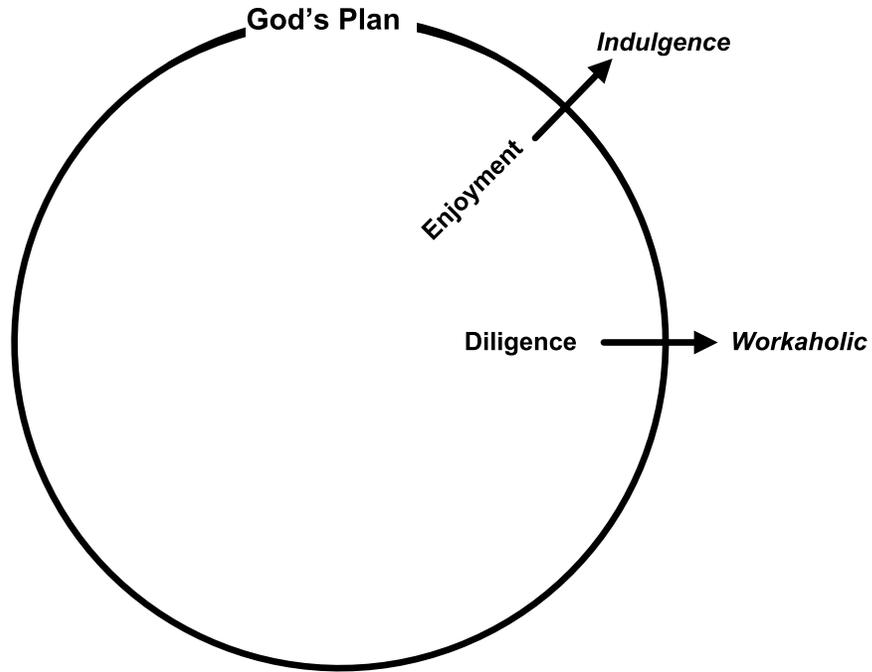
Working diligently can be taken outside of the bounds of God's plan. That person is a workaholic. A *workaholic* works obsessively. Jesus had much to accomplish while He was on earth but He remained inside of God's plan.

- Q7.** Do you work compulsively, even at the expense of your relationship with God, family, and friends? If so, what is your reason for working so hard?

*“And this, too, is a very serious problem. As people come into this world, so they depart. All their hard work is for nothing. They have been working for the wind, and everything will be swept away.”* **Ecclesiastes 5:16** (NLT)

You also use your body to read the Bible, worship, and serve God, these are all good things.

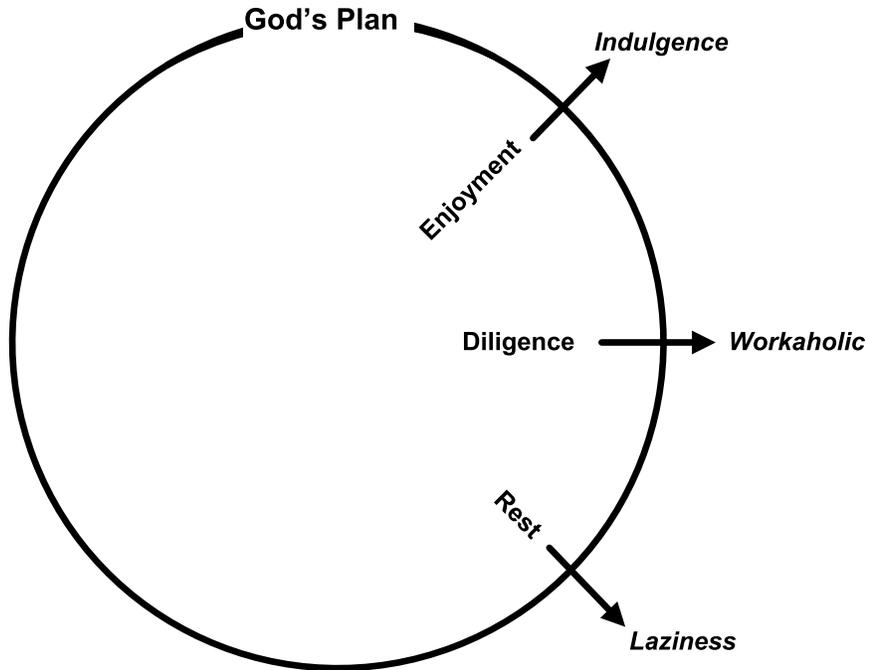
- Q8.** Do you think it is possible to take even these things outside of the bounds?



## Rest

Physical *rest* is part of God's plan. God rested after creating the world. He tells us to rest too.

*"For all who enter into God's rest will find **rest** from their labors, just as God rested after creating the world."*  
**Hebrews 4:10** (NLT)



However, if you spend too much time sleeping or resting, you go outside of God's bounds and become *lazy*.

*"A **lazy** person has trouble all through life; the path of the upright is easy!" Proverbs 15:19 (NLT)*

Lazy people usually don't get a good night's sleep because their bodies aren't tired and they have neglected so many things that their minds are full of worry.

**Q9.** Do you try to escape frustration and worry through excessive sleeping? Explain.

**Q10.** What excuses do you give for not being responsible?

## Eating

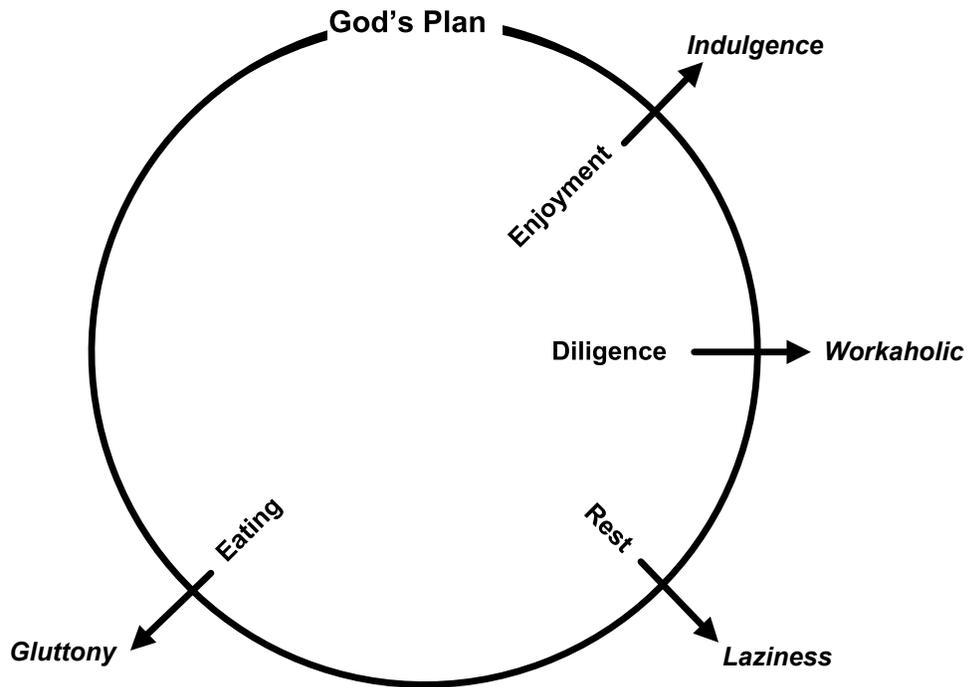
God created you with a need to eat. He created many things for you to enjoy eating.

*“When you open your hand, you satisfy the hunger and thirst of every living thing.” Psalm 145:16 (NLT)*

Staying inside of God’s plan with your appetite would be eating when you are hungry and stopping when you are full.

Jesus didn’t allow himself to be ruled by His appetite. During His forty day fast, He told the devil that man doesn’t live by bread alone.

*“...Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God.” Luke 4:4 (NKJ)*



When eating crosses God’s bounds, it is called *gluttony*. Just like alcoholism or laziness will destroy your life, so will gluttony.

*“For the drunkard and the **glutton** will come to poverty, and drowsiness will clothe a man with rags.” Proverbs 23:21 (NKJ)*

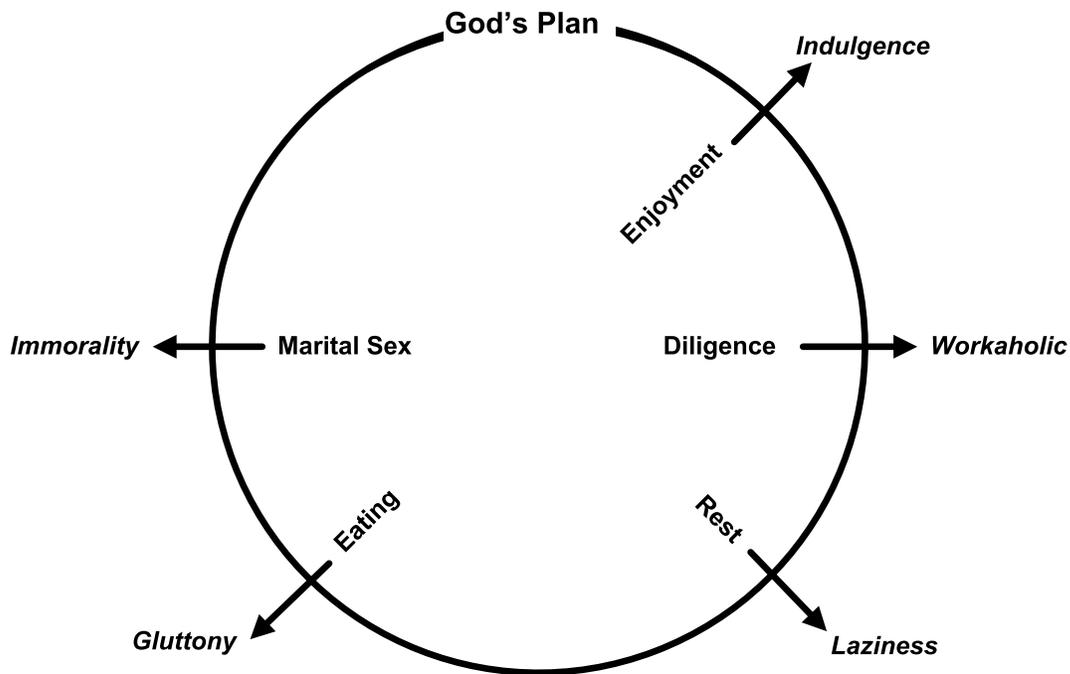
Another way you may cross God's bounds in the area of eating is by bingeing on food and then purging it from your body or starving your body when it needs food.

### Marital Sex

Another blessing inside of God's plan is sex. God created sex for your enjoyment but only within the context of His plan — between a man and woman who are joined together in marriage. Following God's plan means to be sexually pure.

*"Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband..."*

**Hebrews 13:4** (MSG)



Not being sexually pure, sex before marriage, sex with a partner of your same sex, pornography, extramarital affairs, is going outside of God's will and is called sexual *immorality*.

*"...Our bodies were not made for sexual **immorality**. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies."* **1 Corinthians 6:13** (NLT)

**Q11.** Have you taken the good thing, marital sex, and gone outside of God's bounds? Explain.

**Q12.** Have you experienced peace and joy or shame and regret?

Crossing God's bounds may seem fun or exciting but over time it will destroy your life. God makes rules to keep you safe and blessed.

God wants to meet your needs but when you cross His bounds you are trying to be your own god.

### **Beauty**

In the Bible, there are accounts of both women and men who are described as attractive like Sarah, Esther, David, and Moses. Though the Hebrews did not exalt the human form as the world does, looking your best or dressing nicely isn't condemned by God.

*"Charm is deceptive, and **beauty** does not last; but a woman who fears the LORD will be greatly praised."*

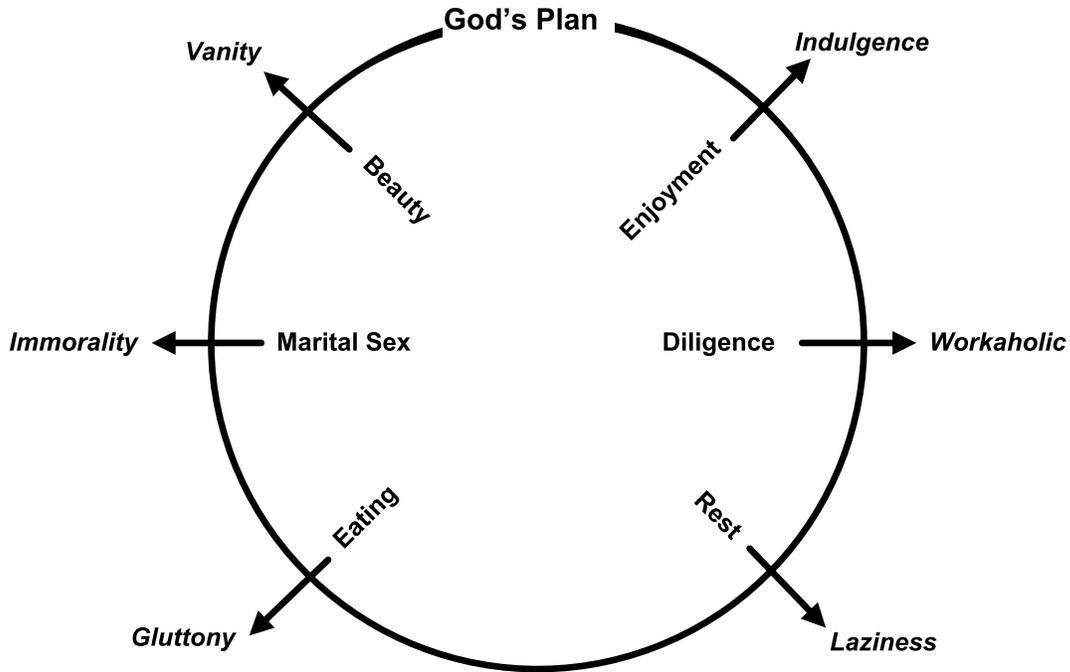
**Proverbs 31:30** (NLT)

**Q13.** In what ways would you be different if you focused more time on your relationship with God than your appearance?

*"And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us, and establish the work of our hands for us; Yes, establish the work of our hands." **Psalms 90:17** (NKJ)*

Personal care of your body becomes *vanity* when taken outside of God's bounds. Vanity shows itself when you spend more time and money on improving your outward appearance than your inward condition.

**Q14.** Do you try to gain attention by how you look?



*“Don’t be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.”*

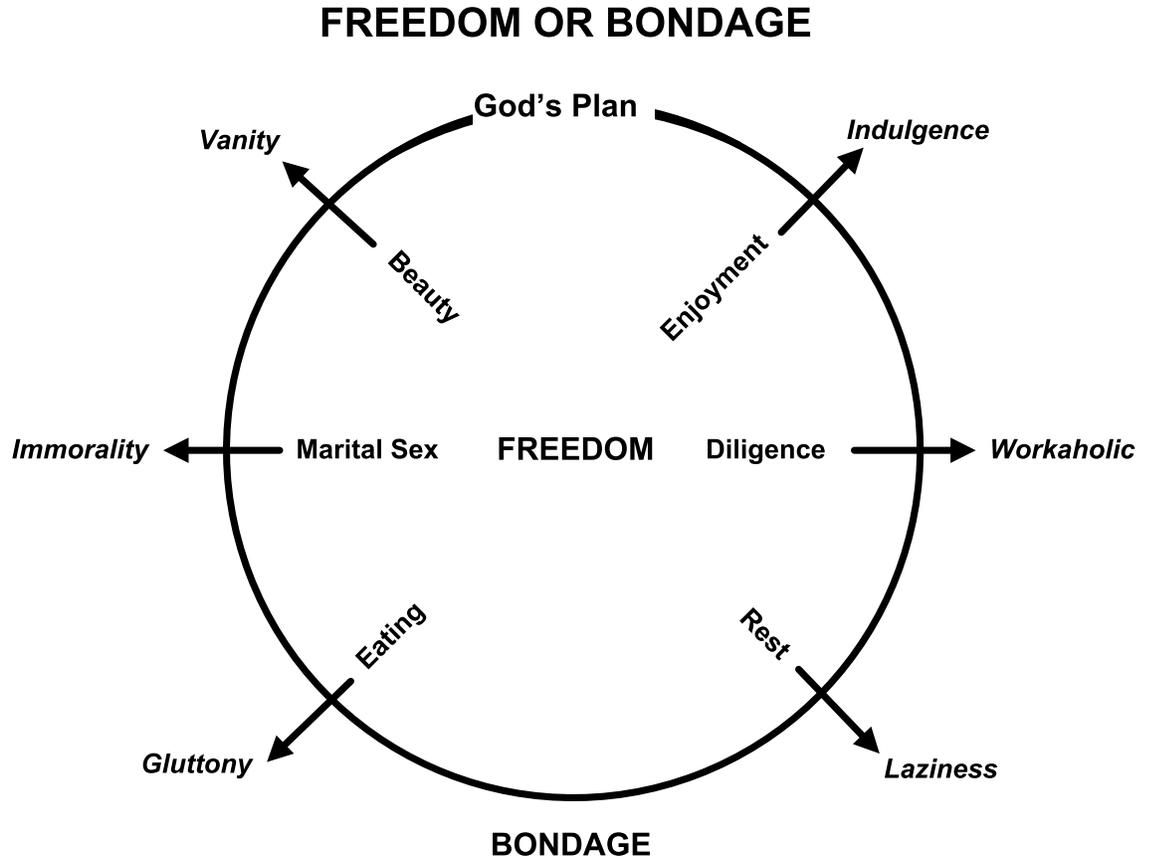
**1 Peter 3:3–4** (NLT)

### **Freedom**

Here’s the paradox. Staying inside of God’s plan sets you free. Going beyond His boundaries produces bondage.

**Q15.** Circle the words on the following diagram that best describe your present behavior.

**Q16.** Which ones are outside the bounds?



If you are outside of God's plan in one or more areas, consider the words of King Solomon. When he was outside of God's boundaries, this is what he discovered.

*"But as I looked at everything I had worked so hard to accomplish, it was all so meaningless. It was like chasing the wind. There was nothing really worthwhile anywhere."*  
**Ecclesiastes 2:11** (NLT)

### **Personal Application**

Take time to **acknowledge to God** the areas where you are outside of His plan.

**Repent** of what you have been doing.

**Confess to God** that you have been trying to meet your needs apart from Him.

**Ask God** to remind you to stay inside of His plan.

*“You made me; you created me. Now give me the sense to follow your commands.”* **Psalm 119:73** (NLT)

# Freedom or Bondage

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Chapter 3

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## BODY AND SOUL

*“...Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.” **Philippians 4:8** (NLT)*

Chapter One focused on the fact that you were created by and belong to God. Chapter Two showed how you can misuse good things and be outside of God’s bounds. This chapter will cover how your soul can affect your body.

You are made up of spirit, soul, and body. All three are interrelated and interconnected.

*“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole **spirit, soul, and body** be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” **1 Thessalonians 5:23** (NKJ)*

What you think in your soul has an influence on your physical body.

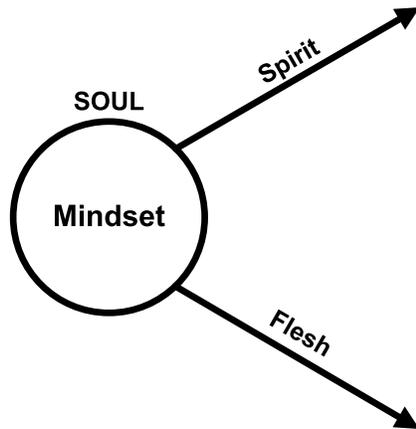
Your soul is made up of your mind, will, and emotions. Your will is the part of you that chooses what to do, including what your mind thinks about. What you think about is what you set your mind on.

**Q1.** What kinds of things do you spend your time thinking about?

- Q2. For the most part, do you have a positive or negative outlook on life? Explain.
- Q3. Do you see any connection between what you think about and how you feel?

### Spirit or Flesh

The Bible describes two mindsets. You can either set your mind on what God wants, on the Spirit. Or you can set your mind on what the world wants, what the Bible calls your flesh.



Don't think of the flesh as your skin and bones. It is the selfish desire inside each person to have everything he or she wants without God. Christians and non-Christians have flesh.

The Bible describes the flesh as wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, and wanting to appear important.

*"Don't love the world's ways. Don't love the world's goods. Love of the world squeezes out love for the Father. Practically everything that goes on in the world—**wanting your own way, wanting everything for yourself, wanting to appear important**—has nothing to do with the Father. It just isolates you from him. The world and all its wanting, wanting, wanting is on the way out—but whoever does what God wants is set for eternity." 1 John 2:15–17 (MSG)*

- Q4.** Do you recognize the presence of the flesh in your life? Give an example of a time when you wanted your own way, wanted everything for yourself, or wanted to appear important.

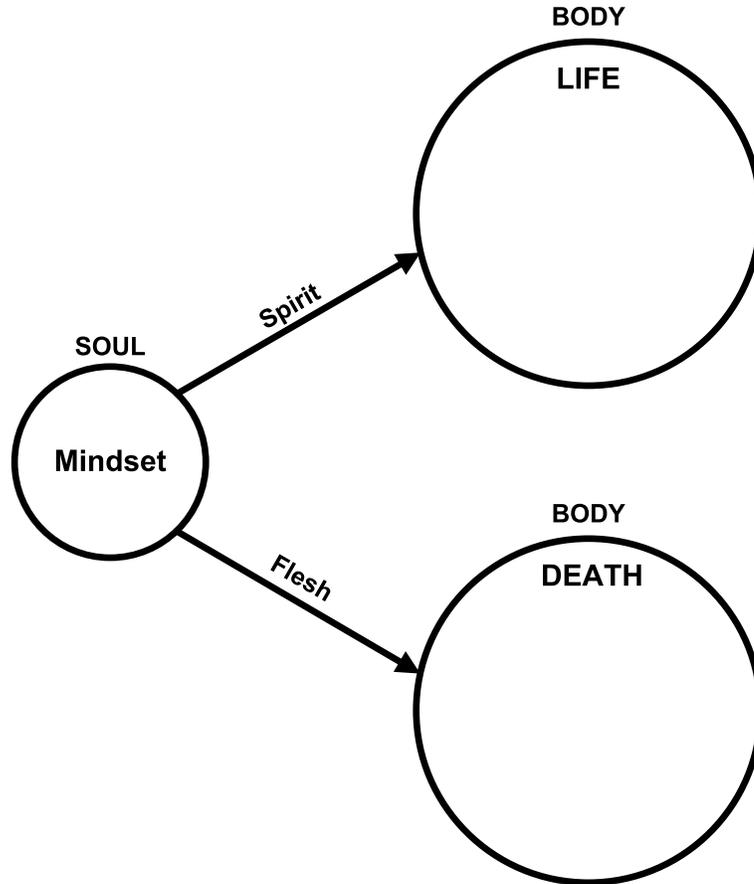
### **Mindset and the Body**

The Bible teaches that when your focus is on the flesh, it brings you down and leads to negative consequences. However, when your focus is on the Spirit, you will be lifted up and experience peace.

*“For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace.”* **Romans 8:6** (NASB)

- Q5.** Did you experience negative consequences that were the result of your selfish decisions? If so, explain.

Notice in the following diagram that your mindset, whether it is set on the flesh or on the Spirit, will affect your body. In time it will produce some form of life or death.

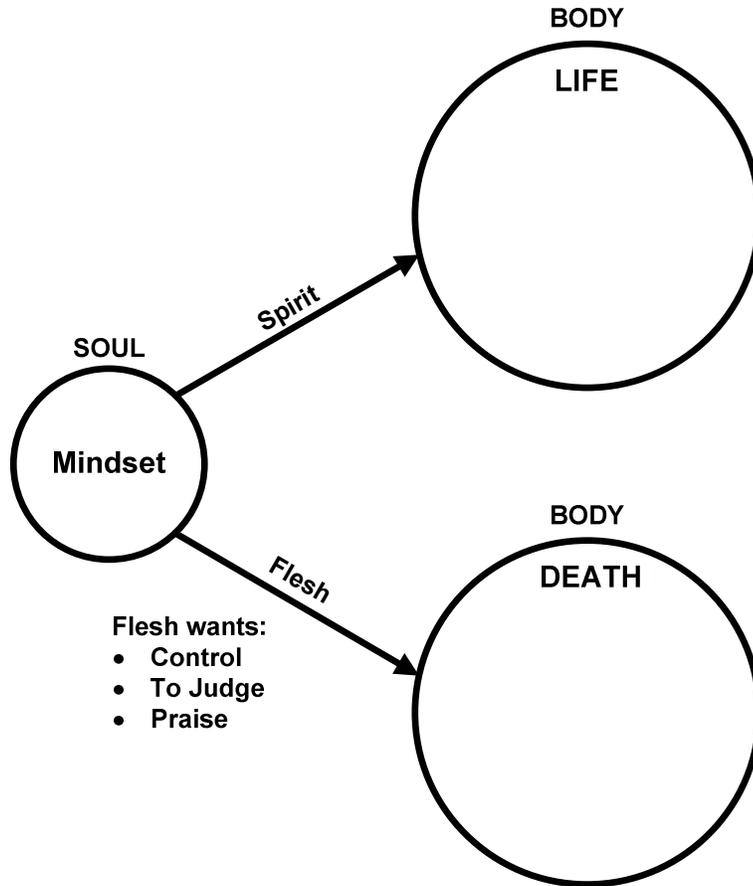


If your mind is set on your flesh, it can result in feelings of depression, fear, anxiety, and the like. These emotions ripple through the soul and eventually affect the physical body.

The fleshly motivation for what you do will typically be rooted in one of these three. The flesh is the:

- Drive to *control* life and others.
- Tendency to *judge* yourself and others.
- Desire to be *praised* and accepted by others.

**Q6.** Do you see any of these motivations behind your fleshly decision in Q4? Explain.



### Sowing and Reaping

The desire to be in control, judge, and seek praise will lead to certain decisions. Those decisions have negative consequences.

*“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.” Galatians 6:7–8 (NASB)*

In time, your mindset on the flesh could lead to one of many physical consequences in the body.

1. Illnesses (check the ones you experience on a regular basis) –

- Headaches
- Ulcers
- Hives and rashes
- Allergies
- Arthritis
- Spastic colon
- Respiratory ailments
- Fatigue
- Insomnia
- Escape in sleep
- Hypertension
- Heart problems

2. Sexual Diseases

3. Chemical Dependency

4. Eating Disorders

5. Disfigurement of your body

6. Abortion

7. Suicide

**Illnesses**

Trying to control your life and/or others lives, judging yourself and/or others, and seeking praise and approval from others will eventually wear you out. It can lead to stress. Stress has been proven to lead to or cause real physical, medical problems in the body.

Not all sickness and disease is caused by what is going on in your soul. Much of it has a biological or physiological root. Yet much evidence in the medical community points to real illness and even disease being caused by what goes on in the soul.

*“...My whole body is sick; my health is broken because of my sins.” Psalm 38:3 (NLT)*

When you can't control things, do you get angry? Being angry isn't healthy. Do you judge and compare yourself to others? This behavior can lead to jealousy. Jealousy is destructive too.

*“Anger is cruel, and wrath is like a flood, but who can survive the destructiveness of **jealousy**?”*

**Proverbs 27:4** (NLT)

Even envy can lead to physical illness.

*“A sound heart is life to the body, but **envy** is rottenness to the bones.” **Proverbs 14:30** (NKJ)*

- Q7.** Which *illnesses* did you check in the list above?
- Q8.** Could they be resulting from some form of stress in your life?
- Q9.** Could that stress be caused by your trying to control, judge, or seek praise in some way? Explain.

### **Sexual Diseases**

Looking for love in the form of praise, approval, or acceptance from others can lead to engaging in sex outside of marriage. Sex outside of marriage is immoral. Using your body in immoral ways is against God’s plan.

When you violate God’s design for you, you actually hurt yourself. A physical consequence of this could be getting a sexual disease.

*“...Our bodies were not made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies.” **1 Corinthians 6:13** (NLT)*

- Q10.** Have you experienced sexual disease in your body?
- Q11.** Was it due to an immoral act or actions?

**Q12.** What other consequences did you suffer as a result?

### **Chemical Dependency**

The same pain and reality of stress that leads to some illnesses in the body can also lead a person to seek relief.

**Q13.** When life is difficult for you where do you go to get relief?

That relief could be in alcohol, drugs, caffeine, or any kind of chemical or substance use. That use can quickly lead to dependency when relied upon over and over.

*“Don’t be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.”*

**Ephesians 5:18** (NLT)

**Q14.** Do you use alcohol, drugs, or anything else to cover the pain of not being in control or being rejected?

### **Eating Disorders**

Seeking praise and approval from others and not from God in the physical area of life can lead you to make poor choices in the area of eating. If you believe you need to look a certain way or be a certain weight to be accepted or to be beautiful, you may begin eating very little.

You may begin eating large amounts to fill a void and then vomiting to remove the weight gain. All of this may be done in the pursuit of acceptance.

Such eating disorders may be continued out of a drive to control at least one area of life. Yet this control is driven by a desire to be accepted or noticed for physical beauty.

*“Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the LORD will be greatly praised.”*

**Proverbs 31:30** (NLT)

- Q15.** Has any type of eating disorder been a problem for you? Can you trace it to a root of seeking praise and approval or control?
- Q16.** What is God saying to you now regarding this disorder?
- Q17.** Will you begin to receive God's acceptance of you?
- Q18.** Circle the words in the following verses that show how much God loves and accepts you.

*“Long ago, even before he made the world, God loved us [you] and chose us [you] in Christ to be holy and without fault in his eyes. His unchanging plan has always been to adopt us [you] into his own family by bringing us [you] to himself through Jesus Christ. And this gave him great pleasure. So we [you] praise God for the wonderful kindness he has poured out on us [you] because we [you] belong to his dearly loved Son. He is so rich in kindness that he purchased our [your] freedom through the blood of his Son, and our [your] sins are forgiven. He has showered his kindness on us [you], along with all wisdom and understanding.” Ephesians 1:4–8 (NLT)*

### **Disfigurement**

Judging your looks based on the appearance of the people around you or people you see on television, in the movies, or in magazines can lead you to make wrong decisions for your body. It may lead you to disfigure your body in an attempt to look like them.

Again, this behavior could be rooted in the desire for praise, acceptance, and/or approval.

*“...The physical part of you is not some piece of property belonging to...you. God owns the whole works. So let people see God in and through your body.”*

**1 Corinthians 6:20** (MSG)

- Q19.** Have you changed or considered changing your appearance to match the appearance of others? Explain.
- Q20.** Could this act have been due to a desire for acceptance based on your judgment of what you think you ought to look like?

### **Abortion and Suicide**

The attempt to control the course of one's life could lead to a decision for abortion. Having an abortion will not only bring physical consequences to the body but also leads to the death of another whom God created.

- Q21.** Have you considered having or had an abortion or influenced someone else to have one? Explain.

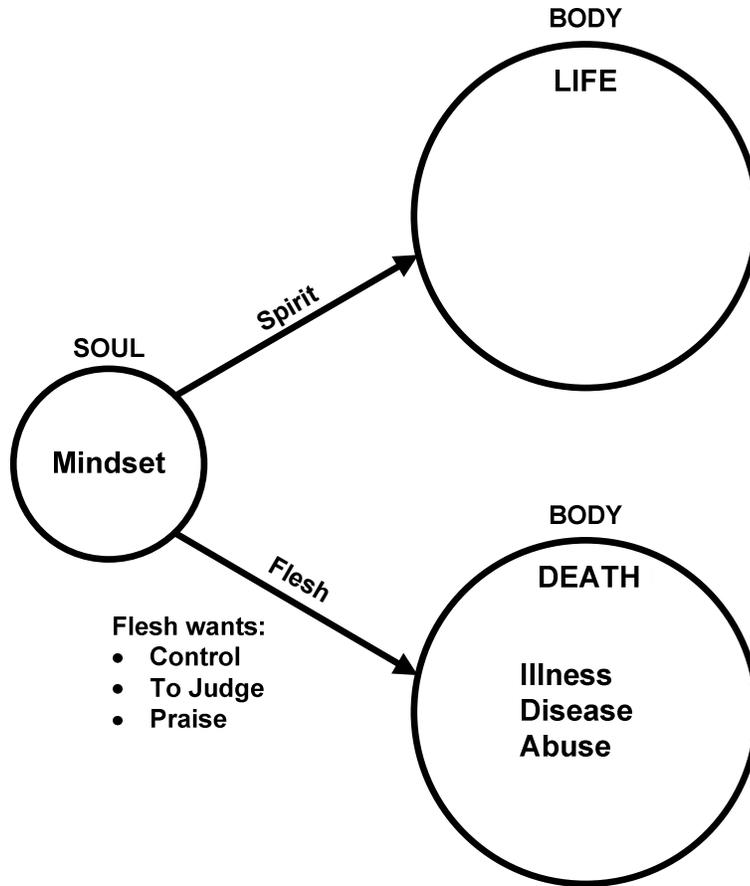
Suicide or thoughts of it are based on the desire to control life, or the judgment that “life isn't worth it”, or even to gain some form of attention.

*“Or don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.”* **1 Corinthians 6:19–20** (NLT)

- Q22.** Have you ever had thoughts of committing suicide?

**Q23.** Can you trace either of these (abortion and suicide) to an effort to control life, judge or seek praise?

All of these problems are in one way or another an *illness*, a *disease*, or an *abuse* of the body.



### Repentance

Pride, vanity, trying to control, and judging are all ways your flesh is trying to be God. When you attempt to be God, you will bring death on your body.

You must turn from the direction you are headed and go God's way. This is called repentance.

*“Some were fools in their rebellion; they suffered for their sins. Their appetites were gone, and death was near. ‘LORD, help!’ they cried in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress. He spoke, and they were healed – snatched from the door of death.”*

**Psalm 107:17–20** (NLT)

### **Jesus – Our Model**

Going God’s way or setting your mind on the Spirit means you will trust God’s control instead of trying to control your life and others. This is what Jesus did.

He *trusted* God’s control even when other people were rejecting Him.

*“...and while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously.”*

**1 Peter 2:23** (NASB)

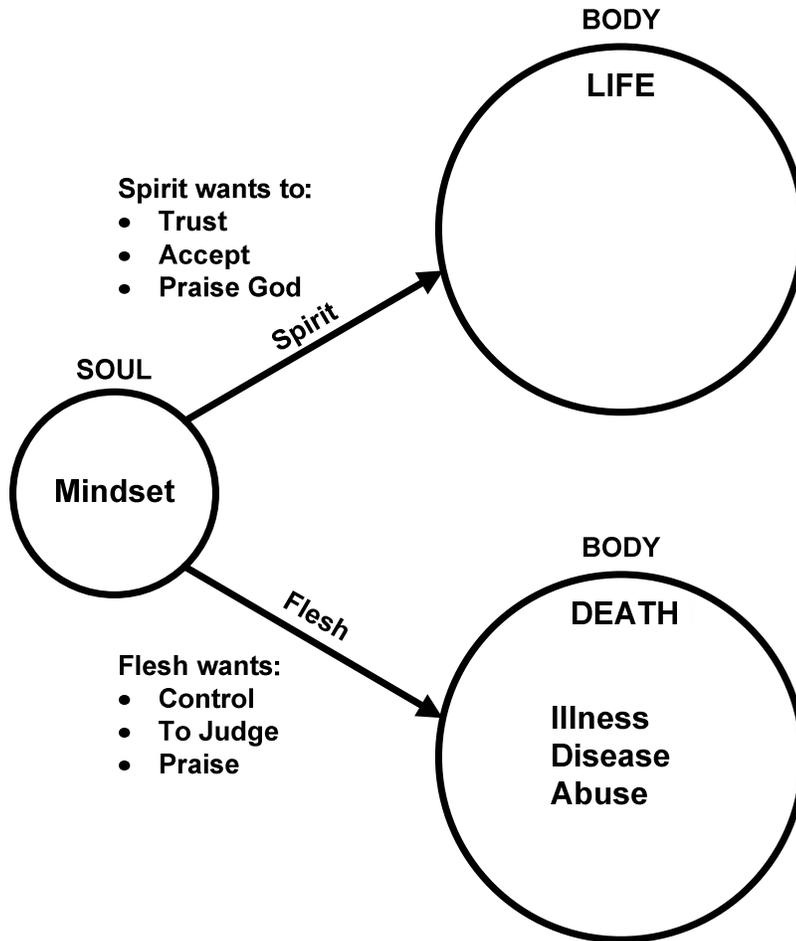
He did not judge. He *accepted* Himself and others.

*“If anyone hears My sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world, but to save the world.”* **John 12:47** (NASB)

He did not seek the *praise* of men.

*“Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing; he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form.”*

**Philippians 2:6–7** (NLT)



### Set Your Mind on the Spirit

Setting your mind on the Spirit means you will accept yourself and others. You won't be judging, comparing, and envying. Finally, when your mind is set on God, you will give Him praise and not be seeking praise for how you look.

*“Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the Lord and turn your back on evil. Then you will gain renewed health and vitality.” Proverbs 3:7–8 (NLT)*

As a result, you will experience *health, freedom, and renewal.*

*“A merry heart does good, like **medicine**, But a broken spirit dries the bones.” Proverbs 17:22 (NKJ)*

*“So Christ has really set us **free**. Now make sure that you stay free...” Galatians 5:1 (NLT)*

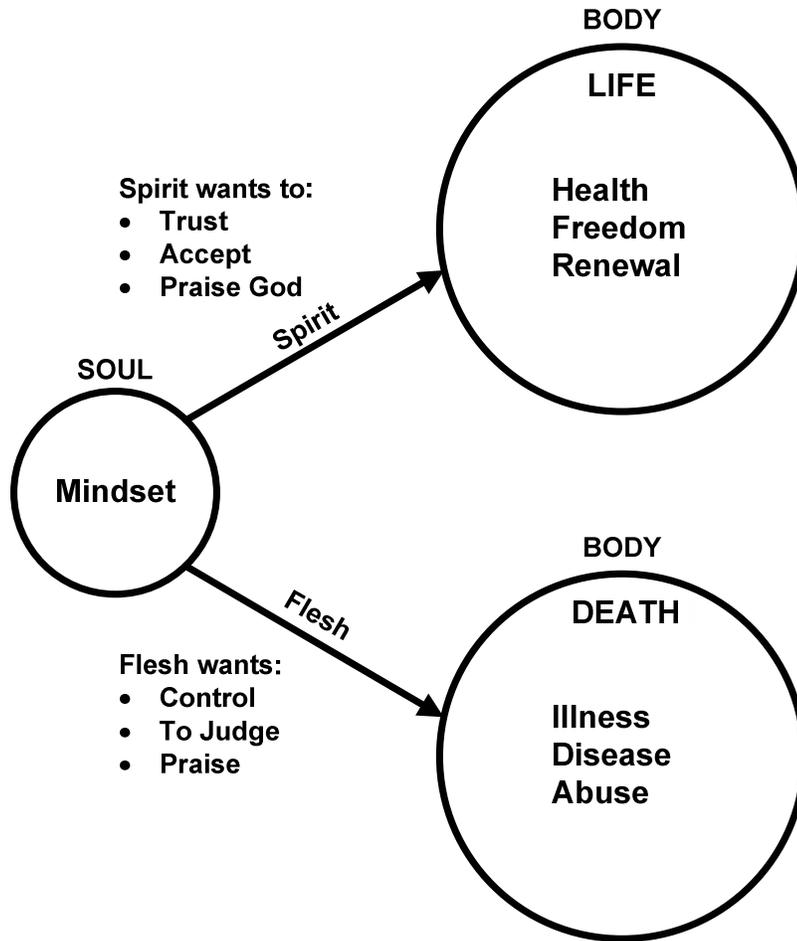
*“For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live **pure** and **blameless** lives until Christ returns.” Philippians 1:10 (NLT)*

You will have purity, self-control, and restoration. You won't be doing destructive things to your body because you won't be looking for love and acceptance in the wrong places.

*“Knowing God leads to **self-control**. Self-control leads to patient endurance, and patient endurance leads to godliness.” 2 Peter 1:6 (NLT)*

Your focus will be on your dependence on God and your hope in Him and the fact that you will get a new body, a resurrected one!

*“It is the same way for the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies, which die and decay, will be different when they are resurrected, for they will never die.” 1 Corinthians 15:42 (NLT)*



### Personal Application

**Q24.** Write down what God has shown you regarding the link between your mindset and the effects seen in your body.

**Q25.** Will you choose, with your will, to set your mind on His Spirit? If not today, when?

# Body and Soul

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

## PHYSICAL U-TURN

*“Today I have given you the choice between life and death, between blessings and curses. I call on heaven and earth to witness the choice you make. Oh, that you would choose life...”* **Deuteronomy 30:19** (NLT)

The last chapter showed how the soul can affect the body. Walking after the flesh can produce health problems, while walking after the Spirit can have positive affects on your body.

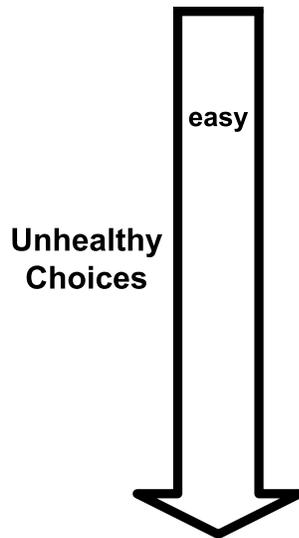
This chapter will focus on the healthy and unhealthy choices you make.

**Q1.** Do you have any unhealthy physical habits? What are they?

It is easy to eat too much and exercise too little. Self-indulgence feels good at first.

### **Starts Out Easy**

The following diagram illustrates that when you make unhealthy choices, you are on a downward road. There are many people who go down this road because it is easy to get started on it. However, as you will see, it is very dangerous.

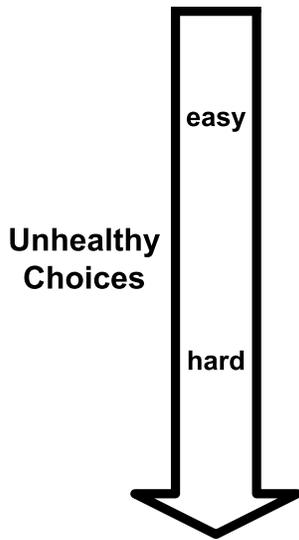


**Q2.** Were the unhealthy habits that you listed in Q1 easy when you started doing them? Explain.

Making unhealthy choices can begin by eating too much because the food tastes so good. It seems easier to keep eating than decide you have had enough and stop.

### **Gets Harder**

You may find it easy to skip exercising, smoke a cigarette offered by a friend, or drink extra coffee to stay awake each night. Even though this way starts out easy, it typically leads to gaining weight, getting out of shape, being tired, or being addicted. The way has gotten hard.



**Q3.** Have your unhealthy habits brought you any hardship?

It was easy for Eve, in the Garden of Eden, to eat the forbidden fruit but it immediately got harder. For the very first time, she felt shame in regards to her body.

*“The woman was convinced. The fruit looked so fresh and delicious, and it would make her so wise! So she ate some of the fruit. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her. Then he ate it, too. At that moment, their eyes were opened, and they suddenly felt shame at their nakedness...”* **Genesis 3:6–7** (NLT)

When you are disobedient to God with your body, life will get harder. An unhealthy lifestyle may not destroy you today or tomorrow, but it eventually will. The road moves from easy to hard and finally to death.

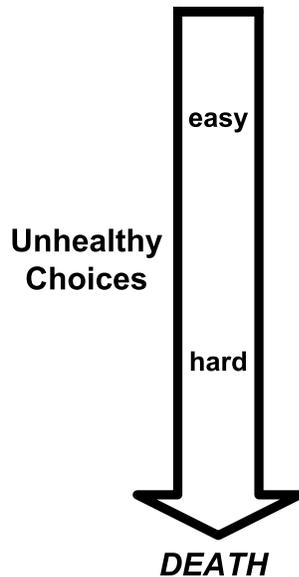
### **Leads to Death**

The way you once thought was easy, over time, gets harder and ends in *death*.

*“There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.”* **Proverbs 14:12** (NKJ)

In the account of Adam and Eve, hardship progressed to the point of death. Even though God had planned for them to live forever, they died, their children died, and ultimately all mankind was affected by their choice that day.

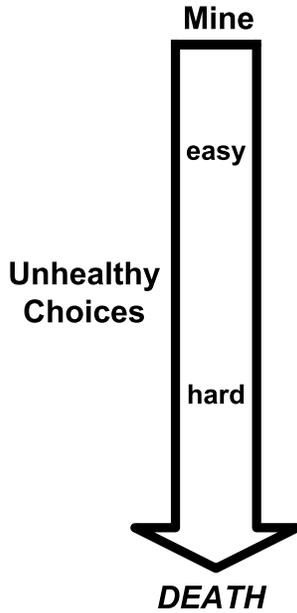
*“Therefore, just as through one man sin entered the world, and death through sin, and thus death spread to all men, because all sinned—”* **Romans 5:12** (NKJ)



- Q4.** Where are you on the diagram? Is it easy, hard, or are you experiencing some type of death in the physical area of your life? Explain.
- Q5.** If it is still easy, do you think the consequences of your unhealthy choices will ever catch up with you? If so, when?

### **My Body is Mine**

The downward road of unhealthy choices is a result of thinking your life or body belongs to you not God.



The good news is that God uses your discomfort to get your attention. Negative consequences help you decide to stop doing things your way. If you follow His way, you will be blessed. If you refuse to obey Him, you will miss out on those blessings.

*“He [God] never takes his eyes off the righteous; he honors them lavishly, promotes them endlessly. When things go badly, when affliction and suffering descend, God tells them where they’ve gone wrong, shows them how their pride has caused their trouble. He forces them to heed his warning, tells them they must repent of their bad life. If they obey and serve him, they’ll have a good, long life on easy street. But if they disobey, they’ll be cut down in their prime...”* **Job 36:8–12** (MSG)

**Q6.** How has God been using what you are going through to get your attention?

**Q7.** Are you ready to give up your unhealthy choices and do things God's way?

When you believe your body belongs to you, it results in some form of death.

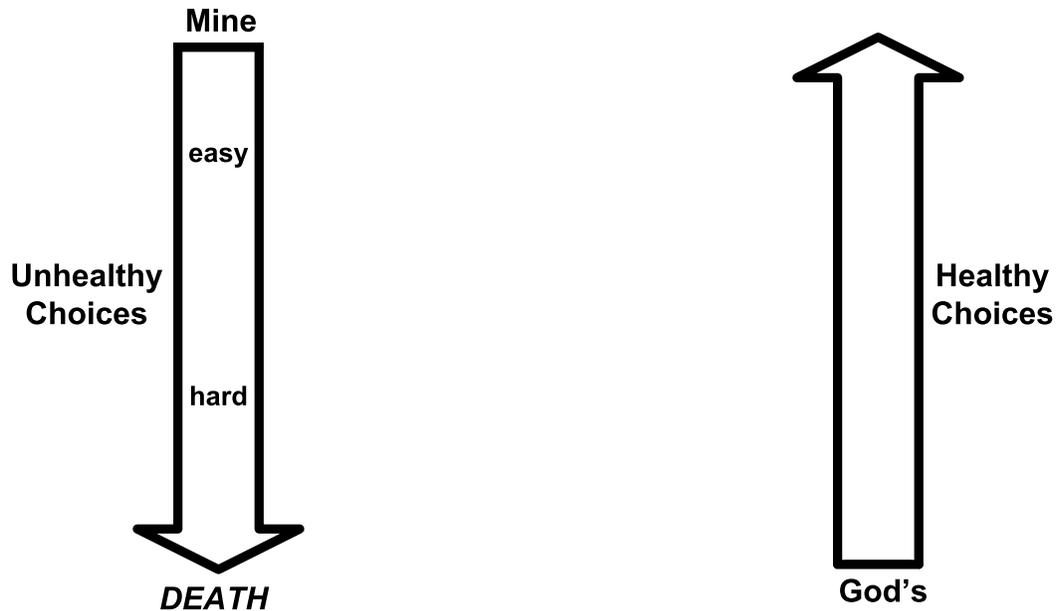
**Q8.** What is your reason for not giving your body to God?

Motives behind not giving your body to God can be to get your own way, meet your own needs, or satisfy a desire. However doing things your way doesn't accomplish any long term satisfaction.

When you truly believe your body belongs to God and you give it to Him, you will start making healthy choices.

**There is a Better Way**

Notice on the next diagram, the roads head in completely opposite directions. You will need to make a u-turn.

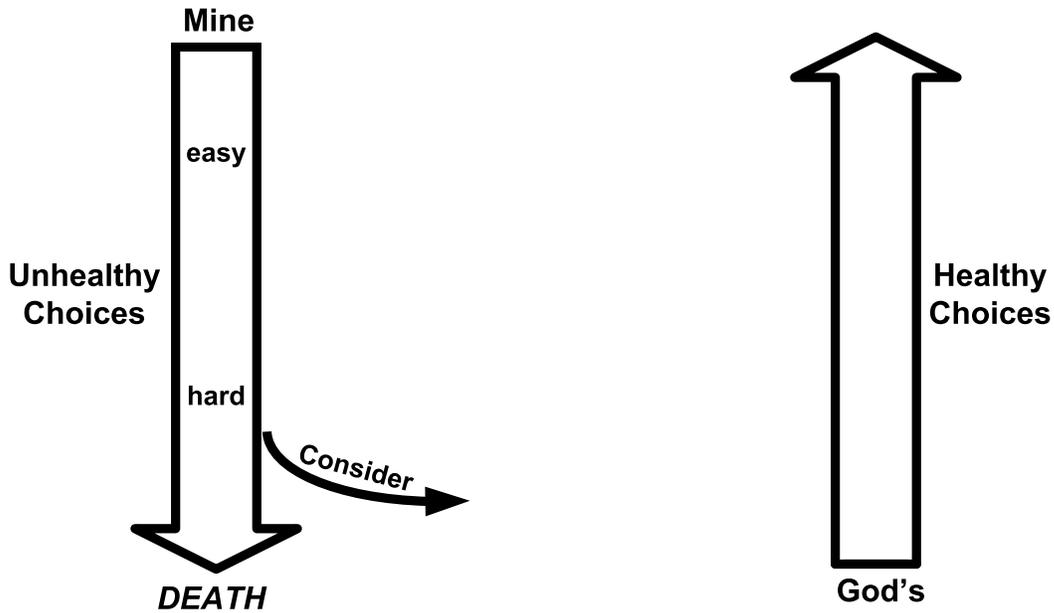


**Q9.** How do you move from making unhealthy choices to doing things God's way?

**Consider**

The first step to making a u-turn in the physical area is to honestly look at yourself, your body, your behavior, where you are headed, and your sin. *Consider* or think about the choices you have been making. Be honest. Don't make excuses, blame someone else, or hide your bad habits. Ask God to search your mind, will, emotions, and body for reasons why you are where you are.

*"I **considered** my ways and turned my feet to Your testimonies."* **Psalm 119:59** (NASB)



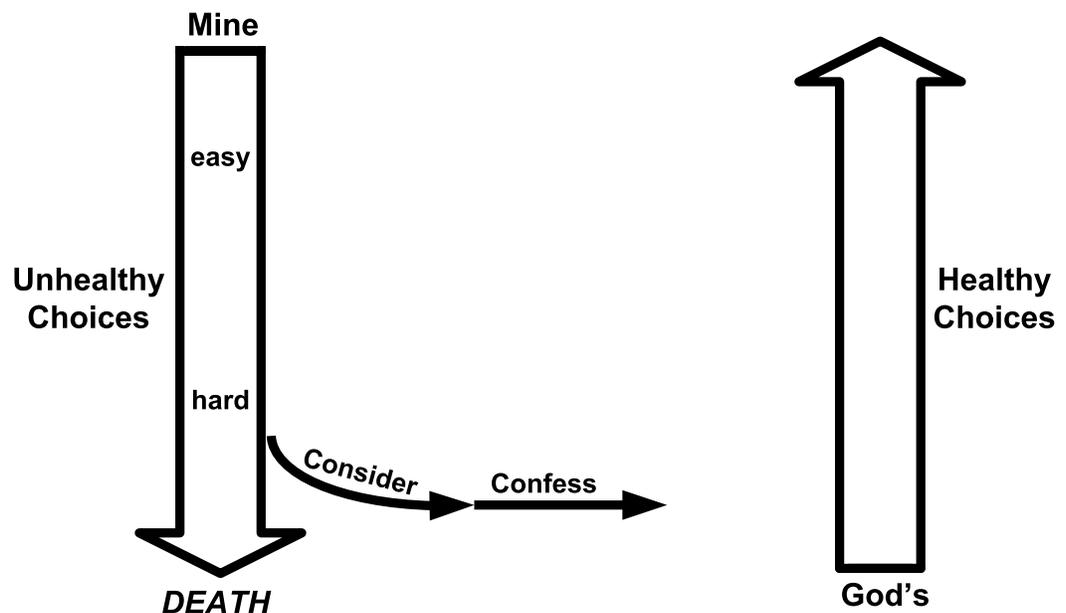
**Confess**

The next step toward changing directions is confession. *Confess* or admit your wrong choices to yourself and God. Agree with God that what you are doing is wrong. It's sin.

*“Finally, I **confessed** all my sins to you and stopped trying to hide them. I said to myself, ‘I will **confess** my rebellion to the LORD.’ And you forgave me! All my guilt is gone.” Psalm 32:5 (NLT)*

It is also helpful to confess your sins to other people.

*“**Confess** your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results.” James 5:16 (NLT)*



## Change

Finally, getting onto God's way requires *change*. You need to change directions, change the way you have been thinking about your choices, change the way you believe about God, and change your choices.

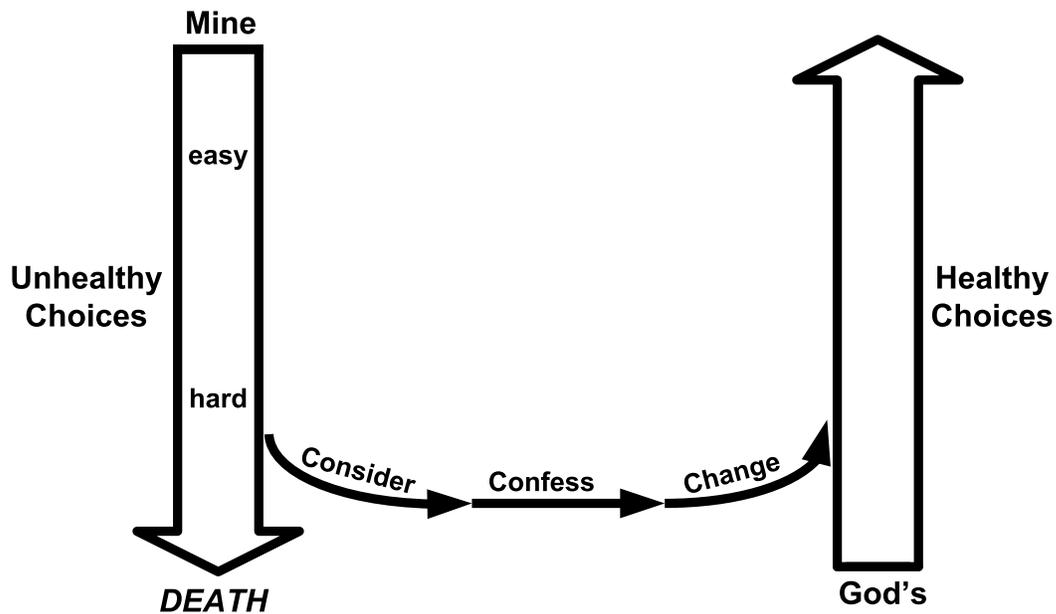
*“...**Repent** now everyone of his evil way and his evil doings, and dwell in the land that the Lord has given to you...” Jeremiah 25:5 (NKJ)*

The Biblical word for this kind of change is “repent.” When you repent you are turning your back on your own way and going God’s way. It’s not continuing to do what you’ve done before. It’s coming to God for help instead of your own resources or methods. There is a complete change in your behavior, your attitude, and your thinking.

*“...Turn from your sins! Don’t let them destroy you!”*  
**Ezekiel 18:30** (NLT)

There is sorrow or regret for what you have done.

*“But I confess my sins; I am deeply sorry for what I have done.”* **Psalm 38:18** (NLT)



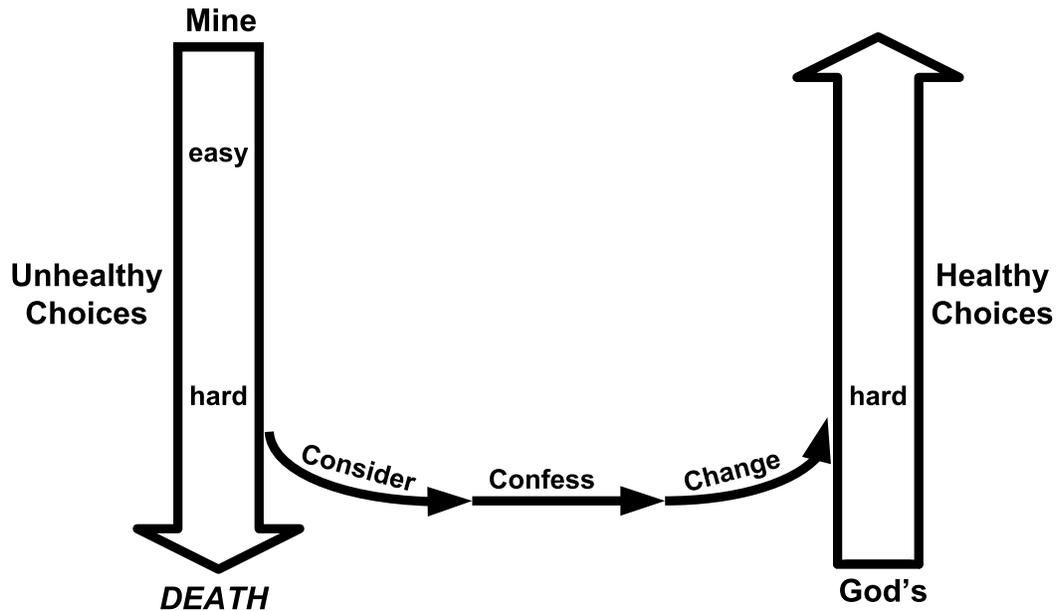
**Q10.** What actions or habits do you need to confess and change? Be specific and list them below.

Q11. How do these sins affect your relationship with God and others?

### Starts Out Hard

In the next diagram, even though you are now on God's way, it's *hard*.

*"...Difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it."* **Matthew 7:14** (NKJ)



Q12. Why do you think moving from unhealthy choices to healthy choices starts out hard?

The way might seem hard at first because you are more familiar with doing things your own way instead of God's way. New ways of doing things always start out difficult. Secondly, your flesh likes to be indulged not disciplined.

### Healthy Choices

The body doesn't get stronger when idle. Proper exercise builds strength. It's true that the more you use your muscles the more developed they become; in the same way, the less you use your muscles, the weaker they become.

*"All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades...No sloppy living for me I'm staying alert and in top condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself." 1 Corinthians 9:25–27 (MSG)*

**Q13.** Are you using your body the way God desires? Why or why not?

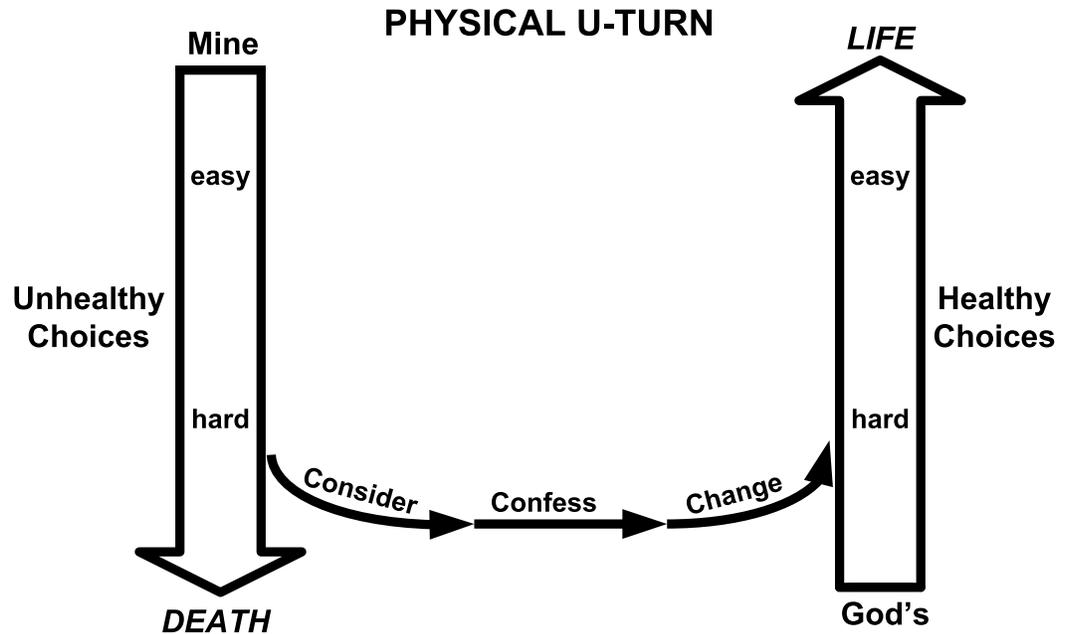
### It Gets Easier

Although this way starts out hard, it does become easier as you consistently follow God's direction. The benefits of a healthy way of life are feeling better, having more energy, not being a slave to unhealthy habits, and perhaps living longer.

*"So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time." Galatians 6:9 (NLT)*

### Physical U-Turn

You may be used to making unhealthy choices, but God has a better way. Faith is making a choice to act on what God says even if you don't feel like changing. Considering your ways, confessing them, and changing directions builds a bridge for you to cross over. Your behavior will be different and your character will be changed.



**Q14.** What would changing directions look like in your life?

### **Life**

Although it is hard at first to do the things God shows you in areas like eating, drinking, exercising, and sleeping, in time, they lead to life. When you don't follow God's ways, your body suffers. You can be free from that suffering.

*"If you will listen carefully to the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in his sight, obeying his commands and laws, then I will not make you suffer the diseases I sent on the Egyptians; for I am the LORD who heals you." Exodus 15:26 (NLT)*

### Taking Personal Inventory

Consider where you are today in regards to your energy and overall health.

- Q15.** If you don't change anything like your eating and exercise, where will you be two years from now, four years, six, eight, and ten?
- Q16.** Will you be healthier? Why or why not?
- Q17.** Will you be pleased with your health?

Pray and fill out the areas that God is showing you where you need to change. If an area is not an issue for you, go on to the next one.

### Ask God About...

- Q18.** What does God want you to change in the area of **eating**?
- Q19.** What does God want you to change in the area of **exercise**?
- Q20.** What does God want you to change in the area of **sleeping**?
- Q21.** What does God want you to change in the area of **chemical dependency** (smoking, alcohol, caffeine, drugs, etc.)?

**Q22.** Is there another area God is showing you that you need to change?

**Commit** this plan to God.

**Ask God** for power to do what He has shown you.

**Share a diagram** from the physical area of life and what you have learned with someone this week.

# Physical U-Turn

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*



# Sharing S.A.L.T. with a Friend

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“...And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.” **1 Peter 3:15** (NLT)

*Meet in a location where your friend feels comfortable sharing.*

## **The Purpose:** Encouragement

How do you encourage your friend? By sharing Biblical truths that have impacted you.

*Ask “Could I share some things with you?”*

## **Sharing with a friend (an informal meeting)**

- Ask, “What’s going on in your life?” or “How are you doing?”
- Listen.
- If necessary, ask questions that help you better understand your friend and his or her situation. For example: “How are you feeling about that?”
- Then share what God has been teaching you as it relates to your friend’s situation.
- If the opportunity allows, draw and explain the S.A.L.T. diagram that is relevant. *This can even be done on a napkin.*
- Encourage your friend and offer to pray.

*Share with an attitude of humility and kindness.*

## **Sharing with a friend (on a regular basis)**

- Make sure your friend has a book.
- Read, study, and answer all questions individually.
- Share your answers with each other and talk about the lesson.
- Draw and explain the diagram for each other.
- Encourage each other to personally apply the lessons.
- Pray together.

*Be sensitive about when to share and the length of your sharing.*

## **Helpful suggestions:**

**Be transparent.** Share your own story. When you are real, other people realize they can be honest too.

**Be a “safe place.”** Information your friend tells you should be kept confidential. Don’t condemn, instead encourage.

**Be a good listener.** Give your friend your full attention. Make eye contact, and, at appropriate times, repeat back what you hear your friend saying. Ask good questions that encourage your friend to talk.

**Be a true friend.** Speak the truth in love.

## **Books in the Seven Areas of Life Training (S.A.L.T.) Series**

### **Titles in the S.A.L.T. Series:**

- Spiritual – My Relationship with God
- Psychological – My Mind, Will, and Emotions
- Social – My Relationship with Others
- Physical – My Body
- Financial – My Money
- Marital – My Relationship with my Spouse
- Parental – My Relationship with my Children
- SALT Instructor's Guide with PowerPoint CD of Diagrams
- SALT Training DVD for Group Leaders

### **About the Authors**

A team of authors at Victorious Christian Living International (VCLi) wrote this book.

For over 25 years, VCLi has been helping believers grow and be successful in all seven areas of life. VCLi trains people and provides materials for effectively ministering to others, including comprehensive church discipleship programs, prison and inner-city ministries, and family ministries. We are headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona with offices in Alabama, Illinois, Guatemala, and Cuba.

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# ***My Money***

Financial Area of Life

## **S.A.L.T.**

**Seven Areas of Life Training<sup>®</sup>**

SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING (S.A.L.T.) FINANCIAL AREA –  
MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY MONEY, Version 2.0

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## **Dedication**

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*All of us at VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING INTERNATIONAL give God the praise for these SALT materials and dedicate this series to the discipleship of believers worldwide.*

*Thank you to all past and present VCLi staff members. You have played a vital role in developing, teaching, and helping others apply these diagrams, concepts, and lessons.*

*Special thanks go to Rocky Nystrom. Your vision and creativity made this series a reality, your determination brought it to completion; and your heart for people to be free energized us along the way.*

## **About this Series**

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### SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING

Learning how to live victoriously in all seven areas of life is the goal of this comprehensive discipleship series.

This small group or self-study book is simple, yet dynamic. Biblical truths are visually illustrated with powerful diagrams.

Solid Biblical truth is taught in each lesson with a challenge to apply that truth to your life. It is when you apply that truth and share it with others that your life will be profoundly changed.

## **About this Book**

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The *Financial Area of Life* deals with your management of your money.

In four powerful chapters, you will find challenges to get real with your finances and start enjoying financial freedom.

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# Chapter 1

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## FINANCIAL FREEDOM

*“The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’”*

**Matthew 25:21** (NLT)

The financial area of life is about how you relate to money.

Most people in this world think that money is great and the more of it they can get, the better off they will be. King Solomon is a person who had a lot of money but had this to say about it.

*“Those who love money will never have enough. How absurd to think that wealth brings true happiness!”*

**Ecclesiastes 5:10** (NLT)

Other people believe that “Money is the root of all evil.” And therefore, the less of it they have the better off they will be. What does the Bible say about money? Is it good or evil?

The truth is that the Bible doesn’t say, “Money is the root of all evil.” It actually says, “The **love of** money is at the root of all kinds of evil.”

*“For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.”*

**1 Timothy 6:10** (NLT)

Money is not evil, money is neutral. However, your attitude about money is usually not neutral, it can be evil.

Knowing the truth about money is the key to being free. We will call that place “Financial Freedom.”

*“And you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* **John 8:32** (NLT)

### **God Owns It, You Manage It**

The most important truth about money is that it all belongs to God.

*“‘The silver is mine, and the gold is mine,’ says the LORD Almighty.”* **Haggai 2:8** (NLT)

God owns everything. You are not the true owner of anything. You are merely a manager over the things He allows you to possess.

*“Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager must be faithful.”* **1 Corinthians 4:2** (NLT)

If you are a manager over God’s money then you ought to make sure you are doing what He wants you to do with it. The Bible gives clear guidelines or boundaries for being faithful with money. The Bible also makes it clear that God blesses those who are faithful.

*“If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. I assure you, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns.”* **Matthew 24:46–47** (NLT)

Even though God actually owns all the money you possess, He allows you to enjoy it.

*“And it is a good thing to receive wealth from God and the good health to enjoy it...”* **Ecclesiastes 5:19** (NLT)

## Four Things

There are really only four things you can do with money. You can:

1. Earn money
2. Give money
3. Spend money
4. Invest money

We will look at what the Bible teaches about each of these four things.

The key to enjoying money and experiencing financial freedom is to do each of these four things in a way that is faithful to God who is the true owner.

Financial freedom comes as a result of financial faithfulness.

### Earn Money Honestly

Before there is any spending, giving or investing, you have to **earn money**.

- Q1.** Do you think it matters to God how you earn it?

### “Get-Rich-Quick” Schemes

The Bible teaches that “get-rich-quick” schemes are a waste of time.

*“Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows.” Proverbs 13:11 (NLT)*

- Q2.** Have you ever wished you could win the lottery and have so much money that all your troubles would be over?

Most lottery winners go on to be miserable after they “get-rich-quick.” Of course, most people who play the lottery never win so they have a hard time believing that getting money quickly would be anything but great.

Another way people try to get rich quick is through “pyramid schemes.” These schemes always have one thing in common – the promise of

getting rich quick. People put their trust in them and usually are disappointed with the outcome.

Some people gamble, some people steal, some people buy cheap stocks, and some people pray, all with the hope of getting rich quickly.

The truth about “get-rich-quick” schemes is that most of them don’t work; but even *if* they do, the wealth gained from them usually doesn’t last.

- Q3.** Are you considering a quick way to make money right now? Describe.
- Q4.** Are you praying that God will bless it?
- Q5.** In light of the previous verse (**Proverbs 13:11**), do you think He will?

### **Ability is from God**

The Bible teaches that your ability to earn money is a gift from God.

*“...Never think that it was your own strength and energy that made you wealthy. Always remember that it is the LORD your God who gives you power to become rich...”*  
**Deuteronomy 8:17–18** (NLT)

It is not your own effort that allows you to succeed at earning money, it is God. It comes from God and once you get it, it is still His.

If God gives you the power to get rich, it probably won’t happen overnight.

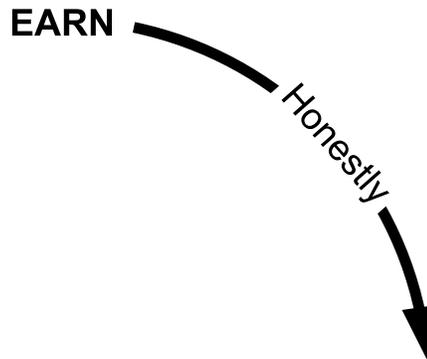
### **Hard Work**

The Bible teaches to earn money through hard work.

*“If you are too lazy to plow in the right season, you will have no food at the harvest.”* **Proverbs 20:4** (NLT)

And finally, the Bible teaches that when you earn money, earn it **honestly**.

*“Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won’t be faithful in large ones. If you cheat even a little, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities.”* **Luke 16:10** (NLT)



Earn money without cheating, lying, or taking advantage of others.

Every time you get money someone has given up money. If you earn money from a job, your employer gives money up each hour that you work. If you get money by selling something, the buyer gives up some money to get what you are selling.

All transactions exchanging money involve one person getting and one person giving. What happens when one of the people in the transaction is not honest? The other person loses. In fact, the other person or the other party gets robbed. Even if that other party is a big company, it is still robbery.

*“The LORD demands fairness in every business deal; he sets the standard.”* **Proverbs 16:11** (NLT)

- Q6.** Have you ever misrepresented something that you were selling in order to get a better price for it? Describe.
  
- Q7.** How do you feel when others do that to you?

If you are not honest on your tax return, the money that you keep because of lying you stole from the government.

*“Wealth created by lying is a vanishing mist and a deadly trap.” Proverbs 21:6 (NLT)*

When you earn money, God expects you to do so honestly.

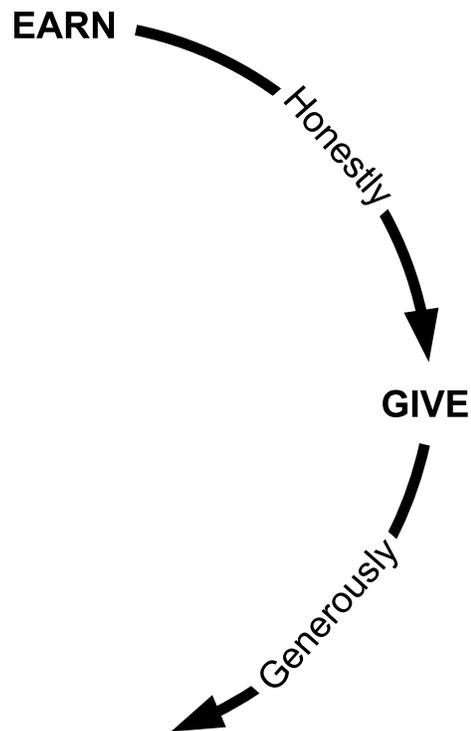
Earning money, even if you earn a lot of it, does not lead you to financial freedom. Freedom comes only when you earn it within the boundaries of financial faithfulness.

### **Give Money Generously**

After you earn money honestly God challenges you to give generously.

*“Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.”  
Proverbs 3:9–10 (NASB)*

- Q8.** Do you believe in giving? When?
- Q9.** Do you give before or after you spend money on things you don't need?



When you give generously, instead of running out of money, God multiplies your money.

*“If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving—large or small—it will be used to measure what is given back to you.”* **Luke 6:38** (NLT)

### **Spend Money Wisely**

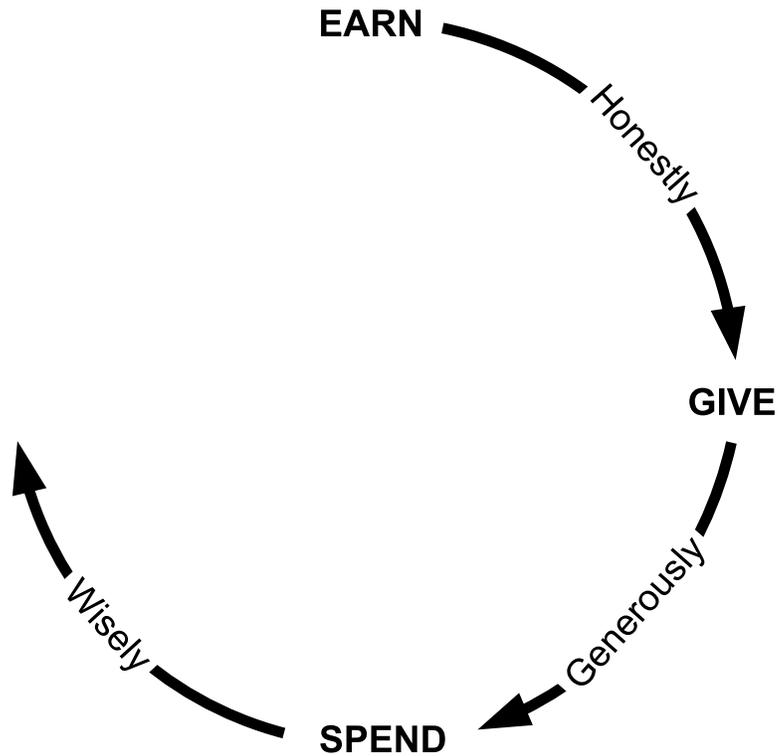
When you earn honestly and give generously, financial faithfulness requires you to spend it wisely. The first priority is to spend it on your family needs.

*“Who is a faithful, sensible servant, to whom the master can give the responsibility of managing his household and feeding his family?”* **Matthew 24:45** (NLT)

**Q10.** How would you define the difference between a need and a want?

The Bible says that God will supply all your needs.

*“And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* **Philippians 4:19** (NKJ)



- Q11.** Have you ever spent money on things you didn't need before you paid for all the things you did need?
- Q12.** If you are in debt, can you trace it back to spending money on things you wanted but didn't need?

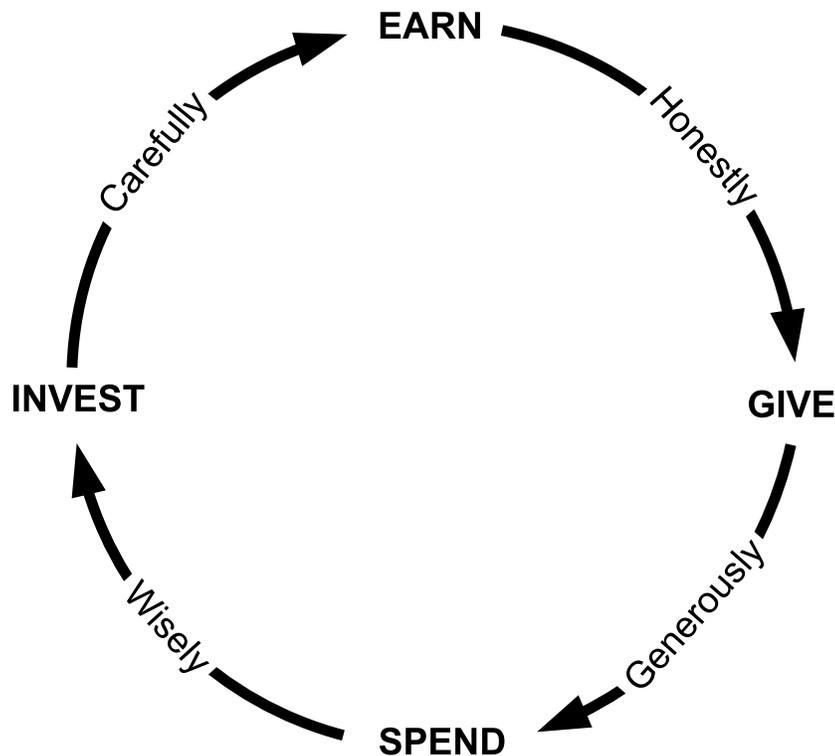
### **Invest Money Carefully**

When you earn money honestly then you can give it generously and spend it wisely. With the remainder, invest it carefully in order to bring an increase.

*“The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of gold said, ‘Sir, you gave me five bags of gold to invest, and I have doubled the amount.’ The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’”* **Matthew 25:20–21** (NLT)

Investing God’s money is another issue of faithfulness. The goal of investing money is to make the money grow. Spending money on something that goes down in value, like a car or a boat, is not investing. Hoarding money in a place where it does not grow is not investing either.

*“Well, you should at least have put my money into the bank so I could have some interest.”*  
**Matthew 25:27** (NLT)



Investing is buying something today that can be sold for more money in the future. Investing carefully is another way to earn money honestly. Earning money honestly starts the whole cycle over again.

Eventually, you could have enough money invested that the money you get from your investments could pay for all your giving, spending, and reinvesting.

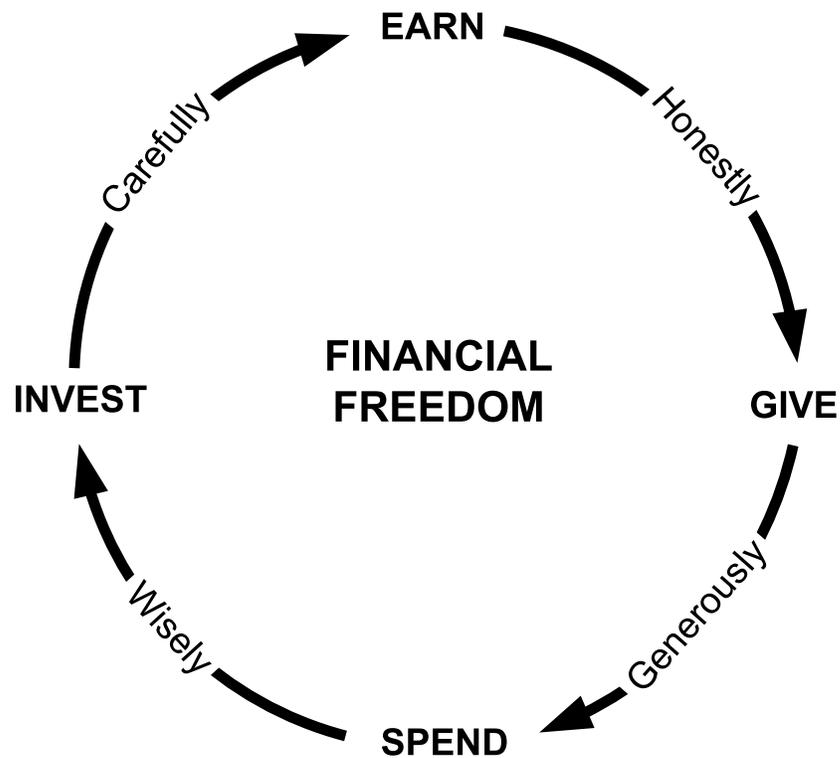
**Q13.** What benefit would you gain from investing money?

**Q14.** What would you do with your time if you had financial freedom?

*“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Galatians 5:13 (NASB)*

### **Financial Freedom**

Financial freedom actually lies within the boundaries of these four principles.



Though it may seem at times that freedom could come from breaking outside the boundaries defined by financial faithfulness, the truth is that only misery, slavery, and death wait for you on the outside.

*“Trust in the LORD with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths.” Proverbs 3:5–6 (NLT)*

Slavery and loss are on the outside of financial faithfulness.

- If you don't **earn** money *honestly*, you could end up in prison.
- If you don't **give** *generously*, you will miss out on God's blessing.
- If you don't **spend** money *wisely*, you might end up in bankruptcy.
- If you don't **invest** *carefully*, you will never have income from investments to pay for your spending and giving.

### **Conclusion**

**Talk to God** about your finances. Write what He shows you.

**Q15.** Are you willing to do whatever He wants you to do with your finances? If so, when will you take action?

**Take action** on what God has shown you.

**Share** with someone this week what you have learned from this lesson. Draw the diagram and explain God's plan for financial freedom.

# Financial Freedom

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Chapter 2

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## GIVE GENEROUSLY

*“If you give, you will receive. Your gift will return to you in full measure, pressed down, shaken together to make room for more, and running over. Whatever measure you use in giving – large or small – it will be used to measure what is given back to you.”* **Luke 6:38** (NLT)

Giving generously is the second phase in our cycle of financial freedom.

Giving is a supernatural way to bring an increase to your finances. Getting ahead by giving really doesn't make any sense but God says that if you do it He will bless you. In fact, God says that He will prove to you that giving works.

*“If you do,’ says the LORD Almighty, ‘I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! **Try it! Let me prove it to you!**”* **Malachi 3:10** (NLT)

First, if you want to initiate God's increase, give.

### **Receive Increase**

Giving is a spiritual matter. It involves you and God. Ask God to show you how much to give, where to give, when to give and even if you should give to something or someone.

God wants your attitude about giving to be cheerful. He wants you to actually enjoy giving.

*“You must each make up your own mind as to how much you should give. Don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For God loves the person who gives cheerfully.” 2 Corinthians 9:7 (NLT)*

**Q1.** Are you a cheerful giver?

**Q2.** Do you find yourself irritated by giving or pressured into giving?

God wants you to give cheerfully and He wants you to give generously.

The principle of sowing and reaping is seen throughout scripture. If you give generously, it is like sowing seeds and it produces God’s blessing. You reap *God’s increase*.

*“Give freely and spontaneously. Don’t have a stingy heart. The way you handle matters like this triggers God, your God’s, blessing in everything you do, all your work and ventures.” Deuteronomy 15:10 (MSG)*

God promises that when you give to Him, He will meet your needs through His provision or supply.

*“Honor the LORD from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty and your vats will overflow with new wine.” Proverbs 3:9–10 (NASB)*

**GIVE**



**Receive  
Increase**

**Q3.** What do you think experiencing God's increase in your life would be like?

There are three things your giving accomplishes:

1. It acknowledges God.
2. It helps the needy.
3. It spreads the Gospel.

### **Acknowledge God**

Giving starts with God. God owns everything. There is nothing that exists that didn't come from God. Therefore, all that you have comes from God. Your ability to give comes only because you have something and that something that you have came from God.

*"The earth is the LORD'S, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it." Psalm 24:1 (NASB)*

Can you give God anything? No, you really can't. But you can dedicate a portion to God.

By giving a portion of what you have, you acknowledge that God is the owner of all. This passage in Deuteronomy talks about proportional giving.

*“...Bring him a freewill offering in proportion to the blessings you have received from him.”*

**Deuteronomy 16:10** (NLT)

**Q4.** Do you give in proportion to what you have received?

**Q5.** What kind of proportion or percentage do you give?

The Bible often refers to proportional giving as a tithe. The literal translation of the word “tithe” is “tenth.”

*“And concerning the **tithe** of the herd or the flock...the **tenth** one shall be holy to the Lord.”*

**Leviticus 27:32** (NKJ)

Instead of bringing animals or crops as a tithe you can bring your finances to the place where God is honored and His work is being done. Giving a tithe reminds you that everything, not only the ten percent, belongs to God.

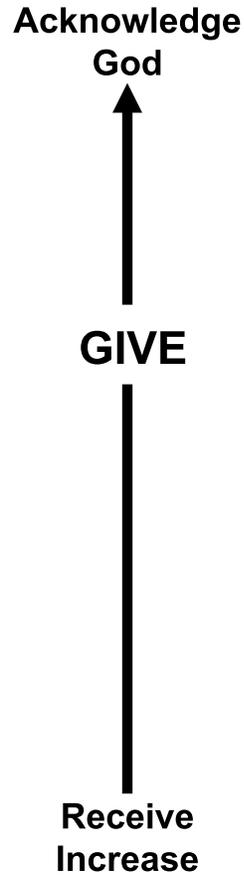
*“Bring this **tithe** to the place the LORD your God chooses for his name to be honored...This applies to your tithes of grain, new wine, olive oil, and the firstborn males of your flocks and herds. The purpose of tithing is to teach you always to fear the LORD your God.”*

**Deuteronomy 14:23** (NLT)

So, whether you have a lot or a little, in God’s economy we are all giving the same when we give our tithe.

Giving your tithe can be the first thing you do with your money. As you receive a paycheck or increase of assets, give back a tithe of that income.

*“On every Lord’s Day, each of you should put aside some amount of money in relation to what you have earned and save it for this offering...”* **1 Corinthians 16:2** (NLT)



Q6. Is your giving based on a tithe or tenth of all you receive? Explain.

Q7. If not, are you willing to begin tithing?

Consider what God says in the following verse.

*“Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated me!’ But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat you?’ ‘You have cheated me of the tithes and offerings due to me.’”*  
**Malachi 3:8** (NLT)

## The Needy

Taking care of the poor and needy is not a new idea invented by the government. Charity is God's idea. God is compassionate and He wants His people to take care of the poor and needy. The Bible teaches us to give generously to the poor.

*“There are always going to be poor and needy people among you. So I command you: Always be generous, open purse and hands, give to your neighbors in trouble, your poor and hurting neighbors.”*

**Deuteronomy 15:11** (MSG)

- Q8.** What is your attitude toward the poor?
- Q9.** Do you reach out to them through your giving?
- Q10.** Have you experienced God's blessing as a result of giving to the needy?

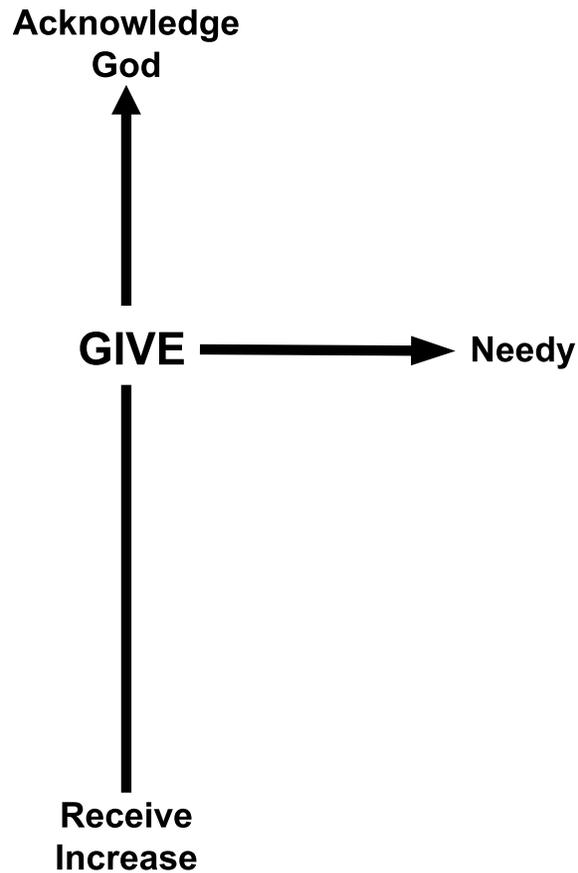
You are giving to God when you give to the poor and needy.

*“...Lord, when did we ever see you hungry and feed you? Or thirsty and give you something to drink? Or a stranger and show you hospitality? Or naked and give you clothing? ...And the King will tell them, ‘I assure you, when you did it to one of the least of these my brothers and sisters, you were doing it to me!’”*

**Matthew 25:37–38, 40** (NLT)

There is a link between our generosity and His blessing.

*“Generous hands are blessed hands because they give bread to the poor.”* **Proverbs 22:9** (MSG)



Giving initiates God's increase. By giving, you acknowledge that everything belongs to God. When you give to the needy, you are giving to what God cares about.

**Q11.** What is something of value God is asking you to give?

As important as it is to give to the physical needs of people, God cares most deeply about where individuals will spend eternity – with or without Him.

## Spread the Gospel

He cares about their souls. He demonstrated His great love for people, by giving His Son. His giving was generous and sacrificial.

*“For God so loved the world that he **gave** his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.” **John 3:16** (NLT)*

Giving financial support to ministries that spread the gospel (the Good News) is another way of giving to what God cares about.

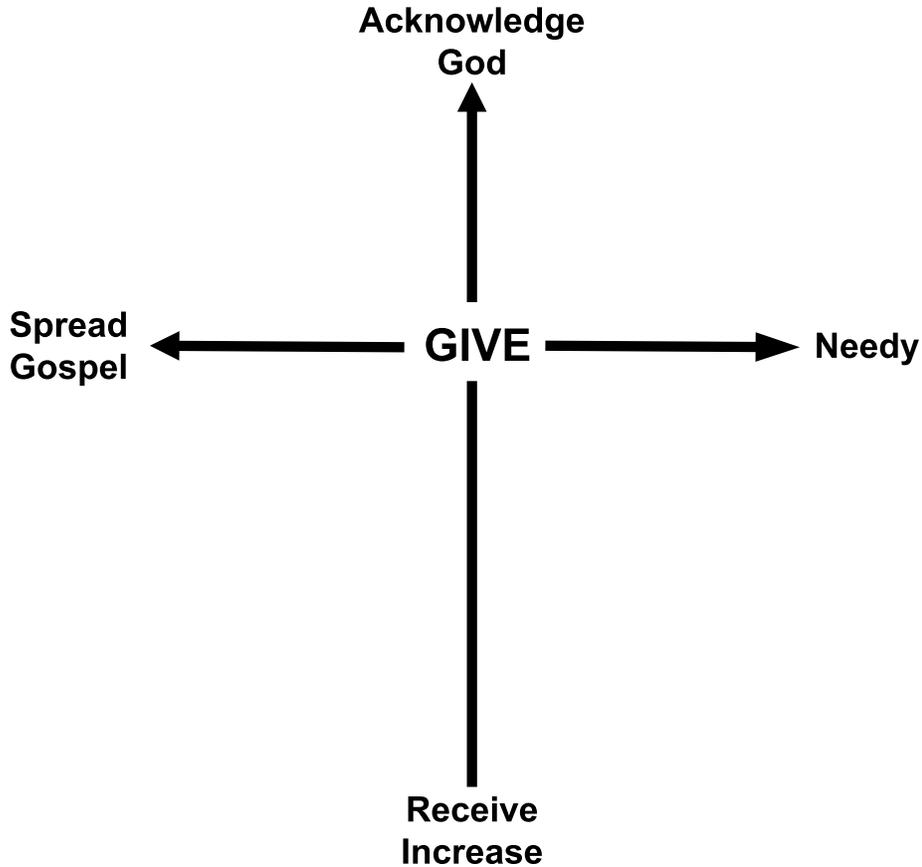
*“...You have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.” **Philippians 1:5** (NLT)*

You can give cheerfully because you are helping people come to know Him.

God has called people to teach others how to live.

*“Those who are taught the word of God should help their teachers by paying them.” **Galatians 6:6** (NLT)*

**Q12.** Do you support the people who work at teaching the word of God?



**Q13.** Do you consider yourself a generous giver?

**Q14.** Would others consider you a generous giver?

If not, examine your motives and beliefs about God and money.

*“Speaking to the people, he went on, ‘Take care! Protect yourself against the least bit of greed. Life is not defined by what you have, even when you have a lot.’”*

**Luke 12:15** (MSG)

Your giving is to be generous. Your giving is to be sacrificial. This is because your giving is to reflect the way your Heavenly Father gives to you. God gave His greatest possession, Jesus, for you to have what

you have. Notice the shape of this diagram has formed a cross. Jesus gave His everything.

**Conclusion**

**Q15.** What did God show you through this chapter on giving?

**Q16.** What is God showing you to do in regards to your giving?

**Believe God** will bring an increase as you give.

**Thank Him** for the increase.

**Do** what God is showing you to do in regards to giving.

# Giving

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*



# Chapter 3

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## SPEND WISELY

*“The wise have wealth and luxury, but fools spend whatever they get.” Proverbs 21:20 (NLT)*

Financial freedom does not require great wealth. Rather, it requires the proper management of whatever assets and funds one possesses. That is financial faithfulness.

The Bible speaks of honest earning, generous giving, wise spending, and careful investing. This chapter will focus on God’s guidelines for spending money and the consequences of not following those guidelines.

Have you noticed how some people who don’t earn much money end up, over time, becoming financially free? While others who have large salaries end up with very little or nothing to show for it? How does this happen?

*“You have planted much but harvested little. You have food to eat, but not enough to fill you up. You have wine to drink, but not enough to satisfy your thirst. You have clothing to wear, but not enough to keep you warm. Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!” Haggai 1:6 (NLT)*

### Starts Out Easy

To go from having much to having little, starts out easy. It is easy to spend money on things you don’t really need.

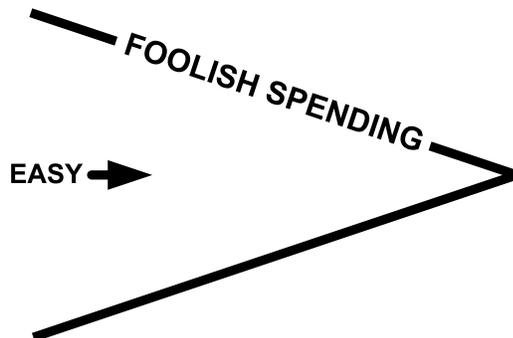
- Q1.** Do you spend money on things you don’t need?

- Q2. Do you purchase things on credit so you can get them right now instead of waiting until you have the funds to purchase them?
- Q3. Have you ever spent more than you had because you saw something you wanted?

Believing money is yours to use as you please leads to foolish spending.

The diagram below illustrates how *foolish spending* is like a wide gate. There are many people who go down this path because it is *easy* to get started on it. However, as you will see, it is a dangerous path.

“...**Wide** is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it.”  
**Matthew 7:13** (NKJ)



When you go through the wide gate, you are spending more than you have, using credit to get what you want, and buying whatever you want whenever you want it. Although this path starts out easy, it typically leads to unpaid bills and working more jobs or longer hours just to keep up with daily living expenses. This path often leads to strained relationships, headaches, stress, and discontentment.

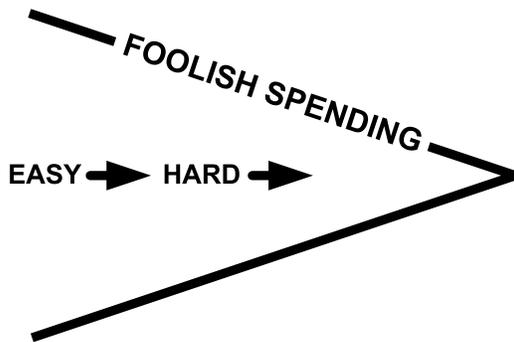
- Q4. Has there been a strain on your relationships due to wrong spending? Explain.

Q5. Have you experienced any negative emotions (depression, anxiety, and worry) due to your finances? Explain.

### Gets Hard

Foolish or unwise spending is the main cause of financial hardship. Notice how the path becomes *hard* and difficult.

*“But don’t begin until you count the cost. For who would begin construction of a building without first getting estimates and then checking to see if there is enough money to pay the bills?” Luke 14:28 (NLT)*

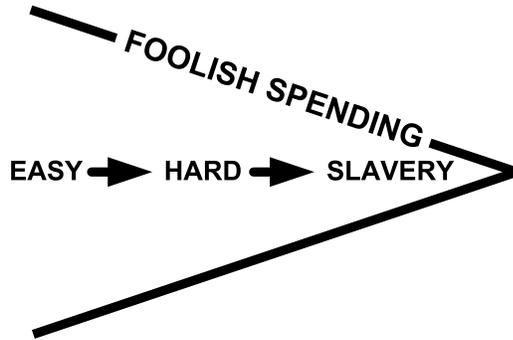


### Slavery

The way that once was easy, over time, gets harder and ends in *slavery*. You are a slave to debt, creditors, and possibly even bankruptcy.

*“The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower becomes the lender’s **slave**.” Proverbs 22:7 (NASB)*

- Q6. If you are having financial difficulties, mark (X) to show where you are on the following diagram.



- Q7. Are you a slave to your bills, loans, and creditors? Explain.
- Q8. In what ways have you been foolish in your spending?
- Q9. If you find yourself on this diagram, have you believed that God's money is your money?
- Q10. Do you think the consequences of foolish spending will catch up with you? When?

*"But if the servant thinks, 'My master won't be back for a while,'...The master will return unannounced and unexpected. He will tear the servant apart and banish him with the unfaithful. The servant will be severely punished, for though he knew his duty, he refused to do it." Luke 12:45–47 (NLT)*

## God Uses It

God can use your financial slavery to help you make a decision to stop doing things your way. He wants you to go His way because when you obey Him, you will be blessed.

*“If troubles come upon them and they are **enslaved** and afflicted, he [God] takes the trouble to show them the reason. He shows them their sins, for they have behaved proudly. He gets their attention and says they must turn away from evil. If they listen and obey God, then they will be blessed with prosperity throughout their lives. All their years will be pleasant.” Job 36:8–11 (NLT)*

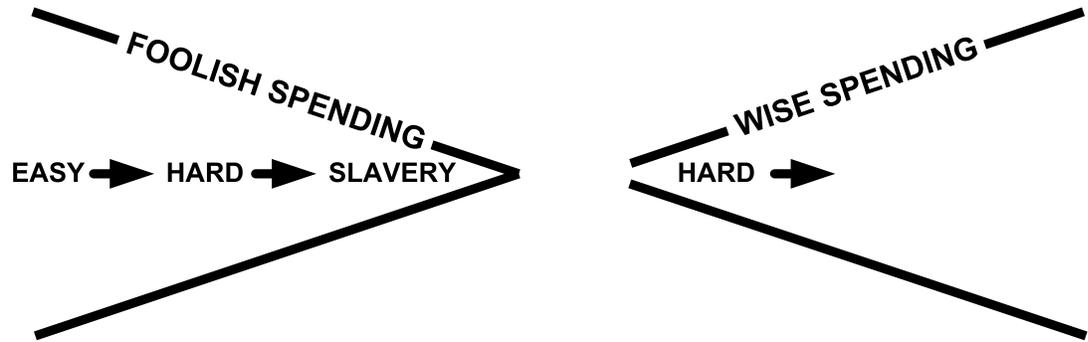
- Q11.** How has God been using what you are going through to get your attention?
- Q12.** Are you ready to give up foolish spending and do things God’s way?

The Bible calls people who manage their money God’s way, good stewards. A good steward is someone that uses money wisely and desires to please God. As a good steward, you need to be faithful whether God has given you much or little to manage.

*“Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won’t be faithful in large ones. If you cheat even a little, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities. And if you are untrustworthy about worldly wealth, who will trust you with the true riches of heaven? And if you are not faithful with other people’s money, why should you be trusted with money of your own?” Luke 16:10–12 (NLT)*

In the next diagram, notice the gate to wise spending is *narrow*. It is reached through a commitment to doing things God’s way.

*“...**Narrow** is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.” Matthew 7:14 (NKJ)*



**Q13.** Why do you think moving from foolish spending to wise spending starts out hard?

### **Starts Out Hard**

Wise spending might seem hard at first because you are more familiar with doing things your own way instead of God's way. New things always start out difficult and awkward. Secondly, it takes time to make a plan or budget. Finally, it's difficult because you will be putting off immediate gratification as you spend wisely.

### **God's Guidelines**

Consider the following items and scriptures as you prepare your monthly budget.

1. Pay taxes.

*"Give to everyone what you owe them: Pay your **taxes** and import duties, and give respect and honor to all to whom it is due."* **Romans 13:7** (NLT)

This verse answers the question about whether God expects you to pay taxes to the government or not. You don't need to pay more than you owe, but do pay what you owe.

**Q14.** Do you deny the government its money or cheat on your taxes? Explain.

2. Take care of necessities.

*“But those who won’t care for their own relatives, especially those living in the same household, have denied what we believe. Such people are worse than unbelievers.” 1 Timothy 5:8 (NLT)*

Take care of your family by providing for their necessities. *Necessities are food, clothing, shelter, and basic transportation.* The Bible makes it clear that God considers meeting these needs for your family very important.

**Q15.** What are your family’s necessities? Are they provided for?

**Q16.** Do you spend money on wants and then not have enough money to pay for your needs? Describe.

3. Spend less than you earn.

*“There is desirable treasure, and oil in the dwelling of the wise, but a **foolish** man squanders it.”*  
**Proverbs 21:20 (NKJ)**

One of God’s principles is to not spend all the money that you have. Spending everything you earn makes it impossible to save or ever have anything to invest carefully.

**Q17.** Are you living within your income?

4. Practice prompt payments.

*“Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it,’ When you have it with you.”*  
**Proverbs 3:28 (NKJ)**

Another one of God's principles is to practice prompt payments for the things you have promised to pay. Don't use the money that is committed to a lender for other things you want.

**Q18.** Are you quick to pay your bills and debts? Why or why not?

5. Eliminate debt.

*“Pay all your **debts**, except the debt of love for others. You can never finish paying that!...”* **Romans 13:8** (NLT)

If you have gone into debt, you need to honor your obligation to pay it back.

Foolish spending can involve self-indulgence and poor planning, which are both indications of not following God's plan. These end in financial slavery like overdue bills, debt and bondage to lenders, dissatisfaction, property decay, worry, and family poverty.

Even though doing things God's way may start out hard, financial slavery is much worse.

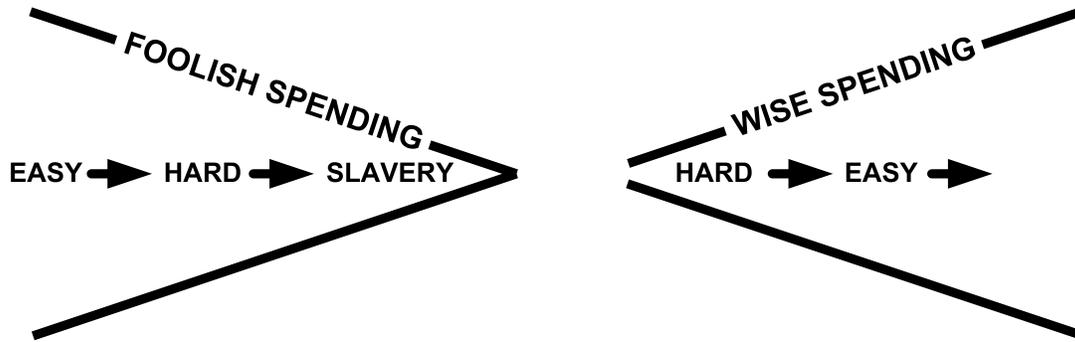
In summary, determine what you owe in taxes and pay them first. Then determine what your family's real necessities are and pay for those next. Then determine what you owe and pay off your debts. Lastly, what is left over can be used for investments.

**Q19.** Are you using your money the way God desires? Why or why not?

### **Gets Easier**

Although the path of wise spending starts out hard, it does become easier as you consistently follow God's patterns. The benefits of wise spending will be that your needs will be met and you will have extra to give and eventually invest.

*“So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time.”* **Galatians 6:9** (NLT)



## Freedom

As you continue on the path of wise spending, not only will it become easier, you ultimately will experience financial *freedom*.

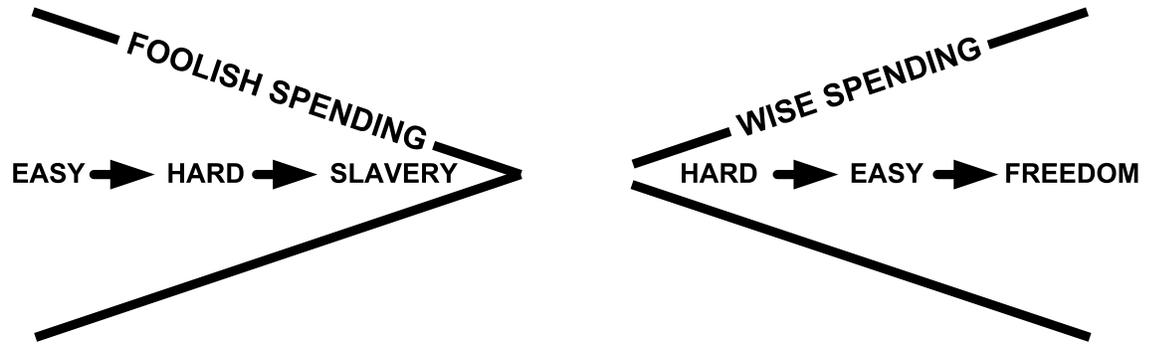
*“God has led you away from danger, giving you **freedom**.  
You have prospered in a wide and pleasant valley.”*  
**Job 36:16** (NLT)

Many people at this point begin to really enjoy the fruit of their wise spending. Some are able to retire and serve in ministries or donate their time and talents to worthy causes.

*“The **wise** have wealth and luxury, but **fools** spend whatever they get.”* **Proverbs 21:20** (NLT)

Consider this paradox. Foolish spenders think they are free to do whatever they want with their finances, but it leads to slavery and bondage. Wise spenders give up their way to become servants of God and find freedom.

Freedom doesn't come from doing what you want but from doing what God wants.

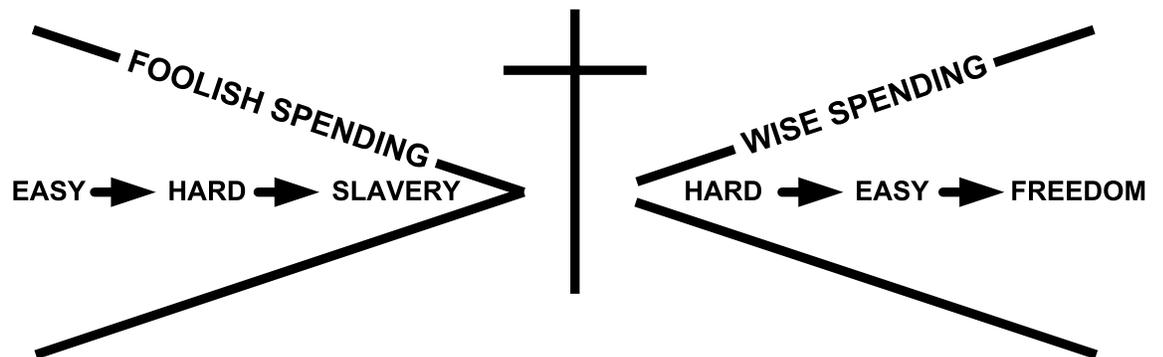


*“I will walk in **freedom**, for I have devoted myself to your commandments.” Psalm 119:45 (NLT)*

### Deny Yourself

The power to change from foolish spending to wise spending comes from Jesus. When He is at the center of your life, He enables you to turn from being self-focused, unfaithful, and foolish to being God focused, faithful, and wise.

On the next diagram, the cross illustrates Christ’s obedience and your need to deny yourself and follow Him.



*“And He was saying to them all, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.’” Luke 9:23 (NASB)*

**Q20.** What would denying yourself look like in the financial area?

## Personal Application

### Make a Plan

**Make a plan** or budget to accomplish financial freedom. Planning is an issue of faithfulness. It is up to you to make your plans, but up to God to allow you to carry out your plans.

*“We **plan** the way we want to live, but only God makes us able to live it. It Pays to Take Life Seriously.”*

**Proverbs 16:9** (MSG)

Even God makes plans.

*“For I know the plans I have for you,’ says the LORD. ‘They are plans for good and not for disaster, to give you a future and a hope.’” **Jeremiah 29:11** (NLT)*

Faithful planning requires paying attention to detail. In ancient times, shepherds were to know exactly what was going on with their work and source of revenue. It is the same for us today.

Some people still have livestock to care and account for. Others have different income sources and amounts. To be faithful requires you to know what is happening in the financial area of your life.

*“**Know well the condition** of your flocks, {And} pay attention to your herds.” **Proverbs 27:23** (NASB)*

**Q21.** Do you have a financial plan for you and your family?

**Q22.** Does your plan take into consideration your future and your present situation?

**Q23.** If you don't have a plan, is there something you are waiting for?

**Ask God** to help you make a budget and give up whatever is necessary to enter the narrow gate.

*“And the Lord replied, ‘I’m talking to any faithful, sensible servant to whom the master gives the responsibility of managing his household and feeding his family. If the master returns and finds that the servant has done a good job, there will be a reward. I assure you, the master will put that servant in charge of all he owns.’”*

**Luke 12:42–44** (NLT)

If you don’t have a plan you already follow, start by filling out the **Budget Planning Form** at the end of this manual.

Ask God to give you the opportunity to share this diagram and the truth you have learned with someone else this week.

With the excess that wise spending creates, you will have money for investing, saving, and debt reduction.

# **Foolish and Wise Spending**

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*



## INVEST CAREFULLY

*“To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who are unfaithful, even what little they have will be taken away.”* **Matthew 25:29** (NLT)

Investing carefully is the fourth phase in the Financial Freedom Cycle. The cycle begins by earning money honestly, giving money generously, spending money wisely, and then investing money carefully. Running this cycle requires making a plan and following it.

Even though some parts of the cycle may seem more significant or spiritual than investing, the Bible doesn't make that distinction. God wants you to be faithful whether you are earning, giving, spending or investing.

### **Extra Money**

- Q1.** If you were given \$100 right now, what is the first thing that comes to your mind to do with it?
  
- Q2.** If you were given \$1000 today, what would you do with it?
  
- Q3.** Imagine being given \$10,000. What would you do with that amount of money?

**Q4.** One last time, what would you do with \$1,000,000?

If you said you would spend any of that money on things (after tithing) other than getting out of debt or investing, then you are not thinking about financial freedom.

*“The wise have wealth and luxury, but fools spend whatever they get.”* **Proverbs 21:20** (NLT)

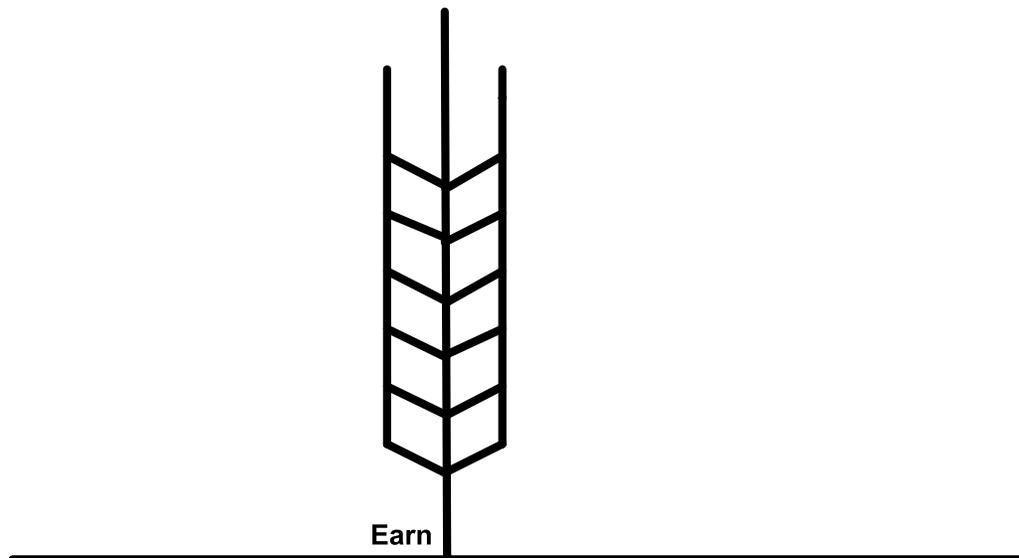
The final phase of financial freedom is having a surplus to invest. If the first thing you do with any amount of surplus is spend it, then you will have nothing to invest. To have money to invest, you begin by considering how much you earn monthly. Before you can give, spend, or invest, you must earn.

### **Fruit of Your Labor**

The Bible refers to the outcome of a person’s labors as fruit. The money that you earn each month is like the crop a farmer harvests.

*“Hardworking farmers are the first to enjoy the fruit of their labor.”* **2 Timothy 2:6** (NLT)

The following diagram illustrates how your monthly earnings are like the grains on a stalk of wheat. There are ten grains on this stalk.



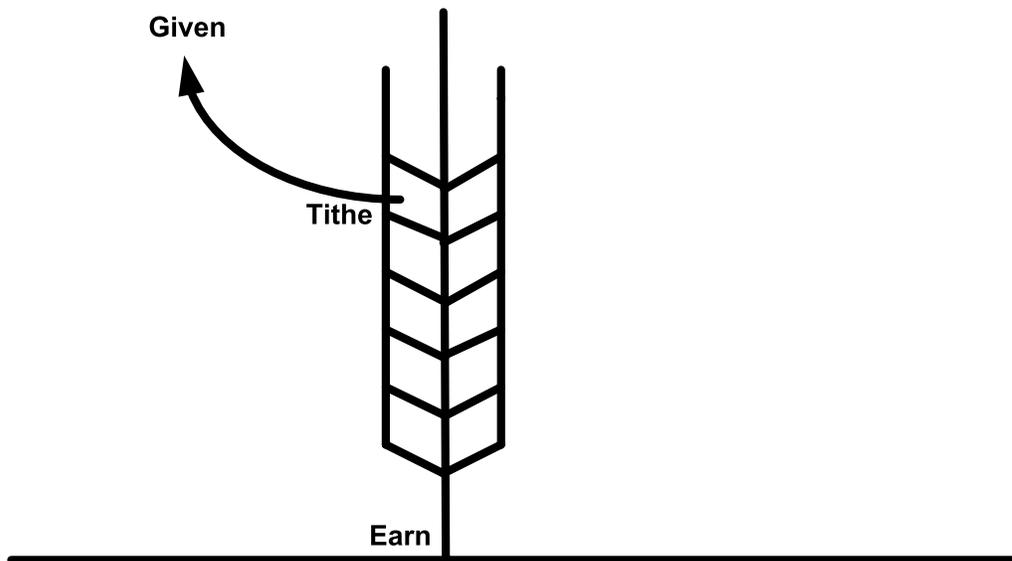
## Tithe First

The Bible teaches that you should honor the Lord by giving the first part of your income.

*“Honor the Lord with your possessions, And with the firstfruits of all your increase.” Proverbs 3:9 (NKJ)*

Giving a tithe is one tenth of your income. A tithe is the Lord’s portion.

The following diagram shows that you honor the Lord by giving a tithe from what you have earned. Since a *tithe* is a tenth of the total, you have *given* one.



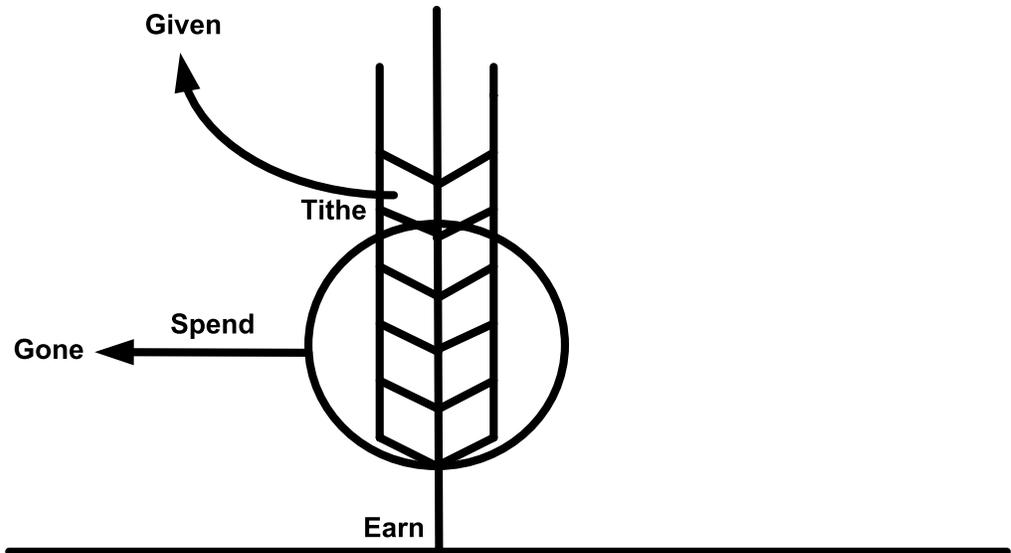
- Q5. As you thought about what you would do if money was given to you, did you consider giving a tithe?

## What You Spend

God has given you money to provide for your needs, so spend it wisely. Whatever you *spend* from the total amount of money you have earned, is now *gone*.

*“To those who use well what they are given, even more will be given, and they will have an abundance. But from those who are unfaithful, even what little they have will be taken away.”* **Matthew 25:29** (NLT)

The following diagram illustrates how eight tenths of what you earn is gone once you spend it.



**Q6.** Do you spend everything that you earn or do you have any surplus?

### **Invest Your Surplus**

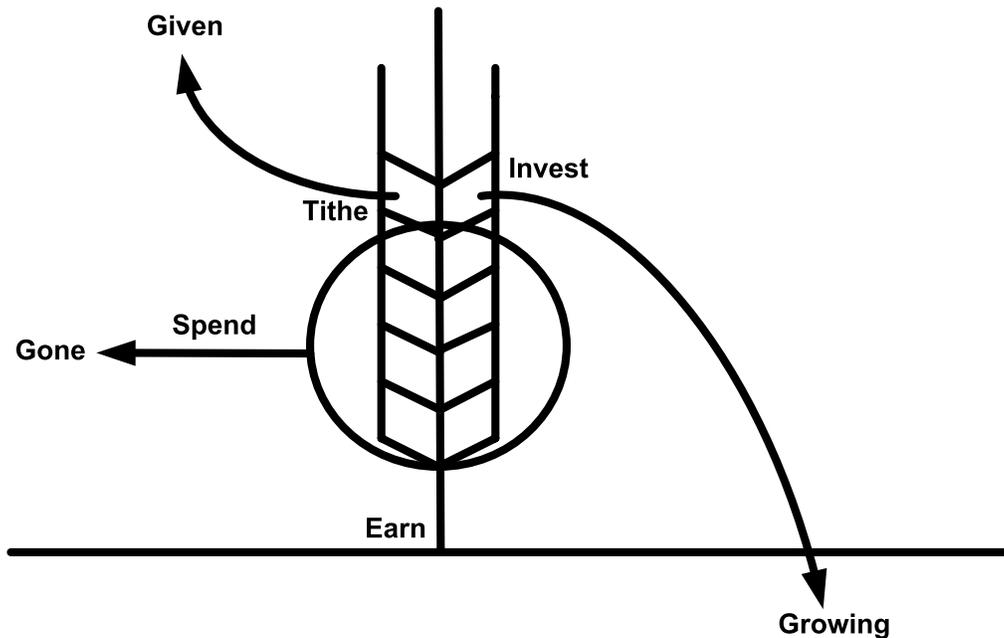
If you have money left over after your monthly expenses, then God has given you more money to manage for Him. If you gave your money to someone to manage, wouldn't you want that manager to give you an increase on your money?

*“Again, the Kingdom of Heaven can be illustrated by the story of a man going on a trip. He called together his servants and gave them money to invest for him while he was gone. He gave five bags of gold to one, two bags of gold to another, and one bag of gold to the last – dividing it in proportion to their abilities – and then left on his trip.”* **Matthew 25:14–15** (NLT)

Do you know how to bring an increase on God's money? This is where faith comes in. You need to believe that you have the ability to manage what God has given you. He didn't give you more than you have the ability to handle.

The way to bring an increase on the money entrusted to you is by investing. Investing is like planting seeds. The money you invest carefully is not gone, it is growing.

The following diagram illustrates the remaining portion of what you have earned being *invested* and it is *growing*.



- Q7. Do you believe God wants you to bring an increase to the money He has given you?

### Reasons to Invest

There are two reasons to invest. One is that it is good management of the Master's money. You are being a faithful steward. The second reason is that careful investing can eventually provide all the income you would need to live.

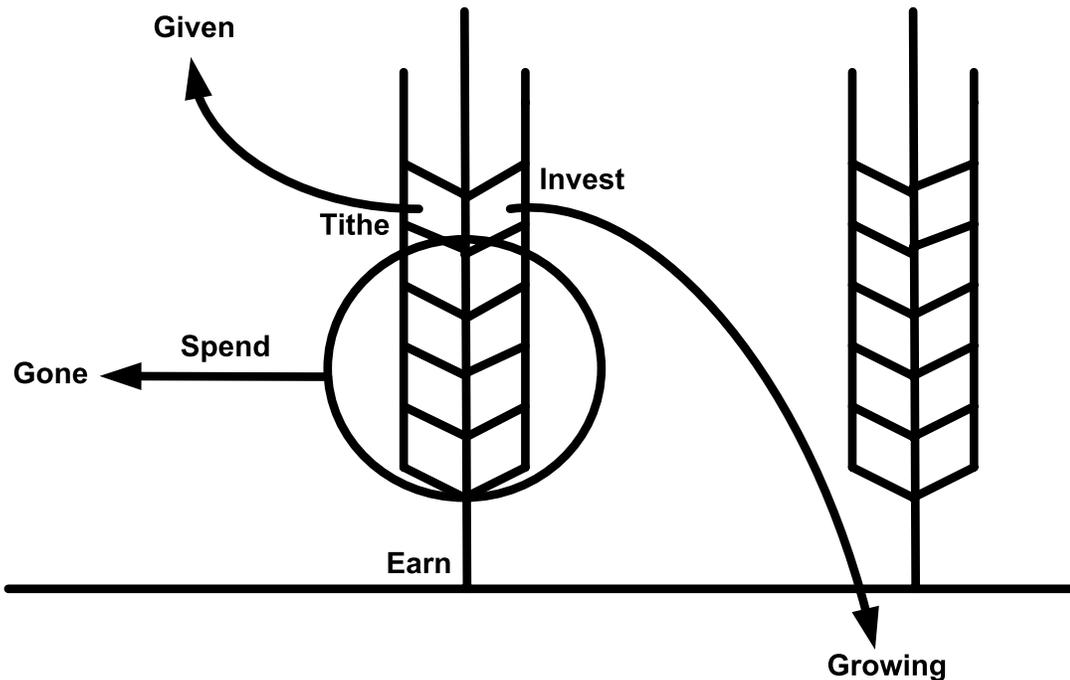
*“The servant to whom he had entrusted the five bags of gold said, ‘Sir, you gave me five bags of gold to invest, and I have doubled the amount.’ The master was full of praise. ‘Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities. Let’s celebrate together!’”* **Matthew 25:20–21** (NLT)

- Q8.** How have you been managing the money God has given you?
- Q9.** Are you managing your money in such a way that you could eventually live off of your investments? If not, why?

When you plant a seed, it will grow and eventually produce a harvest. When you invest your surplus, it will grow and eventually become a significant source of income. Just like you plant a seed in one season and harvest in another, an investment takes time (years) to multiply.

The following diagram illustrates a *new* plant grows from the investments you have made.

## Bringing an Increase



The more seed you get in the ground the larger the harvest. Likewise the more money you invest, the more your investments will earn. If you want to have an abundant harvest in the future, invest as much as you can today.

### Definition of Investment

To invest is to put your money to use in order to gain a financial increase. Buying things today that will sell for a higher price in the future is investing.

For example: A house is considered an investment because as long as it is taken care of, it usually goes up in value. Other investments might be land, mutual funds, stocks, bonds, and rental property.

A car is usually not a good investment because the longer you own it; the more it goes down in value. A car is an expense, not an investment.

If you keep your money invested, it will continue to grow.

## Doubling

The value of your investment will double over time. The greater the percentage return on the investment, the faster the investment will double.

The following formula can be used to calculate the number of years it will take to double the value of an investment.

$$72 \div \text{interest rate} = \text{years it takes to double}$$

Example:  $72 \div 8 = 9$  years (investment doubles in 9 years at 8%)

There is another economic rule that tends to be true when it comes to investing. As a rule, the higher the percent return on an investment the riskier that investment may be. Risky investments may result in the loss of your money.

## Higher Return = Greater Risk

**Q10.** Is a high return worth the risk of losing your money?

Obviously, you don't want to lose your money but investing money will always involve some risk.

*“But the servant who received the one bag of gold dug a hole in the ground and hid the master's money for safekeeping. But the master replied, ‘You wicked and lazy servant...You should at least have put my money into the bank so I could have some interest.’”*

**Matthew 25:18, 26–27** (NLT)

The right motive for investing is faithfulness. If fear is your motive, you may do nothing. If greed is your motive, you may invest carelessly (with too much risk). If faithfulness is your motive, you remember it is God's money and He expects an increase.

## Warning

Any percentage of annual increase that sounds too good to be true probably is too good to be true.

*“Only simpletons believe everything they are told! The prudent carefully consider their steps.”*

**Proverbs 14:15** (NLT)

## Diversify

One way to reduce the risk of losing everything, if an investment goes bad, is to divide your money into several different investments.

*“Divide your portion to seven, or even to eight, for you do not know what misfortune may occur on the earth.”*

**Ecclesiastes 11:2** (NASB)

## Investment Benefits in Retirement

Eventually, your careful investing will create a sizeable reserve. That reserve can be large enough to produce a yearly increase that pays for your annual giving and spending. At that point, you could live off the income from your investment.

When you have this source of income from your investments, you could retire. Since you don't have to earn money at a job, your *financial* freedom has brought you *time* freedom.

You could spend this time God has blessed you with helping your family, church or community.

Financial freedom might allow you to help with raising your grandchildren.

Finally, financial freedom protects you during seasons of your life when you are not able to work or earn money from your labors.

*“Ants – they aren't strong, but they store up food for the winter.”* **Proverbs 30:25** (NLT)

**Q11.** What would you do if you had enough money that you could retire?

*“For you were called to freedom, brethren; only do not turn your freedom into an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.”* **Galatians 5:13** (NASB)

Financial freedom not only provides for your ongoing giving and spending, but it also provides for life's emergencies and leaving an inheritance.

## Emergencies

Unexpected financial emergencies happen. Having money to handle them comes from careful investing. If you don't have an emergency,

then your investment is growing. If you do have an emergency, you can pull money out to pay for it.

### **Inheritance**

*“Good people leave an inheritance to their grandchildren...”* **Proverbs 13:22** (NLT)

Many people think of an inheritance being distributed to their children upon their death. However, think of how much more enjoyment you would get from financially blessing your grandchildren while you are still living. With careful investing, it's possible.

Financial freedom requires planning and a budget that you follow.

- Q12.** How much money would you need per year if you were to quit working? *Assume that your home is paid off and your children are not living with you.*

The only way to save enough for the future is to start investing today. Any expenses that can be eliminated from your spending will increase the amount you have to invest.

The potential to multiply the money entrusted to you becomes an exciting motivation for following a monthly budget and eliminating unnecessary spending.

- Q13.** Have you considered that you may have unnecessary expenses? If so, what are they?
- Q14.** Is it motivating to you to sacrifice some things you want now for the *future* benefit of financial freedom?
- Q15.** If being financially free were your goal, would it be worth following a monthly budget?

You may be thinking that you do not have anything close to what you will need to live on at retirement. Yet, the only way to obtain any kind of reserve is to start with what you have and then consistently add to it every year.

### Making a Plan

Write how much you earn each month in the first blank of the following formula and how much you tithe or give in the second blank, then subtract. The remaining amount is your available income.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Earn – Give = Available Income

Write the amount of your available income on the first blank of the next formula and subtract your monthly expenses. This is your surplus.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ - \$ \_\_\_\_\_ = \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Available Income – Monthly Expenses = Surplus

If you do not know how much your monthly expenses are, use the **Budget Planning Form** to determine that amount.

If you are spending more than you are earning, then you need to eliminate some of your expenses. Otherwise, you are headed for financial *bondage* not financial *freedom*. Financial freedom requires that you spend less than you earn so that you have a surplus.

If you are in debt, getting out of debt is the first thing to do with surplus funds. Getting out of debt is investing in your *future* financial freedom.

## Get Out of Debt

If you are *in* debt, the following steps will help you get *out*:

1. Complete the **Budget Planning Form**.
2. Mark the non-essential items.
3. List them on form A **Available Funds Work Sheet**.
4. Make these funds available for debt reduction by cutting expenses and/or selling the items.
5. List everyone you owe money to (creditors) on form B **Debt Work Sheet**. Follow the directions on the form.
6. Use form C **Debt Elimination** and apply half of the available funds to pay off your smallest debts and divide the other half evenly among your remaining creditors, paying each one an equal amount.

As your smaller debts are paid off, the amount of money you can pay each remaining creditor may increase if you have been making interest only payments on some credit cards. There are no shortcuts to getting out of debt or gaining prosperity, but this plan will allow you to see progress quickly.

Getting out of debt requires a diligent commitment to paying back your creditors.

*“Good planning and hard work lead to prosperity, but hasty shortcuts lead to poverty.” Proverbs 21:5 (NLT)*

- Q16.** Are you willing to take the steps necessary to get out of debt? What steps will you take and when?

If you are out of debt, the rest of your surplus can be invested so that it can grow into a sizeable reserve.

**Ask God** for an investment plan that will increase what God has given you to manage. What did He show you? Write it down.

- Q17.** When will you **start doing** what God has shown you?

# Bringing an Increase

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# FINANCIAL FORMS

## HOW TO MAKE A BUDGET

- BUDGET PLANNING FORM

## FORMS FOR GETTING OUT OF DEBT

- FORM A      AVAILABLE FUNDS WORK SHEET
- FORM B      DEBT WORK SHEET
- FORM C      DEBT ELIMINATION



# FORM A AVAILABLE FUNDS WORK SHEET

1. List total from box E of Budget Planning Form (Investment Potential) on **Line A** below.
2. List all Non-Essential Items using the table below. Non-Essential Items are those items you determine to cut from your monthly expenses to gain surplus dollars for debt reduction or investment.
3. Add the total Non-Essential dollar amount to the Debt Reduction Funds amount.  
**(Line A + Line B = Line C)**
4. Take 50% of your new Debt Reduction Funds total and apply it to your smallest debts. Take the remaining 50% and split it evenly among remaining creditors. (see Form C)

Non-essential Items	Dollar Amount
<b>TOTAL NON-ESSENTIAL DOLLARS</b>	<b>\$</b>

Debt Reduction Funds (Budget Planning Form)	\$ _____	<b>Line A</b>
+ Total Non-Essential Dollars	+ \$ _____	<b>Line B</b>
<b>= TOTAL DEBT REDUCTION FUNDS</b>	<b>= \$ _____</b>	<b>Line C</b>

**50% applied to smallest debts = \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**50% split evenly among remaining debts = \$ \_\_\_\_\_**



# FORM C DEBT ELIMINATION

1. List funds available to reduce the number of CREDITORS and DOLLARS owed in **Table A**. (get these numbers from Form A)
2. List all creditors and dollars owed in order from least to greatest in first two columns in **Table B**. (You first did this randomly in Form B)
3. Use 50% to pay off the smallest debt(s).
4. Use the remaining 50% to pay each remaining creditor an equal amount.
5. List adjusted amounts owed in the monthly columns.
6. Continue paying smallest debts with half your surplus and reducing the dollars owed on remaining debts with the other half until all debts are paid.

**Example:** Calculations based on 5 debts with \$120 total dollars in debt reduction funds, \$60 for paying off smallest debts and \$60 split evenly among remaining creditors. In the first month, the \$45 debt is paid in full and \$15 of the Texaco bill is paid. Plus, the second \$60 is split three ways between the remaining creditors, paying them \$20 each. Notice that with only \$120 applied over 3 months, three debts are completely paid off and significant progress is made on the remaining two. In six more months all debts are paid and surplus can now be applied to investing or savings!

E X A M P L E	Creditors in order—Smallest FIRST (EXAMPLE)	Amount Owed	After 1 Month	After 2 Months	After 3 Months
	1 parents	\$45	--	--	--
	2 Texaco	\$65	\$50	--	--
	3 Doctor	\$90	\$70	\$60	--
	4 Electronics store	\$350	\$330	\$300	\$270
	5 Credit card	\$510	\$490	\$460	\$430

<b>Table A</b> Funds to pay off smallest debts (50% - to reduce number of creditors) \$	Funds split evenly among remaining creditors (50% - to reduce number of dollars owed) \$
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<b>Table B</b> Creditors in order—Smallest FIRST	Amount Owed	After 1 Month	After 2 Months	After 3 Months
1				
2				
3				
4				
5				
6				
7				
8				
9				
10				

# Sharing S.A.L.T. with a Friend

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“...And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.” **1 Peter 3:15** (NLT)

*Meet in a location where your friend feels comfortable sharing.*

## **The Purpose:** Encouragement

How do you encourage your friend? By sharing Biblical truths that have impacted you.

*Ask “Could I share some things with you?”*

## **Sharing with a friend (an informal meeting)**

- Ask, “What’s going on in your life?” or “How are you doing?”
- Listen.
- If necessary, ask questions that help you better understand your friend and his or her situation. For example: “How are you feeling about that?”
- Then share what God has been teaching you as it relates to your friend’s situation.
- If the opportunity allows, draw and explain the S.A.L.T. diagram that is relevant. *This can even be done on a napkin.*
- Encourage your friend and offer to pray.

*Share with an attitude of humility and kindness.*

## **Sharing with a friend (on a regular basis)**

- Make sure your friend has a book.
- Read, study, and answer all questions individually.
- Share your answers with each other and talk about the lesson.
- Draw and explain the diagram for each other.
- Encourage each other to personally apply the lessons.
- Pray together.

*Be sensitive about when to share and the length of your sharing.*

## **Helpful suggestions:**

**Be transparent.** Share your own story. When you are real, other people realize they can be honest too.

**Be a “safe place.”** Information your friend tells you should be kept confidential. Don’t condemn, instead encourage.

**Be a good listener.** Give your friend your full attention. Make eye contact, and, at appropriate times, repeat back what you hear your friend saying. Ask good questions that encourage your friend to talk.

**Be a true friend.** Speak the truth in love.

## **Books in the Seven Areas of Life Training (S.A.L.T.) Series**

### **Titles in the S.A.L.T. Series:**

- Spiritual – My Relationship with God
- Psychological – My Mind, Will, and Emotions
- Social – My Relationship with Others
- Physical – My Body
- Financial – My Money
- Marital – My Relationship with my Spouse
- Parental – My Relationship with my Children
- SALT Instructor's Guide with PowerPoint CD of Diagrams
- SALT Training DVD for Group Leaders

### **About the Authors**

A team of authors at Victorious Christian Living International (VCLi) wrote this book.

For over 25 years, VCLi has been helping believers grow and be successful in all seven areas of life. VCLi trains people and provides materials for effectively ministering to others, including comprehensive church discipleship programs, prison and inner-city ministries, and family ministries. We are headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona with offices in Alabama, Illinois, Guatemala, and Cuba.

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# ***My Marriage***

Marital Area of Life

## **S.A.L.T.**

**Seven Areas of Life Training**®

SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING (S.A.L.T.) MARITAL AREA – MY  
RELATIONSHIP WITH MY SPOUSE, Version 2.0

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## **Dedication**

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*All of us at VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING INTERNATIONAL give God the praise for these SALT materials and dedicate this series to the discipleship of believers worldwide.*

*Thank you to all past and present VCLi staff members. You have played a vital role in developing, teaching, and helping others apply these diagrams, concepts, and lessons.*

*Special thanks go to Rocky Nystrom. Your vision and creativity made this series a reality, your determination brought it to completion; and your heart for people to be free energized us along the way.*

## **About this Series**

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### SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING

Learning how to live victoriously in all seven areas of life is the goal of this comprehensive discipleship series.

This small group or self-study book is simple, yet dynamic. Biblical truths are visually illustrated with powerful diagrams.

Solid Biblical truth is taught in each lesson with a challenge to apply that truth to your life. It is when you apply that truth and share it with others that your life will be profoundly changed.

## **About this Book**

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The *Marital Area of Life* deals with your relationship with your spouse.

In four powerful chapters, you will find challenges to get real in your marriage and start enjoying an intimate relationship with your spouse.

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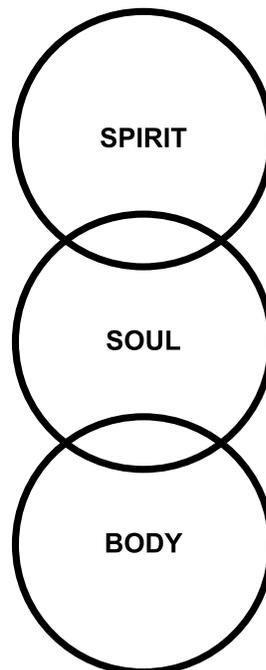
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## TWO BECOMING ONE

*“...And the two are united into one.”* **Genesis 2:24** (NLT)

God created you as a three-part being. You are a spirit, you have a soul, and you live in a body. God designed marriage so there would be unity or intimacy in all three of those parts of your being.



**Q1.** Do you feel “one” with your spouse? Explain.

The phrase “becoming one” or “two united into one” is about *intimacy* between a man and woman in a marriage relationship.

*“But because there is so much sexual immorality, each **man** should have his own wife, and each **woman** should have her own husband.” 1 Corinthians 7:2 (NLT)*

An intimate couple is affectionate, close, and loving. The man and woman share their bodies with each other. They share what is in their souls (minds, emotions, and wills) with each other. They share spiritual intimacy through having a mutual relationship with God.

### **Spiritual Intimacy**

When the spirits are connected, the husband and wife have spiritual intimacy. It is based on a common *devotion* to Jesus Christ. The couple believes Jesus died for their sins and they are a part of God’s family. The Holy Spirit fills them with God’s love.

*“...For we know how dearly God loves us, because he has given us the Holy Spirit to fill our hearts with his love.” Romans 5:5 (NLT)*

- Q2.** Do you and your spouse have this common devotion to Jesus Christ? Explain.

Spiritual intimacy is centered in a *devotion* to God and love for the other person. This love comes from the Source of love, God Himself. Sharing a mutual spiritual commitment is the most important part of a marriage because it is the permanent part of the relationship that can stand alone if necessary.

When you were married, you made a vow before God to be committed to each other. The Christ-like part of you wants to remain committed to your spouse and that vow.

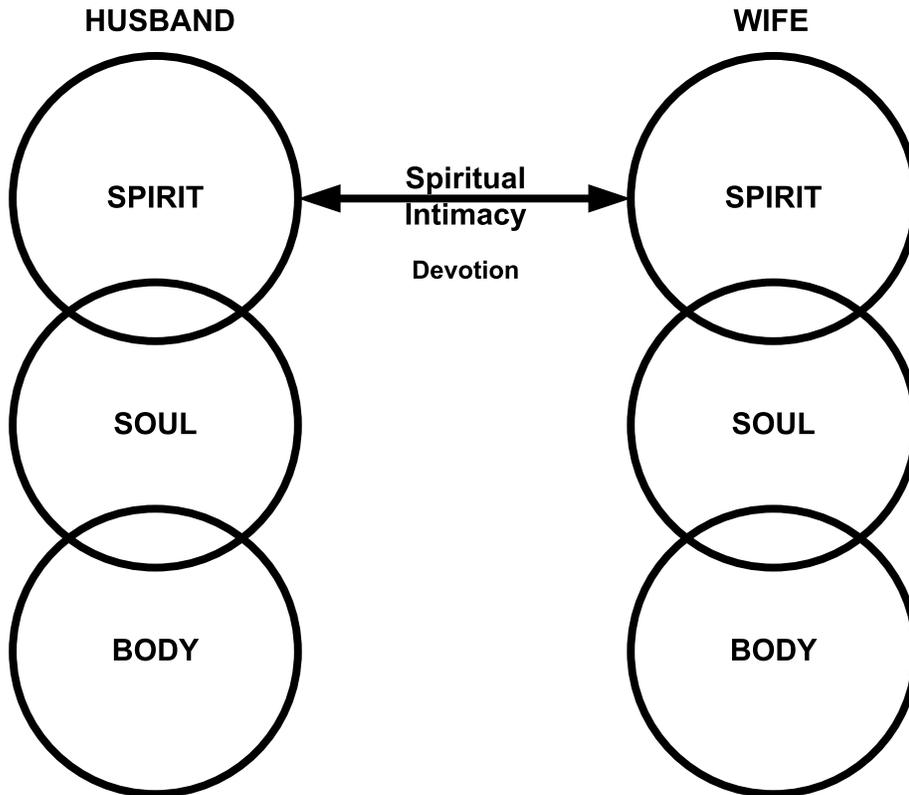
*“A man who makes a **vow** to the LORD or makes a pledge under oath must never break it. He must do exactly what he said he would do.” Numbers 30:2 (NLT)*

*“But once you have voluntarily made a **vow**, be careful to do as you have said, for you have made a **vow** to the LORD your God.” Deuteronomy 23:23 (NLT)*

God’s love is able to exist without receiving anything in return.

*“I will gladly spend myself and all I have for your spiritual good, even though it seems that the more I love you, the less you love me.” 2 Corinthians 12:15 (NLT)*

**Q3.** How do you feel about having made a vow to God when you married your spouse?



This diagram represents a Christian husband and wife. Jesus has made their spirits alive. Spiritual intimacy or spiritual oneness is missing when one or both of the partners are not believers. Believing that Christ died for your sins and receiving His life is what makes you alive spiritually. *(This is a very important part of your marriage; therefore, we have dedicated an entire chapter to the subject of spiritual intimacy.)*

If you are married to a *nonbeliever*, the following verses are important to consider.

*“...If a Christian man has a wife who is an unbeliever and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not leave her. And if a Christian woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him. For the Christian wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the Christian husband brings holiness to his marriage...”*

**1 Corinthians 7:12–14** (NLT)

**Q4.** Are you and your spouse experiencing spiritual intimacy? Explain.

### **Psychological Intimacy**

Another part of oneness comes when a husband and wife have psychological intimacy by sharing their souls (minds, emotions, and wills) with each other. Sharing your soul means telling each other what you are thinking, feeling, and wanting.

Communication is vital for building psychological intimacy in a marriage. This communication involves both spouses speaking and listening effectively. The goal of communication in marriage should be to gain shared understanding.

Psychological intimacy requires shared *understanding*.

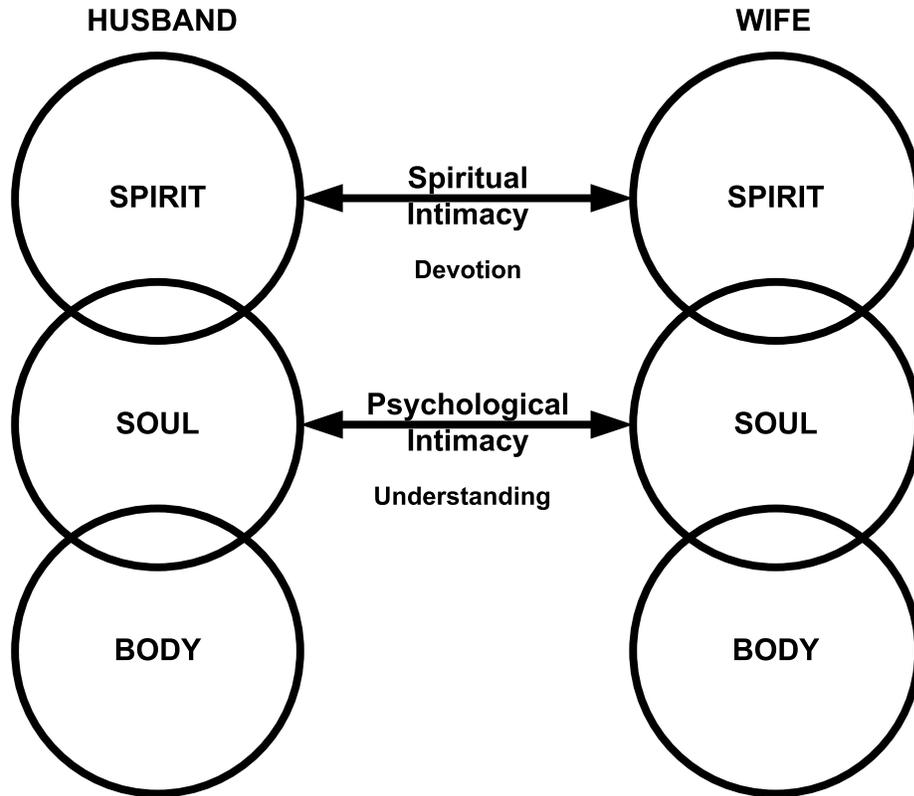
*“Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife...Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous.”*

**1 Peter 3:7–8** (NKJ)

- Q5.** Do you withhold sharing your thoughts, emotions or desires from your spouse? Explain.
- Q6.** If you don't share these things with your spouse, do you share your soul with someone else? Explain.

If you are psychologically intimate with someone else at work, one of your parents, or a friend, you are cheating your spouse out of that special gift of intimacy. The following verse communicates the universal longing for psychological intimacy in a relationship.

*“O my beloved, lingering in the gardens, how wonderful that your companions can listen to your voice. Let me hear it, too!”* **Song of Solomon 8:13** (NLT)



*(Psychological intimacy is an important part of your marriage. Therefore, we have dedicated an entire chapter to it.)*

### **Physical Intimacy**

Lastly, a husband and wife share physical intimacy by sharing their bodies with each other. This physical intimacy includes living together in the same home, touching one another, and sex. The physically intimate couple experiences *satisfaction*.

God created you and your spouse to enjoy physical intimacy. It is willed and designed by Him. It is an important part of becoming one with your spouse.

*“Honor marriage, and guard the sacredness of sexual intimacy between wife and husband...”*

**Hebrews 13:4** (MSG)

Physical intimacy begins with a desire for the other person. Marriage is the right place for that physical desire or drive to be fulfilled or satisfied.

## Free in Marriage

You can be free to share your body without shame.

*“The two of them, the Man and his Wife, were naked, but they felt no shame.”* **Genesis 2:25** (MSG)

- Q7.** What emotions do you experience when you share your body with your spouse?
- Q8.** Do you hide your body from your spouse? Explain.

Don't deprive or withhold physical affection from each other or refuse to satisfy desires that can be righteously fulfilled in marriage.

*“The husband should not deprive his wife of sexual intimacy, which is her right as a married woman, nor should the wife deprive her husband.”*  
**1 Corinthians 7:3** (NLT)

- Q9.** Do you withhold physical intimacy from your spouse? If so, explain why.

## Hindrances to Physical Intimacy

Little or no physical intimacy in the marriage causes the couple to feel distant. The temptation to look for intimacy outside of the marriage may become a problem. Don't withhold your body from your spouse.

A common situation is for a husband to be *only* interested in physical intimacy, which results in his wife possibly becoming dissatisfied. She may look for other relationships to fill her need.

It is just as important for the husband not to withhold psychological (soul) intimacy as it is for the wife not to withhold physical intimacy.

Withholding physical intimacy from your spouse can be connected to premarital or extramarital sexual involvement. This kind of sexual

involvement, consensual or otherwise, falls short of God's best for His children.

*“There is a sense in which sexual sins are different from all others. In sexual sin we violate the sacredness of our own bodies, these bodies that were made for God-given and God-modeled love, for ‘becoming one’ with another.”*  
**1 Corinthians 6:18** (MSG)

God designed sex to form a bond between you and your spouse not others.

*“Don’t you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which belongs to Christ, and join it to a prostitute [or anyone other than his wife]? Never! And don’t you know that if a man joins himself to a prostitute [or anyone other than his wife], he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, ‘The two are united into one.’”* **1 Corinthians 6:15–16** (NLT)

Therefore bonds that were made with others prior to or outside of your marriage need to be broken through confession to God, forgiveness and turning away from those deeds.

*“...Our bodies were not made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies.”* **1 Corinthians 6:13** (NLT)

Another reason for withholding physical intimacy from your spouse may be revenge. For instance,

- Your spouse hasn't met your expectations or done things your way.
- Your spouse has said or done things that are hurtful.

**Q10.** Have you withheld sex as a means of seeking revenge for how you have been treated?

*“Never seek **revenge** or bear a grudge against anyone, but love your neighbor as yourself. I am the LORD.”*  
**Leviticus 19:18** (NLT)

- Q11.** What does this verse say to you concerning seeking revenge against your spouse?

### **Understand What Your Spouse Wants Sexually**

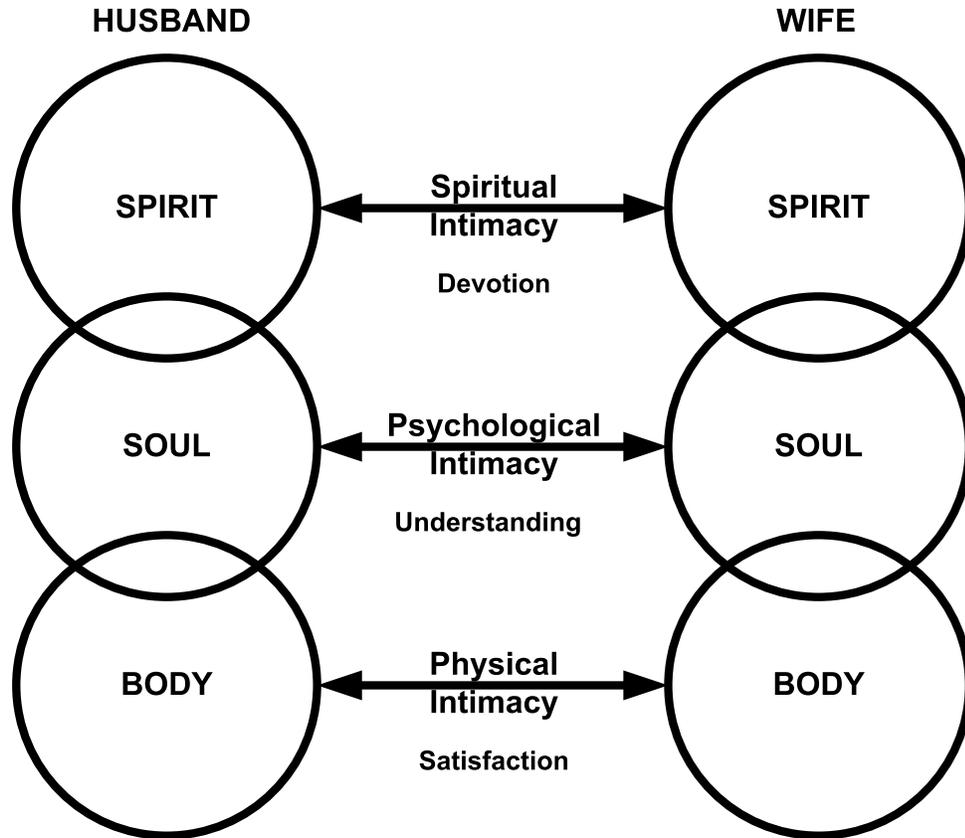
God created everyone to be unique. Understanding your spouse and your spouse's preferences takes time. Find out what kind of physical intimacy your spouse likes and honor that preference.

- Q12.** Do you understand your spouse and know what he or she likes or doesn't like sexually?

*"Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife..." 1 Peter 3:7 (NKJ)*

Since your love is exclusive, your thoughts are centered on your spouse not others.

*"...Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise." Philippians 4:8 (NLT)*



### **Loving Your Spouse with Your Physical Appearance**

Making yourself as attractive as possible is one way of showing your spouse that he or she is important.

**Q13.** Do you make an effort to keep clean and be well groomed?

### **Loving Your Spouse with Your Words**

Physical intimacy is enhanced when your words express love and admiration of your spouse.

*“Don’t use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.”*

**Ephesians 4:29** (NLT)

**Q14.** What words would your spouse appreciate hearing?

### **Loving Your Spouse with Your Attitude**

An unselfish attitude is important in physical intimacy. Focus on your spouse and consider him or her as being more important than your wants or needs.

Selfishness is a problem for everybody. It can be seen in not wanting to be imposed upon or not caring about how the other person feels.

*“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves...”* **Philippians 2:3** (NASB)

### **Valuing Your Spouse**

Valuing your spouse is respecting or cherishing his or her entire person (spirit, soul and body). It is about providing a safe environment for your spouse. For example, if a wife is shy about exposing her body to her husband, he needs to love and accept her each time she does.

She will begin to feel safe and she won't be as self-conscious. However if he says things about her weight or compares her to other women, she won't feel valued or safe in sharing physical intimacy.

Likewise, if a husband is insecure about sharing his inner thoughts, feelings, and desires with his wife, she needs to listen and affirm him each time he does. But if she doesn't like what he says and criticizes him, he won't think it is safe and may keep his thoughts to himself the next time or share them with others who do listen and value him. He won't want to share psychological intimacy with his wife.

Your spouse is a gift from God to you. Thank Him for your marriage and spouse.

*“Find a good spouse, you find a good life – and even more: the favor of God!”* **Proverbs 18:22** (MSG)

**Q15.** How are you valuing your spouse, God's gift to you?

## Sex is for Marriage Only

A man and woman can become spiritually and psychologically intimate before marriage; but ideally, physical intimacy should begin on the couple's wedding day.

The need for sexual purity before and during marriage is very important. Involvements in premarital sex, adultery, flirting, making sexual advances, or indulging lustful thoughts undermine physical intimacy with your spouse.

*“Drink water from your own well – share your love only with your wife. Why spill the water of your springs in public, having sex with just anyone? You should reserve it for yourselves. Don't share it with strangers. Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. She is a loving doe, a graceful deer. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love.” Proverbs 5:15–19 (NLT)*

- Q16.** Have you gone outside of your marriage for physical intimacy? If so, explain.

## Conclusion

If you have not followed God's plan in the sexual area of your life, **agree with God** that what you did was wrong.

**Confess** your sin to God now.

**Repent** and stop doing what you have been doing or for looking for physical intimacy outside of marriage.

*“I pondered the direction of my life, and I turned to follow your statutes.” Psalm 119:59 (NLT)*

**Thank God** for His forgiveness.

**Ask God** to help you follow His plan for physical intimacy.

**Confess** your actions to your spouse and ask for forgiveness. (It may be wise to have a minister or pastor help you with this step.)

*“Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results.”*

**James 5:16** (NLT)

**Ask the Lord** to help you with the words to use to approach your spouse in gentleness and humility.

**Q17.** Will you take these steps? If yes, when?

When a husband and wife are close to each other in their spirits, souls, and bodies, they experience whole person intimacy. They have “become one.”

**Q18.** Do you experience spiritual, psychological, and physical intimacy with your spouse?

**Q19.** What needs to happen so you and your spouse can work on these areas?

# Two Becoming One

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Chapter 2

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## PSYCHOLOGICAL INTIMACY

*“Finally, all of you should be of one mind, full of sympathy toward each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds.” 1 Peter 3:8 (NLT)*

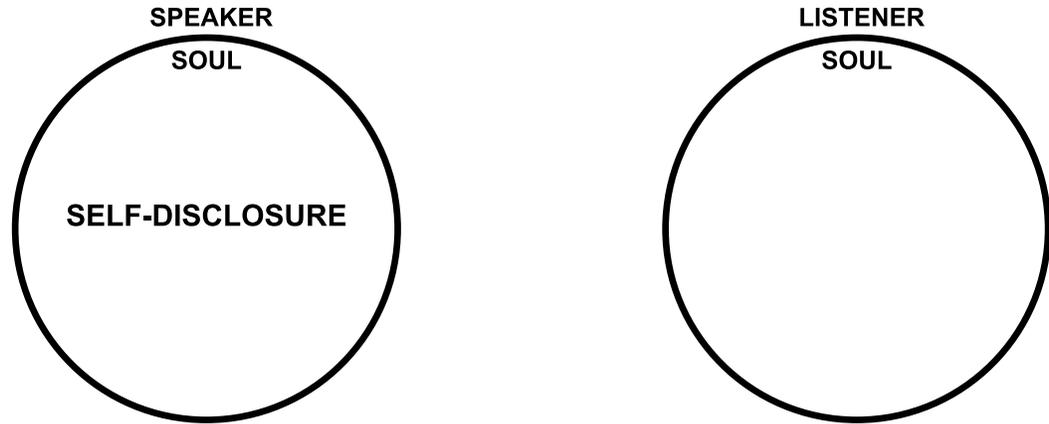
You have learned that there is more to “becoming one” than being intimate physically. In this chapter, you will learn how to share intimacy of your souls.

Your soul can be thought of as consisting of three parts: your mind, your emotions and your will. This is the psychological area of your life. Psychological intimacy involves sharing with your spouse your thoughts, feelings, and desires.

### **Self-disclosure**

When you tell your spouse what is going on in your mind, emotions, and will, you are sharing your soul. This is called self-disclosure.

Self-disclosure uses “I” statements and reveals what is going on in your soul.



The following set of diagrams illustrates how a speaker (in this case, the husband) uses self-disclosure. He communicates his thoughts, his feelings and his desires to his wife. By sharing all three parts, the listener (his wife) has the best chance of understanding him.

For example a husband might tell his wife, “I’ve been **thinking** about the debt we got ourselves into last Christmas. I **think** we bought too many gifts. I am **feeling** depressed because I am worried that we might do the same thing this year. I really **want** us to have fun over the holidays, but I don’t **want** us to overspend.”

### **Mind – Sharing Thoughts**

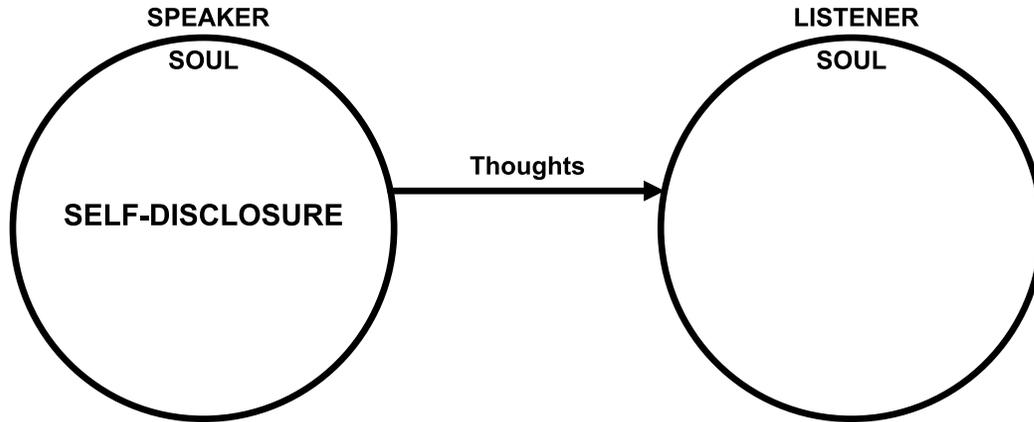
First he shares what he is **thinking** about a situation.

#### **Dialogue #1**

“I’ve been **thinking** about the debt we got ourselves into last Christmas. I **think** we bought too many gifts.”

To communicate your **thoughts**, use phrases like I think or I believe.

*“...Become complete. Be of good comfort, be of one **mind**, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you.” 2 Corinthians 13:11 (NKJ)*



Q1. Think about a situation **you** have experienced recently. What were you *thinking*?

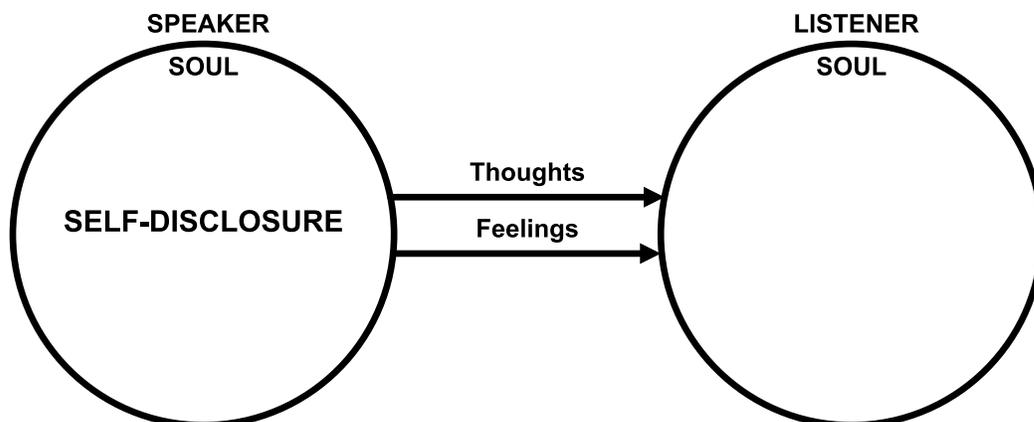
### Emotions – Sharing Feelings

Next, he communicates how he **feels** about the situation.

#### Dialogue #2

“I am **feeling** depressed because I am worried that we might do the same thing this year.”

Feelings are neither right nor wrong; they simply indicate what is going on inside of you.



To communicate your **feelings** or emotions, use terms like the following:

#### Emotions List

accepted	glad	manipulated	smothered
afraid	grateful	miserable	sorry
angry	guilty	misunderstood	stupid
betrayed	happy	neglected	surprised
cheated	helpless	nervous	suspicious
concerned	hopeful	offended	tempted
confused	hurt	overwhelmed	threatened
controlled	ignored	pleased	tired
defensive	impatient	pressured	unappreciated
depressed	inadequate	proud	uneasy
disappointed	insecure	rejected	unorganized
encouraged	irritated	relaxed	unwanted
excited	jealous	relieved	upset
exhausted	lonely	sad	used
frustrated	loved	shocked	worried

- Q2.** How were you *feeling* during your recent situation? Can you find a word on the list that fits?

When you share your feelings, it helps your spouse understand how you are being affected emotionally by what is going on.

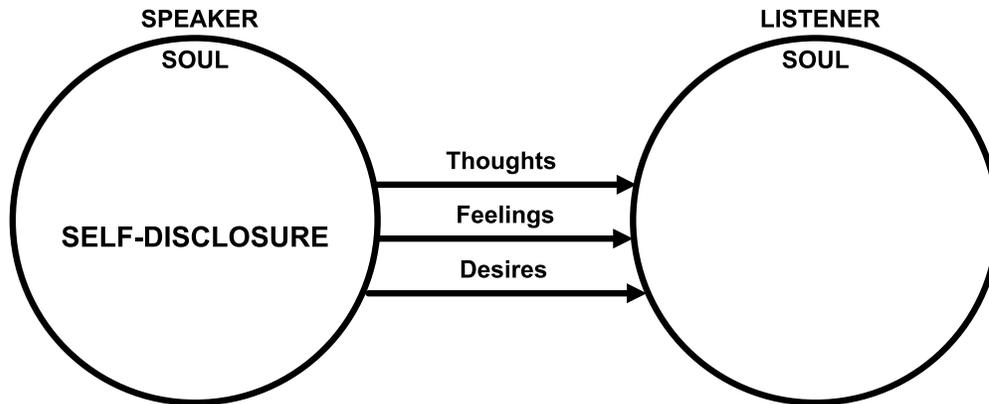
### **Will – Sharing Desires**

Lastly in our example, the husband shares with his wife what he **desires**.

### **Dialogue #3**

“I really **want** us to have fun over the holidays, but I don’t **want** us to overspend.”

To communicate your **desires**, use phrases such as I want, I like, or I hope.



Q3. What did you *want* in regard to your situation?

It's important for a couple to each know what the other wants. That way they can love each other by trying to give the other one what he or she wants. However, you need to be willing to share your wants without requiring that your spouse fulfill them. Likewise, when you don't share what you want, you are depriving your spouse of an opportunity to give.

### Life or Death

In the example used to illustrate how to communicate thoughts, feelings, and desires, notice that the husband takes ownership of his thinking. He also shares what he's feeling and what he wants. Notice that he used "I" statements too.

Compare that to a conversation that begins with "This year we are not buying everyone a Christmas present." The wife would probably get defensive and feel frustrated. When you take time to share what you are thinking, feeling, and wanting, you help your spouse understand.

**Q4.** What do the following verses teach about your words?

*“Death and life are in the power of the tongue, and those who love it will eat its fruit.”* **Proverbs 18:21** (NKJ)

*“A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger. Gentle words bring life and health; a deceitful tongue crushes the spirit.”* **Proverbs 15:1, 4** (NLT)

**Q5.** How do you think your words affect your spouse?

### **Work at It**

Sharing your soul with your spouse may seem like a lot of work, but the reward is well worth the effort. Working at your marriage and communication skills benefits you and your spouse.

*“The soul of a lazy man desires, and has nothing; but the soul of the diligent shall be made rich.”*  
**Proverbs 13:4** (NKJ)

A husband may find this area of intimacy difficult, but consider this example: Would a husband be happy with a wife who refused to share her body with him, just because it took effort to get undressed?

If a husband knew his wife wouldn't be intimate in the physical area, would he have married her? Yet many wives long to know their husband's soul, but are denied this area of intimacy.

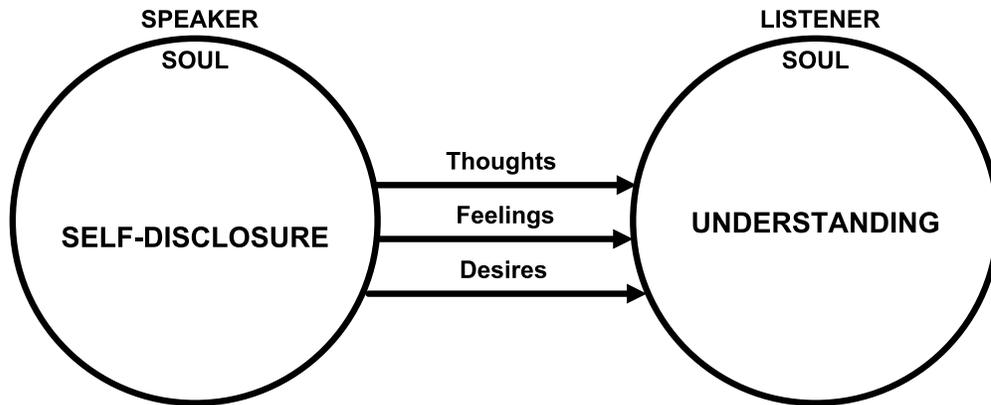
### **Understanding Is the Goal**

The purpose of psychological intimacy isn't to make the other person agree with you or even to change his or her mind. The purpose is to **understand each other**. You may not be in agreement, but you can have shared understanding.

Your spouse deserves to understand you even if he or she doesn't choose to do what you want. Psychological intimacy is gaining shared understanding.

- Q6. How comfortable are you with sharing your ideas or feelings with your spouse?
  
- Q7. Have you been laughed at or ridiculed in the past and quit trying? Explain.
  
- Q8. Do you try to make your spouse feel accepted when he or she shares things he or she is thinking, feeling, or wanting? Explain.

As the speaker shares, the listener is gaining *understanding*.



- Q9. What should the listener be doing as the speaker talks?

## Role of the Listener

There are two characteristics that will help you as you listen.

### 1. Be Attentive.

- *Stop your thoughts.* Try to understand what the other person is saying. Don't try to think of how you will answer. Give your full attention. Allow the speaker to finish without interruptions. The Bible calls people who won't listen "foolish."

*"Fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions."* **Proverbs 18:2** (NLT)

*"He who answers a matter before he hears it, It is folly and shame to him."* **Proverbs 18:13** (NKJ)

**Q10.** Why is it foolish not to listen?

**Q11.** What kind of listener are you? Where is your focus?

*"Don't be selfish; don't live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourself. Don't think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others, too, and what they are doing."* **Philippians 2:3–4** (NLT)

- *Use body language.* Show you are listening by giving your spouse eye contact, nodding, and leaning forward.

*"...Look with your eyes and hear with your ears, and fix your mind on everything I show you."* **Ezekiel 40:4** (NKJ)

## 2. Be Responsive.

- *Ask questions.* Help your spouse communicate what is going on in his or her soul by asking soul-disclosing questions. For example:
  - What were you thinking?
  - How were you feeling?
  - What do you want?

*“A plan in the heart of a man is {like} deep water, but a man of understanding draws it out.”*

**Proverbs 20:5** (NASB)

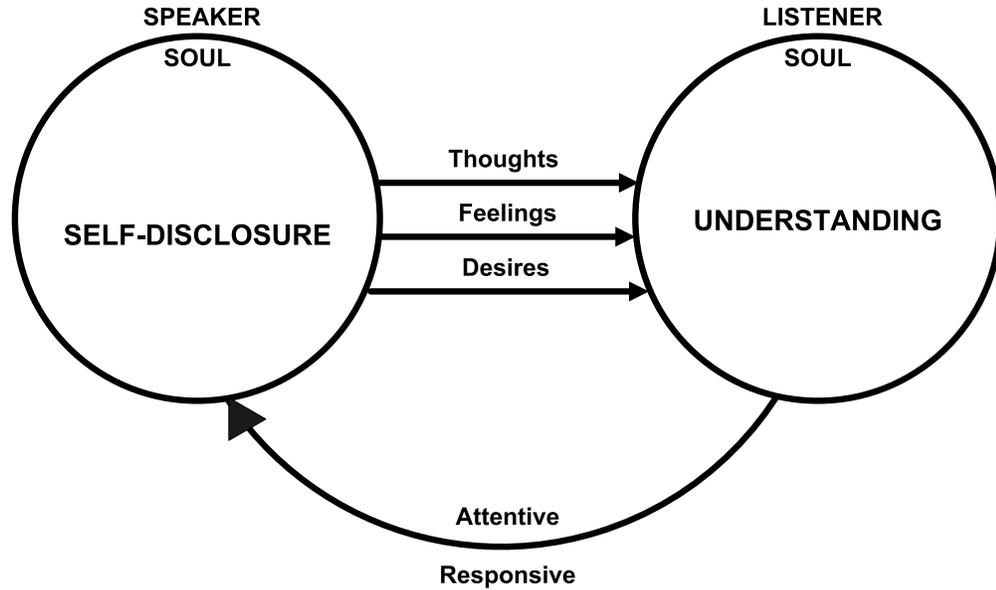
**Q12.** Do you ask these kinds of questions to understand your spouse? If not, what keeps you from asking them?

- *Repeat Back.* Listen so you can repeat back what you heard, this produces shared understanding. If you don't understand, maybe you need clarification. Begin with phrases like, “What I heard you say was...” or “Are you saying...?”

Feedback is important to psychological intimacy. First, you are making sure you heard what was said. If not, you get the message clarified. Secondly, you show your spouse that his or her message was important to you.

**Q13.** Will you begin following these guidelines to improve your listening?

In the following diagram, the wife in our example has listened to her husband share his soul. Now she responds by feeding back what she heard and shows her husband that she values him, as well as, what he has shared with her.



#### Dialogue #4

“I appreciate your sharing about these things with me. Let me make sure I understand. I heard you say that you have been **thinking** about how many gifts we bought last year and that you **feel** depressed, **thinking** that we might get into debt again this year. You **want** us to have fun over the holidays, but you don't **want** us to overspend.”

Notice the example is not word for word, which might be annoying. The wife is *attentive* by stopping what she was doing to give her husband eye contact. She is *responsive* by summing up the main points of what her husband shared and thanks him for sharing.

If she misses something important, her husband can clarify what he said. She can respond to what he has said and they can talk about it.

### Personal Application

**Rely on the Lord** as you *speak* and *listen* to your spouse. You will be communicating, “I care about you. That’s why I share myself with you *and* that’s why I want you to share yourself with me.”

**Write a prayer.** Tell God your thoughts, feelings, and desires in regard to what you have learned in this lesson.

**Plan to communicate** with your spouse about something that has been on your mind.

**Q14. Write out** below what you are thinking, feeling, and wanting.

**Q15.** When will you **talk to your spouse** concerning this matter?

# Psychological Intimacy

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Chapter 3

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## SPIRITUAL INTIMACY

*“Always keep yourselves united in the Holy Spirit, and bind yourselves together with peace.”*

**Ephesians 4:3** (NLT)

In the last chapter, the emphasis was on soul intimacy and the importance of sharing your thoughts, feelings, and desires with your spouse — a process that can lead to understanding. The focus in this chapter is on spiritual intimacy which means “becoming one” spiritually.

Believing on Jesus Christ as your Savior and receiving Him into your life is the foundation for spiritual intimacy with God and your spouse.

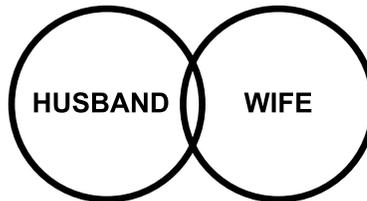
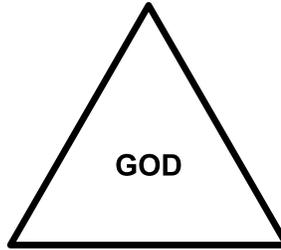
**Q1.** Does your marriage have this foundation? Explain.

*“We are all one body, we have the same Spirit, and we have all been called to the same glorious future. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and there is only one God and Father, who is over us all and in us all and living through us all.”* **Ephesians 4:4–6** (NLT)

Marriage involves three persons, that is, God, a man, and a woman. The following diagram represents the marriage unit. The triangle representing God is at the top, showing that He established, created, and has a plan for marriage. The husband and wife are represented by the interlocking circles symbolizing two becoming one.

*“So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let not man separate.”*

**Matthew 19:6** (NKJ)



### **Devotion**

In the first chapter, we discussed spiritual intimacy in terms of a common *devotion*.

Devotion means a commitment to living one's life for another. A spouse's devotion may be linked to his or her love for the other, the feelings involved, and thoughts that he or she is worth living for.

**Q2.** Did you start out your marriage with a devotion to your spouse?

Over time, that devotion may have broken down. The breakdown may have come due to some failures, faults, or imperfections. A spouse may begin to think this love won't last or may have thoughts that he or she isn't worthy of giving up his or her life for the other anymore.

**Q3.** Are you still devoted to your spouse? Explain.

The good news is that spiritual intimacy is about devotion to **God**. God is the only One worthy of everlasting love. He is worth living your life for. He will never let you down, He won't grow old, He doesn't get irritable, He never changes.

*“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.”* **Hebrews 13:8** (NASB)

*“The LORD will not reject his people; he will not abandon his own special possession.”* **Psalms 94:14** (NLT)

Human devotion is a good thing but it won't necessarily last. God is truly worthy of your devotion. That's WHY it makes sense to devote yourself to Him. The question becomes WHAT does that devotion look like?

- Q4.** Are you devoted to God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Q5.** What is your devotion to God based on? His worth or something else? Explain.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- Q6.** If God is the source of your devotion, how do you show that devotion? In what ways?

### **Devotion to God**

When a husband is devoted to God and a wife is devoted to God, their devotion, or intimacy, increases with each other. As you devote yourself or draw near to God, He will draw near to you.

*“Draw near to God and He will draw near to you...”*  
**James 4:8** (NKJ)

This kind of marriage has an advantage over every other marriage because of this mutual *devotion* to God.

Devotion to God means you acknowledge God as God. It means you don't compete with Him and try to do what He does. It means you let Him be who He is.

*“I am the Lord, and there is no other; there is no God besides Me...”* **Isaiah 45:5** (NKJ)

### **Power to Control**

If you are devoted to God in your marriage, you acknowledge His **power to control** the marriage and therefore control the people in the marriage.

Although He has the power to control, He never overrides the will of the husband and wife. The only one in the marriage who has the right to do whatever He pleases is God. Fortunately, everything God does is to benefit the husband and wife.

- Q7.** Are you devoted to God in your marriage by allowing Him to control your life and the life of your spouse or do you try to control your life and your spouse? Explain.

*“All the people of the earth are nothing compared to him. He has the power to do as he pleases among the angels of heaven and with those who live on earth. No one can stop him or challenge him, saying, ‘What do you mean by doing these things?’”* **Daniel 4:35** (NLT)

## Right to Judge

If you are devoted to God in your marriage, you acknowledge His **right to judge** whether or not the people in the marriage are following His standards.

As author, He has set standards of what a husband does in a marriage and what a wife does. He has determined their respective roles. He compares the husband and wife to His standards and has the right to judge whether they are fulfilling their roles.

- Q8.** Are you devoted to God in your marriage by allowing God to judge you and your spouse in the fulfillment of roles or do you judge yourself and/or your spouse? Explain.

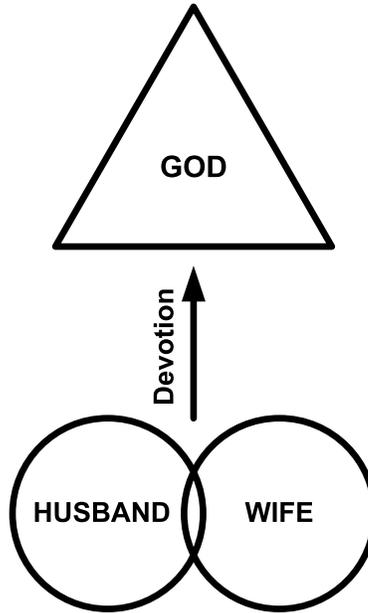
*“There is only one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy...” James 4:12 (NASB)*

## Deserves all Praise

If you are devoted to God in your marriage, you acknowledge that He is worthy and **deserves all praise**.

- Q9.** Are you devoted to God in your marriage by giving Him praise or do you seek praise for yourself or give it all to your spouse?

*“You are worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honor and power; for You created all things, and by Your will they exist and were created.” Revelation 4:11 (NKJ)*



### **Husband and Wife Roles**

We mentioned that God Himself has the right to set standards for the husband and wife in a marriage. These standards include establishing roles. The husband and wife roles are different. Though the roles are different, they are equal.

The husband provides **loving leadership** for the wife. The wife provides **loving support** for the husband.

### **Loving Leadership**

- Q10.** How do you think a husband could demonstrate loving leadership in the marriage?

*“And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her.”* **Ephesians 5:25** (NLT)

The husband is to love his wife, sacrifice for her, listen to her concerns, take care of her, and be sensitive to her needs as though he was caring for his own body.

His role in the marriage is to provide leadership. He is to love, take care of, and not abuse his wife. He ultimately is responsible for making the final decisions for the family.

A husband can be loving, but not lead or he can lead and not be loving. Both are important.

### **Loving Support**

The role God gave the wife is to provide **loving support** for her husband.

- Q11.** How do you think a wife could demonstrate loving support in the marriage?

*“She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.”*  
**Proverbs 31:12** (NASB)

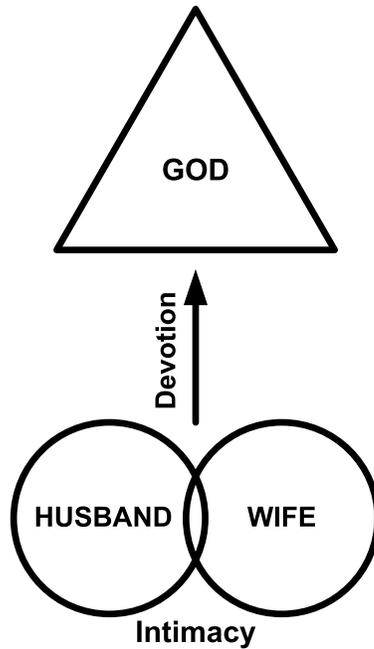
As a loving support, the wife respects her husband, acknowledges, and responds to his leadership, listens to him, is unified in purpose with him, and is a true helper.

Her role in the marriage is to value and support her husband and not resist, compete for, or rebel against the leadership role that has been assigned to him.

She can communicate her thoughts, feelings, and desires concerning decisions, then lovingly supports her husband when he makes the final decisions.

## Intimacy

Spiritual intimacy takes place as the couple devote themselves to God by fulfilling their respective role and not judging the other on how well he or she is doing.

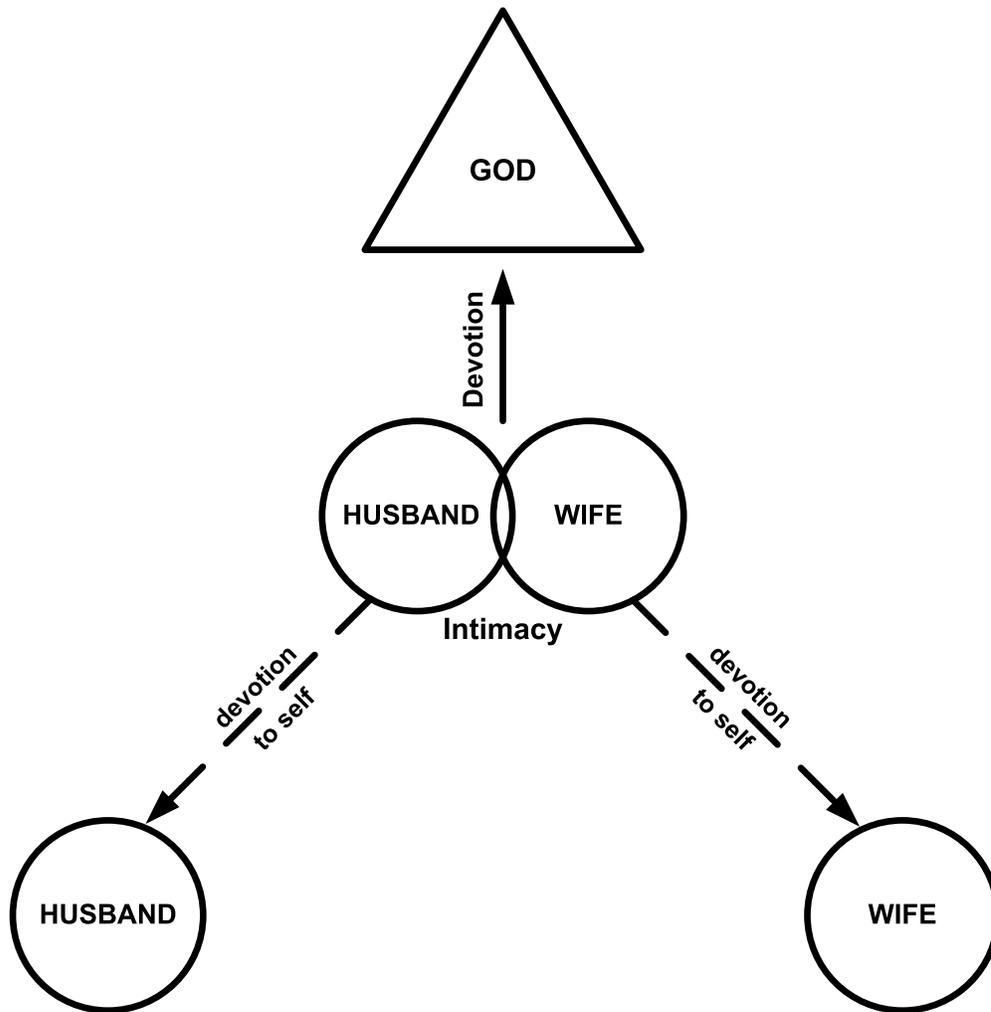


## Devotion to Self

**Q12.** What do you think happens when you are not devoted to God?

Devotion to God is replaced by a devotion to self. Devotion to self results in the belief that it is not a problem when you try to control, judge, or seek praise and approval from your spouse.

In the next diagram, the dashed arrows show that the husband and wife are trying to be like God. They are moving away from God and each other. Devotion to self breaks down spiritual intimacy. The person who is devoted to self is not functioning God's way but for his or her own satisfaction.



## Control

Can you identify with any of the following statements?

- I don't like asking for help from my spouse.
- It bothers me when I'm not in control in my marriage.
- It bothers me when I can't do what I want.

**Q13.** If so, are you acting on the idea that you have the power to control your life or the life of your spouse? Explain.

*“And further, you will submit [devote yourself] to one another out of reverence for Christ.”*

**Ephesians 5:21** (NLT)

## Judging

Can you identify with any of the following statements?

- It bothers me when my spouse doesn't do things right.
- I judge my spouse for not doing things right or looking good.
- I get uncomfortable when my spouse is having problems.

**Q14.** If so, are you setting standards for and then judging your spouse?

We aren't to judge, even ourselves, only God knows a person's heart and has the right to judge.

*“What about me? Have I been faithful? Well, it matters very little what you or anyone else thinks. I don't even trust my own judgment on this point.”*

**1 Corinthians 4:3** (NLT)

## **Seeking praise**

Can you identify with any of the following statements?

- I get upset when my spouse doesn't notice the job I've done, how much work I've done, or how nice I look.
- When I am rejected, instead of accepted, I reject back.
- I usually say and/or do what my spouse wants to keep him/her happy, not necessarily because it's what God wants.

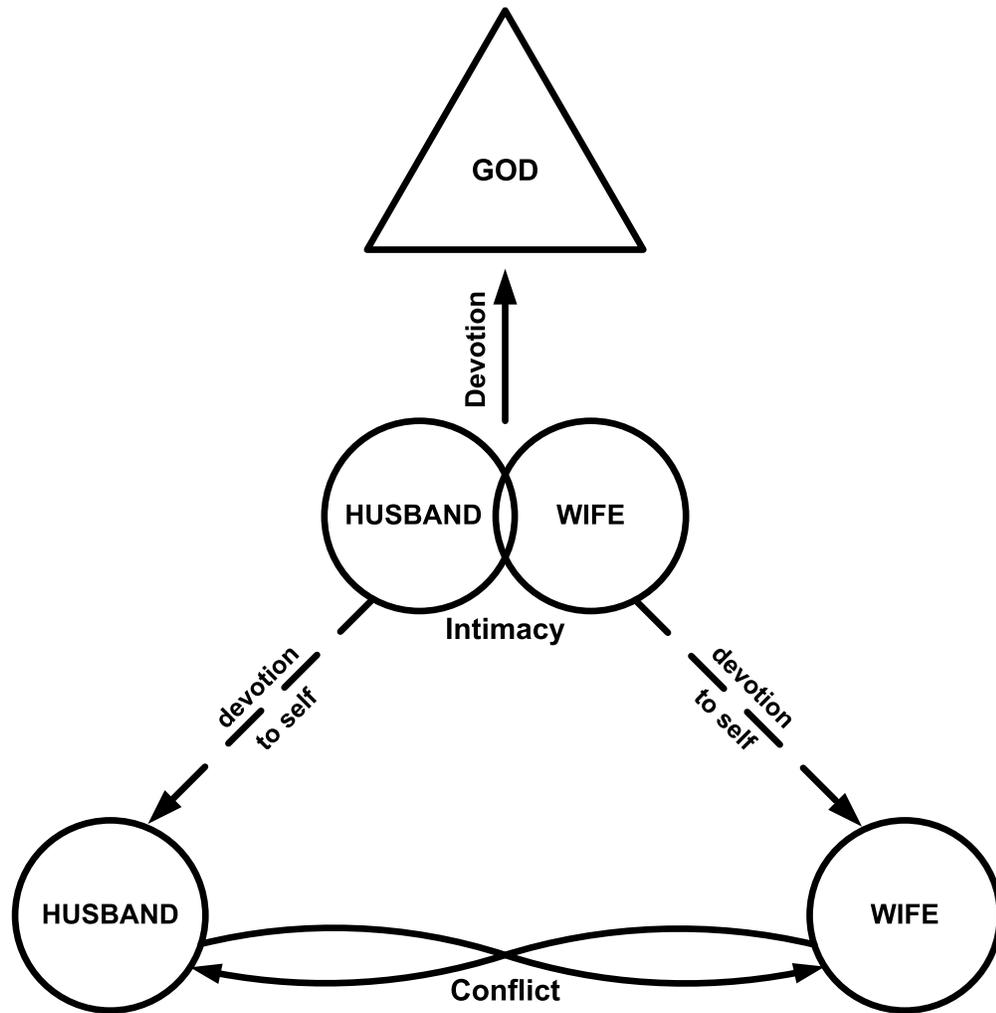
**Q15.** If so, are you seeking praise and approval from your spouse?

*“Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart.” Psalm 37:4 (NASB)*

## **Conflict**

Devotion to self leads a person away from God. If each spouse is devoted to self through the desire to control, judge, and/or seek praise, there will be conflict, which brings separation.

### Intimacy vs. Conflict



The diagram shows that there will be **conflict** in the marriage when the husband and wife are not devoted to God and therefore devoted to self.

**Q16.** Is there conflict in your marriage? Explain.

**Q17.** Have you thought about or talked about ending the relationship?

**Q18.** Are you ready to let God be God in your marriage and life?

*“When the **ways** of people please the LORD, he makes even their enemies live at **peace** with them.”*

**Proverbs 16:7** (NLT)

### **Personal Application**

Steps to restoring spiritual intimacy in the marriage:

- **Pray** and ask God to show you your sin.
- **Confess to God** any sin He shows you.
- **Repent** of that sin.
- **Humbly admit your wrong behavior to your spouse** without trying to justify or excuse what you have done.
- **Forgive your spouse** and seek his or her forgiveness.
- **Commit** yourself to devotion to God and to your spouse.

God has a plan for you, your spouse, and your marriage. You are perfectly designed to fulfill His plan. You will be the most content when you fit into the plan God designed for you.

*“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.” **Ephesians 2:10** (NKJ)*

# Intimacy vs. Conflict

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

## RESTORING INTIMACY

*“Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.”* **Ephesians 4:2** (NLT)

The first three lessons stressed the need for a husband and wife to experience intimacy in body, soul and spirit. If conflict has separated you and your spouse, this chapter examines how to restore intimacy.

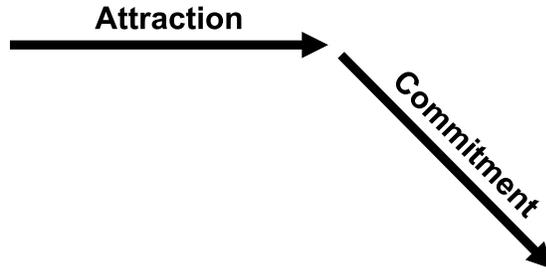
### **Attraction and Commitment**

Every relationship begins with attraction. As you get to know each other, you desire to have your relationship with each other grow. You like what you see in each other. The highlight of the day is being with each other. You are careful to look your best. You want to keep up a good impression.



You wish you could spend the rest of your life with this person. You decide to get married. You commit yourselves to one another.

*“I am my beloved’s, And my beloved is mine...”*  
**Song of Solomon 6:3** (NKJ)

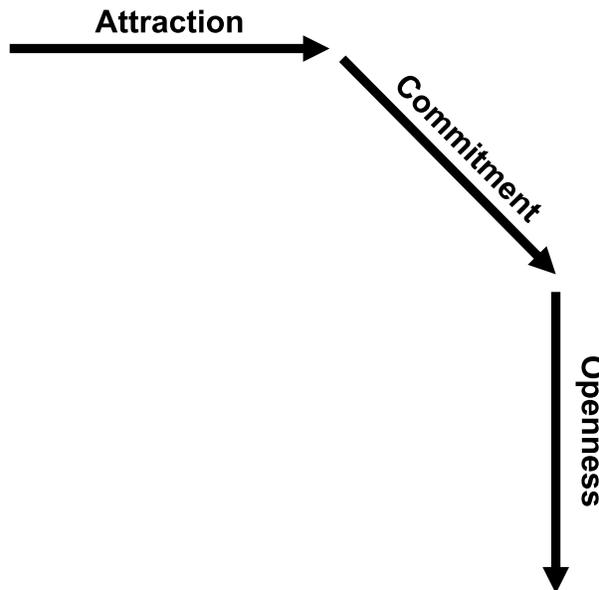


**Q1.** Describe the attraction and commitment stages you experienced with your spouse.

### **Openness**

When a man and woman commit to marriage, their relationship begins to change. They give each other permission to be open and honest. They share their thoughts, feelings, common interests, and positive qualities with each other.

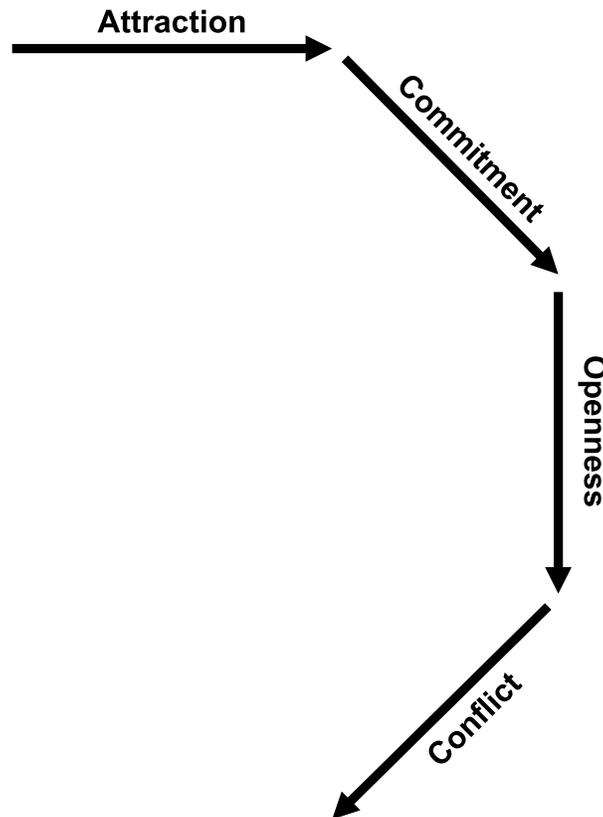
An intimate marriage requires openness.



However, as a result of being open and spending more time together, unpleasant qualities in each individual are exposed, such as selfishness and controlling behavior. This kind of openness may produce feelings of disappointment, disillusionment, and even shock.

### **Conflict**

Openness can lead to conflict. Conflict is normal and to be expected in marriage. But if not handled properly, conflict can destroy a marriage. To simply avoid conflict isn't the answer. You will never achieve intimacy. Intimacy is the result of learning how to work through the conflict.



**Q2.** Describe a time when openness turned into conflict in your marriage.

Marriage exposes the self-centered part of you. The part of you that wants to be in control, is judgmental, and wishes to be served and praised.

Self-centeredness within a marriage can cause you to feel unappreciated, unimportant, misunderstood, falsely accused, or out of control. You get hurt. When you get hurt, you often want to hurt back.

**Q3.** Can you relate to any of those feelings? Which ones?

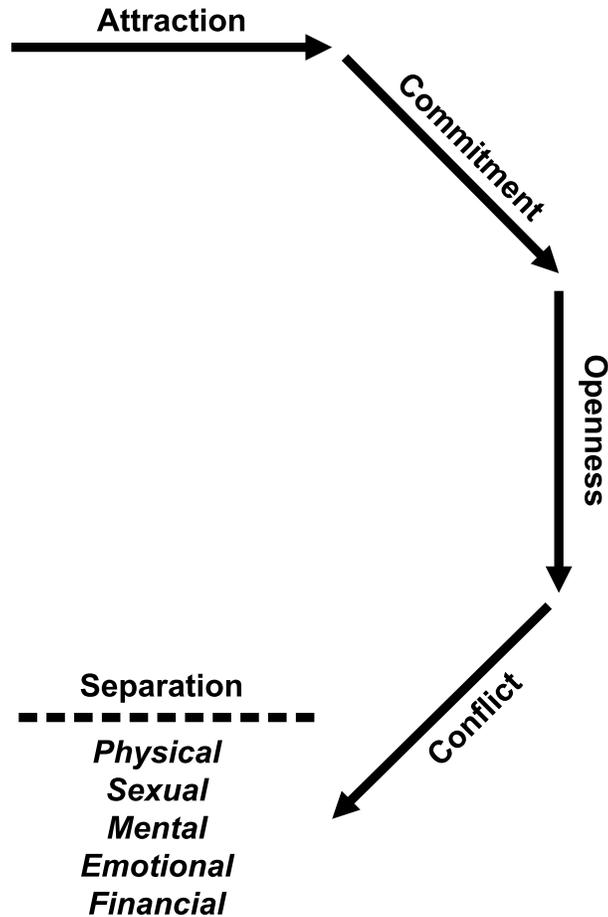
*“For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and every kind of evil.”*

**James 3:16** (NLT)

**Q4.** How do you deal with conflict in your marriage? Give an example.

### **Separation**

Unresolved conflict leads to separation. This separation can be physical, sexual, mental, emotional, and/or financial. Separation spoils intimacy and oneness in the marriage.



*“What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Isn’t it the whole army of evil desires at war within you?”*  
**James 4:1** (NLT)

You may be physically separated from your spouse. For example, you may not be living in the same house, sleeping in the same room, touching each other, or engaging in sexual relations.

**Q5.** Are you experiencing physical or sexual separation from your spouse? Explain.

There may be mental or emotional separation in your marriage. The divided partners begin to confide in others outside of the marriage or withhold their thoughts and feelings from each other.

- Q6.** Do you keep your plans secret and not consult your spouse? Explain.
- Q7.** Do you share your true feelings? Or have you built emotional walls to protect yourself? Explain.

Sometimes spouses separate their money from each other and take on the attitude of “What’s mine is mine, and what’s yours is yours.”

- Q8.** Do you have money or spend money that your spouse doesn’t know about?

The steps leading to conflict are inevitable in marriage. Yet conflict does not need to end in separation.

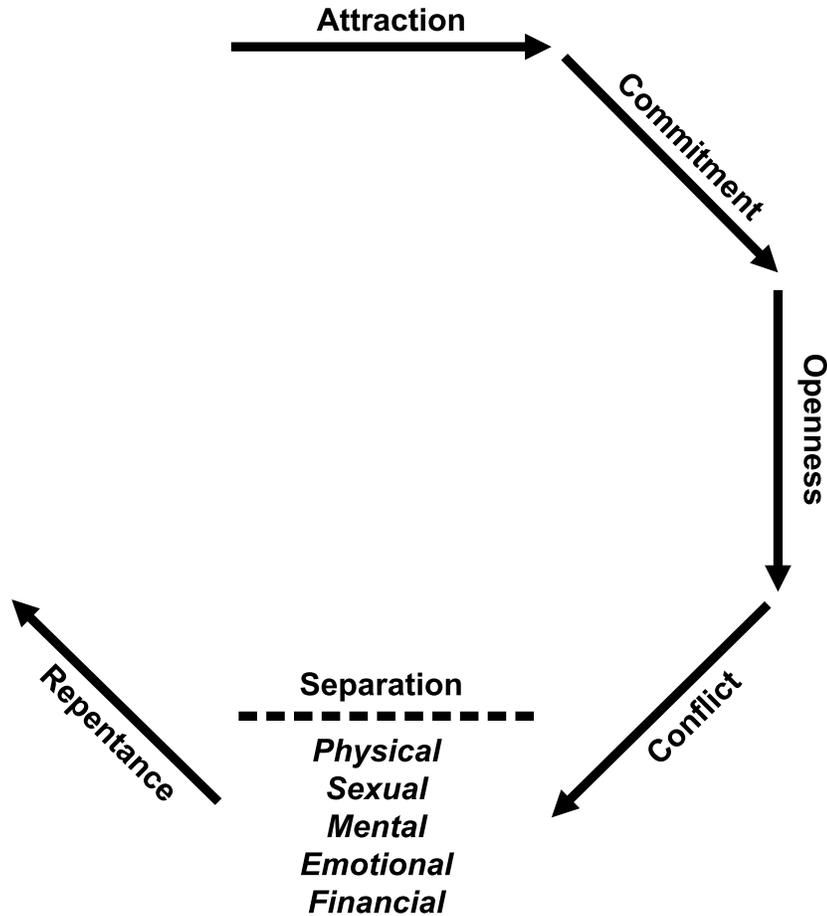
Conflict is actually a crucial part of growth and can result in increased intimacy. It is quite natural for conflict to lead to separation.

God uses the pain of separation to remind us to turn away from our selfish and controlling behavior. However, God desires that despite our differences we remain “one” (intimate).

## Repentance

God wants us to move past separation. The upward journey to restore intimacy begins with *repentance*.

*“For God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation. We will never regret that kind of sorrow. But sorrow without **repentance** is the kind that results in death.” 2 Corinthians 7:10 (NLT)*



Repentance begins with admitting to God that you were wrong in the way you acted or reacted toward your spouse.

- Q9.** Are you willing to take personal responsibility for your actions rather than focusing on your spouse's wrong? Explain.

By using the failures of you and your spouse, God can cause growth in your marriage. God used your spouse to reveal your selfishness problem. Now you can acknowledge and repent of it. Repentance includes a change of attitude and action.

*“I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies.” Psalm 119:59 (NKJ)*

- Q10.** If you are experiencing any kind of separation in your marriage because of conflict, what part did you have in the conflict and separation?
- Q11.** Are you willing to turn from any wrong attitudes or actions the Lord may be showing you? When?

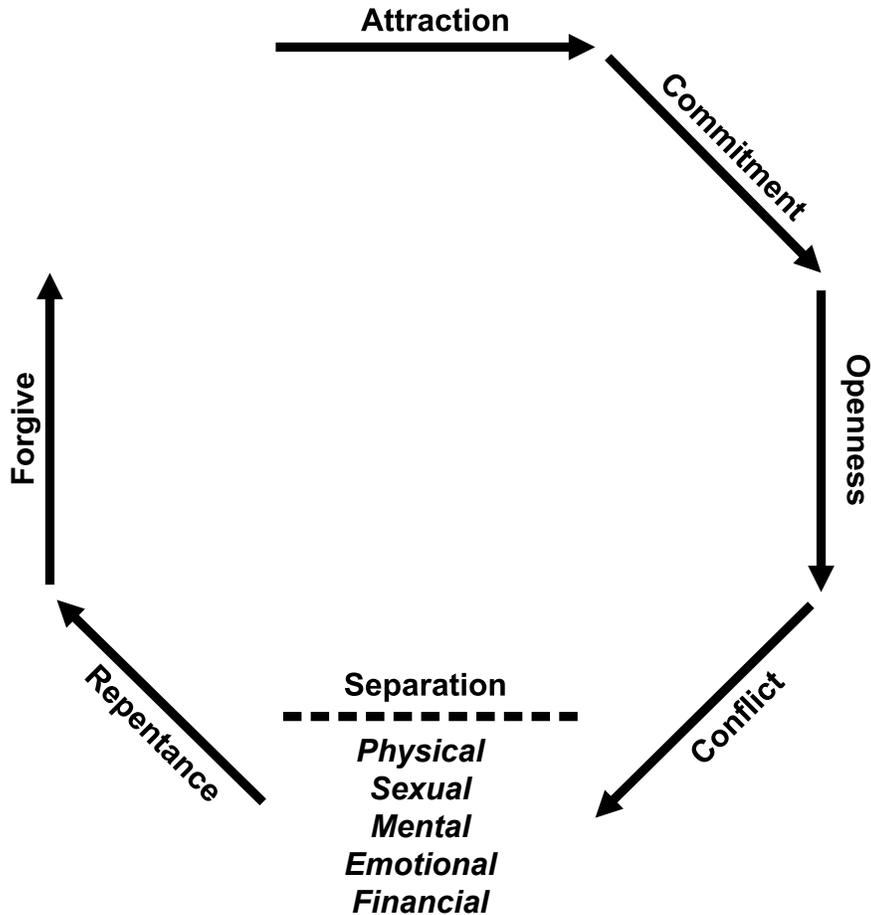
*“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar...”*  
**1 John 1:9–10 (NKJ)**

## **Forgive**

The next step to restoring intimacy is to forgive. Forgiving your spouse is a powerful means of undoing bitterness and replacing it with love.

*“And forgive us our sins, just as we forgive those who have sinned against us...” Luke 11:4 (NLT)*

There are *two* parts to forgiveness. The first part is forgiving your spouse for the hurt he or she has caused you. This part is between you and God.



*"You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must **forgive** others."*  
**Colossians 3:13** (NLT)

Forgiveness is **not** simply trying to forget. It is not just letting time pass after an offense happens. It is not disregarding the wrong another person has done against you or even pretending that an offense did not matter.

### **Giving Forgiveness**

- Forgive your spouse for his or her actions.
- Forgive your spouse for the hurt you felt because of his or her actions.
- Forgive your spouse for all the negative ramifications of his or her actions.

**True forgiveness is choosing to accept the blood of Jesus as the full payment for what your offender did.** Choosing to forgive is an act of your will; forgiveness is not based on your feelings.

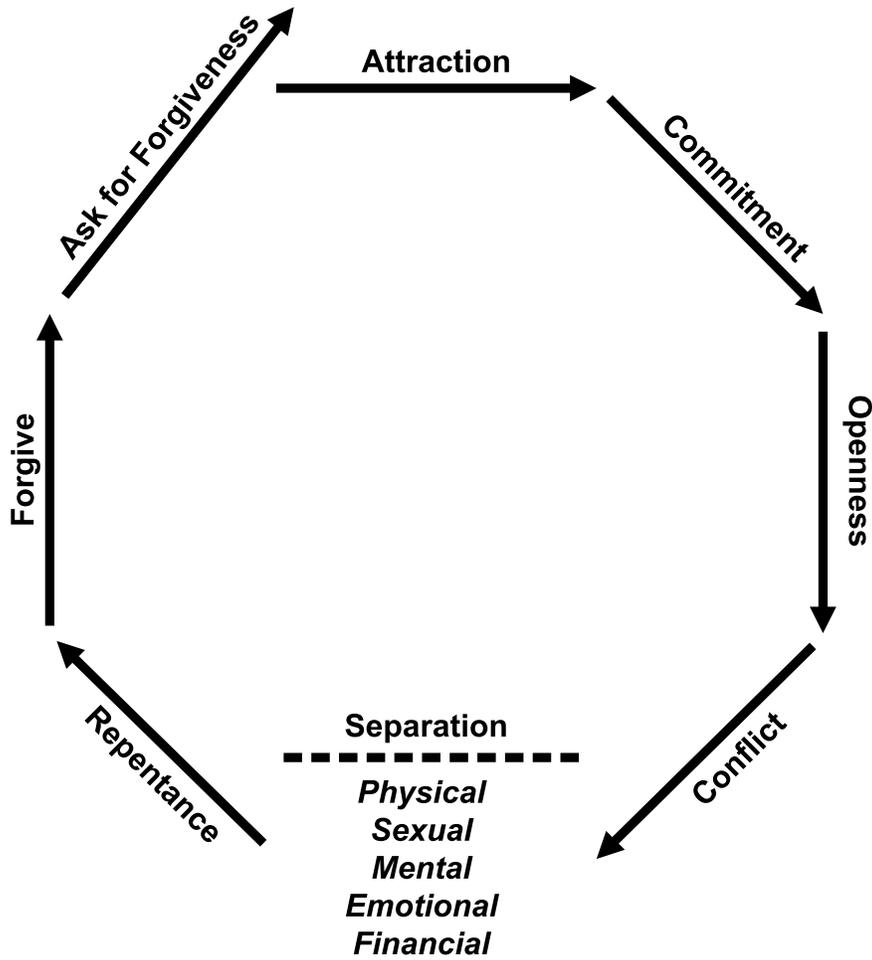
*“...Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”*  
**Ephesians 4:32** (NLT)

**Q12.** Are you willing to pray and forgive your spouse?

### **Ask for Forgiveness**

The first part of forgiveness is to forgive your spouse. The second part of forgiveness is asking your spouse to forgive you. To be reconciled, you must ask for forgiveness for what you have done wrong.

*“So if you are standing before the altar in the temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be **reconciled** to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.”*  
**Matthew 5:23–24** (NLT)



Part of being *reconciled* to your spouse is seeking forgiveness when you have wronged him or her. Even if your spouse's wrong seems bigger, you need to take responsibility for your unkind words and actions.

Seeking forgiveness is:

- seeing how you have hurt your spouse by your *words* or *actions*. Your spouse has been offended by what you did not by what you were thinking. Your sinful *thoughts* about your spouse are between you and God. Repent of those to Him.
- going to your spouse. Be sure you have completed the process of forgiving your spouse before you ask for forgiveness.

- saying, “**I was wrong** for what I did (state your offense). Would you please forgive me?”
- doing everything that you can to make restitution. For example: It might mean being willing to rebuild trust and show yourself as reliable.
- responding quickly.

*“Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible.”* **Romans 12:18** (NLT)

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anything for which you might need to ask your spouse to forgive you.

**Q13.** What are some things for which you need to ask forgiveness from your spouse?

Humbling yourself and asking for forgiveness after you have already forgiven your spouse is the last step to restoring intimacy.

*“Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.”* **Ephesians 4:2** (NLT)

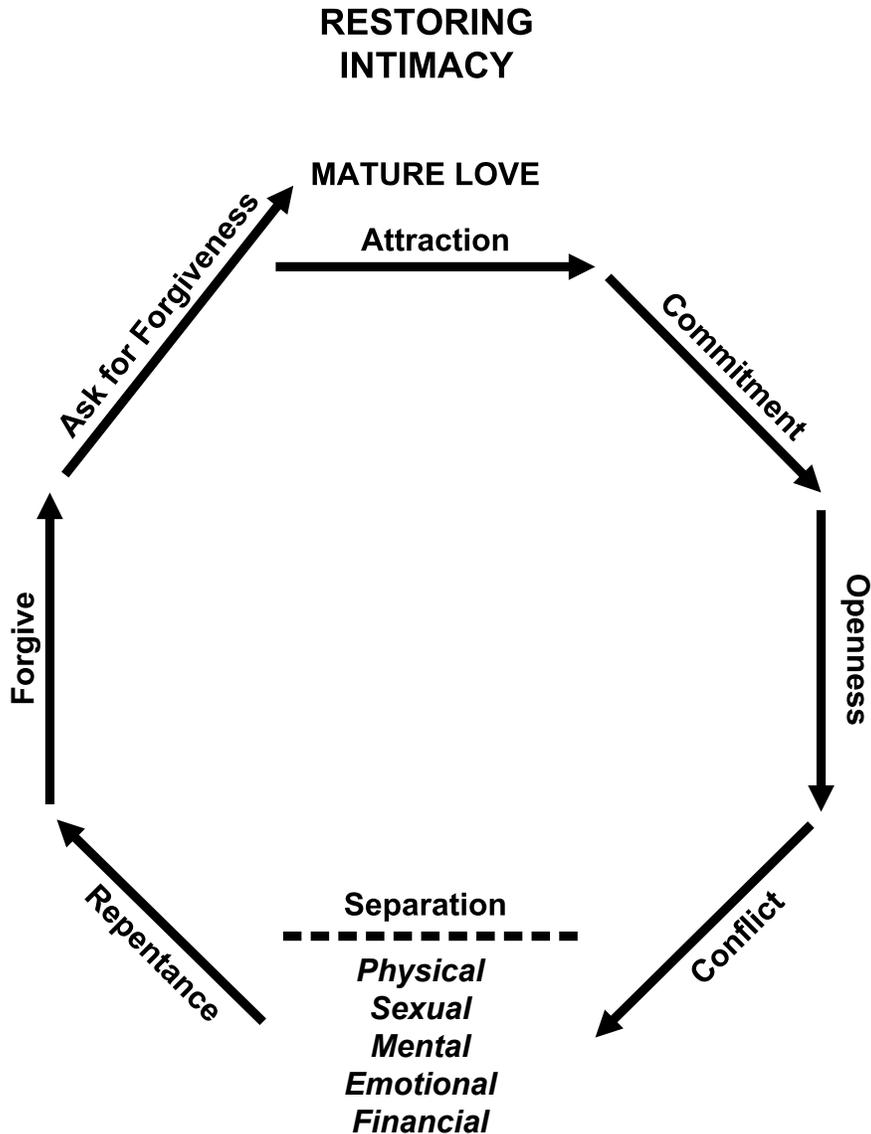
### **Mature Love**

Mature love focuses on accepting rather than being accepted. It focuses on Christ’s acceptance for personal worth. It emphasizes giving rather than getting. It is a love that knows it has a selfishness problem and is quick to repent, forgive, and ask for forgiveness.

Marital intimacy is rooted in mature love that seeks to treat your spouse better than you have been treated. Mature love creates more attraction, which leads to a greater commitment, openness and so on through this process again.

Jesus prayed this prayer for His future disciples, you and your spouse.

*"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me because of their testimony. My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father – that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me."* **John 17:20–21** (NLT)



God desires that you and your spouse be as one and that you experience intimacy in spirit, soul, and body. When you are intimate in all three, it is a blessing to others around you.

### **Conclusion**

**Pray** now to move from separation to restored intimacy.

**Ask God** to change you.

**Start** choosing to be different in your behavior toward your spouse.

Your flesh tries to divide your marriage. The “real you” desires unity and doesn’t want to stay in the place of separation.

Your flesh is easily offended and wants to punish your spouse. The “real you” wants to forgive and doesn’t want to hold onto hurts and offenses.

You are not your flesh. The “real you” loves your spouse!

# Restoring Intimacy

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*



# Sharing S.A.L.T. with a Friend

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“...And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.” **1 Peter 3:15** (NLT)

*Meet in a location where your friend feels comfortable sharing.*

## **The Purpose:** Encouragement

How do you encourage your friend? By sharing Biblical truths that have impacted you.

*Ask “Could I share some things with you?”*

## **Sharing with a friend (an informal meeting)**

- Ask, “What’s going on in your life?” or “How are you doing?”
- Listen.
- If necessary, ask questions that help you better understand your friend and his or her situation. For example: “How are you feeling about that?”
- Then share what God has been teaching you as it relates to your friend’s situation.
- If the opportunity allows, draw and explain the S.A.L.T. diagram that is relevant. *This can even be done on a napkin.*
- Encourage your friend and offer to pray.

*Share with an attitude of humility and kindness.*

## **Sharing with a friend (on a regular basis)**

- Make sure your friend has a book.
- Read, study, and answer all questions individually.
- Share your answers with each other and talk about the lesson.
- Draw and explain the diagram for each other.
- Encourage each other to personally apply the lessons.
- Pray together.

*Be sensitive about when to share and the length of your sharing.*

## **Helpful suggestions:**

**Be transparent.** Share your own story. When you are real, other people realize they can be honest too.

**Be a “safe place.”** Information your friend tells you should be kept confidential. Don’t condemn, instead encourage.

**Be a good listener.** Give your friend your full attention. Make eye contact, and, at appropriate times, repeat back what you hear your friend saying. Ask good questions that encourage your friend to talk.

**Be a true friend.** Speak the truth in love.

## **Books in the Seven Areas of Life Training (S.A.L.T.) Series**

### **Titles in the S.A.L.T. Series:**

- Spiritual – My Relationship with God
- Psychological – My Mind, Will, and Emotions
- Social – My Relationship with Others
- Physical – My Body
- Financial – My Money
- Marital – My Relationship with my Spouse
- Parental – My Relationship with my Children
- SALT Instructor's Guide with PowerPoint CD of Diagrams
- SALT Training DVD for Group Leaders

### **About the Authors**

A team of authors at Victorious Christian Living International (VCLi) wrote this book.

For over 25 years, VCLi has been helping believers grow and be successful in all seven areas of life. VCLi trains people and provides materials for effectively ministering to others, including comprehensive church discipleship programs, prison and inner-city ministries, and family ministries. We are headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona with offices in Alabama, Illinois, Guatemala, and Cuba.

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# ***My Children***

Parental Area of Life

## **S.A.L.T.**

**Seven Areas of Life Training<sup>®</sup>**

SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING (S.A.L.T.) PARENTAL AREA –  
MY RELATIONSHIP WITH MY CHILDREN, Version 2.0

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## **Dedication**

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*All of us at VICTORIOUS CHRISTIAN LIVING INTERNATIONAL give God the praise for these SALT materials and dedicate this series to the discipleship of believers worldwide.*

*Thank you to all past and present VCLi staff members. You have played a vital role in developing, teaching, and helping others apply these diagrams, concepts, and lessons.*

*Special thanks go to Rocky Nystrom. Your vision and creativity made this series a reality, your determination brought it to completion; and your heart for people to be free energized us along the way.*

## **About this Series**

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### SEVEN AREAS OF LIFE TRAINING

Learning how to live victoriously in all seven areas of life is the goal of this comprehensive discipleship series.

This small group or self-study book is simple, yet dynamic. Biblical truths are visually illustrated with powerful diagrams.

Solid Biblical truth is taught in each lesson with a challenge to apply that truth to your life. It is when you apply that truth and share it with others that your life will be profoundly changed.

## **About this Book**

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The *Parental Area of Life* deals with your relationship with your children.

In four powerful chapters, you will find challenges to get real in the parental area of life and start enjoying your children as God intended.

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## PARENTING STYLES

*“Come, my children, and listen to me, and I will teach you to fear the LORD.” Psalm 34:11 (NLT)*

Every child is unique and there are many ways of parenting. But is there one approach to raising children that produces healthy, mature adults?

The following Parenting Quiz will help you understand your own parenting style. Answer the questions based on the way you are parenting now. *If you have several children, answer the questions based on how you parent your oldest at-home child.*

### Parenting Quiz

1. How does my child respond when I tell him or her to do something viewed as unpleasant?
  - a. My child obeys but expresses disapproval (rolling eyes, huffing, slamming doors...).
  - b. My child agrees to obey, but doesn't do it.
  - c. My child argues.
  - d. My child obeys willingly.
2. When my child is caught doing something wrong, he or she:
  - a. Feels guilty.
  - b. Seems not to care.
  - c. Feels like a failure.
  - d. Understands the behavior is wrong and desires to make things right.

3. When my child is asked to help with chores, it appears he or she:
  - a. Does them to avoid conflict with me.
  - b. Does them only when there is personal benefit involved (money or rewards).
  - c. Doesn't expect to have to do chores.
  - d. Enjoys being helpful and having responsibility.
4. When I have a disagreement with my child, he or she generally:
  - a. Withdraws and gets quiet.
  - b. Tries to take charge or manipulate the situation.
  - c. Throws a temper tantrum.
  - d. Shares his or her thoughts or desires with respect.
5. When my child knows I am upset with him or her:
  - a. My child is fearful of my response.
  - b. My child acts up further.
  - c. My child cries and appears devastated.
  - d. My child desires to make things right between us.
6. How do you respond when your child is disobedient?
  - a. Force my child to obey.
  - b. Ignore my child.
  - c. Give in to avoid conflict.
  - d. Explain my disappointment and remove a privilege.
7. How do you get your child to understand what you want him or her to do?
  - a. Get angry.
  - b. I don't bother.
  - c. Try to talk to my child.
  - d. Train by my example.
8. How do you discipline your child?
  - a. Overcorrect. (Consequences don't fit the offense.)
  - b. Neglect to correct.
  - c. Undercorrect. (Consequences don't fit the offense.)
  - d. Correct consistently and appropriately.

9. How do you respond when your child does not act responsibly?
- I yell.
  - I don't say anything.
  - I continually remind my child.
  - I make a plan for training my child to grow in that area.
10. When your child doesn't do a good job, what do you do?
- Use belittling remarks to make him or her feel guilty.
  - Ignore my child because I am busy.
  - Do it myself.
  - Take the time to train my child.

### **Values and Behaviors**

- Q1.** What characteristics would you like your child to have as an adult? Briefly explain.
- Q2.** Do you believe the way you are parenting your child will affect how he or she will turn out as an adult?

### **Acceptance and Accountability**

Consider the benefits of children developing the following internal values:

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity

And the following external behaviors:

- Respect for authority
- Love for God and others

Research shows there is a link between the children who exhibit these values and behaviors and the style of parenting their mothers and fathers use. Specifically, how much acceptance and accountability their parents provide.

**ACCEPTANCE** will be defined as:

*“Showing love and support to one's child.”*

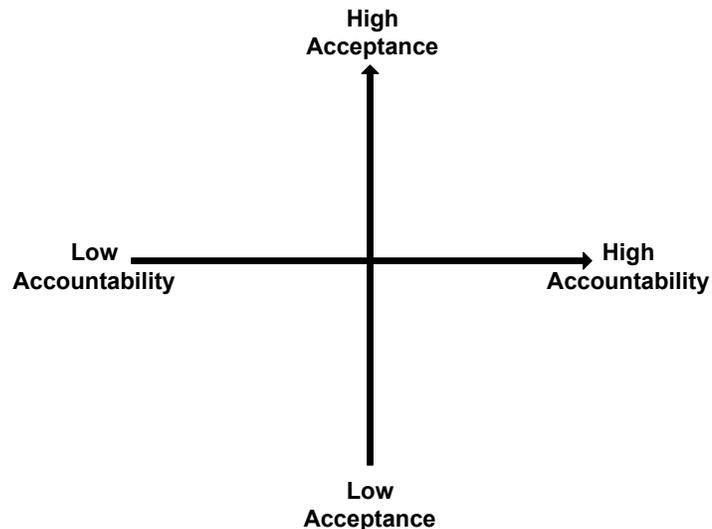
**ACCOUNTABILITY** will be defined as:

*“Directing and correcting the actions of one's child.”*

Acceptance and accountability can be graphed in terms of whether they are exhibited by a parent in high or low amounts.

This graph demonstrates that there are four distinct parenting types:

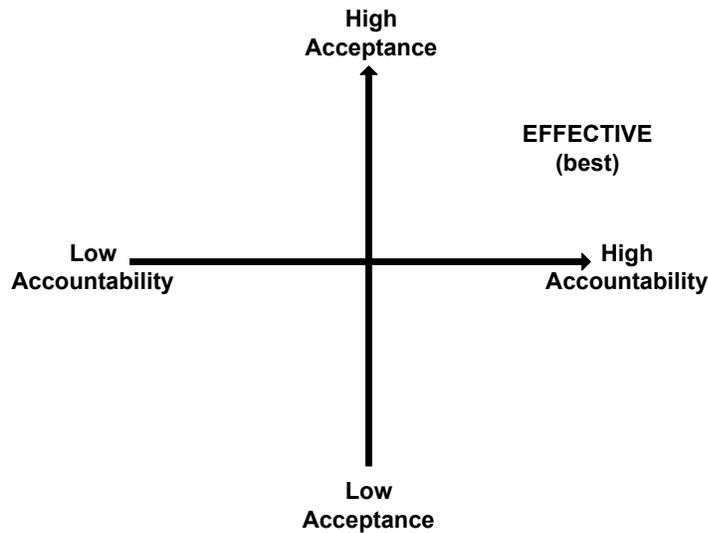
- parents who exhibit **high** acceptance and **high** accountability
- parents who exhibit **high** acceptance and **low** accountability
- parents who exhibit **low** acceptance and **low** accountability
- parents who exhibit **low** acceptance and **high** accountability



## Effective Parenting

Children whose mother and father exercise the highest levels of acceptance and accountability demonstrate the highest levels of:

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity
- Respect for authority
- Love for God and others.



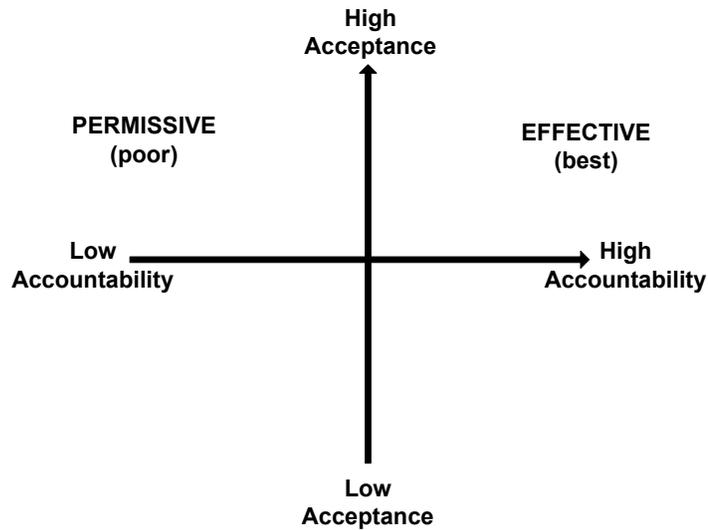
The style of parenting that utilizes both **high acceptance** and **high accountability** we will call “EFFECTIVE” parenting. Effective is the *best* style of parenting.

## Permissive Parenting

Children whose parents exercise **high levels of acceptance** but **low levels of accountability** demonstrate significantly lower levels of:

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity
- Respect for authority
- Love for God and others

We will call this type of parenting “PERMISSIVE.” Permissive parenting is a *poor* style to use with your children.

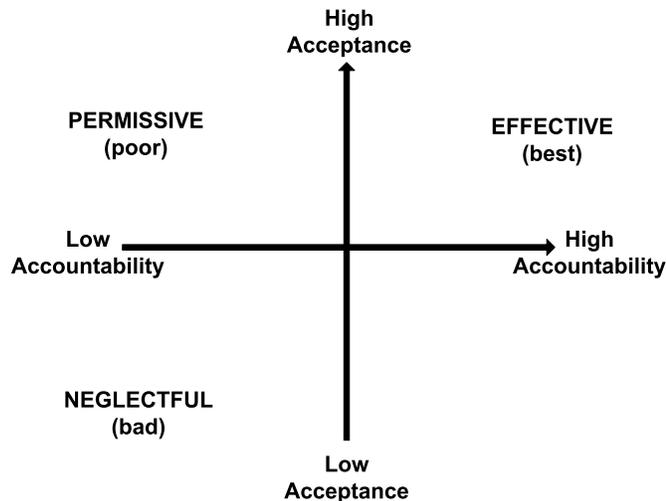


### Neglectful Parenting

Children whose mother and father exercise **low levels of acceptance** AND **low levels of accountability** demonstrate very low levels of:

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity
- Respect for authority
- Love for God and others

We will call this parenting type “NEGLECTFUL.” Neglectful parenting is a *bad* style to use with your children.

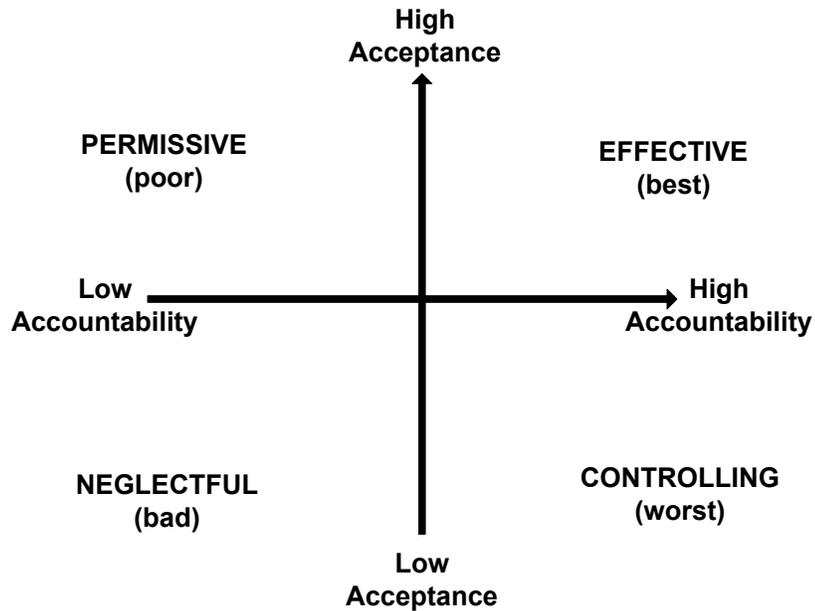


## Controlling Parenting

As bad as neglectful parenting is, it does not produce the worst possible results. Parents who exercise **low levels of acceptance** with **high levels of accountability** tend to have children who demonstrate the lowest overall levels of:

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity
- Respect for authority
- Love for God and others

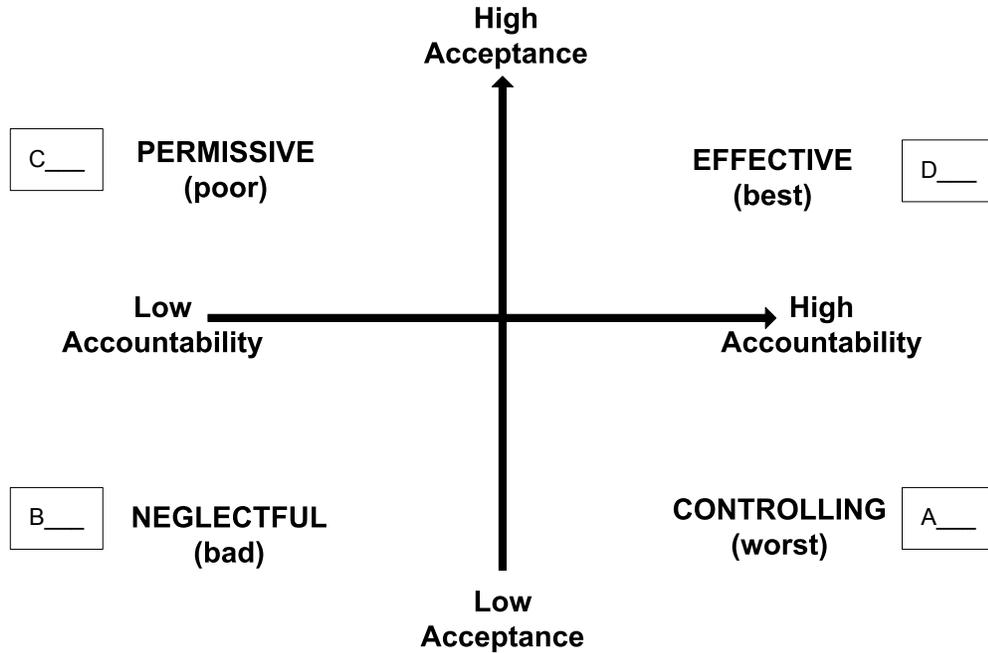
We will call this parenting type “CONTROLLING.” Controlling parenting is the *worst* style to use with your children.



Now it is time to score your Parenting Quiz from pages 1–3.

### Find Your Parenting Style

Count the number of times you circled the letters A, B, C, and D. Put your totals in the corresponding boxes.



The box with the highest number indicates your current parenting style. If your numbers are generally higher on the right side of the diagram, you tend to emphasize accountability in your parenting. If your numbers are generally higher on the top half of the diagram, you tend to emphasize acceptance in your parenting.

- Q3. How would you describe your level of acceptance in your parenting?
  
- Q4. How would you describe your level of accountability in your parenting?

A summary of the parenting styles:

EFFECTIVE .....High Acceptance with High Accountability  
PERMISSIVE .....High Acceptance with Low Accountability  
NEGLECTFUL .....Low Acceptance with Low Accountability  
CONTROLLING .....Low Acceptance with High Accountability

Each parenting style has certain characteristics, biblical examples, warnings, and ramifications for children. We will examine each of these, starting with neglectful.

## Neglectful

Neglectful parenting is characterized by ABSENCE, SPENDING LITTLE TIME and/or forms of ABANDONMENT. When a mother or father is not present with the child, that parent cannot give either acceptance or accountability. No matter what the parent's affections may be, the reality to the child is the parent is absent or hardly there. A parent may justify being gone as being necessary to provide for the family, but the reality to the child is the same.

The neglectful mother or father avoids responsibility and forsakes the care of his/her children and sometimes tries to teach through vaguely communicated commands.

The child of a neglectful parent may have the following kinds of thoughts:

- I'm not important.
- What I want isn't important.
- Why should I care about others? Others don't really care about me.

Neglectful parents are like Lot who was willing to abandon his daughters.

*"Look—I have two virgin daughters. Do with them as you wish, but leave these men alone, for they are under my protection."* **Genesis 19:8** (NLT)

## Permissive

Permissive parenting is characterized by UNDERCORRECTION, that is, there is little attempt by a parent to control the actions of one's child. The parent *may* attempt to correct the child but gives up if that attempt fails. They allow their child's disobedience to continue.

The permissive parent fears the child's rejection or is trying to compensate for the other parent being too strict.

The child of permissive parents may have thoughts like:

- I can do what I want.
- They don't really care enough to make me obey.
- If it were really important how I behave, they wouldn't forget about what they tell me to do.

Permissive parents are like Eli who did not discipline his sons.

*“I have warned him continually that judgment is coming for his family, because his sons are blaspheming God and he hasn’t disciplined them.” 1 Samuel 3:13 (NLT)*

God’s instruction for correcting children is seen in the following verse.

*“Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don’t, you will ruin their lives.” Proverbs 19:18 (NLT)*

**Q5.** If you tend to provide too little accountability, what is hindering you?

- Are you too busy?
- Do you fear your child’s rejection?
- Do you attempt to avoid conflict?
- Do you think the situation or behavior will take care of itself?

**Q6.** What negative behavior has your child displayed due to the lack of accountability?

### **Controlling**

Controlling parenting is characterized by **OVERCORRECTING**, **BELITTLING**, **CRITICIZING**, or being **OVER-PROTECTIVE**. Remember that controlling parenting is low in acceptance, but high in accountability.

Controlling parenting includes correction that is inflexible and harsh. Controlling parents might interrupt, ridicule or ignore the child. They continually remind and condemn the child for past failures and character weaknesses.

Controlling parenting can be subtler in its approach by the use of silent anger, controlled rage, intimidation by guilt, mean or scolding looks. Overprotective parents control their child’s choices by attempting to protect him or her. The motive is fear and the result is damaging to the child.

Controlling parents plant fear in children by attempting to teach by angry, forceful, and demanding statements. Such parents drive their children to do the very things they want them to avoid.

The child of a controlling parent may have thoughts like:

- I get yelled at for everything I say or do.
- If I think for myself or make a decision of my own, I get criticized.
- I'll keep my thoughts to myself.
- I'll get out of here the first chance I get.
- No mistake I've ever made has been forgiven or forgotten.
- There's no way I can ever please them, so what's the use of trying?
- Can't they ever accept me the way I am?
- I'm a failure.

Controlling parents are like Saul who bullied his son to get what he wanted.

*"Then Saul's anger burned against Jonathan and he said to him, 'You son of a perverse, rebellious woman!' ...Then Saul hurled his spear at him to strike him down..."*  
**1 Samuel 20:30, 33** (NASB)

God's challenge to controlling parents is found in the following verse.

*"Fathers, don't aggravate your children. If you do, they will become discouraged and quit trying."*  
**Colossians 3:21** (NLT)

## **Wounded Children**

Whether a child is parented by a permissive, neglectful or controlling parent, the child feels emotionally wounded and rejected. Wounded children might act out in several ways:

- Rebellion and open defiance
- Lying and deception
- Deliberate disobedience
- Drug involvement
- Sexual involvement
- Leaving home
- Joining anti-social groups
- Crime

Even before acting out in such obvious ways, a child may show the following indicators. Check the one(s) you have observed in your child.

- \_\_\_ A sorrowful inner attitude
- \_\_\_ Perverse, abusive language
- \_\_\_ Depression and tiredness
- \_\_\_ Inability to cope with adversity
- \_\_\_ A hardened, insensitive conscience
- \_\_\_ An uncontrolled temper

**Q7.** Are any of your children demonstrating the warning signs in the above list?

**Q8.** Do you think your children have been emotionally wounded or rejected? Explain.

Ask God to show you in what ways you may be permissive, neglectful, or controlling.

**Q9.** What did He show you? Write it down.

### **Effective**

The parenting style that gives the best result is EFFECTIVE parenting.

Effective parenting is characterized by the presence of *both* ACCEPTANCE and ACCOUNTABILITY. Effective parenting is characterized by treating your child as an important individual.

*“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.”* **Philippians 2:3** (NASB)

Effective parents are like Solomon's parents who loved him and taught him God's ways.

*“For I, too, was once my father's son, tenderly loved by my mother as an only child. My father told me, ‘Take my words to heart. Follow my instructions and you will live.’”* **Proverbs 4:3–4** (NLT)

### **Personal Application**

**Ask God** to show you how to be more of an effective parent.

**Write** what He shows you.

**Thank God** for His work in your life.

*“For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.”* **Philippians 2:13** (NKJ)

**Share** the diagram from this chapter with someone this week.

Effective acceptance and effective accountability will be discussed in the next two chapters.

# Parenting Styles

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Chapter 2

## ACCEPTANCE FIRST

*“See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children...” 1 John 3:1 (NLT)*

We’ve introduced four types of parenting that are based on the presence or absence of *acceptance* and *accountability*. We learned that effective mothers and fathers utilize both. However of these two qualities, acceptance comes first. It is at the center of everything an effective parent does.

Consider the perfect father — God. Everything He does for us flows from His love, forgiveness and acceptance. For example, God loved the people of Nineveh, so he sent Jonah to preach to them. God said,

*“Should I not have compassion on Nineveh, the great city in which there are more than 120,000 persons...?”*  
**Jonah 4:11** (NASB)

### God’s Acceptance

Jonah speaks of the great love, forgiveness and acceptance of our heavenly Father.

*“I knew that you were a gracious and compassionate God, slow to get angry and filled with unfailing love. I knew how easily you could cancel your plans for destroying these people.”* **Jonah 4:2** (NLT)

**Q1.** Do you believe God accepts you? Why or why not?

The Bible teaches,

*“But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.”*

**Romans 5:8** (NLT)

**Q2.** What do the following verses say about God’s acceptance of you?

*“See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allows us to be called his children...”* **1 John 3:1** (NLT)

*“If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!”*

**Matthew 7:11** (NKJ)

*“Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.”* **Romans 15:7** (NASB)

These verses and many others teach us what God is like. However, we don’t always believe what He says.

**Q3.** Is it difficult for you to believe God loves you? Explain.

### **Your Experience**

Your experiences can taint and distort your view of God. In fact, the way you were parented could affect your view of God. We tend to put our earthly father's face on our heavenly Father. The Bible reminds us; however, that God is not a man.

*“... [They] exchanged the glory of the incorruptible **God** for an image in the form of corruptible **man**...”*

**Romans 1:23** (NASB)

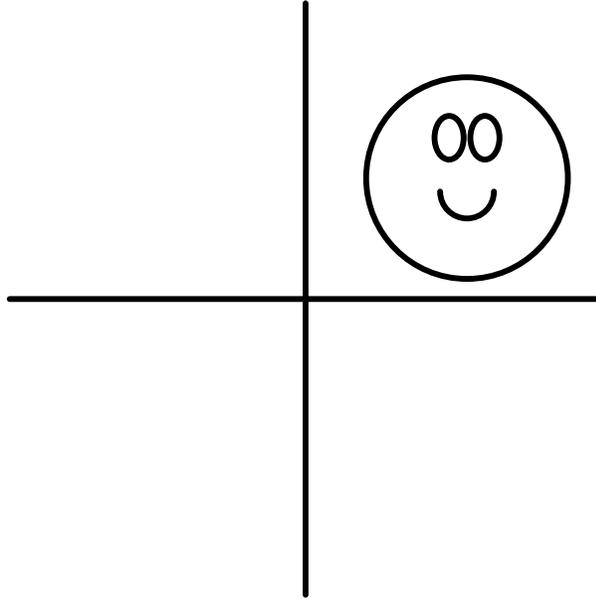
All parenting should reflect how God parents His children; unfortunately, most of the time it does not. Our relationship with parents or authorities in our life can hinder that reflection of love.

- Q4.** Describe your relationship with each of your parents.
- Q5.** What were their parenting styles (neglectful, permissive, controlling or effective)?
- Q6.** Did you have a better relationship with your mother or father?  
What made it better?
- Q7.** If you had a better relationship with one of your parents, was it the one who showed you the most acceptance?

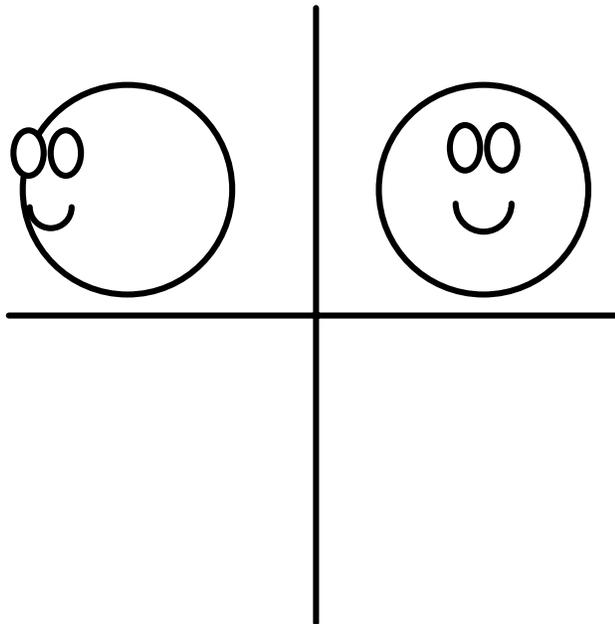
### The Faces of Parenting

The following pictures depict the four styles that a parent might use.

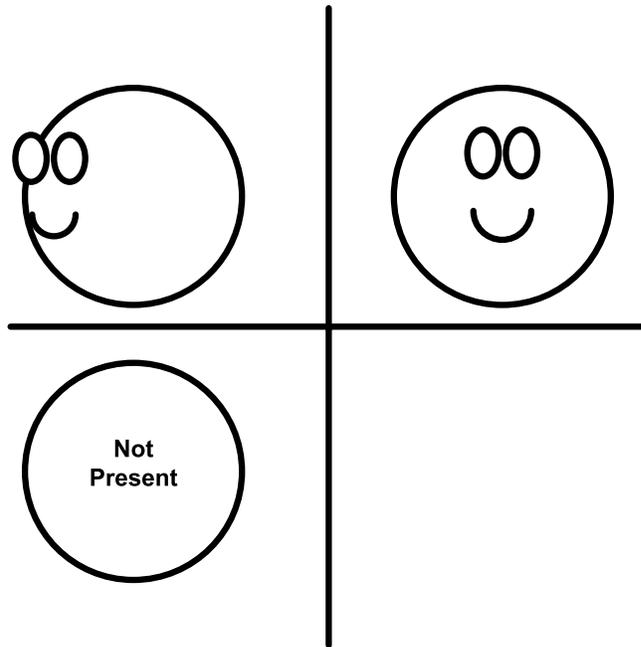
This parent accepts you for who you are – his or her child. This parent has rules but trains and encourages you along the way. This parent doesn't always like what you do, but you always feel loved.



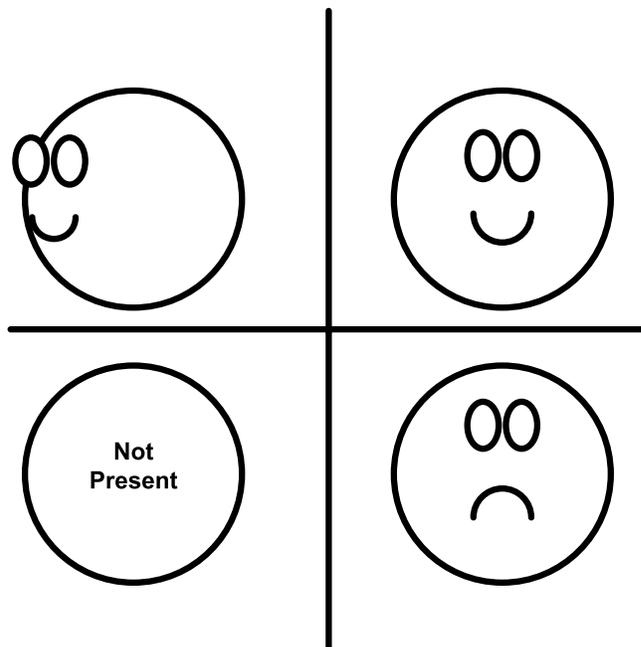
This parent accepts you but looks the other way when you exercise bad behavior. He or she accepts you but doesn't hold you accountable for your poor choices or correct you when you are wrong.



This parent has either abandoned you or was never around. They provide no support, love, training, or discipline.



This parent might be harsh and have expectations you can't live up to or be overly protective and never provide opportunities for you to make decisions. Either way, you don't feel accepted.



- Q8.** Mark the picture that best describes how you viewed your *father*?
- Q9.** What do you think characterizes an ideal parent/child relationship?
- Q10.** Did you experience all of the characteristics that you just identified, with your father? Which ones were missing?
- Q11.** How has this influenced your life?

### **Your View of God**

The parent/child relationship can influence your relationship with God and the way you parent your children. The next statements represent right and wrong ways you might view God. Each statement is followed by what the Bible says concerning your heavenly Father.

#### ***Effective***

You may see God as an *effective* father. “God loves me for who I am, not for what I do. I am His child.” You recognize that because you are His child, He is going to correct you when you make bad choices. He is training you to choose His ways so you will be blessed.

*“For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children.” Hebrews 12:6 (NLT)*

#### ***Permissive***

You may see God as *permissive* and believe God loves you, but you don’t think He cares about your disobedience. You hope poor choices you’ve made with finances, food or other things won’t bring negative consequences.

*“If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children after all.” Hebrews 12:8 (NLT)*

### **Neglectful**

You may see God as *neglectful* and think things like, “Where was God when I needed Him? He’s too busy running the universe to take time to deal with my problems or needs. Is He even real?”

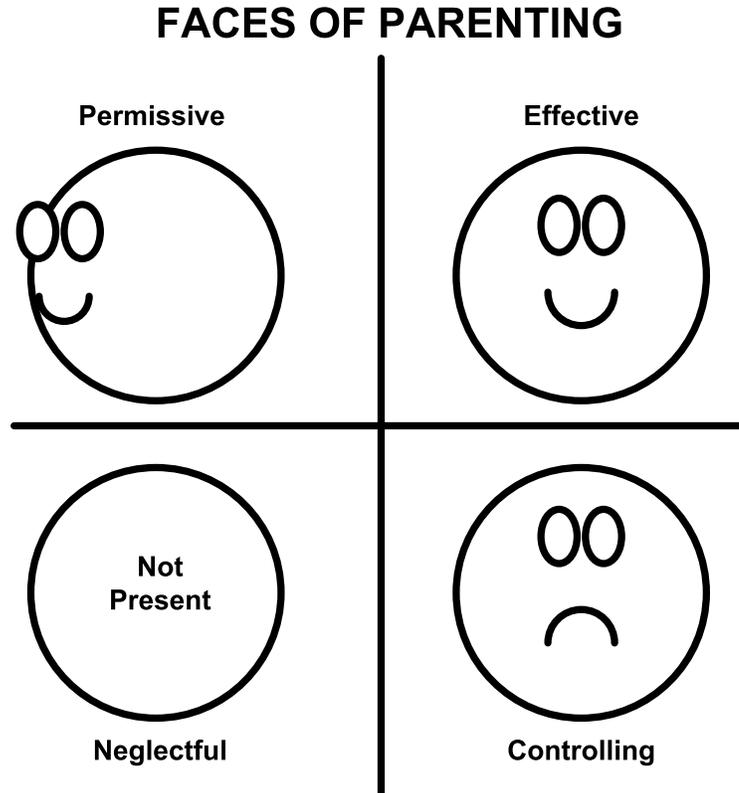
*“Not even a sparrow, worth only half a penny, can fall to the ground without your Father knowing it. And the very hairs on your head are all numbered. So don’t be afraid; you are more valuable to him than a whole flock of sparrows.”* **Matthew 10:29–31** (NLT)

### **Controlling**

You may see God as *controlling* and believe God is judging you. You think He is angry at you. You have thought things like, “I’ll never measure up. God is ready to hit me the minute I fail. He’s going to ask me to go where I don’t want to go and do what I don’t want to do.”

*“So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. You should behave instead like God’s very own children, adopted into his family – calling him ‘Father, dear Father.’ For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God’s children.”* **Romans 8:15–16** (NLT)

**Q12.** Which of the following four pictures best describes how you see God?



**Q13.** Is there a connection between how you were parented and how you view God? What connection is God revealing to you?

### **Your Child's View**

So far, this lesson has talked about the effect your parents had on your view of God, but your parenting also has affects on your children.

**Q14.** Which of these four pictures best describes how you think your child sees *you*?

If you are not satisfied with your answer, consider what might be missing — acceptance.

**Q15.** Why do you think acceptance is so important?

A child feels loved when he or she is accepted and feels rejected and unloved when acceptance is missing. Children need to be accepted, regardless of their behavior, so they will feel loved. Do children need accountability and discipline as well as acceptance? Of course they do.

*“Discipline your children while there is hope. If you don’t, you will ruin their lives.”* **Proverbs 19:18** (NLT)

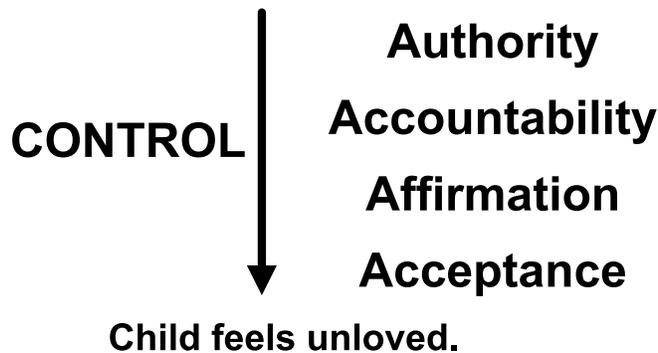
God has placed parents in the position of authority over their children.

*“Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do.”*  
**Ephesians 6:1** (NLT)

### **When Acceptance Comes Last – Control**

How do we discipline in love? Most parents find it difficult to accept their child when he or she needs discipline. God has given you, as the parent, authority to hold your child accountable for his or her behavior and attitude. However, you are not following God’s parenting model if you *only* give affirmation when your child behaves well and does what he or she is told to do. God doesn’t make you behave well on a consistent basis before He gives you acceptance.

Consider the results in children when a father or mother start with **authority**, and move to **accountability**, **affirmation** and lastly **acceptance**. The child feels rejected or unloved. This flow illustrates the use of authority to exercise control. It is a method for getting your way or wanting to look good to others by having well-behaved children. Many times the child of a controlling parent can’t do anything well enough to receive affirmation. The child feels unloved.



Although this control appears to get results, it trains your child to believe your love is conditional. The condition is, “I will love you only after you do what I say.”

- Q16.** Is this true — do you *only* love your child after he or she does what you say? Give an example.
- Q17.** Or is it true that you love your child even before they do anything? Give an example.
- Q18.** What would your child say? Does your child feel loved by you regardless of what he or she does?

If not, this sends a wrong message.

### **When Acceptance Comes First – Love**

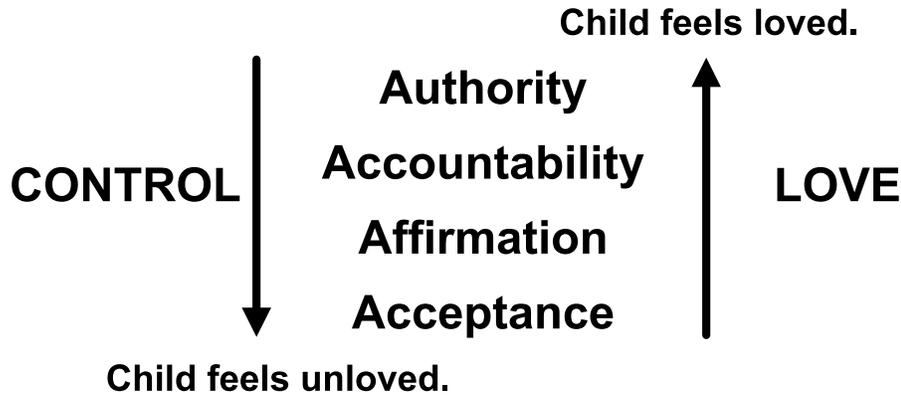
To communicate love to your child, consider again how God fathers His children. He does not use His authority to control you, even though He has every right to do so. God demonstrates His love for you by accepting you. Since He loves and accepts you, you can love your child. Loving your child begins with accepting him or her.

*“When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.”* **Romans 5:6–8** (NLT)

- Q19.** When did God accept you?

God starts by loving you. He loved you before you did anything, good or bad. He **accepts** and **affirms** you. He desires for you to become more than you already are and therefore holds you **accountable**.

# Control vs. Love



Notice in the following verse that God accepts you *before* He holds you accountable and disciplines you.

*“For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those he accepts as his children.” Hebrews 12:6 (NLT)*

Finally, because of His love, you yield to His **authority** and love Him in return.

*“We love Him because He first loved us.”*  
**1 John 4:19 (NKJ)**

## Acceptance First AND Then Accountability

Permissive parents may start out with acceptance and affirmation but stop before they hold their child accountable. Neglectful parents don't start with authority and go down the diagram or start with acceptance and go up the diagram. They do neither. God wants us to love our children like He loves us. All children need acceptance first and then accountability.

*“If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them.” Proverbs 13:24 (NLT)*

**Q20.** How do you begin to show love to your children?

First, accept them:

- Recognize God accepts them.
- Acknowledge they are the children God gave you.
- Remember you do love them.
- Thank God for your children.

Next, affirm your children. This involves outward displays of affection:

- Speak kind words to them.
- Hug and kiss them.
- Hold them.
- Spend time with them.
- Speak about them positively.
- Listen to them.

*“But God **demonstrates** His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.”*

**Romans 5:8** (NASB)

Finally after you have accepted and affirmed your child, you can begin to hold them accountable without undermining his or her assurance of your love. Showing love takes time and energy but is well worth the investment. If your children find sufficient acceptance at home, then they won't be seeking it in the wrong places.

### **Personal Application**

**Q21.** What did the Lord show you through this lesson?

If you have had a wrong view of God, **ask Him** to help you see Him the way He really is.

**Q22.** What did He show you?

**Ask God** to help you love your children the way He loves them with acceptance first.

**Share the diagram** from this chapter with someone this week.

You will learn how to exercise effective accountability in the next chapter.

# Faces of Parenting

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

## ACCOUNTABILITY SECOND

*“...Don’t make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord.” Ephesians 6:4 (NLT)*

We have seen from the previous chapter the importance of **acceptance**. Children feel loved when they feel accepted. Now we will consider the importance of **accountability**. Effective parents provide high levels of both acceptance and accountability. Truly loving your children requires demonstrating your acceptance of them first, then using accountability to grow them up.

- Q1.** Do you provide high or low levels of accountability in your parenting? Describe.

### Healthy Adults

The end goal of parenting is to raise children to be healthy mature adults. By “healthy” we mean healthy in their body, soul and spirit. In order to stay on track, it is always important to remember this is the goal. Healthy, mature adults do not suddenly appear. They grow up over many years.

Most parents expect their children to be mature and fully responsible for their lives by the time they are 21 years old. Therefore, parents should take the time to evaluate how their children are progressing toward this goal. Children are not going to become mature adults just because they have turned 21. They must begin the process of *becoming* mature long before that.

- Q2.** List your children and their ages.
- Q3.** How close are they to being mature adults?

### **Turning Over Control**

Parents understand that they are fully responsible for their child when he or she is a new born. Likewise, those same parents believe that their child should be fully responsible for him or herself by the age of 21.

Another way of thinking about this issue would be to say that parents exercise 100% control over their child at birth and that by age 21 their child should exercise 100% self-control.

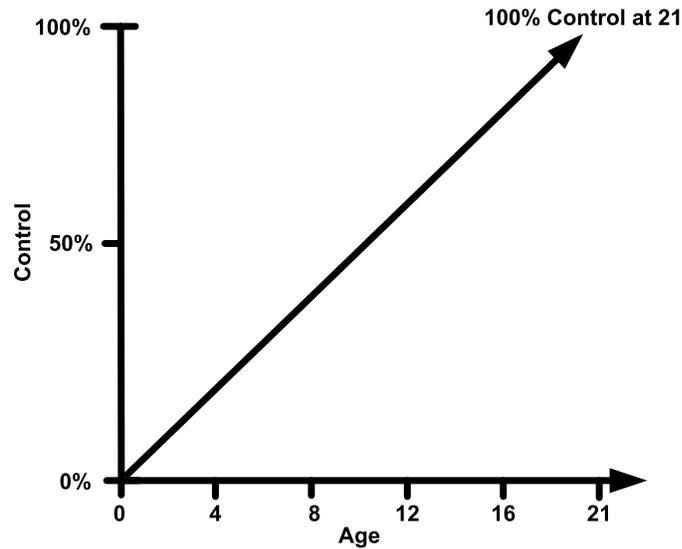
Therefore, it makes sense that parents need to be training their child to handle ever increasing amounts of responsibility as he or she grows older by turning over ever increasing amounts of control to the child.

- Q4.** What is something you used to do for your child that you now let your child do for him or herself?
- Q5.** At what age did you turn control of that responsibility over to your child?

### **Growing Up Graph**

By the time your child is halfway to 21 years old, that child should be making about half of the decisions you used to make for him or her. We can illustrate this concept with the following “Growing Up Graph”.

## Growing Up Graph



The horizontal line at the bottom of the graph represents the child's age from birth to 21. The vertical line on the left side of the graph represents the child's percentage of *control* ranging from 0% at age 0 to 100% at age 21. At that point, the child is 100% responsible for his or her decisions.

The diagonal line illustrates parents turning over control to their child, as he or she gets older.

**Turning over the proper amount of control to your child at the proper age is effective accountability.**

### Accountability

Accountability is directing and correcting the actions of one's child.

*Directing* the actions of one's child shows the training part of accountability. *Correcting* the actions of one's child shows the discipline given when direction is not followed. Parents use control to limit their child's choices, thereby protecting their child from mistakes and harm.

One of the reasons God chose Abraham was because he would train his children how to live.

*"I have singled him out so that he will direct his sons and their families to keep the way of the LORD and do what is right and just. Then I will do for him all that I have promised."* **Genesis 18:19** (NLT)

**Q6.** What are some things you have controlled in your child's life for no other reason than to protect your child from harm?

### **Choices**

Your goal needs to be that your child will be making 100% of his or her choices by the age of 21. Again, effective accountability is about parents transferring control to a child while training him or her to make good choices.

Here are simple steps to implement effective accountability at each stage of your child's growth:

- Teach your child how to make good choices.
- Let your child start making choices.
- Hold your child responsible for his or her choices.

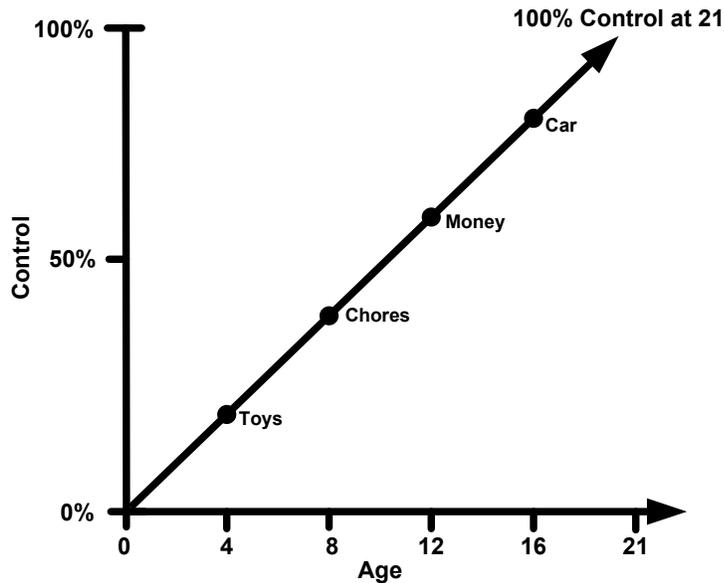
This principle is seen in the way God parents His children. First He trains His children in the way they should go and then He expects them to obey. If they do obey, they are blessed; but if they don't obey, there are consequences and discipline.

*"If you will only obey me and let me help you, then you will have plenty to eat. But if you keep turning away and refusing to listen, you will be destroyed by your enemies. I, the LORD, have spoken!"* **Isaiah 1:19–20** (NLT)

The "Growing Up Graph" illustrates how the correct amount of parental control results in the child's increased growth in responsibility.

*"...Don't make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord."* **Ephesians 6:4** (NLT)

## Growing Up Graph



For example, as seen on the graph:

- When a boy is 4 years old, his parents have already begun to teach him to be responsible for his toys. Parents begin by allowing the child to help in putting away his toys, gradually encouraging him to complete the process more independently.
- By the age of eight this boy's parents have given him chores around the house. He is allowed to do them by himself, but his parents check on whether they are done and how well they are done.
- At twelve years of age his parents may let him start earning money and teach him how to save, give and spend wisely. He is allowed to work for some pay, even if it is for Mom or Dad. He is then permitted to decide whether to spend it or save it.
- At sixteen years old his parents teach him how to be responsible for a car. He is expected to pay for some of the car expenses, such as gas and insurance, even if it's out of an allowance. If he doesn't pay for them, he isn't allowed to drive.

### Ask Yourself

- Q7. Do you think you are effectively turning over control to your children? Give an example.
- Q8. Are you *teaching* your children how to make good choices? Explain.
- Q9. Are you *allowing* your children to make more and more of their own choices? Explain.
- Q10. Are you *holding* your children accountable for the choices they make? Why or why not?

If you are not holding them accountable, then you are exercising too little control. Which parenting styles exercise too little control over a child's choices?

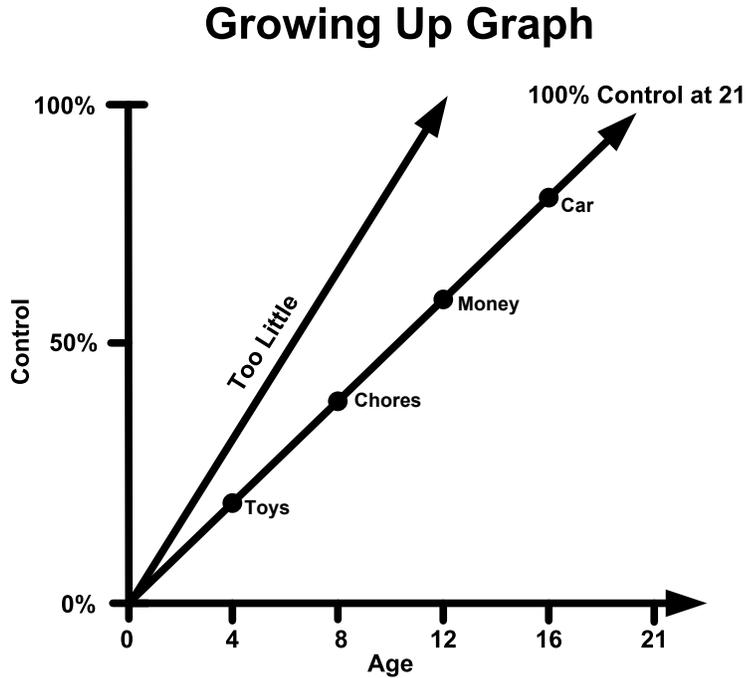
### Neglectful or Permissive Accountability

Consequences of neglectful or permissive accountability:

- Removes parent's control and the necessary training of the child.
- Gives a child **too much** control or choice.
- Forces a child to make decisions for him or her self before he or she is ready.
- A home becomes "child centered."

*"If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them."* **Proverbs 13:24** (NLT)

On the “Growing Up Graph,” **too little parental control** gives the child too much control at too early of an age and looks like the following.



Characteristics in the child resulting from **too little parental control**:

Place a checkmark next to the characteristics that apply to your child/children.

- They wonder why you don't care enough to spend the time to train them.
- They feel anxious, alone, and often become rebellious to express those feelings.
- They are accustomed to making their own decisions and resent it when you or others try to exercise control over them.
- They feel inadequate and later become bitter, angry and resentful.
- They tend to run the home.

**Q11.** Do your children have the characteristics that result from too little parental control? Describe.

## Controlling Accountability

Q12. What are some choices you are afraid to ever turn over to your child?

Q13. Are you afraid your child may never make the right choice?

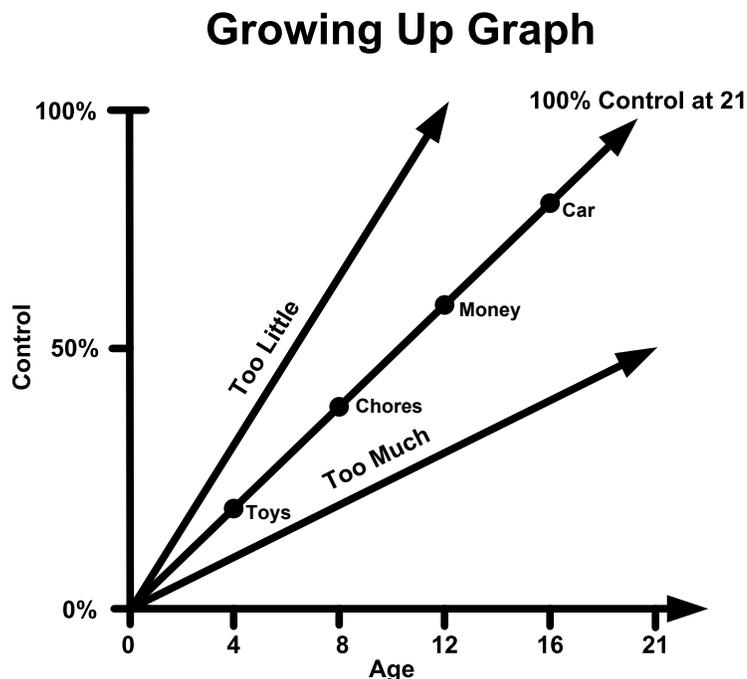
### Consequences of **controlling accountability**:

- Eliminates a child's opportunity to gain skills in decision-making.
- Gives a child **too little** control or choice.
- Parent tells the child *what* to do without training him or her in *how or why*.

*"Fathers, don't aggravate your children. If you do, they will become discouraged and quit trying."*

**Colossians 3:21** (NLT)

**Too much parental control** stifles children's development. These children do not know how to exercise control of their choices even when they are an adult. On the "Growing Up Graph," it looks like the following.



Characteristics in the child resulting from **too much parental control**:

Place a checkmark next to the characteristics that apply to your child/children.

- \_\_\_\_\_ They are afraid to try new things either from fear of failure or just habit of having others doing things for them.
- \_\_\_\_\_ They expect others to continue doing things for them rather than doing things for other people.
- \_\_\_\_\_ They escape through drugs, alcohol, and leisure (because they are unprepared to live, life is overwhelming).
- \_\_\_\_\_ They are angry and very rebellious.

**Q14.** Do your children have the characteristics of too much parental control? Describe.

Balanced control requires parents to turn over responsibility for age appropriate choices to their child.

**Q15.** What are some choices that you have been afraid to turn over to your child that you can begin to train them to take responsibility for?

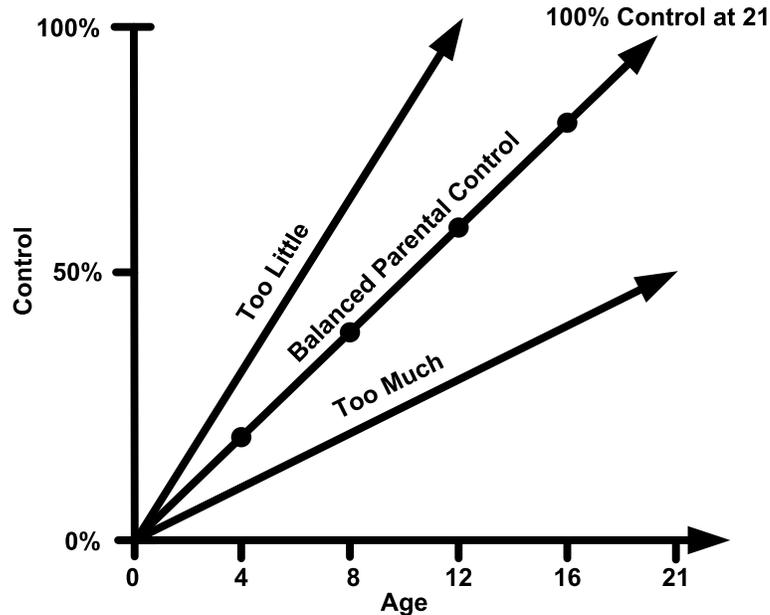
### **Balanced Parental Control**

Effective accountability is exercising neither too little control, nor too much. It requires **balanced parental control**.

Benefits of effective accountability:

- Provides the child with training and responsibility to make good choices.
- Increases choice and responsibility so the child develops into a healthy, mature adult.
- Makes growing up an enjoyable process with challenge, hope and reward.

## Growing Up Graph



Balanced control requires:

- Taking the time to teach children to succeed.
- Risking the possibility that children might fail.
- Taking the time to retrain and hold children accountable when they make mistakes.
- Taking the time to encourage children when they make good choices.

*“...Don’t exasperate your children by coming down hard on them. Take them by the hand and lead them in the way of the Master.” Ephesians 6:4 (MSG)*

Consider the following scenarios regarding parenting with effective accountability.

### Scenario #1

A two-year-old who understands the word “No” wants to touch objects on the table.

Mom says, “No, don’t touch.”

The child picks up the object while looking at Mom.

### What Do You Do?

1. Remove all the objects that are off limits.
2. Choose to let the child play with the objects since they really don't mean much to you.
3. Commit to training your child to obey.

Leave the objects within reach but repeat the words, "No, don't touch." If the child does not obey use a flick on the hand along with the words, "No, don't touch!" This action may need to be repeated several times until the child is trained to obey.

- Q16.** What type of parenting is characterized by option #1: Neglectful, Permissive, Controlling or Effective?
- Q17.** What type of parenting is characterized by option #2?
- Q18.** What type of parenting is characterized by option #3?

Notice that option 3 takes the most time and energy initially, but the benefits include that the child understands the word "no" and the child can be taken to other environments where objects do not need to be removed from reach, such as other people's homes.

### Scenario #2

A family is on vacation.

At a gas stop the seven-year-old boy steals a pack of chewing gum.

After traveling 20 miles down the road, the parents find out the son didn't pay for the gum.

### What Do You Do?

1. Tell the child that stealing is wrong and he should not do it again.
2. Stop the car and give the child a spanking for stealing and take away the gum from him.
3. Commit to train the child to take responsibility for his action.

Drive back to the store where the gum was stolen. The child confesses the theft to the attendant. Dad pays for the gum. The consequence is that the boy needs to work to pay his Dad for **more** than what he stole.

- Q19.** What type of parenting is characterized by option #1: Neglectful, Permissive, Controlling or Effective?
- Q20.** What type of parenting is characterized by option #2?
- Q21.** What type of parenting is characterized by option #3?
- Q22.** Though option #3 is again time and energy consuming, what are the benefits to the child?

### **Scenario #3**

A twelve-year-old boy wants to watch TV shows and movies his parents believe are inappropriate.

His parents discover that he has watched some of these shows and movies at a friend's house.

### **What Do You Do?**

1. Don't ever let him go to that friend's house again.
2. Decide that if his friend's parents think those shows and movies are O.K., you're O.K. with them as well.
3. Explain to your child that with the privilege of staying at a friend's house comes the responsibility of respecting your wishes.

Explain that you are responsible to protect him from harmful influences and explain that he needs to become responsible to protect himself. Tell him that he loses the privilege of going to that friend's house until he demonstrates that he will honor your rules while he's there.

- Q23.** What types of parenting are characterized by options 1 and 2? List them here.
- Q24.** Explain the benefits to the effective parenting seen in option #3.

### Scenario #4

Your sixteen-year-old daughter calls and says she blew out the tire on your car and is stranded.

She explains that she was not paying attention to where she was driving and hit the median and blew the tire.

She wants you to come and rescue her.

### What Do You Do?

1. Tell her that if she can drive she should know how to change a tire. Leave her to figure it out or help her, but make sure she never wants to bother you when she is in trouble again.
2. Go put on the spare for her and tell her to watch what she is doing when she is driving. Buy another tire for the car.
3. Take the time to train her to be responsible for a car.

Affirm your love for her and thankfulness that she was not hurt. Help her get the car to a safe place to change the tire. Assist her as she changes the tire. Tell her that she needs to pay for a new tire.

- Q25. Are you willing to do what it takes to see your children grow into healthy mature adults?

### Personal Application

**Ask the Lord** to give you a training plan for any of your children that are not on track for their age.

*“If you need wisdom – if you want to know what God wants you to do – **ask him**, and he will gladly tell you. He will not resent your asking.” James 1:5 (NLT)*

**Write down** what the Lord shows you.

# Growing Up Graph

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

## REACHING FULFILLED ADULTHOOD

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, Even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6 (NASB)*

In Chapter One we identified certain desirable qualities to be developed into a child. We examined how the various parenting types affected the outcome of those qualities. This chapter focuses on what it takes specifically to see those qualities developed in a child by the time he or she reaches adulthood.

Acceptance and accountability remain as the essential ingredients.

We introduced these qualities as:

*Internal values of:*

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity

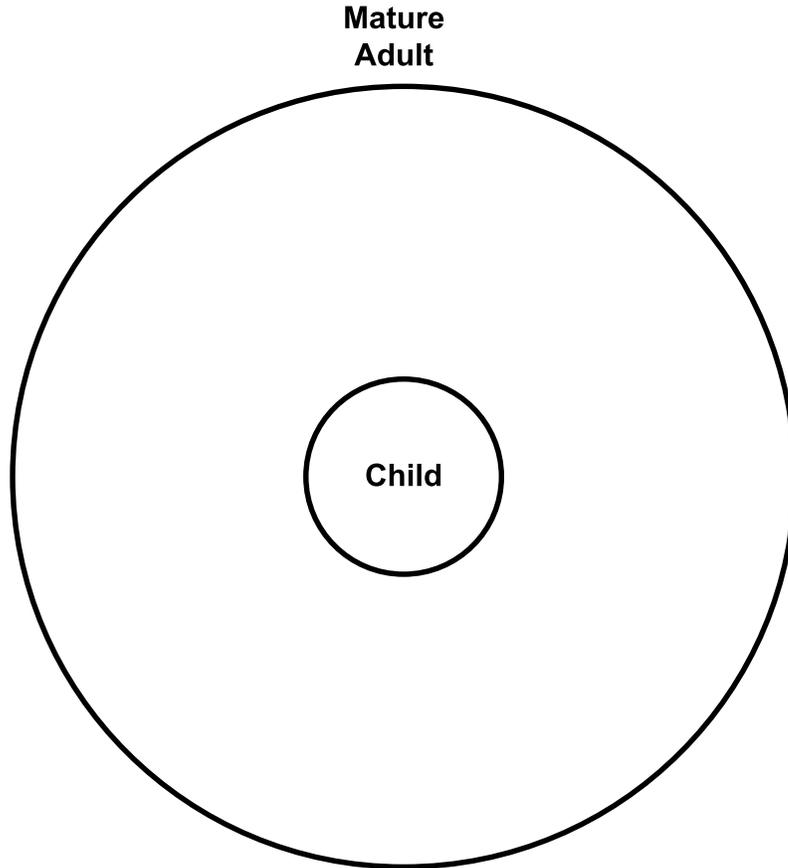
*External behaviors of:*

- Respect for Authority
- Love for God and others

Acceptance always comes first, and then accountability. Both ingredients are necessary, in that order, to building the above qualities into a young person.

## From Child to Adult

For the purposes of this lesson, think of your child as having undeveloped potential. Consider the inner circle below as representing your child while he or she is still young and the outer circle representing your child that has grown into an adult.



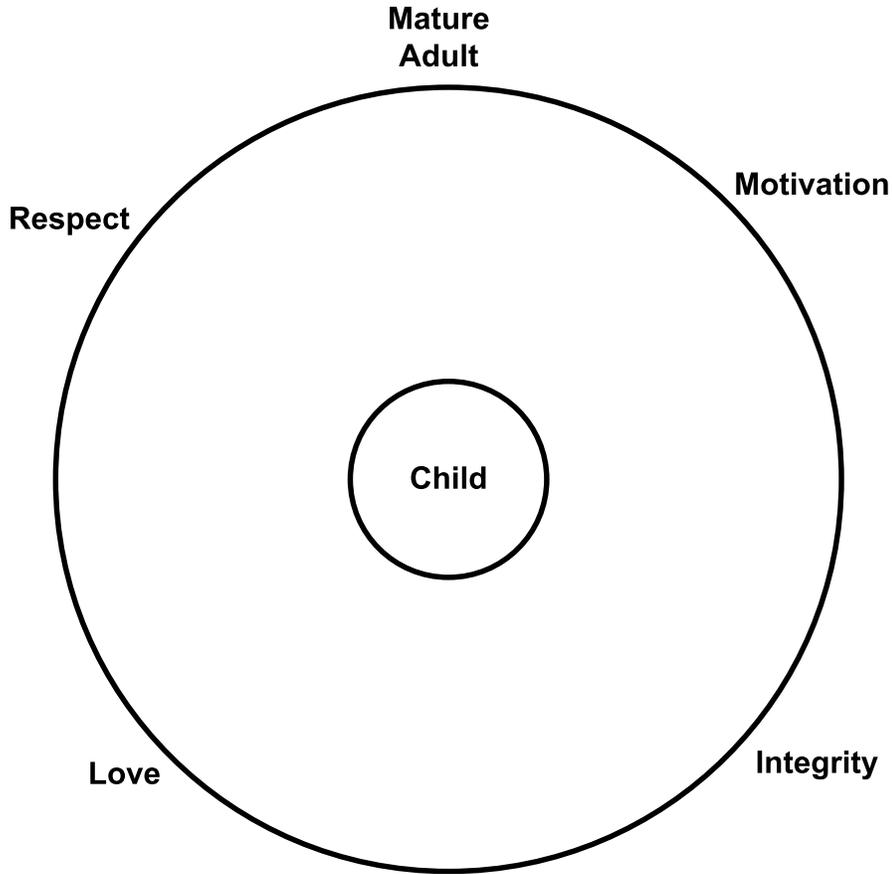
Think of those elements you would like to see developed in your child as objectives that round out his or her life. There are two things to consider: Where your child is now? Where you want him or her to be?

Remember, these objectives are:

- Motivation and confidence
- Integrity
- Love for God and others
- Respect for authority

These objectives indicate what we would like to see true of our children when they become adults. We know that these things do not just

happen. There is much prayer, work, care, patience, and persistence required on the part of the parent – but these objectives must be kept in mind as the years pass. They are shown as *motivation, integrity, love, and respect*.



### **Motivation**

Motivation and confidence enable your children to function effectively wherever God leads them. Motivation and confidence are required for the ability to study, to fit into the working world with skill, to manage one's home and children, to contribute to the community, or to make a positive impact on one's generation.

*"Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might..."* **Ecclesiastes 9:10** (NASB)

Q1. What is it that develops a child's motivation and confidence?

### **Encouragement**

*Encouragement* gives your child the motivation to use his or her God-given talents. Your child will have the confidence to do whatever he or she is given to do. A child must be allowed to risk failure in his/her endeavors and learn that it is "safe" to fail. That is, if he/she fails in a creative attempt, encouragement rather than criticism or rebuke will be given. To lift a child up through praise and encouragement will ensure a positive outcome more than any amount of critical instruction.

*"So **encourage** each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing." 1 Thessalonians 5:11 (NLT)*

Q2. What is a specific area in which you want to see your child grow in motivation and confidence?

Q3. What can you do to encourage your child in that area? Describe.

Q4. What is it that hinders growth in motivation and confidence?

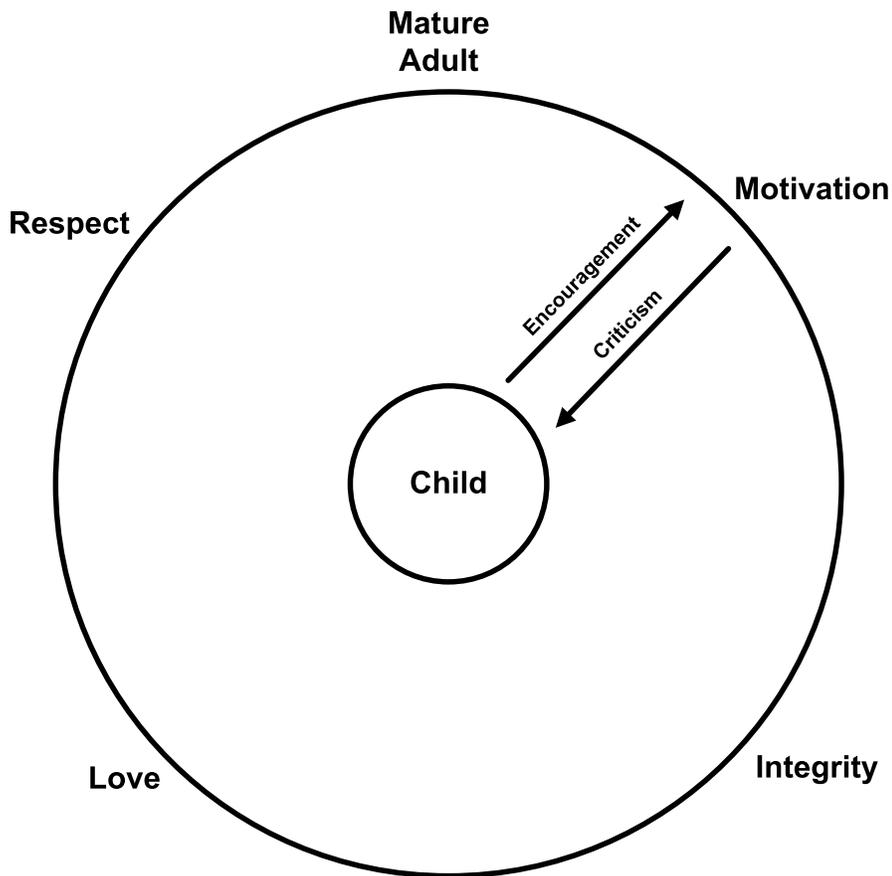
### **Criticism**

To *criticize* is to "find fault with." Criticism focuses on the negative part of what is being done. Just as encouragement builds up a child's motivation and confidence, criticism tears it down.

Criticism stifles creativity and leads to frustration and anger on the part of the child. Whenever a child fails, instead of getting encouragement from the parents, if he or she gets criticism, it adds insult to injury.

*"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a **harsh** word stirs up anger." Proverbs 15:1 (NASB)*

- Q5.** When you are attempting to help your child develop, would your child see your efforts as critical or encouraging?
- Q6.** If you believe your child would characterize you as critical, ask the Lord to show you what you can do to be encouraging. Write down what He shows you.



Notice that providing *encouragement* results in a mature adult who has *motivation* and confidence. The arrow pointing back to the child indicates under development of those qualities due to *criticism*.

### **Integrity**

*Integrity* is a commitment to the truth. To speak and act truthfully represents the strongest evidence of strength of character. Truthful behavior is a rare quality in a world where “every man has his price.”

Therefore to develop integrity in a child requires a deep commitment by the parent.

*“Do not let kindness and truth leave you; Bind them around your neck, Write them on the tablet of your heart.”*  
**Proverbs 3:3** (NASB)

**Q7.** What is it that develops a child’s integrity?

### ***Honesty***

If parents want their children to have integrity, they need to model *honesty*. This requires a parent’s own commitment to integrity.

For example, when you make a commitment to do something, you do it. You tell the truth. You live the way you want your child to live. Children must be able to see the parents’ model what they teach.

*“Happy are people of **integrity**, who follow the law of the LORD...Oh, that my actions would consistently reflect your principles!”* **Psalm 119:1, 5** (NLT)

Maturing children do not expect their parents to be perfect. They know that is not realistic. However, they want to know that their parents believe what they are telling them to believe. Being honest about your failures creates a bond with your children.

*“But if we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin.”*  
**1 John 1:7** (NASB)

**Q8.** What are some truths that you want to see your children committed to as they grow up?

**Q9.** What have you done to lead them in that commitment? Describe.

**Q10.** What do you do that undermines the development of integrity in your child?

### ***Hypocrisy***

Perhaps the greatest complaint that children have toward their parents is “they don’t practice what they preach.” If children don’t see their parents being honest, they won’t be either.

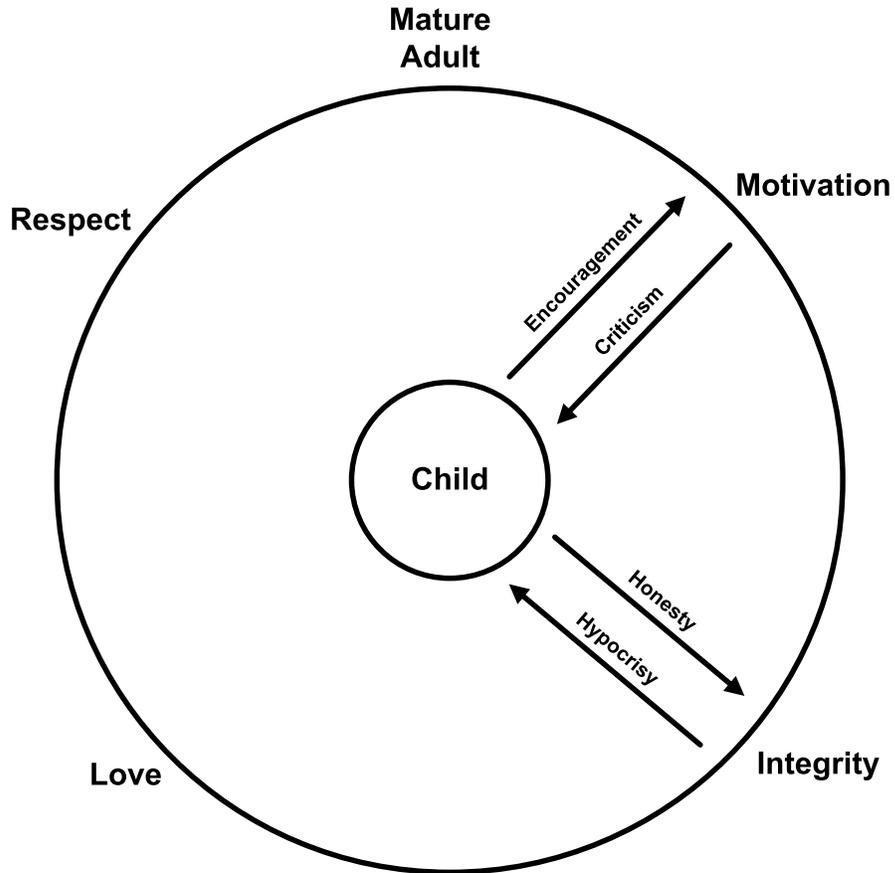
*“But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without **hypocrisy**.” James 3:17 (NASB)*

It is important for a child to hear a parent admit “**I was wrong**, I should have...” whenever the parent realizes an action was not a good modeling of his or her teaching.

**Q11.** Do you believe the truths that you want to see your children committed to as they grow up?

**Q12.** Would your child agree that you are committed to those truths in your own life?

**Q13.** If your answer is no, ask God to help you make a course correction in your own life to be committed to His truth. Write down anything He shows you here.



## Love

All Biblical commands can be summed up in loving God completely and loving others unselfishly. Attending church and memorizing scripture are excellent disciplines but those alone don't develop these qualities in a child.

*"...You shall **love** the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind...You shall love your neighbor as yourself."*

**Matthew 22:37, 39** (NASB)

**Q14.** What develops a child's love for God and others?

## **Acceptance**

God's love communicated by the parent through acceptance of the child during the growing-up years provides the child with a sense of security. This sense of security enables the grown child to give freely with no sense of loss, and to love maturely without requiring anything in return. The following scripture illustrates God's love for His children, the same love you are to demonstrate to your children.

*"Oh! Ephraim is my dear, dear son, my child in whom I take pleasure! Every time I mention his name, my heart bursts with longing for him! Everything in me cries out for him. Softly and tenderly I wait for him."*

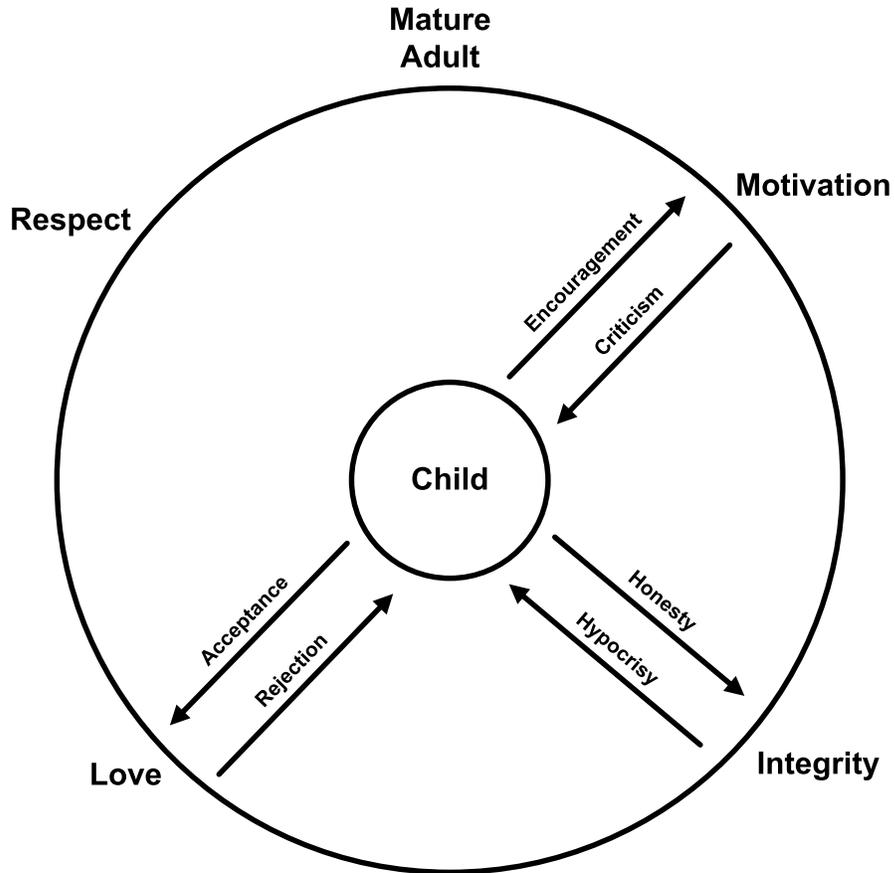
**Jeremiah 31:20** (MSG)

- Q15.** How are you communicating love and acceptance to your child?
- Q16.** What undermines a child's love for God and others?

## **Rejection**

*Rejection*, on the other hand, undermines the child's sense of acceptance by parents and by God. Rejection can be quite subtle or be openly expressed. It is depreciating the child's worth by belittling, ignoring, renegeing, interrupting, ridiculing, sarcasm, or discrediting.

*"Fathers, do not exasperate your children, so that they will not lose heart."* **Colossians 3:21** (NASB)



## Respect

God places every child under the authority of his or her parents. The success of that child's life will have much to do with how he/she relates to future authorities. Your child will need to show respect to teachers, bosses, governmental officials, and God. Prepare your child by training him or her to respect you.

*"Honor your father and your mother as the Lord your God has commanded you, that your days may be prolonged, and that it may go well with you..."*

**Deuteronomy 5:16** (NASB)

**Q17.** How are you training your child to grow in the area of respect for authority?

## **Discipline**

Giving fair and clear limits in the home grows a child's respect for authority. Limits need to be provided that take into account the child's safety physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Limits need to be given clearly without threats and shouting. This is the same kind of *discipline* God gives you.

The limits need to reflect sensitivity to the child's abilities, friendships, and needs. Time must be taken to ensure the child understands the limit/s. If these limits are broken, the correction needs to be age and situation appropriate.

*“Train up a child in the way he should go, even when he is old he will not depart from it.” Proverbs 22:6 (NASB)*

**Q18.** How do you communicate fair and clear limits in your home?

**Q19.** What undermines a child's respect for authority?

## **Over or Under Correction**

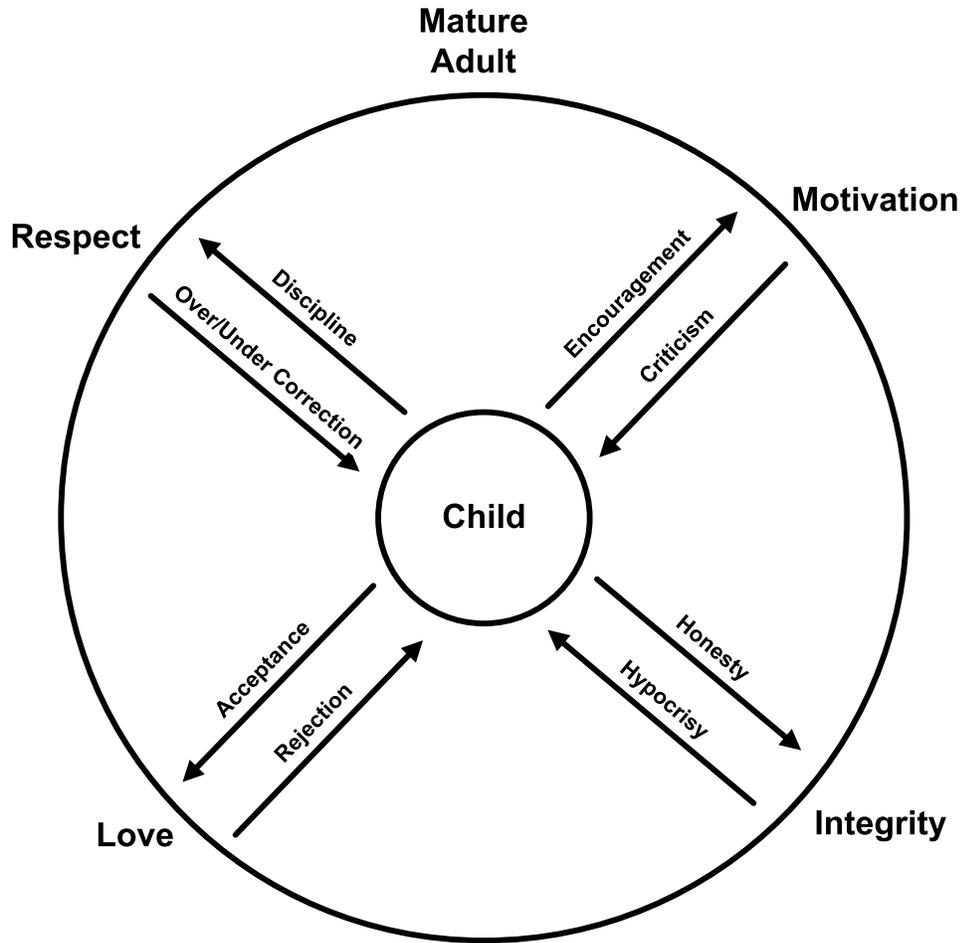
Overcorrecting and undercorrecting undermine respect for authority. Overcorrecting is correction that is inflexible, demanding, arbitrary, and authoritarian.

*“Your own soul is nourished when you are kind, but you destroy yourself when you are **cruel**.”*

**Proverbs 11:17 (NLT)**

Undercorrecting is either a failure to correct or a failure to insist that correction be obeyed.

*“You must teach these things and encourage your people to do them, correcting them when necessary. You have the **authority** to do this, so don't let anyone ignore you or disregard what you say.” Titus 2:15 (NLT)*



The arrows are pointing at the qualities that help your child to grow into an effective, mature adult. The arrows pointing back to the child indicate the lack of development of those qualities.

**Personal Application**

**Ask God** to show you what you have been practicing in your parenting.

**Circle the arrows** that describe your parenting.

If you circled any arrows that keep your child from developing, **ask God** to help you begin to do the things that benefit your child.

**Write** what He shows you.

# Reaching Fulfilled Adulthood

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*Diagram*

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*Notes*

# Sharing S.A.L.T. with a Friend

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“...And if you are asked about your Christian hope, always be ready to explain it.” **1 Peter 3:15** (NLT)

*Meet in a location where your friend feels comfortable sharing.*

## **The Purpose:** Encouragement

How do you encourage your friend? By sharing Biblical truths that have impacted you.

*Ask “Could I share some things with you?”*

## **Sharing with a friend (an informal meeting)**

- Ask, “What’s going on in your life?” or “How are you doing?”
- Listen.
- If necessary, ask questions that help you better understand your friend and his or her situation. For example: “How are you feeling about that?”
- Then share what God has been teaching you as it relates to your friend’s situation.
- If the opportunity allows, draw and explain the S.A.L.T. diagram that is relevant. *This can even be done on a napkin.*
- Encourage your friend and offer to pray.

*Share with an attitude of humility and kindness.*

## **Sharing with a friend (on a regular basis)**

- Make sure your friend has a book.
- Read, study, and answer all questions individually.
- Share your answers with each other and talk about the lesson.
- Draw and explain the diagram for each other.
- Encourage each other to personally apply the lessons.
- Pray together.

*Be sensitive about when to share and the length of your sharing.*

## **Helpful suggestions:**

**Be transparent.** Share your own story. When you are real, other people realize they can be honest too.

**Be a “safe place.”** Information your friend tells you should be kept confidential. Don’t condemn, instead encourage.

**Be a good listener.** Give your friend your full attention. Make eye contact, and, at appropriate times, repeat back what you hear your friend saying. Ask good questions that encourage your friend to talk.

**Be a true friend.** Speak the truth in love.

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- Psychological – My Mind, Will, and Emotions
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- Marital – My Relationship with my Spouse
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- SALT Instructor's Guide with PowerPoint CD of Diagrams
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### **About the Authors**

A team of authors at Victorious Christian Living International (VCLi) wrote this book.

For over 25 years, VCLi has been helping believers grow and be successful in all seven areas of life. VCLi trains people and provides materials for effectively ministering to others, including comprehensive church discipleship programs, prison and inner-city ministries, and family ministries. We are headquartered in Phoenix, Arizona with offices in Alabama, Illinois, Guatemala, and Cuba.

**VCLi**  
**Phoenix, AZ**  
**[www.vcli.org](http://www.vcli.org)**  
**1.888.577.4904**