

Summer Series 2017

#1

Facing

the

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of

my

Inner

World

From the Pulpit Ministry of Christ E Free Church
July-Sept 2017

Jesus Christ
Our Highest Calling
Our Greatest Purpose
Our Soul's Source and Joy
And Our All-Consuming Passion

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INTRODUCTION

Our year-long theme is for 2017 is “Drawing Nearer”. If you don’t have it, get “Drawing Nearer”, which is our January and February 2017 sermon series booklet.

We are attempting to revisit our 2017 theme, throughout the year, and attempt to connect our other sermon series into this greater, overarching theme of Drawing Nearer. “Facing the Flaws of My Inner World” is an essential part of the Drawing Nearer series.

When Facing the Flaws of Our Inner World, we must view our flaws as spoiled leftovers, which can seep back into our New Christian life and make our whole life reek of decay. We must strive to starve those *old life* flaws to death. The New Life Traits, refer to the life of Christ in us, which needs nurturing to fullness of life. If we starve our *old life* flaws, we will nurture our *New Life* traits. And if we nurture our *New Life* traits, that will begin starving our *old life* flaws and putting them to death.

“Facing the Flaws of My Inner World”, is focused on an honest and open heart before God, and inviting the Holy Spirit to be free to shine His light of conviction into the darkest areas of our inner life. Our church family prayer, throughout this series is this.

Psa 139:23-24 ESV Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

I believe this to be a prayer that, if prayed with full sincerity, God will be pleased to answer and will certainly help us to experience victory over our sinful nature and to Draw Near to God, in a fresher and deeper way than we have before.

“What Does the New Life Look Like?” Intro

Series Title: *“Facing the Flaws of My Inner World”* **July 2, 2017**

Series Introduction.

Series Text: 2 Cor.5:14-17

An Introduction

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.”

~2 Corinthians 5:17 ESV

“A New Beginning” without any step of change, is little more than a blowing of the horn to announce the entry of well-meaning intentions.”

INTRODUCTION

Main Idea: Our Traits or Flaws, will bless or hinder, our relationship with God and others, as well as our ministry.

2 Cor. 5:14-17 ESV For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was

raised. (16) From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. (17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, *then* he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Paul gives us a conditional promise.

v.17) “Therefore, ***If***”. Paul just gave a basis for the new life we have through faith in Jesus Christ. Now in v.17, he states, “If anyone is in Christ”, which is stated as a foundation for the promise to follow. “If” anyone is in Christ, *then* (implied the assured reality being), He is a new creature, the old has passed away, behold the new has come.” So the second part of the verse is factual truth, if in fact the first part of the verse is personally true for you. If the first part of v.17 is true, then the second part of v.17 is certainly true. The first part of the verse is the basis for the reality of the second part. And the second part of the verse, is based upon and is conditional upon the first part of v.17.

“*If...then.*” This is a wonderful promise for the true believer in Jesus Christ.

Our church family knows of a friend of mine and with whom, after 40 years, I have recently reconnected. One day we were on the phone and he was very depressed and telling me about his life, his problems and his relationship with God. “I’m an alcoholic, I’ll always be an alcoholic. I’m this and that and I’ll always be that way.” And He went on.

And this passage of Scripture came to my mind. And I told him, “I know they say, ‘once an alcoholic, always an alcoholic’”; but that’s one of the many lies from Satan and the world. You *have*

FACING THE FLAWS

God does not brand us according to our weaknesses, flaws or failures. In Christ we start afresh. We are forgiven; We have a new family; we have a new life!

failed. Therefore, You *are* a failure. Therefore, You *will always be* a failure. You were an alcoholic. Therefore you are an alcoholic. Therefore, you will always be an alcoholic. Etc. I told him, that's the way you may see yourself, but God does not see you that way. God knows our sin, our weaknesses, our failures, Yes. Of course. But He sees us for what we could be, and what He created us to be, if we would only invite Him in, and allow Him to do His work in our lives. God's word says that if anyone is in Christ, He is New Creation. The Old has passed away, behold the new has come!" This is God's promise.

Well, there was a long silence, and I'm thinking I have said too much. I've overstepped my bounds. I must have offended him. Then I began to hear him crying and then sobbing loudly. And he said, Oh Praise the Lord. He began to praise God and thank Him, and crying out to God, then He began to pray for me. And Together we both rededicated our lives to Christ, all over again, over the phone. Thank God for His promise for New Life and for new beginnings.

It was a beautiful thing and a relief for him, to realize he need not be confined to the curse of the past, for the remainder of his life. In Christ, all things are made new.

"You've Been Remade!", Mike Donehey / Jason Ingram | 10th Av.North

But don't you know who you are, What's been done for you?
Yeah don't you know who you are?

You are more than the choices that you've made,
You are more than the sum of your past mistakes,
You are more than the problems you create,
You've been remade.

'Cause this is not about what you've done,
But what's been done for you.

This is not about where you've been,
But where your brokenness brings you to.

This is not about what you feel, But what He felt to forgive you,
And what He felt to make you loved.

You are more than the choices that you've made,
You are more than the sum of your past mistakes,
You are more than the problems you create,
You've been remade. You've been remade You've been remade.

Our Goal is to honestly examine, the Traits and flaws, that bless and hinder, our relationship with God and others, and even our ministry.

Series of ***Facing The Flaws of Our Inner World***, celebrates the new life we have been given in Christ Jesus our Lord. It celebrates the opportunity to live for Him, who died for us. It celebrates the challenge to allow God to enter into our inner world, infiltrate the deepest darkness and nastiness of our fallen, broken, sinful human nature. We will celebrated the death of our sinful flaws, and revel in the resurrected Victorious life we now have in Christ.

INNER FLAWS are leftovers of the spoiled, broken fallen, nature ("the flesh"), which will spoil our present Christian life, Christian relationships with God and with one another, as well as our Christian ministry for Christ.

NEW LIFE TRAITS are biblical Christ-like qualities that are part of our new life in Christ. Over the past few months, I have been going through a book on Contentment and Discontent. And as I read that book, the names of other people began coming to my mind. And I'm thinking, I really need to get this book into their hands. That will get them straightened out.

Isn't that typically what happens. Some sin comes to our mind and we think God is using me to identify that flaw in someone else – its always someone else. But God began showing me, It's the

RailRoad cross-tie in my own eye, that I need to worry about first, then I can focus on pointing out everyone else's problems once I get mine under control.

Some of the Flaws of Our Inner World are: Discontent. Greed. Self-Pity. Jealousy. Gossip. Guilt. Anger. Fear. Failure. Self-Control. Apathy. Ego.

So this series has been a bit of a personal journey for me, and perhaps it might be a bit of a help for you as well. Its not pointing the finger at anything or anybody, other than at our own flaws and declaring all-out war on them in the name of Jesus.

GOALS: (1) To identify our own personal flaws in light of Scripture. (2) To Declare all out war on those flaws, to bring our life into alignment with the very life of Christ, removing these inner hindrances and obstacles, to my relationships and ministries.

So Today, I invite you to declare with me this ***declaration of Independence*** from our past, our curses, our failures, our flaws, and the things that define us, and keep us in bondage, whether we are aware of them or not.

These Flaws are free to define me
and bind me -- ***NO LONGER!***

I'm not going to stand for it. I'm not going to live like it. That is declaring war on some of the most powerful forces in our lives. It is declaring war on some of the greatest desires amongst all the other desires in our lives.

Inner Flaws can be a manner of thinking or a way of living. They can be attitudes or actions. Flaws are things that are to be put off – or ***to mortify*** or put to death. ***New Life*** Traits are things to be put on – to feed and nurture and Bring to life.

Both Flaws and Traits imply personal awareness and responsibility. Both necessitate purposefully taking steps to face and put to death, these flaws of the fallen, broken, sinful, human nature.

We will be inviting and Allowing the Holy Spirit of God, to shine His light of conviction upon our lives; illuminating areas of personal weakness, and flaws of our inner world, that He impresses upon us, to work on. We will also begin allowing Him to eliminate the negative Inner Flaws and accentuate the positive, New Life Traits.

These Flaws are free to define me
and bind me -- ***NO LONGER!***

WE WANT TO PUT TO DEATH THE SINFUL NATURE.

* Leonard Ravenhill: "We're going to attend a funeral tonight, *our own.*"

Rom 8:11-15 ESV (11) *If* the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, *then* he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. (12) So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. (13) For *if* you live according to the flesh, *then* you will die, but *if* by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, *then* you will live. (14) For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. (15) For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!"

This Tells us What is True for True Christians

* In order to put to death the sinful deeds of the flesh, we must put to death the sinful desires of our fallen human nature. Our desires govern our decisions. And Our Greatest desires always govern our

lesser desires. Desires lead to deeds. Deeds lead to actions. Actions form a lifestyle.

v.11) “If” – Another conditional promise. “If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you...” Paul is not calling into question the truthfulness of this statement, but is presenting another conditional sentence with a conditional promise.

v.11b) “*Then...*” is implied - “If..., *then* (the result will be)... he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you”.

Paul gives us a conditional promise. The first part of v.11 is supposing a particular thing to be true; that is “If the spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you...” What is Paul Supposing? (1) that they are true believers in Christ and as true believers in Christ, the Holy Spirit of God indwells each of them. This is what Paul is supposing to be true. So he states, ***If*** we believe that to be true, which we do; “..., *then* he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies, through his Spirit who dwells in you.

If the first part of this verse is true, ***then*** the second part is true as well. The first part of the verse, is the basis for being assured that the second part of the verses will take place. The second part of the verse is based on and dependent upon, the first part of the verse. So we can declare, “Yes the Holy Spirit of God did indeed raise Jesus from the dead.” Therefore, we are absolutely certain that the Same Supernaturally Powerful Holy Spirit, will give life to our mortal bodies.” This becomes the basis, then upon which he extends an invitation to us.

Life & Death and in the power of the will (v13)

v.13a) “***IF***”, you live according to the flesh, *then*, you will die.

V13b) but “**IF**” by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the flesh, *then* you will live. Life and death are addressed “In Christ”. Life and death are also a matter of the will of the Christian. We must be willing to put the Inner Flaws of our Sinful nature to death. This is part of our focus in this series.

WE MUST PUT TO DEATH OUR SINFUL NATURE.

CLOTHING OURSELVES WITH NEW LIFE

* **Imagine putting on a coat.** It is an act of the will to take it off or put it on.

“**Putting OFF**” is identifying and putting to death our sinful Flaws

Eph 4:21-24 ESV assuming that you have heard about him and were taught in him, as the truth is in Jesus, (22) to **put off** your **old** self, which belongs to your **former** manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, (23) and to be **renewed** in the spirit of your minds, (24) and to **put on** the **new** self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

“Putting off the *old* self”(v22) is putting to death our Inner Flaws. This is not merely the conflict between either lifestyle or desires, but it is both, and both are connected and one leads to the other.

“Putting on the *new* self”(v24) is nurturing the New Life Traits we have in Christ. Desires lead to deeds. Deeds lead to actions. Actions become a lifestyle. Remember, this is not merely a focus on sinful inner flaws, but the sinful inner flaws of *Christians*. This is not merely a generic focus on the New Life traits, but the New Life Traits in our lives as Christians, which need to be nurtured and strengthened, so there will be no place for the Inner Flaws to continue to govern our behavior.

Desires => Deeds => Actions => Lifestyle

Eph.4:22 (22) to **put off** your **old** self, which belongs to your **former** manner of life and is corrupt through deceitful desires, [Col.3:9-14]

Corrupt Lifestyle begins with deceitful corrupt desires. Attitudes affect lifestyle. Our greatest desires will govern all lesser desires. The “Former manner of life” refers to our life before coming to Christ. The “Old self” refers to the Inner Flaws still alive in the true believer. “Deceitful desires” are the greater desires and lusts which overpower our lesser desires, and ultimately define us, bind us and rule over us, smothering the New Life Traits, hindering our relationships with God and others, and even negatively affects our ministry.

Putting **ON** is nurturing the New Life Traits

i. Put on

Eph.4:23 (23) and to be **renewed** in the spirit of your minds, (24) and to **put on** the **new** self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

This is a process of putting to death or starving our sinful Inner FLAWS and bringing life to or nurturing our New Life TRAITS. When we begin doing this, we begin making our Inner FLAWS, lesser desires and our New Life TRAITS become our Greater desires. The result is our sinful Inner Flaws become subservient to our Godly New Life Traits of the Holy Spirit purging our sinful, fleshly attitudes and actions.

So we are learning about putting to death the sinful Inner Flaws and beginning to learn about putting on the New Life Traits of the true believer’s life.

WE MUST CLOTHE OURSELVES WITH THE NEW LIFE.

HOW WE IDENTIFY THE INNER FLAWS THAT SPOIL MY CHRIST-LIKENESS

* To ignore our inner flaws is to nurture sinful character tendencies.

God's Holy Word is our Mirror

Jas 1:22-25 ESV But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (23) For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks intently at his natural face in a mirror. (24) For he looks at himself and goes away and at once forgets what he was like. (25) But the one who looks into the perfect law, the law of liberty, and perseveres, being no hearer who forgets but a doer who acts, he will be blessed in his doing.

God's Holy Word is the mirror that allows us to identify, evaluate and Face the Flaws of Our Inner World.

God's Holy Spirit is the one who calls our attention to our flaws and the need to address them.

Joh 16:7-8 ESV Nevertheless, I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you. (8) And when he comes, he will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment:

i) It is my inner person who invites the Holy Spirit to move and responds to His convicting and cleansing work.

ii) Or it is my own sinful nature that rejects or suppresses the work of the Holy Spirit as I ignore and excuse those flaws; nurturing and protecting my flaws.

Gods' invitation to **put on** Christ, is an invitation to surrender to the Holy Spirit's work, and saying NO to the known fleshly desires

and flaws. These negatively affect our relationship with God, with others and will negatively affect our ministries for Christ.

God's invitation to *put Off* certain spiritual flaws, attitudes and practices, is an invitation to say yes to God's purifying and pruning work in your life as it pleases Him.

God wants to change your life for the good. He wants to enhance your relationships with Him and with others. He wants to bless you in your ministry for Christ.

WE MUST IDENTIFY AND ADDRESS OUR INNER FLAWS

Personal Inner Exam - P.I.E. -As we read through Scripture and as we go through this series together, we will be attempting to take a realistic inner look at our Traits and Flaws to determine what **FLAWS** need to be put to death. This is “*Facing the Flaws of Our Inner World*”. As we look at the issues in this series, we will be asking questions:

- (1) Why is this a flaw? Why is it negative? Is it a sin?
- (2) How can [this particular flaw] hinder my relationship with God and with others?
- (3) What affect could this flaw have in my ministries for Christ?

* List areas of ministry I am involved in.	* List the negative or adverse effects this flaw could have on each ministry?
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- (4) Why would keep me from putting this flaw to death?
- (5) What might be the result, if I did nothing about this flaw in my life?

Purposeful Adjustment STeps – P.A.S.T. -

- (1) Search this flaw further in Scripture and learn more passages that deal with it.
- (2) Look at examples in the Bible and in recent history of people who manifested this flaw. What was the effect?
- (3) Ask God’s Holy Spirit for strength, grace and determination to work on putting this flaw to death and bringing a particular trait to life.
- (4) **STeps of Action**

* What can I do to starve this flaw to death?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

* What can I do to nurture this Trait and allow it to flourish in my life?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Prayer to pray for:

Psa 139:23-24 ESV Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!



“The Flaw of Discontent”

Series Title: *“Facing the Flaws of My Inner World”* **July 9, 2017**

Sermon Topic: Curse of Discontent; Mystery of Contentment

Sermon Text: Phil.4:8-13; 1Tim.6:6-8; Heb.13:5; Jude 14-15;

Series Text: 2 Cor.5:14-17

“But godliness with contentment is great gain.”
--1 Timothy 6:6 ESV

“The man who attempts to satisfy his longings with the things
of this world, is like the man who opens his mouth
to take in the wind to satisfy his belly.”

—Jeremiah Burroughs

Main Idea: Traits and flaws, that bless and hinder, our relationship with God and others, as well as our ministry.

INTRODUCTION: If you have ever left food in the fridge too long, you realize that after a few months or so, the leftovers, even though they may have been refrigerated, have become spoiled and smelly. Now suppose you open the fridge and look into a container seeing the green, molded, slimey and smelly spoiled leftovers – and you shut the door and ignore it. You come back the next day and open the door again, perhaps expecting something magical to

have occurred, yet you open the food container and discover it has only become worse than before.

As we consider our series of *Facing the Flaws of Our Inner World*, think of these flaws as spoiled leftovers from our old life. They are spoiled, smelly and undesirable. To ignore these spoiled inner flaws, is only a guarantee that they will only become worse, more spoiled, more undesirable.

SERIES focus:

2 Cor. 5:14-17 ESV For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (16) From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. (17) Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, *then* he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

v.17 is another one of those conditional promises, “*IF*” this is true, “*then*” something else will take place.

Inner Flaws are things we must put off. This is putting to death the Inner Flaws and spoiled leftover remnants of our old way of living.

New Life Traits are aspects of the New Life in Christ that we must put on. This means nurturing the existing New Life traits in Christ. Both imply personal awareness and our responsibility to purposefully take steps to face the flaws of our inner world and put to put them to death. In this series, we will not be thinking of others, but about ourselves. We will not be pointing the finger at another person’s faults. We will not be gathering ammunition to address another person’s weaknesses..

We will be inviting and Allowing the Holy Spirit of God, to shine His light of conviction upon our lives, illuminating areas of personal weakness, and flaws of our inner world, that He impresses upon us, to work on and begin allowing Him to minimize the negative and accentuate the positive.

THE NEW LIFE TRAIT OF CONTENTMENT

* Jeremiah Burroughs- refers to contentment as “The Rare Jewell of Christian Contentment”. “Rare”, because so many people, even Christians seem to be lacking it. A “Jewell”, because it is far more valuable than we think.

Contentment defined: Literally self-sufficient or sufficient with what one has; to be Satisfied with one’s state; desiring nothing more than what one possesses; enough; sufficient; Biblically it refers to satisfaction with God’s benevolence: desiring nothing more, than what God has ordained for us.

FACING THE FLAWS

“I don’t have what I want, therefore I will not be thankful for what I have.”

-J.Burroughs
1646

Learning Contentment

Php 4:8-13 ESV Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. (9) What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me--practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you. (10) I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. (11) Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have **learned** in whatever situation I am to be content. (12) I

know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the **secret** of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. (13) I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

“Learned” refers to that which is acquired through experience; to come to one’s senses. This indicates a process of change—a lengthy process.

“**all things**” (v13) refers to being content in having an abundance of things in this world, but also being content in having nothing of this world. “All things” refers to being content with God in every situation of life, whether in times of gain and abundance, or times of loss and need.

Paul informs us that contentment does not come from what we possess, but from God Himself. Contentment grows out of our satisfaction with God. Contentment is a learning process.

Contentment contrasted with Covetousness

* Covetousness means most literally, to love money or gain. “Thou shalt not covet”. This is Commandment #10 of the 10 Commandments. In fact it may be the longest of the 10.

Exo 20:17 ESV "You shall not covet your neighbor's **house**; you shall not covet your neighbor's **wife**, or his male **servant**, or his female servant, or his **ox**, or his **donkey**, or **anything** that is your neighbor's."

It means To Desire that which you do not possess, but someone else does. “If I only had more, or that, or him or her, then I’d be OK.”

Rockefeller was at one point the world's richest man and first ever American billionaire. Considering he was a billionaire in the early 1900's he is still considered as the richest person in modern

history. When a reporter asked him, “**How much money is enough?**” He responded, “*Just a little bit more.*” That is discontent. Discontent is not limited to poor people but snags even those with abundance.

And in Scripture, covetousness is *contrasted* with contentment.

Heb 13:5-6 ESV Keep your life free from love of money(covetous), and be content with what you have, for he has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you." (6) So we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?"

In Church history, Covetousness or Avarice was one of the 7 deadly sins, from which all other and lesser sins were thought to be derived.

1Tim. 6:10 ESV For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

Albert Einstein is quoted as having said, “the lack of money is the root of all evil”. That is clearly inaccurate, but Scripture accurately states that “the *love* of money is the root of all evil. In other words, if you are covetous with a heart filled with longing and love towards money or other possessions, there is a good chance that, if this goes unaddressed, this will lead to only worse things. One who loves money or is covetous, may resort to cheating or stealing or lying to get more. The woman who covets her neighbor’s husband may resort to flirting and pursuing another woman’s husband. Covetousness is a sign of discontent.

Notice what the love of money carries with it. Insatiable cravings, destructive straying from Truth, and even bringing unexpected pain that cannot be withstood. This pain may be moral, social or relational or all of the above.

Discontent is ultimately, a result of the emptiness of heart, created by the absence of the fullness of God.

Therefore the pursuit of empty discontent, breeds further emptiness and deeper discontent.

THIS IS THE NEW LIFE TRAIT OF CONTENTMENT.

DISCONTENTMENT - OUR INSATIABLE LONGING FOR MORE

Discontentment is an insatiable longing for more, when one's needs are sufficient. Contentment is the enemy of worldliness. Worldliness, as an Inner Flaw, is the mortal enemy of contentment. And the New Life Trait of Contentment is the mortal enemy of worldliness. Put to death, contentment and worldliness can prosper. Nurture contentment and worldliness will begin to starve.

Discontent leads to Murmurings

* Murmurings or complaining. This is in regard to an ongoing attitude or “spirit” or a person which is constant and all-consuming. Discontent can't be very well disguised.

Dissatisfaction with God and life is uncontainable – like a volcano that will eventually release its high pressure contents. **Murmuring** refers to a continuous, unchecked attitude of complaining. Nothing can satisfy, nothing will bring contentment; nothing will appease. Murmuring is a nurtured determination and is a spiritual bondage.

Discontent is the absence of gratitude. With all that God did for the Israelites, they continued to be ungrateful and grumbles and murmured against God, and His servants Moses and Aaron.

<p>Num 16:9-14 MKJV is it only a small thing to you that the God of Israel has separated you from the congregation of Israel, to bring</p>

you near Himself to do the service of the tabernacle of Jehovah and to stand before the congregation to minister to them? (10) And He has brought you near, and all your brothers the sons of Levi with you. And do you seek the priesthood also? (11) For this cause you and all your company are gathered against Jehovah. And what is Aaron, that you murmur against him? (12) And Moses sent to call Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab. And they said, We will not come up. (13) Is it a small thing that you have brought us up out of a **land that flows with milk and honey**, to kill us in the wilderness, but must you also seize dominion over us? (14) Besides, you have not brought us into a land that flows with milk and honey, nor given us inheritance in fields and vineyards. Will you put out the eyes of these men? We will not come up.

How soon they forgot. God delivered the Hebrews from bitter bondage, and horrific enslavement and beatings through His servant Moses. Then while in the wilderness, they weren't immediately experiencing the promises God has given them. And while wandering in the wilderness, they blame Moses for bringing them out of the "land flowing with milk and honey" to kill them. The Land flowing with Milk and honey was an initial reference to the characteristics of the promised Land to which God was leading His people.

But in their discontent they referred to the old life in Egypt, enslaved and cruelly treated as the "land flowing with milk and honey". Wow. Even God could not satisfy them. Its not that they were merely discontented, they refused to be content with the good grace of God in their lives. Discontent is the absence of gratitude for what one has. It is also the emptiness of one's heart as a result of the absence of the fullness of God. It was not God's doing, but their own.

Murmurings leads to emptiness

* Vanity, vanity all is vanity

Ecc 1:2 ESV Vanity of vanities, says the Preacher, vanity of vanities! All is vanity.

Or we might translate this, “emptiness, emptiness; everything amounts to emptiness”. Discontent drives one to insatiably pursue emptiness, only to be further dissatisfied, and more deeply discontented.

Jeremiah Burroughs, 1645 - Discontentment.

...” My brethren, the reason why you have not got contentment in the things of the world is not because you have not got enough of them-that is not the reason. But the reason you are not content is because the things you seek, are not things proportionable to that immortal soul of yours that is capable of God himself.

Many men think that when they are troubled and have not got contentment it is because they have but a little in the world, and that if they had more, then they should be content. That is like saying- if a man were hungry, and to satisfy his craving stomach he should gape open his mouth to take in the wind, and then should think that the reason why he is not satisfied is because he has not got enough of the wind. No, the reason is because the wind is not suitable to to craving of his stomach.

The worldly or natural man, can never be content with the Supernatural or heavenly blessings. Likewise the Supernatural man can never be content with natural, worldly blessings.

*** Worldliness is the mother of discontent and other inner flaws.**

Jeremiah Burroughs goes on to give us this wisdom concerning the spiritual person and contentment. “Contentment is not gaining

more of what we desire, but in **learning** to want fewer things.”
Here lies the “secret” or mystery of contentment^[Phil.4:12].

“for I have **learned** in whatever situation I am to be content.”(phil.4:11)

The worldly person who gets 10,000 times more a year, will not be content with even that, because he always desires more and never has enough. But the New Life Christian, who receives 10,000 more a year, will also not be content, because that is not what it takes to bring him/her contentment.

For the New Life Christian: It is not riches that bring true contentment, but the God of all riches which brings contentment. It is not even health or life that offers contentment, but the God of life who offers such contentment.

-J.Burroughs.

FACING THE FLAWS

“the pursuit of empty discontent, only breeds further emptiness and deeper discontent.”

* Discontent is ultimately, a result of the emptiness of heart, created by the absence of the fullness of God. Therefore the pursuit of empty discontent, breeds further emptiness and deeper discontent. Many people in America are discontented. Many Christians in America, are discontented; never pleased or fully satisfied with the things God has allowed, but always longing, looking, pursuing something else, more, better.

Murmurings leads to caustic criticism (Jude15)

* Fault-finding is criticism and finger pointing blame.

Jude vs.14-16 ESV It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, (15) to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the

harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him." (16) These are **grumblers**, ***fault-finders***, following their own sinful desires; they are loud-mouthed boasters, showing favoritism to gain advantage.

As our inner faults are nurtured and personal sin progresses, it only gets worse, like spoiled leftovers. Murmuring or complaining results from a discontent and thankless heart, which overlooks its own flaws, while pointing out the flaws and faults of others.

Murmurings leads to God's Displeasure and Discipline (Jude15)

Psa 106:20-26 (20) They exchanged the glory of God for the image of an ox that eats grass. (21) They forgot God, their Savior, who had done great things in Egypt, (22) wondrous works in the land of Ham, and awesome deeds by the Red Sea. (23) Therefore he said he would destroy them-- had not Moses, his chosen one, stood in the gap before him, to turn away his wrath from destroying them. (24) Then they despised the pleasant land, having no faith in his promise. (25) They murmured in their tents, and did not obey the voice of the LORD. (26) Therefore he raised his hand and swore to them that he would make them fall in the wilderness, [Numb.16;41-46]

And when the writer of Hebrews refers to this, he describes the death of the Israelites: "But with whom was He grieved forty years? Was it not with those who had sinned, whose *carcasses* fell in the wilderness? (Heb 3:17)

DISCONTENTMENT: AN INSATIABLE LONGING FOR MORE

DISCONTENTMENT IS A CHOICE

Discontentment is a choice, a way of life, a frame of mind and a purposeful nurturing and nourishing of the Inner Flaws.

Rom 8:13 MKJV For if you live according to the flesh, you shall die. But if you through the Spirit **mortify the deeds of the body**, you shall live.

Starve your Flaws. Feed your Traits.

* We are to put off or starve our Inner Flaws and we are to nurture Our New Life Traits that we have in Christ.

As is the case with most any Inner Flaw or sin, the more the flaw is nurtured, the more it grows; stronger and stronger; more and more dominant and overwhelming. “You mean the character of Christ can be overpowered by the sinfulness of our own frail, human fleshly actions?” I would say yes. Because God does not force us to change, nor will we gradually gravitate in that direction.

“**Tale of 2 Wolves**” – some credit this to Martin Luther, some to DL Moody; others connect it with Cherokee Indian Tradition.

A grandfather is talking with his grandson and he says there are two wolves inside of us which are always at war with each other. One of them is a good wolf which represents things like kindness, bravery and love. The other is a bad wolf, which represents things like greed, hatred and fear.

The grandson stops and thinks about it for a second then he looks up at his grandfather and says, “Grandfather, which one wins?” The grandfather quietly replies, “the one you feed the most”.

Our greatest desires or lusts will govern, dominate and overpower our lesser desires. Our greatest desires are the ones we feed and submit to. Our lesser desires and intentions are those that get gobbled up and ruled over by our greater desires. We feed our greater desires and they become greater and stronger. We starve our lesser desires and they become weaker and even lesser. The New Life, Christ-like traits that rule us, are those we nurture and feed the most.

Assignment: (Bulletin Insert)

Jeremiah Burroughs refers to contentment as living on “The Dew of Heaven”.

Gen 27:28 ESV May God give you of the **dew of heaven** and of the fatness of the earth and plenty of grain and wine.

This is Isaac’s blessing to Jacob. Dew does not come in a downpour. It doesn’t fill up any bucket or cause the streams to overflow. In its abundance, fills up nothing, yet it covers everything.

Contentment involves an inner satisfaction with God and His provisions, along with a quiet confidence that His abundant provisions for today, will return for tomorrow. Living on the Dew of Heaven, is not living off the abundance from reservoirs or barns or stockpiles, but in the faithful provisions of God for each day.

Key to contentment is gratitude, thankfulness and satisfaction in the sufficient provisions of God with every new day and for each new need.

Food, clothing, shelter, employment, provision, possessions...

Mat 6:33 ESV ...***But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.*** [vs25-33]

A prayer to pray for Contentment and deliverance from the bondage of discontentment may come from Psalm 139. This is a prayer for us to pray throughout this series.

Psa 139:23-24 ESV Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Imagine this: Fires burn for months in the Smokey Mountains. Gatlinburg Tennessee, a long time tourist town, like many other communities, suffers tremendous loss. In the fires, 2 men own houses and both burn to the ground and all their contents are total losses. The Local News station is on the scene with microphones, cameras and reporters and the two men are interviewed.

Man #1: “We lost everything; my house, my car in the garage, valuables, all my clothing, personal items, irreplaceable family heirlooms, etc. We’ve lost everything. We’re devastated.

Man #2: “We lost nothing of any real value; our house, car, clothing, some personal items. But praise the Lord, nothing of any real value. Our family is well.”

2 fires. Both men lost basically the same things. One man describes it as losing everything and being devastated. The other man describes it as losing nothing of much value and being thankful to God.

What is the difference between the 2? One man was content. Contentment and Discontent are like muscles. Each require nutrition and exercise.

1Tim. 6:6-9 ESV (6) *But godliness with contentment is great gain, (7) for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. (8) But if we have food and clothing, with these we will be content.* (9) But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation, into a snare, into many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.
[Job 1:21]

Discontent is dangerous, destructive and devastating. Contentment itself, is of indescribable worth and is “the rare Jewel of Christian

Contentment”. Therefore let us pursue contentment, for godliness with contentment is great gain.

Contentment and Discontent are like muscles; each require nutrition and exercise to increase and grow. (1) Feed and exercise Discontent and it will thrive and increase. (2) Feed and exercise Contentment and it will thrive, increase, grow and satisfy.

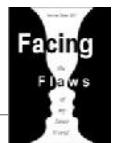
God wants to teach us contentment – satisfaction in Him. If we refuse or fail to learn, we only become more discontented with even greater misery. All our blessings and benefits, provisions and possessions are gifts, from the hands of our loving Heavenly Father, none of which are deserved. And yet, we are prone to be discontent over that which is undeserved. Can we imagine what life would be like if God paid us wages, proportionate to our service for Him? If He allowed only what we earned and we received only what we deserved? Imagine our discontent then.

Whether we have nothing in this life, we should praise God for His grace and mercies and that HE does not give us what we deserve, nor pay us what we are worth. Ultimately, Discontent is the emptiness of heart, resulting from the absence of the fullness of God. We must make it our goal, to feed on God until God is are greatest desire and most valuable Treasure.

Therefore, Feed contentment. Practice Contentment. Practice expressing Grateful Appreciation in Thanks Giving to God for all the undeserved blessings that we enjoy. Discontent is a Leftover Inner Flaw. Let us work to starve Discontent and feed the New Life Trait of personal Contentment and satisfaction with God.

DISCONTENTMENT IS A CHOICE

I believe the greatest value of this series will not be in the sermons on Sunday mornings, but in what we do with our assignments throughout the week. [Use PIE, p.17]



“Facing Pride”

Series Title: “Facing the Flaws of My Inner World” **July 16, 2017**

Sermon Topic: Flaw of Pride; Trait of Humility

Theme: Pride, self, ego, vs Humility, vanity, others

Main Text: 1Pet.5:5 / Jas.4:6 / 2Tim. 3:2 /

Series Text: 2 Cor.5:14-17

“I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.”

--Isaiah 14:14 ESV

It was pride that changed angels into devils;
it is humility that makes men as angels.

--Saint Augustine

Theme: Pride, self, ego, vs Humility, vanity, others

Main Text: 1Pet.5:5 / Jas.4:6 / 2Tim. 3:2 /

INTRODUCTION

Scripture tells us this about the last days...

2Ti 3:2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, **proud**, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

Main Idea: Traits and flaws, that bless and hinder, our relationship with God and others, and even in our ministry.

2 Cor. 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, *then* he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Inner Flaws are spoiled leftover remnants from our old worldly life and are things we are seeking to put to death.

New Life Traits are new life qualities in Christ and are things we are seeking to nurture into greater life manifestation. Both imply personal awareness and responsibility. Purposefully taking steps to face the flaws of our inner world and put to put to death, these flaws.

We will be inviting and Allowing the Holy Spirit of God, to shine His light of conviction upon our lives, illuminating areas of personal weakness, and the flaws of our inner world, that He impresses upon us; to work on and begin allowing Him to minimize the negative and accentuate the positive. We seek to put our inner flaws to death and nurture our Christ-like traits to life.

NURTURING THE SINFUL FLAW OF PRIDE

* We can nurture pride without even realizing it. Failing to identify pride and taking action to starve it, is to take unintentional steps toward nurturing it.

Pride is a Spoiled leftover of the old worldly living

1Jn 2:16 because all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the *pride* of life, is not of the Father, but is worldly.

Pride is a spoiled leftover of life before Christ.

Pride's definition reveals its deception

Some Synonyms for pride: proud, arrogant, haughty, boastful; puffed up; Vanity

Proud definition: self-Exaltation: Pomp; distorting an image; inflating worth; ascribe unrealistic value; perception of superiority;

Arrogant: “Hyper Appearance” – enlarge ego; puffed up; self-perception; Over do appearance. The underlined items above reference the deceptive nature of pride. The deception is that it is only an appearance; the actual value, worth, position, or essence doesn’t change. It is talk, deception, convincing, and/or trickery. What’s worse, it is most often *self*-deception.

How many of us have ever entertained the idea: “I’m OK, its everyone else that’s messed up.”? Pride is often a greater interest and concern about what other *people* think about you, rather than what *God* thinks about you.

Pride and It’s Consequences

Pride and personal devastation

Pro 16:18 MKJV *Pride* goes before *destruction*, and a *haughty* spirit before a *fall*.

Pride and violence

Psa 73:6 Therefore *pride* enchains them; *violence* covers them like a robe.

Pro 28:25 He who is of a *proud* heart stirs up *strife*; but he who puts his trust in Jehovah shall enjoy abundance.

Pride and enmity with God

Jas 4:6 But he gives more grace. Therefore it says, "God opposes the *proud*, but gives grace to the humble."

1Pet 5:5 Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for "God opposes the *proud* but gives grace to the humble."

The consequences of pride here, is that Pride is an enemy of God and God opposes pride, even in the life of a Christian.

Pride is seldom mentioned alone. It has close associates that are mentioned with it and are closely connected.

Pride's Associations

Pride and lying

Psa 59:12 MKJV For the sin of their mouth is the word of their lips, even let them be taken in their *pride*; and for cursing and the *lying* which they speak.

Pride often is associated with lying even about one's self. This comes in the form of bragging about one's experiences or accomplishments, whether false or true. It comes with exaggerating one's experiences, qualifications, accomplishments and overall *reality*. *Pride manifested in exaggerating is lying about self.*

Pride and an argumentative spirit

Pro 13:10 MKJV Only by pride comes argument, but with those who take advice is wisdom.

Pride's self-deception is an inflated ego or exalted self-perception, so that their word is always right and they let everyone know it.

Pride and greater sins

2Ti 3:2 For people will be lovers of self, lovers of money, proud, arrogant, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

“Lovers’ of self” – idolatry; “lovers of money” is covetousness and discontent; “Ungrateful” is a thankless heart, thinking that this person owes nothing to anyone else, for these are responsible for their own achievements.

June Hunt, from Hope For the Heart offers this information

regarding some causes of pride.

Causes of pride (HopeForTheHeart.org)

- (1) **Selling out** to the world's concept of success.
- (2) **Eliminating** low self-worth by attempting to fill God given inner needs, apart from God.
- (3) **Lifting** the burden of guilt for sins, through personal performance, achievements or appearance. Here is the deception again – *appearances*.
- (4) **Focusing on Self**. What we nurture, grows!

PRIDE'S EXAMPLES

King Herod

In the New Testament in the book of Acts, King Herod is persecuting the early church. He has just executed the apostle James and has imprisoned the apostle Peter with the same possible goals. The church prayed for Peter and he was miraculously set free.

Act 12:21-24 ESV On an appointed day Herod put on his royal robes, took his seat upon the throne, and delivered an oration to them. (22) And the people were shouting, "The voice of a god, and not of a man!" (23) **Immediately an angel of the Lord struck him down, because he did not give God the glory,** and he was eaten by worms and breathed his last. (24) But the word of God increased and multiplied.

Herod's pride brought about his own undoing, as God humbled him.

King Nebuchadnezzar

This occurred in Daniel chapter 4, then recounted to Nebuchadnezzar's son in chapter 5.

Dan 5:18-21 **ESV** O king, the Most High God gave Nebuchadnezzar your father kingship and greatness and glory and majesty. (19) And because of the greatness that he gave him, all peoples, nations, and languages trembled and feared before him. Whom he would, he killed, and whom he would, he kept alive; whom he would, he raised up, and whom he would, he humbled. (20) ***But when his heart was lifted up and his spirit was hardened so that he dealt proudly, he was brought down from his kingly throne, and his glory was taken from him.*** (21) He was driven from among the children of mankind, and his mind was made like that of a beast, and his dwelling was with the wild donkeys. He was fed grass like an ox, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, until he knew that the Most High God rules the kingdom of mankind and sets over it whom he will.

Nubuchadnezzar was filled with pride and God humbled him

Satan Himself – first sin

* We believe Satan, before he fell into sin, was Lucifer. We also believe this passage refernces the account of Satan’s fall and exile from heaven, due to his sin of pride.

Eze 28:14-17 **ESV** You were an anointed guardian cherub. I placed you; you were on the holy mountain of God; in the midst of the stones of fire you walked. (15) You were blameless in your ways from the day you were created, till unrighteousness was found in you. (16) In the abundance of your trade you were filled with violence in your midst, and you sinned; so I cast you as a profane thing from the mountain of God, and I destroyed you, O guardian cherub, from the midst of the stones of fire. (17) ***Your heart was proud because*** of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground; I

exposed you before kings, to feast their eyes on you.
 [context: “king of Tyre, 28:2-8] [Note also Is.14:11-15]

Things that Nurture Pride

Practicing perfectionism can help nurture pride. Perfectionism is not only a sense of compulsion to do things perfectly, but an obsessive compulsion that is related to the person’s perception of how others view them. Therefore for some, perfectionism is fueled by pride.

Prejudice. This is the idea that one person or group of people is better than another. This is the sin of pride manifested by the deception of inflated Self-worth, as compare to others.

Exaggeration is lying and bragging which may be telling the truth, but with motives for personal aggrandizement. This is often displayed by self-focused results and in self-promotion.

This can be accomplished by placing one’s self at the center of every conversation. It may occur by practicing waiting for someone to take a breath so you can interject your thoughts and experiences. It also involves yielding to the feeling that you have to top some else’s story.

These are all things that tend to nurture pride and put humility to death. This grows as it is nurture and can be addressed by realizing your tendency, confess it to God as sin, and begin practicing more humble attitude and dealings with others.

NEW LIFE TRAIT OF HUMILITY

* Pride is the enemy of Humility. Humility is the enemy of Pride. When we nurture pride, we are starving humility. When we starve the Inner Flaw of pride, then we are nurturing the New Life Trait of humility.

Humility defined

To Bring low; deflate; to ascribe lower rank; a modest self - perspective. Humility involves a realistic understanding of self-worth and position.

Humility exemplified

Only One Example is needed – *that of Christ*

Php 2:7-8 ESV but *emptied* himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in human form, he *humbléd* himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

This passage is often referred to as the Humiliation of Christ. Not that Christ was embarrassed but that He humbled Himself. Many would not agree, but from Heaven's perspective, humility is a positive trait.

Jesus emptied himself – (v7), that is, He made himself of no reputation; He self-limited his glory; position. Jesus also humbled himself (v8b). This means that He deflated himself (ego or personal perception) to the level of those around him, to those whom He came to minister.

Starve your Pride. Feed your Humility

As is the case with most any Inner Flaw or sin, the more the flaw is nurtured, the more it grows; stronger and stronger; more and more dominant and overwhelming. “You mean the character of Christ can be overpowered by the sinfulness of our own frail, human fleshly actions?” I would say yes. Because God does not force to change, nor will we evolve in that direction.

Feed humility and we starve pride. Starve pride by feeding humility. Feeding can be practicing humility by displaying menial tasks for others. Even if you don't feel like it or don't feel

comfortable doing things that takes the attention off yourself and places it on others, nevertheless it is practicing acts of humility.

When we practice humility, we are nurturing humility and starving pride. It is a long and painful process, but one that must be undertaken in Facing our Inner Flaws.

i) Some Enemies of Humility

These are some things we can begin to starve, in order to put to death the sin of Pride. Starve **Prestige**, or your label or titles which tend to place you above others. Starve **Popularity** which focuses on how others view you, rather than how God views you. Starve **Praise**, which focuses on putting you and your accomplishments in the spotlight. Starve **Position** which can be perceived as a higher level of social status, above those around you. Starve **Possessions** which is focused on what you own. Starve **Power**. This refers to putting one person's word, input, or preferences above that of others as pertaining to importance, due to a perceived position of level of status.

FACING THE FLAWS

The only enemy you can defeat is the one you fight. The only sin you can put to death is the one you fight to starve.

ii) Enemies of Pride

These are things to Nurture in order to Starve the attitude of pride and nurture the new life trait of humility. Here are some suggestions:

*** Starve Self-Exaltation:** Practice putting others First, whether in conversations, or discussion groups or even leadership groups. Realize God can use and speak through the ideas and gifts of others.

*** Starve Self-Aggrandizement:** Rejoice in others' achievements.

Treat others as you would appreciate being treated. This celebrates good things happening to people with whom you are associated. A little acknowledging of others work, ministry and ideas goes a long way in the area of personal encouragement, ministry morale and team spirit.

*** Starve Self-Promotion:** Allowing Credit to go to someone else. Working the back ground or behind the scenes is difficult for those who “out front” kinds of personalities. Not speaking up for yourself, when one individual receives notice for what the team as a whole was involved. But this is part of practicing humility and putting pride to death.

*** Starve Self-Attention:** Practice deflecting attention away from yourself in conversations. Ask questions that allow others to talk about themselves. This purposefully deflects the spotlight of attention and conversation away from yourself and upon the life and experiences of others. Everyone has their own story. Everyone of us feels the need to share or express our story. Events, experiences and circumstances in life are all part of the molding process of who we are or are becoming. Asking questions, then genuinely listening when those questions are answered, is crucial in getting to know and truly appreciate others.

*** Starve Self-Preservation:** Invite God’s Holy Spirit to shine His light of Conviction upon my life. You may not like what the Holy Spirit reveals to you. You may not like the means of which the Holy Spirit uses to shine His light of conviction upon the Inner Flaws of your hidden world. But when others point out a perceived flaw –and I say perceived, because it may or may not be an accurate perception. But when someone does point out a perceived flaw in your life, we must not be quick to discount it, but must be willing to bring that insight or accusation before the Lord, asking Him to shine the light of His conviction on the issue and perhaps

even bring the input to another Christian for confirmation of or contradiction of the flaw.

The Inner Flaw of Pride is deceptive because we may not realize we have it.

CONCLUSION:

Test for Humility

- ☐ Do you feel joy when others are honored?
- ☐ Do you honestly and openly admit your sin to God?
- ☐ Do you seek Truth from others regarding your flaws or weaknesses?
- ☐ Do you accept criticism graciously?
- ☐ Do you turn all worry, anxiety and concerns over to the LORD?
- ☐ Do you pursue Godliness in all that you do?
- ☐ Do you attempt to focus conversations on others, rather than on yourself?
- ☐ Do you Invite God's Holy Spirit to shine His light of Conviction upon my life.

*When we nurture pride, we starve Humility. When we Nurture Humility, we starve Pride.

[Use PIE, p.17]

Psa 139:23-24 ESV Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!



“Facing Anger”

Series Title: “Facing the Flaws of My Inner World” **July 23, 2017**

Sermon Topic: Pride, self, ego, vs Humility, vanity, others

Series Text: 2 Cor.5:14-17

Sermon Text: 1Pet.5:5 / Jas.4:6 / 2Tim. 3:2 /

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking
but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.”

-Rom 14:17 ESV

“It only takes a spark to get a fire going;
and soon all those around, are caught up in its burning...”

-Mis-quote

INTRODUCTION

Main Idea: Our Inner Flaws or New Life Traits, can bless or hinder, our relationship with God and others, and our ministries.

We are told: “I lied. Therefore I am a liar. Therefore I will always be a liar.” Alcoholic, or Homosexual. This is the world’s way of labeling but God sees it differently. For the True believer in Christ we have the promise, not only of Salvation, but for deliverance as well.

SERIES focus: 2 Cor. 5:17

Inner Flaws –putting to death the Inner Flaws and spoiled leftover remnants of our old way of living.

New Life Traits –nurturing the life the existing New Life traits in Christ. Both imply personal awareness and responsibility. Purposefully taking steps to face the flaws of our inner world and put to put to death, these flaws.

We are looking from 2 perspectives today. One, is we are considering our own personal flaw of anger, but also we are considering how we can help others monitor their anger without pointing the finger at them. If we have the opportunity to help others be set free from their flaw of anger, why not take that opportunity?

INTRODUCTION***When Anger leads to an Explosion, who is to blame?***

Our focus is anger in the context of our relationships. If our relationships are important to us, should we not do all that is in our power to minimize anger and to prevent explosions and help preserve those relationships that are most important to us?

NURTURING THE SINFUL FLAW OF ANGER

Nurturing – not how to nurture our anger, but how to identify things, practices or other traits that tend to nurture or stir up our anger.

Anger's definition

Anger isn't necessarily bad. The Old Testament definition of Anger refers to the nose or flared nostrils, indicating a physical, facial expression of emotion. The New Testament word for anger refers to being provoked, implying outside circumstances or

influences triggering an inner and unfavorable response; and resulting in impassioned emotion.

Anger's Unfavorable Consequences

* Relational consequences of anger

Pro 29:22 ESV A man of wrath stirs up strife, and one given to anger causes much transgression.

“Wrath” is an outburst of passion or explosive anger. One who is “given to anger” or one’s personality who deals with built-up, unresolved offenses.

i) Unresolved issues breeds Anger and Anger breeds strife – Anger, due to ongoing relational strife and personal hurt feelings can lead to **DisInterest**. “This may be the attitude of “This happens too often, so from now on, I’m just keeping my distance.” There grows a DisInterest in enduring the drama.

Anger can lead to **Ambivalence**. This is a more disconnected state. “I really don’t care anymore. Say what you will; do what you want – I don’t care. I’m Disconnecting.” One may appear to or at least pretend to be unconcerned or unaffected by the things which had previously caused anger our outbursts.

Anger may eventually result in **Avoidance**. The attitude my develop which says, “I’m steering clear of that person or that influence.” Thus fulfills the adage: “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach him to fish and he is able to avoid his wife for an entire weekend.” Unfortunate, but that may be **Avoidance**.

Avoidance is developed practice of distancing one’s self from the source of anger or agitation. You don’t come around as much. Your conversations are more superficial and safe. You are careful not to express your preferences or offer an opinion, and certainly

you don't share your feelings or things of any importance. Avoidance is much like coasting on a bicycle. You just quit working at it. Unresolved anger builds barriers, causes emotions to become cold and calloused, and any contact with the angry person is cold, routine and "un-relational" – purposefully unrelational.

Offenses have been covered up by excuses. Emotions have calloused over with disappointment. Attempts to cover up or balance out may provide a temporary fix, but unless the offenses are addressed and resolved, they will always be there, only to rise again, with greater fury and frustration each time any new offense is introduced.

Time may pass and peace may seem to seep back into the relationship. But once another offense takes place, you hear, "There you go again. You always do that" You may have thought that ignoring, remaining silent and covering it up has worked the offense out. But when another offense comes, the cover is pulled away and there lies all the previous hurts, offenses, criticisms, that were never resolved.

ii) Anger brings negative influence on others

Pro 22:24-25 ESV Make no friendship with a man given to anger, nor go with a wrathful man, (25) lest you learn his ways and entangle yourself in a snare.

Anger is contagious because once person's anger can nurture or stir up another person's anger. Anger stirs up anger. Strife stirs up strife. Violence stirs up violence.

iii) Anger often results in Hurt feelings and broken relationships

Anger and offenses don't typically fix themselves. Someone in high school angered, bullied or offended you. You are out of high school and you finally forget about that person and the stress is

reduced surrounding that person. Eventually you have a 10 year reunion and at the very moment you see the person who bullied you – and immediately, after 10 years, all that anger, hurt and maybe hatred instantly returns. The flaring nostrils and impassioned emotions over take you all over again. Things were covered up for 10 years, but were never resolved.

Anger's Associations

Anger has close associations. If anger had a family reunion, Uncle Anxiety and First Cousin Frustration, always seem to show up.

A step up from anger is **Wrath**. This is unaddressed and building anger. Wrath includes Resentment; Revenge; Hatred; gossip; slander... which is verbal murder.

Col 3:8 ESV But now you must put them all away: **anger**, **wrath**, **malice**, **slander**, and obscene talk (or filthy communication)

These are the many associations of Anger. One flaw seldom stands alone. Anger can lead a big posse with lots of backup. The Flaws of our Inner World affect others and seem to relate to one another. Often times they may support and strengthen and even seem to nurture one another.

Interestingly anger is associated with filthy communication. Foul language or dishonorable, disrespectful speech is often saved for the more angry outbursts. Anger seems to bring out other spoiled leftovers which are remnants of our old, way of living.

The cause of anger may be broader than we think? It may be shared.

First: Is the person who gets angry, under any obligation to control their anger and withhold hurtful reactions? Sure. No doubt about it.

Eph 4:26 ESV Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger,

Secondly: Are others in the relationship, likewise under any obligation to be aware of and attempt to de-escalate any anger inciting influence? Yes, No, depends?

A Stick of dynamite. A Person with Match.
The perfect combination for an explosion.
When Dynamite blows up, who is at fault?
The dynamite or the one who lit the fuse? Or
do both carry some level of responsibility for
the anger and/or outburst?



Anger is often a result of a sense of injustice or wrongful treatment. In a relationship, anger is often a result of being treated or spoken to in a manner in which they did not deserve and is perceived to be dishonorable and disrespectful treatment.

Your anger is a signal that something is wrong – like the red warning light on the dashboard of a car. The purpose of the light is to propel you to action...to cause you to stop and investigate what is wrong and then to take appropriate action. Jesus became angry at the hypocrisy and stubborn hearts of the religious leaders. As a result He fully restored a man's crippled hand on the Sabbath.(Mk.3:5) (June Hunt, *HopefortheHeart*)

Fb post this week from a man in our Men of Grace group. "A Man will do what He has said he will do. He doesn't need to be reminded *every 6 months*."

A woman's reminders to her husband – "aren't you ever going to get around to doing that?" - may be perceived as nagging and insulting and may be accompanied with a sense of "What did I do to deserve this?" A Man's delay of doing what he said he would do, may be perceived by the woman as, "I asked him to do this; he

told me he would; now here we are 6 months later and it is still not done. SURELY I DON'T DESERVE THIS."

Things are said, words are exchanged, nostrils flare, tempers rise, and feelings are hurt and relationships are damaged. Here is a great Biblical principle for strained relationships.

Pro 15:1 ESV A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

"Soft Answer" – what do you think that means? Low voice tone. Soft and controlled; well thought through responses? "Soft", doesn't mean that. Because the wife may say, "Why haven't you done what you said you'd do, 6 months ago?" [The man hears – "why don't you get to work and keep your word, you lazy bum!"]

Then the man responds with a soft, controlled, well thought through answer, in the typical Clint Eastwood style... "Nag, Nag, Nag." [And of course the woman hears, "*Nag, Nag, Nag.*"]

Now the man's response was calm, cool, collected, and very soft spoken, but clearly inflammatory. This is not what Scripture has in mind.

"Soft" is defined here as tender; or weak. We might say, "caring soft-hearted, not forceful, or harsh. But in this context it refers to a response that has a de-escalating or defusing affect. Answers in these situations can pour gas on the fire or help to quench the fire. Our responses can de-fuse the potential explosive situation, or our words can light up the fuse that causes someone to explode in anger. So could responsibility of someone "blowing up", be shared? Perhaps.

A harsh word stirs up anger or escalates anger. But a tender, well chosen, sensitive word can de-escalate an angry and potentially explosive situation. One person says something disrespectful to

another person and the other replies, “You can’t talk to me like that!” And anger stirs up anger and strife nurtures strife.

It is possible to be in a relationship with someone whom we consider to be an “angry person” and yet be part of the reason that person is a “hot head”. Everyone is certainly responsible for their own actions. But realistically, we may be part of the fuse lighting, which results in another person’s explosive behavior.

If you are in any level of meaningful relationship, you know exactly what it takes to set the other person off and what lights their fuse. And sometimes, the responsibility for an explosive display of anger may be shared between both parties.

Consider this:

Anger may well be a joint responsibility; both those who are angered, as well as those influences which may possibly contribute to the anger.

ANGER’S EXAMPLES

Example 1 – Excusing and Covering up Problems, Misunderstanding, Anger



IGNORING AND OFFERING EXCUSES are often our way of Covering up anger or offenses. Anger can be temporarily covered up. We can make excuses, pretending it didn’t really bother us or pretending it was no

big deal.

YOUR BOSS CALLS YOU LAZY.

Cover It Up with EXCUSES. Others may say, “Don’t Worry, blow it off. Its not your fault, you were waiting on the copier. The boss is crazy. You couldn’t help it”.

Making Excuses or creating alibis for your actions is a way of covering up the offense.. Covering an offense, problems, misunderstanding and anger or ignoring offensive behavior only covers up the offense and defrays the anger until a later time. If you punch someone in the nose and then pretend everything is OK, or act like it never happened- Is that acceptable? NO! However, it’s easier to cover it up, gloss it over or act like it never happened, because it is awkward to address it Biblically. Most people are not able to do that, much less willing to make things right. This is why anger tends to contribute to more anger untill it reaches an explosive level. That’s why you can see a person after 10 years and all that anger can come flooding right back.

Covering things up, doesn’t address the problem because the next offense or whatever caused the anger in the beginning, is only going to come back. The next time a problem arises, the cover is only going to be pulled off the old offenses and the new offense is piled right on top of the other old offenses. And rather than getting better, over time things actually get worse. Excusing and covering up offenses nurtures anger.

Attempting to Balance anger fails

IGNORING AND COMPLIMENTING OTHERS

Balance it out: If your boss calls you lazy, then others may try to balance that out with a compliment by saying, “Oh I think you’re very conscientious. You’re a hard worker. They should be glad to have you. I’ve always looked up to you as a great role model.”

I don't think we can really balance criticisms with compliments.
But if we try, what happens if we get one more negative influence?



Anger! We become over-balanced. Or what if these criticisms were level 5? And what if the insult was level 5 and what if the offenses were level 5 offenses, but all the compliments were level 1 or level 2 compliments? That

wouldn't make up for anything. In fact it may make it worse.

Someone launches a level 5 offense, then offers a level 1 compliment? U-N-A-C-C-E-P-T-A-B-L-E!

Imagine your wife goes shopping and brings home a new outfit. You make the comment: **“I think you’re a little too heavy for those pants”** (Level 5 offense) *“But I love the color of your shoes!”* (Level 1 compliment). And the other person’s like – “Wha-a-a-a-a-a-a-t?!” You said I was fat and now you compliment my shoes and think that makes it all Good!”

Defused? Resolved? DeEscalated?. Neutralized?. No. A level 6 criticism needs a level 10 compliment to balance that out. But better yet, would be an admission of the offense followed by an apology.

When the fuse gets lit, the fuse must be de-fused. Stress must be de-stressed. Resolution must take place. Apologies must be made.

Wrong things, misunderstandings, harsh words have to be made right. To cover them up, just leaves them to be uncovered at another time. Or to attempt to balance them out, only sets up for an explosion at a later time.

What can be said to cover up the offense? Nothing. What compliment can be given to balance the offense with a compliment? There is none.

The wife needs to hear the husband apologize. Offenses must be dealt with. Resolve the issue and do what it takes to help put this anger offense to death. If we have the opportunity to help anger defuse and put it to in another person's life, **why not try?**

Imagine this scenario: These are the incidents that builds to a man exploding.

- (1) Alarm clock doesn't go off, so he gets up late.
- (2) He has a Flat tire on the way to work, so now he's really late and stressed.
- (3) The Boss writes him up for being late, so he is more stressed.
- (4) He left home so fast, that he left his wallet on dresser and has no money for lunch. More stress on top of lack of food.
- (5) After lunch, the Boss comes to him and tells him a big client is meeting with him and he needs him to finish his report and have it on his desk by 5pm.
- (6) The man was planning to leave at 4pm, because he had promised his son he'd be at his game at 5:30. Its an hour drive home. He wasn't planning on this and now his blood pressure is going through the roof, as he wanted to keep his commitment to his son.

(7) So he calls his wife to give her a heads up as to what's going on and she yells at him. Now the volcano has built up so much pressure he is set up for an easy ignition.

(8) After turning in the report to his boss, the man attempts to hurry to his son's game anyway. Traffic is backed up on the way home and a man in front of him, notices he's in too big of a hurry, so he takes it on himself to be the speed police and drives the speed limit in the fast lane, blocking Dad from speeding and making it more difficult, if not impossible to get to His son's game before it ends. This profoundly increases his stress and frustration level. And this triggers the volcano to erupt uncontrollably.

(9) Then in a fit of rage the speeding Dad explodes in anger and runs the slow driving guy off the road and they both crash.

(10) Dad gets taken to jail for road rage and wreckless endangerment.



So who is to blame? The Dynamite for exploding or the things that built up and contributed to the lighting of his fuse? Yes the man is responsible for his actions. No doubt.

But what things could have helped sooth his anger, quench his rage and possibly prevented the explosion?

#5) **Boss**: If the boss first asked, “Do you have time to work this in your schedule before you leave today?” – perhaps that may have been a cooling effect on his building anger. Now is it the Boss's fault the Dad, ran the man off the highway? No. The Dad is responsible for his own actions. But did the Boss's input influence the situation and add to the frustration and anger. Yes.

#7) **Wife** – If the wife had attempted to understand that the situation was out of the Dad's control, and not stressed him out all the more, then perhaps their phone conversation may have had a

de-fusing effect on the angry, lit fuse of dynamite and may have prevented his explosion of road rage.

Now is it the wife's fault the man exploded? No, the man is responsible for his own actions. But did the wife's response add to the Dad's frustration level? Yes.

If we have the opportunity to de-fuse someone's anger then why not try? Being a peacemaker is often a difficult and risky thing to attempt. In our Relationships, there will be times when we are the ones with a lit fuse and on our way to an angry explosion. There will be times when another person with whom we have relationship has a fuse that is ready to be lit, and perhaps we will have the opportunity to de-escalate things, defuse the other person's frustration and/or anger and actually, positively, and productively help avoid an emotional explosion. If we are aware of a potentially volatile and explosive situation, and cared enough to take action to be a cure for the problem rather than part of the cause -- we could be a peacemaker and make a positive influence on those around us who are walking around with lit or nearly lit fuses.

Have YOU ever been in traffic and for whatever reason, have been in a hurry, but traffic just wouldn't move fast enough. Stress builds. I tell you, because of what I have experienced, there have been many times when I have been in traffic, and someone is behind me, riding my bumper and I think – "this person's in a large hurry"- and I do my best to let them get by as soon as possible. I think to myself; "I just may have helped avoid road rage, somewhere down the road."

Biblical Example of Anger

* POSITIVE EXAMPLE: Jesus at the Temple:

Mar 11:17 ESV And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."

The righteousness of Christ was provoked to anger by the dishonor and disrespect of the House of the Lord. And yet, while our Lord's anger was provoked, His righteousness prevailed; He responded without sin.

NEGATIVE EXAMPLE:

Joseph's Brothers:

Gen 37:4 ESV But when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him and could not speak peacefully to him.

The Jealousy of Joseph's brothers was provoked by their Father's favoritism. They nurtured anger and it led to the sin of hatred, murderous thoughts and intent.

Things that Nurture Anger and Starve Peace

* And these are things that need to be starved.

1) Reviewing or rewinding an unpleasant or anger provoking event over and over in our minds will only feed anger. Anger feeds anger. Strife, fuels strife. Reviewing the treatment stirs up anger. Remembering the harsh words or undeserved treatment that caused the anger only stirs up anger, opens the door to hatred and will ultimately lead to murderous thoughts, feelings or possibly even actions.

2) Uncontrolled thoughts turn up the fire and causes anger to simmer to the boiling point. Impassioned emotions build; Anger provoking memories worsen. Life-controlling and emotionally stirring experiences fill the mind and will ultimately direct one's steps.

3) Improper Attitudes: “I deserve to be angry” (entitled). “Wouldn’t you be?” (excuse, alibi). This mindset which excuses one’s angry actions is also the attitude which leads to the stimulation of all the flaws of our Inner World, as they are fed, stirred up and set on fire by one another.

Pro 19:11 ESV Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

“Good sense” involves the utilization of the mind in gaining accurate information and allowing it to provide useful insights, and direct one toward appropriate action.

4) Consider it all bad luck; while failing to consider God’s hand in the situation and purpose in allowing faith, building, emotional stress like you are facing.

5) Nurturing a begrudging spirit.

1Cor.13:5 ESV [Love ins not] ...rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful;

There is the Biblical example. Love is not resentful, nor does it keep a record of wrongs. That is resentful, holding grudges, and active unforgiveness. Can we do it? Its tough. Can we use some help? We can. We need help of those with whom we are angry, to make things right; to bring about forgiveness; to starve anger to death and to help bring about peace in our spirit and peace in our relations with one another.

Starving anger and nurturing peace or tranquility
must be intentional. It will not occur by accident.

NEW LIFE TRAIT OF PEACE

* The Fruit of the Spirit or the evidence of the New Life traits in

Christ, are Love, Joy and Peace...(Gal. 5:22)

Anger is a two way street, which involves the input from others, so is the New Life Trait of Peace; a two way street, of which one person can positively influence and affect, the attitude and actions of another.

Peaceful or Tranquil defined.

Peace is not necessarily an absence of turmoil, but rather stability in turmoil. Peace is uncontrolled by turmoil. Peace is stability in angry and emotionally charged situations. Tranquility is the calm which overcomes the tumultuous storms of life. REMEMBER, Anger is powerful, but so is Peace. Being a peacemaker will require determination and Holy Spirit control over your Inner World.

Tranquility exemplified

* We must choose to be peacemakers

Mat 18:15 ESV "If your brother sins against (or offends) you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

This is Biblically how to resolve anger and offenses. This is not something you decide to do at a moment's notice, but is an attitude that is nurtured over time – over decades, maybe over an entire lifetime for some of us.

Peace is the calming, defusing influence and de-escalating effect in times of flaring of nostrils, relational turbulence and the impassioned emotion of heated anger.

Example of Abram and Lot (Gen.13:1-11)

Summarize the story of Abram and Lot.

Gen 13:8-11 ESV Then Abram said to Lot, "Let there be no strife between you and me, and between your herdsmen and my

herdsmen, for we are kinsmen. (9) Is not the whole land before you? Separate yourself from me. If you take the left hand, then I will go to the right, or if you take the right hand, then I will go to the left." (10) And Lot lifted up his eyes and saw that the Jordan Valley was well watered everywhere like the garden of the LORD, like the land of Egypt, in the direction of Zoar. (This was before the LORD destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah.) (11) So Lot chose for himself all the Jordan Valley, and Lot journeyed east. Thus they separated from each other.

1) Abe Chose to be a peacemaker.

2) He chose to allow Lot to have what he wanted.

3) Did Abe lose anything? Read the following verses in Gen. 13:12 and following. At the time it may have seemed like he was losing the best land, yet he valued peaceful relations with Lot, over the perceived value of the "better" life and more real estate in Jordan.

But after they were separated, God said – "Abram, lift up your eyes – look to the North, to the South, to the East and the West. All the land that you see, is yours. Look down at the ground. See the dust. Your offspring will be as numerous as the dust of the earth. (v14-16)

Abram may have been tempted to think he was losing out being a peacemaker. But God made it clear that His actions were pleasing to Him and God reaffirmed His promise of global, eternal blessing to Abram and his descendants. No loss there, only blessings and gain.

Starve Anger by nurturing Peace & Tranquility

i) Enemies of Tranquility

Unachieved goals; Unpredictable relationships; Unrealized expectations. Uncontrollable circumstances. Undeserved

treatment. Unappreciated deeds;; Disappointing relationships; anger, distress, frustration; physical fatigue; emotional depletion; these are all enemies of a peaceful and tranquil spirit.

ii) Enemies of Anger

Peace. Stability. Resolve. Faith, Forgiveness. Reconciliation. Restoration. Peacemaking. Anger starves peace, but peace can starve anger.

Steps Toward Dealing With Anger (Hope For The Heart)

1) Realize Your Inappropriate Anger. Is it merited? Is it sinful?

2) Revisit Your Root Source (Ps.139:23-24)

Acknowledge God's Hand in your hurt, frustration, pain, fear, problem.

(3) Release Your Right to be Angry unto Sin. Seek to forgive. Pray for peace.

(4) Rejoice in God's Purpose. Though the problem itself may not be joyful, yet seek God's purpose and fight for the joy He has for you.

(5) Restore Relationships when Appropriate. Many people will fight against it, but a good apology can bring about unexpected peace and joy in your situation and to a relationship as a whole.

(6) Always seek to **Reflect** God's Love.

Stop. Consider. Invite God's Holy Spirit to shine His light of Conviction upon my life. Sincerely praying the prayer focus of our series:

Psa 139:23-24 ESV Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Uncover anger. Resolve Offenses; Restore relationships. Do not squelch the Godly desire to be a Peacemaker.

CONCLUSION:

Addressing relational anger

Mat 18:15 "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. *If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.*

¹Offense Shared: Humility must be expressed and gentleness must be demonstrated; share your offense to the offender; without blaming or insulting. This is not a time to vent one's anger, but to attempt to humbly share the hurts and offenses received by the offending party. If the other party has a similar interest for a restored relationship, then progress has been made.

²Frustration Expressed: This is getting things off your chest, but with purposeful self-control and in a healthy manner. Sharing offenses is not a time when you unload and blow the offending party away in a retaliatory act. This Expression is purposeful action. It is carefully chosen, de-escalating words. It has the goal of a peaceful restoration at heart.

³Message Received: The offending party must also be humble and interested in making things right Biblically, and without insult or blaming. Mat.18:15 promises, "*If* he listens, you have gained your brother.." It does not promise that the offender will be receptive or that your reconciliation will be certain. But it is a principle that God provides to make restoration for strained relationships and a potential resolution for offenses and sources of anger.

⁴Apology Made: Apology is an important part of resolutions. Ideally, an apology is offered from a truly grieved and genuinely repentant person, without excuse, blame or insult.

Gary Chapman says about apology: One person can be the peace maker; one person can absorb the impact; one person can do the compromising and the two can possibly live at peace again. But unless both parties, work together the relationship may return to peaceful, but it will never be reconciled. And he states, that “without apology you will not experience a lasting, meaningful relationship.”

If you are in a relationship in which you never apologize, then you are possibly deceiving yourself.

(* G.Chapman, Summary of Apology (copies, posted

5Issue Resolved: At this point, the ideal result is that the anger provoking issue(s) has been resolved. The Anger has been quenched and the offenses have been resolved, but only if the apology is perceived as sincere, and genuine and was accepted.

6Explosion Averted or Explosion Recovery; Explosions are damaging words and accusations, insults; once explosion occurs, you cannot reverse it. You can't rewind time and take it back. Words are said that you would never ordinarily say, if you weren't angry. And we all keep our inner thoughts to ourselves regarding some things.

Once we explode you may have said: “I didn't mean it.” But In reality, Anger doesn't make us say things we don't mean. IT does make us say things we wish we'd kept quiet.

Explosive Anger in an emotional state which causes us to lose control, and say the things that are on our mind, in our heart and perhaps were kept bottled up until the explosion takes place.

7Relationship Restored: When anger, wrath or an emotional explosion takes place, an apology may be in order. Restored relationship is a 2 way street; it must come from both parties.

(Hope for the Heart, Anger, copies, posted)

ADDITIONAL Steps to soothing anger and nurturing personal peace

- i. Attempt to remove yourself from the situation** if possible
- ii. Casting cares upon the Lord** (1Pet.5:7), giving him our concerns, frustrations, anger and stress.
- iii. Take Every Thought Captive** (2 Cor.10:5)
- iv. Talking to the Wonderful Counselor – Praying *aloud*** (Is.9:6)
We are creatures of expression and God is available to listen.
- v. Pray for your offender** (Mat.5:44)

Mat 5:44 ESV But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

It is more difficult for anger to turn to resentment, hatred and unforgiveness if we are praying for the person with whom we are angry.

- vi. Attempt to talk with the offender** (Mat.18:15)

Mat 18:15 ESV "If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.

It is an intimidating thing to confront another person with our personal hurts, but may be the only way to get restoration and full relief from the anger.

- vii. Practicing forgiveness** (1cor.13:5; Eph.4:32)

1Cor.13:5 (NIV) ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it *keeps no record of wrongs*.

- Forgiveness Does not ignore or gloss over offenses to you

- Forgiveness Does not pretend to minimize the wrongs of others actions
- Forgiveness DOES free you from the poison of resentment
- Forgiveness DOES affect your relationship with God and with others. * But Forgiveness will affect your relationship with God MORE than your relationship with others.

viii. Do not allow anger & Unforgiveness to control & dominate you.

1Cor 6:12 MKJV All things are lawful to me, but not all things profit. All things are lawful for me, but I will not **be brought under the power** of any.

ix. Remember, Blessed are the Peacemakers. (mat.5:9)

Mat 5:9 ESV "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.

x. Realize that which is causing you anger, is that which is under God's control and He has a purpose in this to strengthen and purify your Inner World.

Rom 8:28-29 MKJV And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. (29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestinated to be conformed to the image of His Son, for Him to be the First-born among many brothers.

Let us Resolve to starve the sinful, damaging inner flaw of anger, and to nurture a peaceful influence and positive affect on others, when we can.

xi. Invite the Holy Spirit of God to shine His light of conviction upon the sin of my anger. [Ps.139:23-24]

Consider letting the other person have the last word. Each person continuing to have the last word, will only escalate the already heated issue.

Two people trying to get the last word, in order to end an argument, is like two people throwing gas on a fire, in order to put it out. * Let the other person get their way or win the argument.

Heb 12:14-15 ESV Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. (15) See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God; that no "root of bitterness" springs up and causes trouble, and by it many become defiled;

[Use PIE, p.17]

Psa 139:23-24 ESV Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!



“Facing My Inner Flaws of Fear and Failure”

Series Title: *“Facing the Flaws of My Inner World”* **Aug.6, 2018**

Sermon Topic: Fear, Failure and Faith and Success

Series Text: 2 Cor.5:14-17

Sermon Text:

“for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power
and love and self-control”
--2 Timothy 1:7 ESV

Not only can failure lead to fear;
but fear can lead to failure.

Sermon Focus: There is a fear that most of us have felt at one time or another. It is the fear of religious commitment.

Exo 14:13 ESV And Moses said to the people, “***Fear*** not, stand firm, and see the salvation of the LORD, which he will work for you today. For the Egyptians whom you see today, you shall never see again.

“Fear Not”, was a statement of comfort and assurance; to refrain from becoming distressed or anxious due to the sense of the threat of danger that was facing them. Fear is not necessarily a sin, but it can become a hindrance to full spiritual life.

INTRODUCTION

OUR GOAL IS TO STARVE FEAR AND FAILURE

2 Tim 1:7 “...for God did not give us a spirit of fear but of power and love and self-control.

Define Fear

The dictionary defines Fear, as an unpleasant emotion that something is a threat of danger or pain.

1. Fear comes from the ***past***, something we experienced makes us afraid of things at present or in the future.
2. Fear comes from ***past*** failure. We tried something, and fell flat on our face, and was embarrassed or was painful.
3. Fear comes from an ignorance regarding the unknown. At some point in our ***past***, we were told about monsters. They're under your bed or in your closet. Or we were told about death, or the hazards of choking because you were talking when you were chewing. Maybe you were shamed from not measuring up somehow.

Do you know what all these have in common? They are all part of the ***past***. Because of these things, the past rules our lives through fear and failure, and ruins our future.

i) Example of Fear: An example of fear that is positive; Imagine you have an automobile accident. You now become very cautious while driving, especially at intersections. You no longer take for granted that you have the green light and those with red lights will stop as they should. That is a good fear, because it makes us more cautions and more careful for our personal safety.

An example of fear that is negative; you decide you'll never get back into a car again.

ii) Enter Courage: Some think fear is the opposite of courage. But fear is what brings courage out of hiding. Fear causes us to be caution, perhaps overly cautious; maybe even paralyzed. Courage is what allows us to overcome fear. Without fear there would be no need for courage. Without courage, there would be no overcoming of our fears.

Most fears that aren't clinical issues, are closely related to comfort, safety, interrupted plans, etc. Fear can be based on reality or perception.

I Googled the top fears and got a list of 100 fears. Some of my favorites are listed below.

#1: Arachnophobia – The fear of spiders affects women four times more (48% women and 12% men).

#2: Trypophobia – The fear of holes is an unusual but pretty common phobia.

#3: Alektorophobia – The fear of chickens. You may have this phobia if chickens make you panic.

#4: Hippopotomonstrosesquippedaliophobia – The fear of long words. Believe it or not, it's real.

#5: Globophobia – The fear of balloons. They should be fun, but not for phobics.

#6: Podophobia – The fear of feet. Some people fear touching or looking at feet, even their own.

#7: Bananaphobia – The fear of bananas. If you have this phobia, they are scary.

With all the fears that have been identified, we can certainly see how fear(s) can paralyze a person's life. Fear can keep us from taking steps, facing challenges, accomplishing great feats.

Define Failure

An attempt that fell short; Goals that were not achieved.
Expectations that were unmet or disappointing.

i) Example of Failure: Stephen King's first novel was rejected 30 times. Then it was published and sold 350 million copies. Thomas Edison is known as the greatest failure in history, failed 1,000 plus times, before inventing the light bulb. Bill Gates' first business venture failed.

ii) Re Evaluate Failure: Failure may stem from a desire

FACING THE FLAWS

Not only will failure lead to fear; but fear can lead to failure.

to please others or to look good to other or that some appearance will be lowered; or that what we failed at, will be detrimental to our future,

Do you know how many paintings Vincent Van Gogh sold during his lifetime? 1.

Someone has defined F.A.I.L. as: **F**irst **A**tttempt **I**n **L**earning. Failure can be a great learning experience. Failure helps us know what doesn't work and eliminates our options.

We need to starve Fear and Failure. But we need to...

NURTURE FAITH AND SUCCESS

Define Faith

Faith is that which we depend on or something we expect; something that is in the future; maybe out of our control but we hope will happen.

A Person of Faith is not necessarily a person who is deeply connected to God. A person can have faith that it won't rain tomorrow morning, or that they'll get through some tough situation. For some faith is merely the recitation of the statement: "My faith will get me through". Faith is not the most important

thing. The most important thing is *what or WHO you place your faith IN.*

Define Success

Success is defined as Achieving our goals; to accomplish an aim or goal. Achievement or accomplishment.

Synonyms - happiness, prosperity, arrival; to “climb the ladder”; to be on “easy street”.

People’s definition of success is often void of any concept of pleasing God. Success is most commonly that which occurs which appears to be instrumental in supplying money, power, position, blessings, possessions, comfort, pleasure, etc.

LET’S TIES THIS TOGETHER.

Personal Inner Exam

* Let’s attempt to examine our inner world to determine if Fear and Failure reside there in a negative or debilitating way.

Personal Inner Exam - As we progress through this series together, we will be attempting to take a realistic inner look at our Traits and Flaws to determine what **FLAWS** need to be put to death. This is “Facing the Flaws of Our Inner World”.

As we look at the issues in this series, we will be asking questions:

- (1)** Why is [FEAR] a flaw? Why is [FEAR] negative? Is it a sin?
- (2)** How can [FEAR] hinder my relationship with God and with others?
- (3)** What affect could [FEAR] have in my ministries for Christ?

* List areas of ministry I am involved in. * Then list the negative or adverse effects [FEAR] could have on each ministry?

- (4)** What would keep me from putting [FEAR] to death?

(5) What might be the result, if I did nothing about [FEAR] in my life?

IIIB. Purposeful Adjustment Steps

(1) Search [FEAR] further in Scripture and learn more passages that deal with it.

(2) Look at examples in the Bible of people who were [FEARFUL]. What was the effect? Some who manifested [FAITH]? What were some effects?

(3) Ask God's Holy Spirit for strength, grace and determination to work on putting [FEAR] to death and nurturing [FAITH] to life.

(4) SSteps of Action

* What steps can I take to begin to starve the Inner flaw of [FEAR] to death?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

* What steps can I take to begin nurturing the New Life Trait of [FAITH] and to allow it to flourish in my life?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Prayer to pray regarding our Inner Flaws and New Life Traits:

Psa 139:23-24 ESV Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

We might Redefine failure as lessons learned. Perhaps we should redefine Success as re-directed goals, new grid for evaluating life

and accomplishments. God focused or self focused?

CONCLUSION: 2 Cor. 5:17 –

The Promise:

2Co 5:17 ESV Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.

Perhaps the idea of being able to start all over – whatever your failure – with a fresh start, is hard to imagine. It is the passing away of the old life or the old way of living, with old weaknesses, Flaws, hindrances and failures. It means old problems, old habits or life controlling issues are gone. *Sounds like a great idea.*

Perhaps your whole life being made anew, re-done, salvaged; all the broken things healed; all the ugly things made beautiful is too good to be true. It is like all of life just gets a reboot and everything gets flushed.

The Condition:

v. 17) “...if anyone is in Christ,”

These are not just words you speak. They are not just an imaginary scenario like some virtual video game, where you seem to be inside playing the game but the reality is, nothing is different.

“In Christ” is to Believe in Christ and to be forgiven from sin. It is salvation for your eternal soul from punishment, with the gift of Eternal life. It means being Born again into the family of God.

The Expectation:

Faith in Christ initiates a fresh start. “Life is a series of new beginnings.” (George Sweeting) The Christian must be a life lived with Christ at the center focus and at the wheel in control.

2Cor. 5:14-15 ESV For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

Some people view religion as a way to avoid unpleasant karma in their present earthly life AND uncertain possibilities in the “after life”.

Taking on the label of “Christian” or verbalizing a prayer that declares a belief, when in fact you believe none of it – that’s not what this is about. God knows if we mean business or not. Its not a matter of pulling the wool over the eyes of the Almighty.

But it is genuine grief over the mess of my life; over my sin and living apart from God. George was a very close friend of mine and he often spent extended stays in mental hospitals. But while there, he would often write songs about life and faith and always in the “Hank Snow” style of music. One time he was discharged and his latest song, from his time in the hospital was “One Half My Life, Has Not Been Lived for Jesus”. He had a habit of writing songs with lengthy titles. But this song was one of deep regret at wasting half his life, doing his own thing, and going his own way. But the song also praised God for His wonderful redemption of the remainder of his life to be used of God to point many other people to Jesus Christ.

Being a genuine Christian involves a deep faith dependence upon Jesus Christ, as Gods’ Son and only Redeemer of our soul and all of life. It marks the end of your old way of living and the beginning of a new way of living. God tells us, “here is what I have done for you.” Now My expectation is that you begin living like you have a new life. Live differently. Act differently. Turn

away from the sin of your old life and trust in Christ and follow Him fully, living the Life He has called all His children to live.

The Appearance - to show one's self

2Co 5:9-10 ESV So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. (10) For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.

We will all be brought before the judgment place of Jesus Christ and each of us will give an account to Him, of all the things we have done in this earthly life.

For those who do not know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior- it will be a day of being held responsible for all the sins, Christ died to forgive, but whose salvation you chose to reject.

For those who claim to be Christians or believers in Jesus, but continue living a sinfilled life – like you have your fire insurance, but you continue to live in the burning building as long as you can, because you are kind of addicted to the heat – those may be held accountable to God for falsely believing – or wearing a label that did not apply.

Of you may be a Christian – you may be genuinely in the family of God, and yet you continue living in open disobedience to God, - you will be evaluated, your lifestyle will be evaluated, the sins they nurtured and lived in, you will be held accountable for those things.

Some tend to think God doesn't care and will let everything slide. But no one really believes that because no one holds that point of view except when it comes to religion.

ILL) When we raised your children, did you just once ever think – “Oh, no, I don't care if they throw their food on the floor. I don't”

care if they use the bathroom on the couch. No, I don't mind at all if my children curse me and disrespect me. My children are welcome to lie, I couldn't care in the least." No one thinks that way, except when it comes to God.

We think that God as our Heavenly Father, doesn't care how we live or act, as His children? But God will not allow His children to live in open known, disobedience to His holy standards.

So fear is what brings courage out of hiding. Failure is often the back door to success.(Dr. Erwin Lutzer) It is a necessary part of success.

Faith is the inner conviction that things will change; and specifically, God will lead and guide and redeem, if I only give Him the opportunity to do so.

I posed these questions on Fb and asked for responses to contribute to this sermon.

(1) What are some negative aspects of Success?

(2) What are some positive aspect of Failure?

These are some responses I received.....

“**Dan**” ^{1a}Missing all the years with my family "I look back on it now and say boy did I screw up" I let the all mighty dollar control my life.

^{1b}What I've had to listen to "gripes and complaints" from the top "Owner of the Corporation" to the ones that do the actual work "They are the ones that I tried my very best to help".

²I definitely would had more time with my family "if I had only listened to that little voice in my head" I know now it was God telling me that money was not the answer.

“**James**” ¹Failure can make you try harder, give you perseverance, keep you humble, help you relate to other that have failed. However, we should strive to succeed, not fail. ²Success

can change your life in a negative way, less privacy, false friends, less time with family and loved ones, you can get lazy and not push your self.

“Michele” ¹It ties us to the world and has the potential to cultivate a love for the world and the things of the world. It gets us thinking more about the temporal than the eternal. It places US at the center of our universe and not God. It makes us think we can depend on ourselves or that we actually have something to be proud of. Has the potential to make us think higher of ourselves than we ought. ²Failure can draw us closer to God (if we let it do the work it was meant to do!), help us understand what others might feel when they are hurting. It might foster empathy and greater love for our neighbor. We might gain the valuable riches of humility, wisdom and insight while also growing in intimacy with Christ through the process of our suffering.

“Steve” ¹Pride. ²Humility.

“Will” ¹Pride, which leads to social unpopularity. Everyone desires to be accepted. The issue with success is that individuals become prideful of their success. In return people dislike you. There are those few who give all credit to God and those people are rare. ²Wisdom. From failure one gains wisdom.

“Danette” ¹I believe you have to define success before you can answer this properly. With the world's definition of success, a huge negative is that it is very self-serving and pulls us away from God. But I personally believe success is being exactly where God wants you to be, doing what He wants you to do...you may not have all the worldly "things" that seem so important, but you will have true peace and joy that absolutely nothing in this world can give you. ²And as for "FAILURE"...that many times puts me on my knees before Almighty God like nothing else can!

“Sam” Unless you realize that every one you ever met had a hand in your success then you could believe that you were the only one that matters. That will cause you all kinds of problems. I

truly believe you learn more & remember longer from failure, than you do from success.

“**Regina**”¹ becoming proud ²develops grittiness

“**Russell**”¹ Presuming Gods favor rather than knowing His character. ²Phil 3:10

“**Jay**”¹ A negative aspect of success is when our success causes us to loose our dependence upon God. Every time we succeed we have to think about who caused us to win that victory. Most of the time we say, yay!!!! I did it!!!! No, God who is at work within you is the one who accomplished that victory in you. We must remember that we are nothing but vile, nasty sinners whom Christ saved from a sinking pit. This will help us to not become prideful in our successes. However, Christ tells us we are more than conquerors in Christ Jesus. We have the ability to succeed in all things, but it must be through Christ who is living and abiding in us. Philippians 4:13

²Joshua 1:8 teaches us that we must study the truths of God's word and grow our INSIDE JESUS MUSCLES in order to be successful. This will cause our dependency to be upon God. The truth is not in us unless the Holy Spirit puts it there and causes it to grow. So one pitfall to success is pride if we are not careful.

Jay: Failure puts into perspective our fallen nature. There is nothing like a great fall to humble a person. Failure can be a stepping stone to success. We must first fail in order to succeed. If we don't know that we are sinners, we would not know that we need a savior.

We may think we've failed. We think we missed God's path for us. Today we can Start Fresh! Start Now! “Behold the **NEW** has come! Failure leads to fear - fear to try again. Fear to feel again. Failure can cause us to be afraid to take any challenge. ***Fear leads to failure. Fear of God, leads to a Failure to experience the very best that God desires for me.***

Fear of what God wants to do in my life. Fear of where God wants to lead me. Fear of how God wants to use me. Fear, because we are afraid that if God has His way in my life, I will never experience the things I'd always hoped for; Fear of never fulfilling my dreams; fear of never realizing my goals and life's pursuits.

That fear, moves us to keep God at arm's length, because we are afraid God will change everything. And that is absolutely correct. Fear of God's involvement in your life, will lead to fail to trust Him; It will lead you to Fail to experience the very best that God desires for your life, because we want to go our own way and do our own thing.

Our Declaration of Independence from fear and failure:

"I will allow my Fears and my Failures to define me
and bind me..... ***NO LONGER!*** "

Prayer to pray regarding our Inner Flaws and New Life Traits:

Psa 139:23-24 ESV Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!



A Recipe for Freedom from Fear and Failure

Release **ALL** your Hopes and **ALL** your expectations
into the loving care of your Heavenly Father.

Surrender **ALL** you have ever dreamed of
and **ALL** you have ever longed for
to the sovereign, perfect plan of Almighty God.

Submit fully, **ALL** that you have and **ALL** that you are
to the Supreme Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Open **ALL** the depths of your being
and **ALL** the areas of your life,
to the full Control of God's Spirit of Holiness.

Entrust Him with **ALL** that you cherish
and **ALL** that you treasure in this life.

Expect **ALL** your plans to be totally
and dramatically revised and **ALL** your hopes
to be completely and radically, redirected.

Await His **ALL** consuming love
and **ALL** encompassing power
to fill and govern your life and future forever

Fear of sin and being accountable to God for that sin, can be positive, if we allow that sin and that fear to draw us to God in humble faith dependence on Christ for His forgiveness and turn us away from that sin. Fear can be positive if it opens us to all God to rule our lives. The old things can become, gone. We can all have a new start and a new life through faith in Jesus Christ.

“Facing My Inner Flaws of Discouragement and Nurturing the Traits of Hope & Joy”

Series Title: *“Facing the Flaws of My Inner World”* **Aug13,20,2017**

Sermon Topic: Discouragement, Disappointment, Depression, Disillusionment and Despair

Series Text: 2 Cor.5:14-17

Sermon Text:

“Then he said to them, “Go your way.
Eat the fat and drink sweet wine
and send portions to anyone who has nothing ready;
for this day is holy to our Lord.
And do not be grieved,
for the joy of the LORD is your strength”
-- Nehemiah 8:10 ESV

“We could never learn to be brave and patient
if there were only joy in the world”

--Helen Keller

INTRODUCTION

Main Text;

2 Cor. 5:14-17 ESV For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that those who live might no longer

live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. (16) From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. (17) **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, then he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.**

Main Idea: Our Inner Flaws or New Life Traits, can bless or hinder, our relationship with God and others, and our ministries.

Discouragement, Disappointment, Depression, Disillusionment, and Despair can negatively affect our relationships with God and with others, as well as negatively affecting our ministries. These Flaws must be starved. Therefore, Hope, blessings, Joy in the Lord, and Peace in the Holy Spirit must be nurtured to newness of life.

OUR THEME IS THIS; “Our Attitude & the focus of our minds can dramatically affect our outlook on life, whether positively or negatively.”

REEMEMBER OUR Inner Flaws – are the spoiled, stinking leftover remnants of our old way of living, which keep us from living the New Life that God desires us to live.(Rom.6:4)

Our New Life Traits –are the existing New Life traits in Christ. Both imply personal awareness and responsibility. Purposefully taking steps to face the flaws of our inner world and put to death, these flaws. This is part of the New Abundant Life, Jesus came to provide for us.

We refer to Discouragement and Despair as flaws of our inner world, not because they are sins, because I don't believe they necessarily are. But we deal with them as flaws, because they weaknesses which can affect our relationships with God and with

others, and can certainly affect our ministry. Therefore, and we need to have victory over these flaws for our own spiritual health.

INTRODUCTION

This topic today are things we can all relate to and to which no one is immune. These can occur at different levels; some may experience these in lesser degrees, while others may experience these at a deeper and perhaps a more debilitating level.

Like a darkness over the soul...“Our disappointments tend to color our world more vividly and more indelibly than our accomplishments.” Discouragement and Disappointment may come from our plans, dreams, pursuits or expectations which go unachieved.

Pro 16:9 ESV The heart of man plans his way, but the LORD establishes his steps.

This indicates that our ways and God’s ways are not always the same ways. We have the tendency of making plans for our lives, that may stray from God’s plans. So we can see the value in making our prayer for this series, our life’s pursuit.

Psa 139:23-24 (23) Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any ***grievous*** way in me, and ***lead me in the way everlasting!***

One version reads “any grievous way”, while another reads “wicked”. However the Hebrew word used in the Old Testament context is used to refer to that which is idolatrous, in which case that would certainly be sin or “wicked”. But it is also used to refer to something that is “painful” or even “sorrowful”, which would indicate something that was an inner flaw or weakness, rather than a sin.

Discouragement, Disappointment, Depression, Disillusionment, and Despair

DISCOURAGEMENT AND ITS AFFECTS

Any of these “Ds” can occur when we have pursued and worked toward personal goals, anticipating one expected outcome, but God allowed something different – perhaps even drastically different.

If failing to achieve our own way brings discouragement, yet finding God’s way brings joy, shouldn’t the joy of the one, overshadow the discouragement of the other? At what point, do we eventually come to the place where we can say, “though I am disappointed that my plans have not come to fruition, yet I rejoice in the assurance that God’s will has been done, at this time, in this situation?”

Jeremiah Burrows writes; “though I am discouraged that my plans have been redirected, nevertheless I rejoice in the faithful guidance and abundant blessings from God. So why should not the one rejoice me, as much as the other disturbs me?” Good Question!

John Piper refers to depression in general as the darkness of the soul., and he gives a non-sensational, but realistic perspective on it.

DISCOURAGEMENT: a loss of confidence or enthusiasm; this may be the more common and more superficial level.

DISAPPOINTMENT: the feeling of sadness or displeasure caused by the nonfulfillment of one's hopes or expectations. This level is a bit less superficial and a little deeper in its emotional affect. If your husband gives you chocolates for Valentine’s Day rather than roses, you may be a bit discouraged. If your husband forgets Valentine’s Day altogether, you may be disappointed.

DEPRESSION: feelings of unusual or prolonged disillusionment or despondency. You had your own plans, but God allows

something different.

DISILLUSIONMENT: a feeling of disappointment resulting from the discovery that something is not as good as one believed it to be. For instance if one was thinking that marrying “Mr. Right” would bring relational satisfaction and marital bliss, only to discover they you are still dissatisfied with life, this could be disillusioning.

DESPAIR: the complete loss or absence of hope. This is a deeper and more severe level of the soul darkness.

I see these “Ds” as downward steps or increasing levels of soul darkness severity. For some, the farther along in soul darkness they go, they become more moldable by it, rather than more calloused because of it. I am convinced that in order to endure the affliction of the darkness of soul, the more contented we must become with the Grace that God has given to sustain us.

John Piper argues that we must fight against the darkness of the soul and we must fight for joy. We must fight, but we must not fight alone. We must join the fight with other believers, fighting together, supporting together and hoping together, until the rays of the light of God’s glorious joy begins to dispel the darkness over our soul. In time – though it may seem an eternity- the God sustained fight for joy, will wear on and out last the hold that the darkness has over us.

The light does not come as a flip of a switch. Instead it may be experienced more gradually, subtly and slowly like a dimmer switch lighting up a room, slowly but surely.

Psa 34:1-9 ESV Of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, so that he drove him out, and he went away. | (7) The angel of the LORD encamps around those who fear him, and delivers them. (8) Oh, taste and see that the LORD is good!

Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him! (9) Oh, fear the LORD, you his saints, for those who fear him have no lack!

David with Abimelech (1Sam.21:8-15)

In 1 Sam.19, Saul was jealous against David and in his anger attempted to kill David. David fled for his life. Both from fear, but also respect for the life and authority of King Saul. In his fleeing for his life, David came to Abimelech. Abimelech asks David why he was alone and where were his men? In his state of Discouragement, Disillusionment, Depressed state and Despair...

David LIED. v.8) Oh, the king has sent me on a secret mission. And I left is in such a hurry, would you happen to have a spear or a sword around that I could use. The priest had kept Goliath's sword, with which David cut off Goliath's head and he fled to Gath, wearing Goliath's Sword. *His morality was lessened.*

David LAPSED; v.10) With his mind and judgment clouded, he took Goliath's sword, and fled to Gath, the home of Goliath. And immediately he realized he was in just as much trouble as when he was chased by Saul. The men there recognized him and asked, "is this not David?" The man who killed Goliath, and whose subjects sang and danced over his victories? *His mentality was lacking.*

David LOST IT: 1Sam. 21:12-15 ESV (13) So he changed his behavior before them and pretended to be insane in their hands and made marks on the doors of the gate and let his spittle run down his beard. (14) Then Achish said to his servants, "Behold, you see the man is mad. Why then have you brought him to me? (15) Do I lack madmen, that you have brought this fellow to behave as a madman in my presence? Shall this fellow come into my house?" After defeating the giant warrior Goliath, and with the trophy of Goliath's sword in his hands, he had lost all courage and was pretended to be crazy. *His Courage was fading.*

Discouragement, Disappointment, Disillusionment, Depression, and borderline Despair. The things emotionally distraught situations cause us to do. The man of God, the man after God's own heart, the man who was the Apple of God's eye, acting like this. (Ps.17:8)

For David: Lying, Lapsing in judgment, and losing control to the degree that he pretended to be crazy. For Naomi, in the book of Ruth, disillusionment was expressed by believing that the hand of the Lord Himself, was against her. For Judas, his despair was manifested by suicide.

For a pastor friend of mine... it was leaving the ministry. "Joe" was the pastor of a large Church, with hundreds in attendance. The church's attendance dipped below a certain level and he was never able to get the numbers back up to what he felt it should be. It went on until he became so disillusioned and almost despondent, that he left the ministry.

He told me that the problem was that he had spent too much time building personal relationships among the people, that he had failed at properly training and developing the leadership of the church. And, in his mind, that was the cause of his church, slipping in numbers and his own perceived personal failure as a pastor.

I remember asking him: "If God saw fit to bring about a great revival in your church, would you take the credit for it?" He immediately and emphatically said, "NO". Then I asked, "if God saw fit to *withhold* bringing a revival to your church, would you take the blame for it?" He said, just as immediately and just as emphatically, "YES".

When we get to that point, perhaps a break may be in order. A break can be a rest from disillusioning situations and a redirected

focus, as we fight for joy and to recover a healthier, more Biblical perspective of God in ministry.

This far, we have focused on starving Discouragement, Disappointment, Depression, Disillusionment and Despair. Now we turn our focus to “Nurturing the New Life Trait of Praise, Hope & Joy”

INTRODUCTION

Today’s focus is not just for those who personally struggle with darkness of the soul, but for all of us, as we learn how we can better understand and minister to those who do. Darkness of the souls is not merely a result of the discouraging and difficult circumstances that we experience, but is more a result of our *perception* of those circumstances and our responses to them.

One person may get laid off from their job. “Oh well, I was looking for a job when I came here. I’ll find another one.” They rebound by regrouping and refocusing; doing a few job searches; checking out a few possibilities and making some new connections. Though discouraged, yet their mindset is still, “I’m going to do what it takes to make life work.” And their ability to function normally, doesn’t seem to be affected.

Another person under the same circumstances allows their uncontrolled thoughts to run away with them. “Oh brother, it took me 6 wks to get this job.” –**Discouragement**. “I really liked that job; I really thought it was such a good fit for me. I may never find another one like that.” –**Disappointment**. “The Economy is really down and no one is calling me from any of my interviews.” There are clearly no jobs out there, so why try?” –**Depression**. “I’m going nowhere. I’m a failure. I’m behind on my bills and will probably never catch up.” Why would God allow this? – This is hopeless. I’m just going to stay inside and stay in bed.” =

Dissillusionment. “Nothing is coming together. Nothing is ever going to work out. I hate my life. There’s no way out of this. Its hopeless. No one really cares what happens to me. I’m all alone. “I can’t go on living like this any longer.” **–Despair.**

So Nurturing the New Life Traits of Hope and Joy can come through..

THE POWER OF PRAISE & THE MIND FOCUSED ON SPIRITUAL THINGS

Praise is calling to mind the goodness of the Lord and declaring aloud the greatness of our God.

Praising God has positive, thought focusing capabilities and faith enhancing properties.

Psalm 34:1-3 (1) I will bless the LORD at all times; his praise shall continually be in my mouth. (2) My soul makes its boast in the LORD; let the humble hear and be glad. (3) Oh, magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together!

Praising God “continually” – refers to Praising Him at all times, in all places, and in all situation. This is not positive thinking or mind over matter, but the realistic exaltation of God, in the life and circumstances of the Believer. This recognizes the power and position of God as the Lord of your life’s circumstances. Praise calls to mind the goodness of the Lord and declares aloud the greatness of our God.

Praising God is not a magic phrase, but genuinely praising God *is* a purposeful refocusing of the mind and releasing of the concerns over all the earthly issues of life, into the hands of our Powerful, loving Heavenly Father.

The Power of Thoughtful, purposeful Praise

I **WILL** bless the Lord. He Praise **SHALL** continually be in my mouth. I **WILL** focus my thoughts on the goodness of the Lord. I **WILL** declare aloud the greatness of our God.

Our problems often start with small things, but can start an downward progression, which may be the result of the “perception of the circumstances” and the evaluation of life, from that perspective. That’s the battle of the thoughts and the need to refocus the mind toward positive, spiritual, healthy, spirit controlled thinking. And this is where Praise, Hope and Joy come in.

Praising God has positive, thought focusing capabilities and faith enhancing properties.

Psa 22:3 But You oh God, are holy; You who *inhabit* the praises of Israel.

This refers to the idea of Gods people offering Him MINDFUL praise. And in response to His pleasure, God manifested His presence, which filled the temple of praise – so that His literal, localized presence was literally felt and experienced as a thick cloud among his people, such that the ministers could not minister.

2Ch 5:11-14 ESV And when the priests came out of the Holy Place (for all the priests who were present had consecrated themselves, without regard to their divisions, (12) and all the Levitical singers, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, their sons and kinsmen, arrayed in fine linen, with cymbals, harps, and lyres, stood east of the altar with 120 priests who were trumpeters; (13) and it was the duty of the trumpeters and singers to make themselves heard in unison in praise and thanksgiving to the LORD), and when the song was raised, with trumpets and cymbals and other musical instruments, in praise to the LORD, "For he is

good, for his steadfast love endures forever," the house, the house of the LORD, was filled with a *cloud*, (14) so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of God.

Praise achieved the pleasure of God, in a sense that brought the manifest presence of God so real, so think, so physically felt and experienced, that the priests could no longer function in carrying out their ministry responsibilities.

God's manifest presence was as in a cloud or thick presence- in the temple, in the tabernacle, in the wilderness, and in the presence of His people as they praised Him. Imagine PRAISING God so genuinely, that His presence became so real and felt, that you could no longer sense the focus on your troubles or circumstances.

Praise is not like an incantation to stir God up to doing something for us. But Praise is an act of worship where a specific focus is made and a Supernatural invitation is extended to God as His praises are declared – not merely read or sung – but declared out of the genuine admiration and awe toward God for who He is and all that HE has done. It is a purposeful refocusing of the mind onto spiritual things, directed toward the Lord God Almighty and His mighty deeds and faithful character.

Praise either brings the reality of God's presence to you, or it brings you more into the reality of God's Supernatural presence. Not sure which, but I know it happens. Praise is the purposeful calling to mind the goodness of the Lord, and declaring aloud the greatness of our God!

Praise changes you.

Praise can change our disposition. It is a refocusing our attention off our problems, troubles, stresses, despair and focusing on God and all His glory and wonder.

Praise – like a spiritual medicine, can help bring relief from soul darkness. But better than a medicine to fix our ills, is a vitamin to enhance our health, and therefore offers a preventative measure to the spiritual life. Praise cannot merely heal spiritual sickness, when experienced regularly, it can enhance spiritual health, so as not to get sick or to possibly avoid the deeper levels of soul darkness.

Ps.34:4-6 (4) I sought the LORD, and he answered me and delivered me from all my fears. (5) Those who look to him are *radiant, and their faces shall never be ashamed*. (6) This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him and saved him out of all his troubles.

Fear is changed to hopeful *radiance*. This speaks of an actual, noticeable, physical change in a person's countenance due to the practice of praise. IT is a change of a person's inner thoughts; a declaration of the goodness and presence of God and the result is displayed in a changed physical countenance.

Not only does praise help us focus our minds better on God and spiritual things, but praise seems to release a greater sense of the Supernatural presence of God in our immediate situation.

***“You will keep him in perfect peace,
whose mind is fixed on you...
because he trusts in You...” --Is.26:3***

Years ago, I was still living alone and through certain circumstances I was in greatly distressed and filled with rage – I had a loaded gun and I was planning on leaving the house and taking care of some business. As I was walking through my house on my way to the front door – it was like I became wrapped in something that nearly immobilized me – and what flooded my thoughts was – “Praise the Lord. I will Praise the Lord. I must Praise the Lord!” And at that moment I, I think I was held captive

by God Himself, and all I could think to do was to kneel and begin to praise the Lord. And so I did. And everything that filled my mind about God, came pouring out of my mouth in praise. And AS I did – it was like some force that had filled my physical body, just began to flow up and out of me – from the ground up, and in super slow motion. And at that moment, that distress - that intense anger and uncontrollable rage dissipated, and left me completely at peace and filled with joy.

When we praise God we might consider visualizing us laying our circumstances at His feet; and His holy presence overshadowing and overwhelming every care and every concern, that is attached to or associated with that circumstance. Lost in His love. Overwhelmed by His holy, manifest presence. Satisfied with His sovereignty over all things;

***So the power of praise comes from a mind
focused on God who is worthy of all praise.***

So this is a purposefully, practically, nurturing of the New Life Trait of..

HOPE AND A SPIRITUAL MIND

Consider the underestimated importance of a controlled, spiritual mind.

2Cor. 10:4-5 ESV For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds. (5) We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and **take every thought captive** to obey Christ,

Part of our spiritual warfare is focusing our minds and controlling our thoughts. These “thoughts” are those which feed depression and despair, and starve joy and peace. We must reject them. We must starve those thoughts, take control of our mind, fight for joy

and allow God to fill our minds with beneficial, spiritual thoughts. Taking control of your thought life is a discipline that is not easily nurtured.

Php 4:4-8 ESV Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. (5) Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; (6) do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by ^Aprayer and supplication with ^Bthanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (8) Finally, brothers, ^Cwhatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything *worthy of praise*, ***think about these things***.

“Think about these things”. Or Train your mind to focus on these thoughts. I personally don’t know of *many* Christians who have made this a top priority. But I know of *some* who have and it has been life changing, because God’s word is life changing. The Spirit controlled mind is life changing. Practice training yourself to call to mind the goodness of the Lord and declaring aloud the greatness of our God.

Our emotions are based on our thinking, and our perceptions. Make a List of good, godly praise worthy things that God has done, and take note of how one’s emotions may change as a result.

Emotional change can take place as we...

Pray to God and give Him our problems and receive His peace.

Starve anxiety. Nurture peace. Cast your cares upon Him for He cares for you. v.6) Pray, give thanks; Talk to your Wonderful Counselor; express **ALoud** your concerns, fears, or anxieties.

Emotional change can take place as we...

Think about God and Rejoice in the things He has done.

Nurture peace and joy. Acknowledge His blessings and Give thanks. I am personally focusing on thanking and praising God for *what I don't have*. I have been praising the Lord that I don't have lots of debt. I have been praising the Lord because I don't have a terrible family situation. I have been praising the Lord that I don't have failing health.

Emotional change can take place as you...

Intentionally fill your mind and focus your thoughts on things that are good, pure, holy, right,

Intentionally look on the bright side. Rather than focusing on what you don't have, focus on what you have. Don't be so fixed on your ailments and afflictions, but on the blessings and things that are going well in your life. This is controlling your thought life.

Lord today, My life, my situation; my direction and my purpose is in your hands. TODAY is a new beginning; old things have passed away, I rejoice that all things are new in my life.

Sometimes we focus more on the discouraging aspects of life rather than the good things. We allow our troubles to disturb us more than our blessings rejoice us. It is a matter of mental, spiritual focus. "Hold on to that which is good." (1Thes.5:21)

Starve Discouragement before it starves your peace and turns into Disappointment. Put to death Disillusionment before it begins to starve your joy and turns to Depression. Starve Despair by nurturing praise, hope, joy, peace in the Holy Spirit.

CONCLUSION: 2 Cor. 5:17 –

1) So how can Discouragement affect our relationship with others?

Discouragement is often contagious. One person catches it, and exposes it to everyone they come into contact with. Nurture Despair and it will foster despair in others. Nurture Hopelessness and it may foster hopelessness in others. On the other hand, Nurture HOPE, peace and joy, and it can foster HOPE and peace and joy in others. HOPE can starve Despair to death.

2) How can discouragement affect my ministry?

Discouragement from relationships can be transferred into the ministries you are involved in. Distress from your job can be projected into your ministry. **Think about your ministries.** List them and consider how any one of the levels of soul darkness may affect those ministries.

3) I was trained in Seminary in the area of counseling. However I realize that many of our problems (but certainly not all) don't necessarily need professional help. Some may need professional help at times, but not as many as we think. I believe what we need more is a better, clearer focused perspective on God. The key word may be "consistent"; "His praise will *continually* be in my mouth".

Psa 42:5-6 ESV Why are you cast down, O my soul, and why are you in turmoil within me? Hope in God; for I shall again praise him, my salvation (6) and my God. My soul is cast down within me; therefore I remember you from the land of Jordan....

Soul darkness can be just as debilitating and just as deadly as a bullet would on the battlefield. The key to the soul being hopeful, is not a spoonful of praise when spiritually ill, but regular, consistent intake of our daily spiritual supplements and maintaining of our spiritual health. Don't keep Praise in the medicine cabinet. Keep it on the dinner table, as a regular reminder, a spiritual vitamin or spiritual supplement to keep one healthy and prevent the spiritual sickness of soul darkness.

4) When you experience Darkness of the soul at any level, you need not be embarrassed when seeking and asking for help. Fight for Recovery. Fight for Joy. But don't fight alone.

And for those who are not struggling with darkness of the soul, we must be alert and aware of those who are struggling! They must not be allowed to struggle and fight alone. Help them to enter into praise. If they are unable to do so, you praise the Lord for them. You pray for them, and bring them into the presence of God in prayer and you help them to focus their thoughts on the goodness of the Lord and lead them in declaring aloud the Greatness of our God. We must not let those who are struggling with darkness of soul, do so alone.

POTENTIAL CAUSES OF DESPAIR: Prolonged and Progressive Darkness of the Soul; digressing from Discouragement, to Disappointment, to Depression, to Disillusionment, to Despair.

1) Mounting or compiling problems, strained family relations; employment stress; personal issues and instability;

2) Traumatic events; divorce; job termination; promotion delay again; perceived rejection;

3) Devastating loss or relational problems; death, ongoing conflict;

4) Long term Aimlessness; unemployment; medical problems; lack of personal productivity; unrelenting pain;

5) Loneliness – not necessarily romantic loneliness, but a sense that you are disconnected from other meaningful relationships; that “you’re are going it alone”;

6) Success: Pursuing, gaining, getting and acquiring possession; yet Unsatisfying Success; when satisfaction and fulfillment still evades you, can lead to despair. How many wealthy, superstars; seemingly successful celebrities have ended their life in despair, desperation and suicide.

POSSIBLE SIGNS OF DESPAIR:

1) Inappropriate attitudes: I'm worthless, life is meaningless; life is not worth the effort; Everything is going wrong.

2) Your emotional darkness is negatively affecting your work schedule or work performance due to lack of concentration and increased mistakes; cannot stay focused even on familiar routine responsibilities.

3) When soul darkness affects your social life; you regularly refrain from normal socializing; purposefully or unintentionally / reduced or significantly minimized social interaction; isolation or reclusive tendency;

4) Alcohol use or substance abuse: over eating; binge watching TV; this would be consistent and uncontrolled, prolonged activity that attempts to alleviate physical pain, help mask or distract from mental and emotional pain and darkness.

5) Changes in personal or home hygiene; not cleaning house; too overwhelmed to deal with clutter or cleaning; not bathing, shaving, combing hair or brushing teeth;

6) An overall attitude of hopelessness of life; "Life isn't worth living? "I wish I could just escape the pain, the darkness, the emptiness of life." *Entertaining thoughts of how to escape life by ending life.

Struggling with soul darkness is a lot like a person drowning in the water. If you see someone drowning, no matter how many times

you yell for them to “**swim**”; or how loudly you yell – they simply cannot chose to swim out. At some point someone has to jump in with them and help bring them out of the water. Likewise, simply telling someone to “**snap out of it**” or instructing them on steps they should take, may not be enough, especially in the deeper levels of darkness and despair. At some point, someone who cares may need to just jump into the darkness and walk out with them into the light.

Years ago, I had a very close friend in ministry for several years. He was a very solid and devout believer and follower of Jesus Christ. But he battled with depression, emotionally and medically. He was often admitted into a psychiatric hospital in our area. But when he was descending into the darkness, his mom often contacted me to come help her get her son out of bed. He was 50+ years old. At times I physically pulled him out of bed, helped him get going and then we went out together. It was a battle for him and for me.

Again, this is not just for those struggling but for those who may be able to help those who are struggling. We must be willing to connect and intervene if necessary in order to help others begin stepping up and rising up out of the mental, emotional and spiritual darkness.

NOTE: We must acknowledge that some levels of soul darkness may necessitate special medical and psychological intervention. Keeping this in mind as a potential step may be necessary and the best way of bringing help to the one for whom you care so much.

PRACTICAL STEPS OUT OF DESPAIR:

1) Fight to praise God and to experience His presence. This is not a crutch or some false hope. Praising God can be a life

changing; perception altering; hope, peace and joy instilling experience and life-long practice.

2) Cry out to God. Reach out to a friend: Contact a pastor or trusted friend for conversation, or sharing your feelings of despair. Resolve in your heart, “I will not struggle alone!” Find at least one trusted friend to confide in and honestly share your struggle with. Those to whom a trusting person shares with or calls out to, must attempt to be understanding, patient and available. Darkness doesn’t “clock in” at convenient times.

3) Force yourself to clean up- self and environment. Get Up. Clean Up. Dress Up. Don’t Give Up. Clean house. Straighten things up a bit. Take small tasks that can help you feel fulfilling.

4) Get out of the house and back into some normal routines if possible. Minimal responsibilities can be taken on and can foster a renewed sense of encouragement. If possible make a list of possible, small, achievable goals, or help someone make a list. These may involve personal relationships, social interaction, employment opportunities, environment focused goals. Start with smaller tasks and attempt to complete and check off as having been accomplished. Attempt to do what makes you feel productive, fulfilled, and works toward you progressing forward and out of the darkness.

5) Progressively begin to socialize again. Invest your time and efforts in helping others. Giving of yourself often makes you feel better about yourself and life. Helping others can help get your focus off yourself and may open the door to emotional, physical, mental and relational strength and blessings.

6) Contact a professional Christian Counselor if depression or despair persists. Taking this step in no way implies you are a weak human being or that you are mentally deficient in any way.

There is certainly no silver bullet or incantation when it comes to preventing darkness of the soul, as though it were some spell. But I do believe, when we practice this spiritual exercise of Praise more consistently and more thoughtfully, the darkness of the soul would affect us less frequently.

“His praise will *continually* be in my mouth!”

Praising God is not just medicine for the ills of soul darkness, but should be put into practice as a daily supplement for darkness prevention and overall spiritual health and maintenance.

Prayer to pray regarding our Inner Flaws and New Life Traits:

Psa 139:23-24 ESV Search me, O God, and know my heart! Try me and know my thoughts! (24) And see if there be any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!

Practice training yourself to call to mind the goodness of the Lord and declaring aloud the Greatness of our God. Practice using words of praise, as they have thought focusing and soul cleansing capabilities.

Remember this is not about merely dispelling the darkness of your own soul, but helping the healthy inner disposition of others. And remember that words can speak life and death into another person's world.

For the sake of others, be ready and willing to jump into someone's darkness. You may not merely encourage them, you just may save their life.



Don't close this booklet yet

without considering this all important question.

Is Jesus Christ the Savior or *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;
--Rom 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come from God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should
not perish, but have everlasting life. --John 3:16

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him to die in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is
eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.
-- Romans 6:23

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of Jesus Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were
still sinners, Christ died for us. ---Romans 5:8

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord
will be saved." -- Rom 10:13

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his
name, he gave the right to become children of God,
- John 1:12

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you are truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your sins
and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

The ABCs

A - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

B - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

C - Confess your sins to God. He already knows. Also Confess Jesus as you LORD. He desires and deserves to be your Lord.

Prayer: Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

Connect with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

Commit yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

Heb 10:24-25 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

Act 2:41-42 So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:
 Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,
 Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, www.christefca.org

*It is our prayer that you find **Jesus Christ** to be...
 your highest calling,
 your greatest purpose,
 your soul's source and joy,
 and your all-consuming passion.*

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May each lesson bring a growing submission, a deeper obedience and an increase of the righteous reign of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the fullness of His Spirit, in His Church and throughout our mission field.

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