

# INTRODUCTION

## What is Activate?

The goal of Activate is to help empower participants to recognize God's voice, so they may better:

1. **Know God (and Hear His Voice):**
  - *Cultivate a deeper relationship with God while learning to hear His voice through prayer, Scripture, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.*
2. **Find Freedom (from the Lies that Hold You Back):**
  - *Break free from the deceptions hindering growth and blocking the path to fulfillment.*
3. **Discover Purpose (in Knowing TRUE IDENTITY in Christ):**
  - *Uncover the unique purpose and calling God has placed within you. Embracing your true identity in Christ and living out your God-given destiny with confidence and clarity.*
4. **Make a Difference (in Transformative Community):**
  - *Partnering with others to bring about positive change, while building a transformative community.*

## What to Expect?

***A 12-week INSPIRATIONAL process that includes:***

### ***During Our Weekly Classes:***

- 5 minute review the previous week
- 10-minute teaching video
- 60-minutes of content engagement in groups

### ***Throughout the Week:***

- Bible study during the week: *3-5 Day Devotionals to enhance the teaching*
- Connection with your *Table or Group Leader or prayer partner*

### ***Role of the Table Leader:***

- Facilitate weekly conversations and prayer at the tables
- Connect with participants weekly
- Pray with participants as needed
- Answer any questions as needed

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# EXPECTATIONS

*As you consider stepping into Activate Your Life Journey, we want to invite you to pray and seek God's guidance on whether this is the right season for you to embark on this transformative experience. This class is designed to help you deepen your relationship with God, discover your true identity in Christ, and step into your unique calling. It is a journey that requires intentional commitment, a willingness to be vulnerable, and a readiness to engage with new ideas and perspectives. Here are some key expectations for those who choose to participate:*

## What to Expect?

### 1. **A New Teaching Experience:**

You will be introduced to new biblical concepts and teachings. We ask you to keep an open mind as you learn, allowing God to stretch you and reveal areas of growth. There will be teachings that may challenge your current thinking, but it is in these challenges that transformation begins.

### 2. **Vulnerability:**

You will be asked to be vulnerable, both with God and your group. Vulnerability is a key element for growth. By sharing your thoughts, struggles, and breakthroughs with others, you will experience the power of community and accountability.

### 3. **Commitment to the 12-Week Program:**

Activate is a 12-week program that requires your commitment. Each week builds on the previous one, and consistency is important to make the most of this experience. You will also be asked to dedicate **1-3 hours each week** to complete devotional exercises and personal reflection. These exercises will help you deepen your understanding and engagement with the material, making your journey more meaningful.

### 4. **Bold Next Steps:**

**Bold** doesn't necessarily mean big or outwardly visible actions. Bold is about overcoming fear and making the necessary changes to step out of your comfort zone to obey God's call. The class will encourage you to take bold steps that align with God's unique purpose for you. These steps might involve changes in your personal life, your relationships, or how you serve within the church and community. Boldness is about the **faith** to follow through on what God is revealing to you.

### 5. **Radical Adjustments in Life:**

To experience true transformation, we must be willing to make adjustments in how we live. Transformation doesn't happen when we keep doing the same things and expecting different results. Activate may require you to re-evaluate your time, your priorities, and your lifestyle to fully engage in what God has for you.

## What We Ask of You:

- **Pray** and seek God's direction to ensure you're fully ready to embark on this journey.
- **Commit** to attending all 12 sessions and engage fully with the weekly work and activities.
- Be open to **new teaching** and **vulnerability**, allowing God to shape and challenge you.
- Prepare to take **bold next steps** as God calls you into new areas of obedience and service.
- Be ready for **radical adjustments** in your schedule and priorities to engage fully with the process.
- Know that **what you get out of Activate** is directly related to what you put into it. The more you commit, the more transformative your journey will be.

## Conclusion:

Activate is not a passive program; it is an active journey that will challenge and stretch you. As a community, we are committed to supporting each other and encouraging each person to pursue God's calling on their life with boldness and faith. This journey is not just about personal growth—it's about how we can grow together as a body, helping one another fulfill our unique purposes. If you feel called to step into this journey, we believe God has something incredible in store for you. Take some time to prayerfully consider your commitment and join us for the adventure ahead.

**You get out what you put in!**

**Checkout our ONLINE workbook AND weekly devotionals:**



# MODULE #1

## Module 1: Activate Overview & Setting Expectations

In this first session, we will set clear goals for your personal transformation and introduce you to the powerful journey ahead. As we begin this process, we encourage you to **prepare your heart** to engage in spiritual growth, knowing that this journey will challenge you, stretch you, and invite you to embrace new perspectives that God may reveal to you.

### Expectations for Activate

As you step into Activate, we invite you to prayerfully consider the following expectations and what you are committing to for the next 12 weeks:

1. **A New Teaching Experience:**
  - You will be introduced to **new biblical concepts and teachings** that may challenge your current thinking. We ask you to come with an open mind, allowing God to stretch you and reveal areas of growth.
2. **Vulnerability:**
  - Activate is not just about learning—it's about **growth through vulnerability**. You will be asked to be open and share your struggles, breakthroughs, and questions. This vulnerability will allow the Holy Spirit to move powerfully in your life and in your group.
3. **Commitment to the 12-Week Program:**
  - **Consistency** is key. Activate is a **12-week** commitment. Each week builds on the last, and to fully experience transformation, you will need to engage each week.
  - You will be asked to dedicate **1-3 hours per week** to complete devotionals and personal reflection. This extra time will deepen your engagement with the material and make the journey more meaningful.
4. **Bold Next Steps:**
  - **Boldness** in Activate is about stepping out of your comfort zone and taking the necessary actions that God has called you to. This may involve changes in how you live, how you serve, or how you relate to others.
  - Boldness means **obedience**—overcoming fear and trusting God to lead you into new areas of growth.
5. **Radical Adjustments in Life:**
  - **Transformation requires change**. To experience lasting change, we must be willing to **re-evaluate our time, our priorities, and our lifestyle**.
  - Be open to making adjustments to how you spend your time, the people you prioritize, and the way you engage with the world around you.

### What We Ask of You:

- *Pray and seek God's guidance to ensure you're fully prepared to begin this transformative journey.*
- *Commit to attending all 12 sessions and engage with the weekly work and activities.*
- *Be open to new teachings and vulnerability as God challenges and shapes you.*
- *Prepare to take bold next steps that align with God's unique purpose for you.*
- *Be ready for radical adjustments in your schedule, priorities, and mindset to fully engage with the process.*
- *Know that the transformation you experience will be proportional to the commitment you make—what you put into Activate, you will get out!*

## **Conclusion:**

*Activate is more than just a class; it's a **journey of transformation** that will challenge you, stretch you, and help you grow in ways you never imagined. As a community, we are here to support one another in our pursuit of God's calling for our lives. If you feel called to step into this journey, we believe God has something incredible in store for you.*

***You get out what you put in!** We look forward to seeing what God will do through you during this 12-week journey. Let's begin this transformative process together.*

## **Module #1 Prayer and Journaling Session:**

As we begin this journey, we will engage in **prayer and journaling**. This will be a time of **personal reflection** where you ask God to guide you in your next steps.

- **Prayer Prompts:**
  - **Ask God to reveal** what areas of your life He wants to transform during this journey.
  - **Ask God to help you let go** of any fears or reservations that may be holding you back from fully engaging in this class.
  - **Invite the Holy Spirit** to speak clearly to you during this process.
  - **Ask God to show you** the bold steps you need to take to activate His calling in your life.

This is the time to **listen** and **journal** about the direction God reveals for you. Be open to His promptings as you prepare to step forward.

## **Module #2 Preview: Hearing God's Voice**

In Module #2, we will dive into the fundamental concept of hearing God's voice. As we explore the teachings from **John 10:27**, where Jesus says, *"My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me,"* we'll learn how to differentiate God's voice from our own thoughts and the enemy's lies. This module will equip you with the tools to discern God's voice through prayer, Scripture, and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

You will be introduced to practical exercises, including listening prayer and journaling, to begin hearing God's voice more clearly in your daily life. Through a time of group prayer and individual journaling, you'll gain direction from God as you embark on your 12-week journey. By the end of this module, you'll be able to confidently start recognizing God's voice and aligning your life with His will.

### **Key Focus:**

- *Learning to hear God's voice clearly*
- *Distinguishing between God's voice, your own thoughts, and the enemy's lies*
- *Practical listening prayer exercises to hear from God in your life*

This module will lay the foundation for the entire Activate journey, helping you deepen your connection with God and step into your unique calling with confidence.

# Module #1 Homework

## ACTIVATE – Week One: Listening Prayer & Identity Reset

**“God, what do You want me to know?  
God, what do You want me to do?”**

This 30-minute experience is not about analyzing yourself — it’s about **letting God speak into who you are**. You are not here to fix yourself. You are here to **listen**.

*“My sheep hear My voice...” – John 10:27 (NIV)*

### **Before You Begin (2 minutes)**

Find a quiet place. Put your phone on Do Not Disturb. Have your journal open. Take three slow breaths and say quietly: *“Jesus, I am here. I am listening.”*

### **STEP 1 — Settle & Invite (5 minutes)**

Sit comfortably. Close your eyes.

Pray slowly:

*“Father, I invite You into this moment. I surrender control, distractions, and expectations. Holy Spirit, show me what You want me to see. Speak to me about who I really am.”*

Don’t rush. Let your mind settle.

If thoughts come up, don’t fight them — just bring your attention back to Jesus.

### **STEP 2 — Ask for Direction (5 minutes)**

Now ask the two Activate questions:

**“God, what do You want me to know?”**

**“God, what do You want me to do?”**

Listen.

Write what you sense — even if it feels small.

This becomes your **personal Activate compass** for the next 12 weeks.

### **STEP 3 — Review & answer the question on Page 8**

### **Close in Gratitude**

Finish with:

*“Thank You, Jesus, for showing me who I am and where You are leading me.  
I trust You.”*

### **Why This Matters**

*Your entire Activate journey flows from this moment.*

*When identity is clear, purpose follows.*

*When truth is received, lies lose power.*

*This isn’t self-discovery.*

*This is **Jesus revealing you to yourself**.*

*And that changes everything.*



# ACTIVATE JOURNEY

*But now, O Jacob, listen to the Lord who created you.  
O Israel, the one who formed you says,  
"Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you.  
I have called you by name; you are mine."  
Isaiah 43:1*



*Born with God's  
imprint. Your TRUE  
IDENTITY in Christ!*



*Our life in a fallen world  
brings some "landmines"  
called TRAUMAS!*



*Because of those  
TRAUMAS, we build  
COPING MECHANISMS  
that encompass the LIES of  
the ENEMY!*

*As we live out the LIES,  
even as Christians, we live  
a downward trend of  
MEDIOCRITY!*



**List some of Life's Challenges (Traumas):**

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*This is YOUR decision  
point. Break off the LIES  
and choose to be  
**ACTIVATED** by God's  
Purpose for  
YOUR life!*

**List some LIES that you may believe about yourself because of Life's Challenges:**

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**List some COPING MECHANISMS because of Life's Challenges:**

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# MODULE #2

## Hearing God's Voice

### Overview:

In this module, we will explore one of the most foundational aspects of our relationship with God — **hearing His voice**. Jesus teaches in **John 10:27** that "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." This module will equip you with the tools and practices to better discern the voice of God from your own thoughts and the enemy's influence. You'll discover that God speaks in many ways, not always through words but through thoughts, impressions, feelings, and even images. The key to hearing God's voice is cultivating a posture of humility, faith, and trust, so that we can recognize His leading in our lives.

You will also be introduced to **listening prayer** and **journaling** as powerful tools to deepen your ability to hear God. During our prayer time, you will practice listening prayer and journaling, asking God for specific direction in your life as you begin the journey of transformation and purpose through **Activate**.

- **God's Voice vs. Strange Voices (The Enemy or Ourselves)**
  - Jesus teaches that His sheep recognize His voice (John 10:1-5, 14-16).
  - Understanding that we are called to recognize and distinguish His voice from our own thoughts and the enemy's lies.
  - The enemy can plant false thoughts in our minds, but with the Holy Spirit's help, we can learn to discern His voice.
  - Practicing the ability to differentiate between God's voice and the enemy's lies is essential for spiritual growth.
- **Why God Speaks and How to Listen**
  - God speaks to us not only through His Word but through images, thoughts, and impressions.
  - The importance of paying attention to what we feel, see, hear, and sense, trusting that God is revealing Himself to us in many ways.
  - Listening prayer helps us tune in to His voice and build a relationship of trust and obedience.
  - The posture of a child—humble and open—is essential for listening to God. (1 Samuel 3:9)
- **Hearing God's Voice in Daily Life**
  - God speaks through His Word, through others, and through His still small voice in our hearts.
  - Taking time to be quiet and listen in the busyness of life can help us tune in to God's leading.
  - The more we practice listening and responding, the easier it becomes to hear from God.
  - God's voice is not a one-time experience; it's a continual process of listening and growing in intimacy with Him.

## **Group Prayer & Journaling Time:**

### **Prayer Prompt (Leader's Guide):**

"Father, we come before You today with open hearts. We desire to hear Your voice more clearly in our lives. We invite You to speak to us in this moment. We ask that You help us distinguish between our own thoughts, the enemy's lies, and Your truth. Guide us, Lord, as we seek Your direction for our lives. Help us to trust that You are speaking and that You will lead us into freedom. We pray that we may live with open hearts, ready to hear Your voice in every area of our lives. In Jesus' name, Amen."

### **Journaling Time:**

- *What is God saying to you in this moment? Write down any thoughts, images, or impressions that come to mind.*
- *Reflect on any areas of your life where you feel God is calling you to trust Him more fully.*
- *Ask God for clarity in areas where you are uncertain or confused.*

## **Small Group Breakout Questions:**

1. **How have you experienced God speaking to you in the past, and how do you distinguish His voice from others?**
2. **What obstacles do you face in hearing God's voice, and how can you overcome them?**
3. **What steps can you take this week to practice listening prayer and hearing from God more clearly?**

## **Module #3: Breaking Free from Lies and Strongholds**

In **Module #3**, we will dive deep into the powerful process of **breaking free from the lies** and **strongholds** that have held us back from fully embracing God's truth and walking in spiritual freedom. Each of us has been shaped by certain beliefs—some true, some false—that have influenced how we see ourselves, others, and God. These **limiting beliefs** and **strongholds** often build walls around our hearts and minds, preventing us from living out the abundant life that Christ has promised.



# Module #2 Homework

## Hearing God's Voice

In the next module, we will explore one of the most foundational aspects of our relationship with God—**hearing His voice**. Jesus teaches in **John 10:27** that "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me." This module will equip you with the tools and practices to better discern the voice of God from your own thoughts and the enemy's influence. You'll discover that God speaks in many ways, not always through words but through thoughts, impressions, feelings, and even images. The key to hearing God's voice is cultivating a posture of humility, faith, and trust, so that we can recognize His leading in our lives.

You will also be introduced to **listening prayer** and **journaling** as powerful tools to deepen your ability to hear God. During our prayer time, you will practice listening prayer and journaling, asking God for specific direction in your life as you begin the journey of transformation and purpose through **Activate**.

### Module #2 Devotional (3-Day Devotional)

#### Day 1: The Call to Hear God's Voice

##### Scriptures:

- **John 10:1-5**
- **John 10:14-16**
- **John 10:26-28**

##### Reflection:

Jesus says that His sheep know His voice and follow Him. Are we listening to His voice? Hearing God is not always an automatic process, but it is something we can grow into with practice and a receptive heart. Often, the busyness of life can drown out God's voice, but by focusing on His Word and leaning into His presence, we can begin to recognize His voice more clearly.

##### Prayer Prompt:

Father, help me tune my ears to hear Your voice. Remove distractions and quiet my heart so that I may listen to what You are saying to me today.

##### Journaling Prompt:

- *How does it feel to know that you are one of God's "sheep"?*
- *What are some obstacles that might be preventing you from hearing God's voice?*
- *Ask God to help you recognize His voice more clearly as you move forward in your journey.*

## **Day 2: Distinguishing God's Voice from Other Voices**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Acts 2:17**
- **1 Corinthians 2:4-5**
- **Psalms 29:3-9**

### **Reflection:**

God's voice is powerful, and it carries the authority to transform our lives. Sometimes it's hard to distinguish between our thoughts, the enemy's voice, and God's voice. Pastor Mike Dean, in his ministry, uses discernment to ask God to reveal what needs to be confessed and placed under His authority. This is the process of training ourselves to hear God's voice clearly. As we practice, we'll begin to recognize His voice more often and more clearly.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Holy Spirit, I ask You to help me distinguish Your voice from all other voices. Guide me in knowing the difference between my own thoughts, the enemy's lies, and the truth You are speaking into my life.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- *Are you able to distinguish between God's voice, your own thoughts, and the enemy's voice? What differences do you notice?*
- *Reflect on a time when you clearly heard God's voice. What did He say?*
- *Ask God to reveal any lies you may be believing that need to be replaced with His truth.*

## **Day 3: Hearing God's Voice in Our Daily Lives**

### **Scriptures:**

- **1 Samuel 3:9**
- **John 10:27**
- **Psalms 34:18**

### **Reflection:**

Hearing God's voice is a skill we can develop over time. It requires child-like faith, humility, and trust that He desires to speak to us. When we approach Him with an open heart, He will show us things we might have missed otherwise. Remember, God speaks to all believers—whether through Scripture, impressions, or still small whispers. It's essential to make space for God in our lives through prayer, reflection, and journaling.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, I come to You with humility, asking You to help me hear Your voice in every part of my life. I trust that You are always speaking, and I want to listen. Show me how to follow You more closely.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- *Reflect on a moment in your life when God spoke to you clearly. How did you know it was His voice?*
- *What new ways might God be trying to speak to you right now?*
- *Ask God to show you how you can better listen and obey His voice in your daily life.*

# MODULE #3

## Breaking Free from Lies and Strongholds

### Overview:

In this module, you will be introduced to the powerful process of **identifying** and **breaking free** from the lies and strongholds that have held you back from walking in the fullness of God's truth. Each of us has beliefs—some true, some false—that shape the way we live. These beliefs can either propel us toward spiritual growth or prevent us from living in the freedom Christ has purchased for us.

You will learn how to recognize the lies that have been embedded in your heart and mind, and how to replace them with God's Word. This module will teach you to **renew your mind** through God's truth and begin living with **spiritual freedom** and **emotional healing**.

### Teaching Points:

- **What are Strongholds?**
  - Strongholds are mental and emotional patterns that block our growth and keep us from fully embracing God's truth.
  - Strongholds are often rooted in lies that we have believed for a long time.
- **How Lies Become Strongholds**
  - Lies that we believe about ourselves, others, or God create a foundation for strongholds to form.
  - The enemy uses lies to keep us in bondage, preventing us from fully experiencing freedom in Christ.
- **The Power of Truth**
  - The truth of God's Word is powerful enough to break down the strongholds in our lives.
  - Jesus says in **John 8:32**, "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."
- **Renewing the Mind**
  - To break free from strongholds, we must renew our minds by replacing lies with God's truth.
  - This is an ongoing process of transformation that requires our commitment to God's Word.

## **Group Prayer & Journaling Time:**

### **Prayer Prompt:**

“Father, I ask You to reveal the lies and strongholds in my life. Show me where I have believed things that are not aligned with Your truth. I surrender these lies to You and ask that You replace them with the truth of Your Word. Help me walk in the freedom You have given me, and teach me to renew my mind with Your truth every day. In Jesus' name, Amen.”

### **Journaling Time:**

- Write down any strongholds or lies that God reveals to you.
- Reflect on how you've been affected by these lies and how replacing them with truth can bring freedom.
- Ask God for specific steps you can take this week to break free from these strongholds and walk in freedom.

## **Small Group Breakout Questions:**

1. *What lies or strongholds have you identified in your life, and how have they impacted you?*
2. *How has God's truth helped you break free from any lies in the past?*
3. *What steps can you take this week to actively replace the lies in your life with God's truth?*

## **Module #4: Prayer and Journaling - Unpacking Lies & Hearing God's Truth**

**Module #4** will deepen your ability to hear God's voice, particularly in response to personal struggles and the lies you've believed. By dedicating time to prayer and journaling, you are opening the door to experience transformation as you invite God's truth to replace the lies in your heart. This module prepares you for the next steps in your journey, moving toward emotional freedom and spiritual clarity as you learn to walk more closely with God in His truth.

## Lies and Truth Exercise from Module #3

***As you go through this process of defining your lies, remember, when we feel negative emotions we usually have three responses:***

- ➔ Ignore or rationalize the emotion because it is uncomfortable.
- ➔ Compensate or cope with the emotion by addictive behavior, not just substance abuse but excessive shopping, sports, binge watching or even ministry.
- ➔ Apologize to God and promise to "do" better.

All are the scheme of the enemy (Ephesians 6:11) to rob you of your divine identity and keep you stuck in that child-like, emotional pain.

***Your present situation is not the source of your pain.*** It is an indicator of a belief that usually has origins in a childhood traumatic event where you interpreted a situation and formed a belief system around that interpretation. Experience results in reaction and forms a belief system. Belief is the foundation for personal identity perception. Go back and review what you wrote on the previous page. As you proceed, allow God to take you into deeper healing.

Seeking the healing of the interpretation of memories is following the broken path of negative emotions back to the origin of belief formation.

Read the following verses and journal.

### **Psalm 139:23-24**

*"Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting"*

### **Psalm 19:12-13**

*"But who can discern their own errors? Forgive my hidden faults. Keep your servant also from willful sins; may they not rule over me. Then I will be blameless, innocent of great transgression."*

- ➔ What blocks us from receiving from God?

- ➔ How does God want us to respond?





# Module #3 Homework

## Breaking Free from Lies and Strongholds

In **Module #3**, we will dive deep into the powerful process of **breaking free from the lies** and **strongholds** that have held us back from fully embracing God's truth and walking in spiritual freedom. Each of us has been shaped by certain beliefs—some true, some false—that have influenced how we see ourselves, others, and God. These **limiting beliefs** and **strongholds** often build walls around our hearts and minds, preventing us from living out the abundant life that Christ has promised.

### Day 1: Recognizing the Lies

#### Scriptures:

- **John 8:32**
- **2 Corinthians 10:4-5**
- **Ephesians 6:10-13**

#### Reflection:

Today's focus is on recognizing the lies and strongholds in our lives. These can be beliefs that we've adopted or that have been imposed upon us, often from past experiences, disappointments, or the lies of the enemy. The enemy seeks to keep us trapped in negative patterns of thinking and living. However, through the truth of God's Word, we can break free from these strongholds.

The battle for our minds and hearts begins with identifying the lies that have shaped us. The truth of God's Word is our weapon to tear down the lies and replace them with His promises.

#### Prayer Prompt:

Father, I come before You today asking You to reveal the lies and strongholds that I have believed about myself, others, or You. Show me the areas of my life where the enemy has influenced my thinking. Help me to see the truth of Your Word that will set me free. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### Journaling Prompt:

- *What lies have you believed about yourself, your identity, or God's promises in your life?*
- *How have these lies shaped your behavior, thoughts, or emotions?*
- *Ask God to reveal the truths that counter these lies and help you begin the process of breaking free.*

## Day 2: Confronting Strongholds with God's Truth

### Scriptures:

- Romans 12:2
- 2 Corinthians 5:17
- James 4:7-8

### Reflection:

Today, we will reflect on confronting the strongholds with God's truth. Strongholds are lies or patterns of thought that have taken root in our hearts and minds, but God's truth has the power to break down these walls. By choosing to submit to God and align our thoughts with His Word, we begin the process of transformation.

To truly experience freedom, we must renew our minds by replacing the lies we've believed with God's truth. Remember, freedom comes through obedience to God's Word and standing firm against the enemy's lies.

### Prayer Prompt:

Father, I submit my mind and heart to You today. I choose to resist the lies of the enemy and align my thoughts with Your truth. Help me to renew my mind and replace the old patterns with Your new way of thinking. Show me how to stand firm in Your Word and resist the devil's schemes. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Journaling Prompt:

- *What is a specific stronghold or lie you want to confront today?*
- *What does God's truth say about this area of your life?*
- *Ask God to help you believe and embrace His truth, replacing any lies you have been believing.*

## Day 3: Walking in Freedom

### Scriptures:

- John 8:36
- Galatians 5:1
- Philippians 4:6-7

### Reflection:

Today's focus is on walking in the freedom that Christ has already given us. When Jesus died for us on the cross, He broke the power of sin and strongholds over our lives. As believers, we have been set free, but it's up to us to **choose** to live in that freedom.

Freedom doesn't happen overnight, and it requires a **daily commitment** to renew our minds and walk in obedience to God's truth. Today, reflect on the peace and freedom that God's truth brings. You are no longer bound by the lies you've believed. You are free to live the life God has called you to.

### Prayer Prompt:

Father, thank You for setting me free. Thank You for breaking the power of the lies and strongholds in my life. I choose to walk in the freedom You have given me. Help me to stay rooted in Your truth and not be pulled back into old patterns of thinking or behavior. I pray for Your peace to fill my heart and mind. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### Journaling Prompt:

- *Reflect on how it feels to walk in the freedom that Christ has given you.*
- *Are there any lingering thoughts or feelings that still hold you back from fully embracing freedom?*
- *Ask God to continue to transform your mind and help you live out His truth every day.*

# MODULE #4

## Breaking Free from Lies and Strongholds

### Overview:

In Module #4, we will deepen your ability to hear God's voice, particularly in response to the personal struggles and lies you've believed. By dedicating focused time to prayer and journaling, you will invite God's truth to replace the lies that have taken root in your heart. This time of reflection will empower you to move forward in spiritual freedom, as you learn to hear God's direction clearly and walk in the truth He reveals.

This module will help you unpack the lies that have been hindering your progress and learn how to actively renew your mind with God's truth. This time of prayer and journaling is not just about identifying the lies, but also about creating space for God to speak clearly into your life. When you invite God into your struggles, He will provide clarity, peace, and the ability to move forward with confidence in His truth.

### Group Prayer & Journaling Time

#### Prayer Prompt:

"Father, I ask You to help me uncover the lies that have taken root in my heart. Help me recognize the areas where I have believed deceptions, and where my thoughts have been misaligned with Your truth. Reveal the strongholds that I have built around myself and show me the steps toward freedom. Replace these lies with Your truth and set me on a path of healing, restoration, and transformation. I trust You to guide me and help me to walk in the freedom that You have already won for me on the cross. In Jesus' name, Amen."

### Journaling Time:

- **Deep Reflection:**
  - What are the specific areas of your life where you've noticed strongholds or deep-seated lies holding you back? What is the emotional or spiritual impact of these lies in your life?
  - How have these lies shaped your identity, relationships, and choices? Write down how these beliefs have influenced your life story.
- **Inviting God's Truth:**
  - Invite God to replace these lies with His truth. Ask Him to speak clearly to your heart and mind, and listen to what He wants to show you about who you truly are in Christ.
  - Write down any thoughts, words, or images that come to mind as you seek God's truth to replace the lies.

- **Breaking Agreements:**
  - Is there any area in which you have unknowingly made agreements with lies (e.g., “I’m not good enough,” “I’ll never change,” “God doesn’t really love me”)? Spend time asking God to show you any agreements you’ve made with these lies.
  - Prayerfully break those agreements, renouncing them, and declare the opposite truths in alignment with God’s Word. Write down the declarations of truth you now stand on.
- **Healing of the Heart:**
  - Ask God to heal any wounds that have been caused by these lies. What emotions or painful memories arise when you think of the lies you’ve believed? How has it affected your heart’s posture toward God, yourself, and others?
  - Write out a prayer asking God to heal and restore your heart. Ask Him to give you the strength and courage to walk in the new truth He is revealing to you.

### **Small Group Breakout Questions:**

1. **Revelation of Lies:**
  - Have you identified any deep-seated lies that have shaped your behavior, thoughts, or emotions? How has God shown you these lies in your life?
2. **Truth Replaced:**
  - What specific truth from God’s Word is replacing the lies in your heart and mind? How does this new truth change the way you see yourself, your life circumstances, and your future?
3. **Breaking the Chains:**
  - As you reflect on the lies that have held you captive, what emotional or spiritual freedom are you beginning to experience by replacing those lies with God’s truth? What is one practical step you can take to continue walking in freedom?

### **Module #5: Forgiveness: Releasing the Past & Living Unoffendably**

In **Module 5**, we will explore the vital aspect of forgiveness and how it leads to freedom in our spiritual and emotional lives. Forgiveness is not optional for believers—it is essential for healing and spiritual growth. Jesus teaches us in Matthew 18:21-22 that forgiveness is not just a one-time act but a continual choice to release the wrongs done to us and to extend grace, just as God has done for us.

We will delve into the process of releasing bitterness and un-forgiveness and the emotional freedom that comes from choosing to forgive. This module is not just about forgiving others, but also learning to forgive ourselves and let go of past wounds. Through forgiveness, we not only release others but also free ourselves from the chains that bind us emotionally.

You will be equipped with biblical tools and teachings to let go of past hurts and offenses, as well as practical steps to begin living unoffendably, embracing God’s peace and grace.



# Module #4 Homework

## Breaking Free from Lies and Strongholds

**Module #4** will deepen your ability to hear God's voice, particularly in response to personal struggles and the lies you've believed. By dedicating time to prayer and journaling, you are opening the door to experience transformation as you invite God's truth to replace the lies in your heart. This module prepares you for the next steps in your journey, moving toward emotional freedom and spiritual clarity as you learn to walk more closely with God in His truth.

### **Day 1: Understanding the Source of Lies**

#### **Scriptures:**

- **John 10:10**
- **Ephesians 4:22-24**
- **1 Peter 5:8**

#### **Reflection:**

Today, we reflect on where lies and strongholds originate. The enemy's strategy is to steal, kill, and destroy (John 10:10), and one of the ways he does this is by distorting our thinking through lies. These lies take root in our hearts, often over time, as we accept thoughts and beliefs that are contrary to God's truth. However, as we begin to recognize these lies, we can make a choice to replace them with the life-giving truth of God's Word.

The first step in breaking free is understanding the source of these lies and acknowledging that they are not from God. We need to expose these lies to the light of God's truth and start to reject them, aligning our hearts with the truth that God speaks over us.

#### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, I come before You and ask that You reveal the lies that have taken root in my heart and mind. Show me where I have unknowingly agreed with the enemy's deception. Help me to recognize the areas in my life where I've allowed lies to shape my thinking. I choose to reject these lies and embrace Your truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### **Journaling Prompt:**

- *What lies or distorted thoughts have you been holding onto that are keeping you from walking in God's freedom?*
- *How do these lies influence your decisions, relationships, or emotions?*
- *Ask God to reveal the root of these lies and show you His truth to replace them.*

## **Day 2: Replacing Lies with God's Truth**

### **Scriptures:**

- **2 Corinthians 5:17**
- **Romans 8:1-2**
- **Isaiah 55:8-9**

### **Reflection:**

As we move forward in our journey toward freedom, it's essential to replace the lies we've believed with God's truth. This is not a passive process; it requires us to actively renew our minds (Romans 12:2). When we understand who we are in Christ—loved, accepted, and free from condemnation—we can begin to see how the lies we've believed no longer align with our true identity. God's truth is always greater than the lies the enemy tries to tell us. It's time to choose the truth that comes from knowing who God is and who He says we are.

God's Word will provide the clarity we need to break free from strongholds. We must not only know God's truth but actively apply it to our lives, choosing His ways over the patterns of the world and the lies of the enemy.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, thank You for Your truth that sets me free. I choose to replace the lies I've believed with Your life-giving Word. Help me to renew my mind with Your truth and to see myself as You see me. I choose to walk in the freedom You have already provided. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- *What is one lie you've believed that God's truth directly challenges?*
- *What scripture or truth from God can you stand on today to replace that lie?*
- *Ask God to help you believe His truth fully and to apply it to every area of your life.*

## **Day 3: Walking in the Freedom of Truth**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Galatians 5:1**
- **2 Corinthians 3:17**
- **John 8:36**

### **Reflection:**

Freedom is not just a one-time event but an ongoing process. Jesus has already broken the power of sin and strongholds, but it is up to us to choose to walk in that freedom daily. Today, take a moment to reflect on what it means to truly live in the freedom that Christ has given you. Freedom is not just about being released from something; it's also about stepping into the life God has planned for you—living fully as the person He created you to be.

To walk in this freedom, we need to continue renewing our minds, rejecting lies, and embracing the truth that comes from God. We need to press forward in faith, knowing that as we embrace God's truth, we are also embracing the freedom that leads to true transformation.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, thank You for the freedom I have in Christ. I choose today to walk in that freedom and not be bound by the lies of the enemy. Help me to keep my eyes on You and to live according to the truth of who You say I am. Fill me with Your peace, and guide me in living the life You've called me to. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- *How does it feel to know that you are free in Christ?*
- *In what areas of your life do you still need to walk more fully in God's freedom?*
- *Ask God to continue to reveal areas where you need healing and transformation and to help you step fully into the freedom He has provided.*

# MODULE #5

## Forgiveness: Releasing the Past & Living Unoffendably

### Overview:

In **Module 5**, we will explore the vital aspect of forgiveness and how it leads to freedom in our spiritual and emotional lives. Forgiveness is not optional for believers—it is essential for healing and spiritual growth. Jesus teaches us in Matthew 18:21-22 that forgiveness is not just a one-time act but a continual choice to release the wrongs done to us and to extend grace, just as God has done for us.

We will delve into the process of releasing bitterness and un-forgiveness and the emotional freedom that comes from choosing to forgive. This module is not just about forgiving others, but also learning to forgive ourselves and let go of past wounds. Through forgiveness, we not only release others but also free ourselves from the chains that bind us emotionally.

You will be equipped with biblical tools and teachings to let go of past hurts and offenses, as well as practical steps to begin living unoffendably, embracing God's peace and grace.

### Teaching Points:

#### 1. The Biblical Mandate for Forgiveness

- Jesus teaches that forgiveness is essential for maintaining our relationship with God (Matthew 6:14-15).
- Forgiveness is not a suggestion, but a command from Jesus, rooted in His own forgiveness of us (Ephesians 4:32).

#### 2. Forgiving Others

- Forgiveness is choosing to release others from the debt they owe us (Matthew 18:21-35).
- Jesus encourages us to forgive without limits, knowing that He has forgiven us more than we could ever forgive others.

#### 3. Forgiving Ourselves

- Often, we carry the burden of unforgiveness toward ourselves. Christ has forgiven us fully, and we must accept His forgiveness and let go of guilt and shame.
- Embrace God's grace to release past mistakes and live in the freedom He has won for you (Romans 8:1-2).

#### 4. The Freedom in Forgiveness

- Forgiveness doesn't excuse wrongs, but it frees us from the chains of resentment and bitterness.
- Unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die—when we forgive, we release the burden and walk in freedom.

#### 5. Living Unoffendably

- Living unoffendably means choosing to walk in peace and love, even when others wrong us.
- We can develop this heart by constantly choosing grace and forgiveness over offense (Proverbs 19:11).

## **Group Prayer & Journaling Time**

### **Prayer Prompt:**

"Father, I come before You today, surrendering all the hurt and pain that I have been carrying. I know that unforgiveness has been holding me back, and I choose today to forgive. Help me to release bitterness and extend grace, just as You have extended grace to me. Show me any areas in my life where I need to forgive others and even myself. Fill me with Your peace, and guide me in walking unoffendably. In Jesus' name, Amen."

### **Journaling Time:**

- Write down any names, situations, or experiences where you need to forgive.
- Ask God to reveal the deep roots of unforgiveness in your life and help you release them.
- Reflect on how choosing forgiveness can bring emotional healing and spiritual freedom.

## **Small Group Breakout Questions**

### **1. Experiencing Forgiveness:**

- What has been your experience with forgiving others, and how has it impacted your emotional and spiritual life?

### **2. Forgiving Yourself:**

- How can you apply the truth of God's forgiveness to your own life? Are there areas where you need to forgive yourself and let go of past guilt?

### **3. Living Unoffendably:**

- How can choosing to forgive more quickly and living unoffendably bring peace and freedom into your relationships and everyday life?

## **Module #6: Prayer and Journaling - Deepening Forgiveness**

In **Module #6**, we will dive deeper into the practice of forgiveness. While the initial decision to forgive may release us from some emotional burdens, forgiveness is an ongoing process that requires us to continually walk in grace, release bitterness, and find true emotional freedom from past relational wounds.

Through prayer and journaling, this module will help you unpack the deeper layers of forgiveness and explore the emotional healing that forgiveness can bring. We will focus on allowing God to illuminate areas in our hearts that still need healing and transformation, and we'll practice deeper levels of surrender to God's healing power.

Forgiveness doesn't mean the wrong was okay or that it no longer hurts, but it does mean choosing to release the person or situation to God, trusting that He will handle the justice, and allowing Him to heal our hearts. This time of reflection and prayer will enable you to move forward, not defined by your wounds, but free in Christ's love and peace.



# Module #5 Homework

## Forgiveness: Releasing the Past & Living Unoffendably

In **Module 5**, we will explore the vital aspect of forgiveness and how it leads to freedom in our spiritual and emotional lives. Forgiveness is not optional for believers—it is essential for healing and spiritual growth. Jesus teaches us in Matthew 18:21-22 that forgiveness is not just a one-time act but a continual choice to release the wrongs done to us and to extend grace, just as God has done for us.

We will delve into the process of releasing bitterness and un-forgiveness and the emotional freedom that comes from choosing to forgive. This module is not just about forgiving others, but also learning to forgive ourselves and let go of past wounds. Through forgiveness, we not only release others but also free ourselves from the chains that bind us emotionally.

You will be equipped with biblical tools and teachings to let go of past hurts and offenses, as well as practical steps to begin living unoffendably, embracing God's peace and grace.

### Day 1: Understanding the Importance of Forgiveness

#### Scriptures:

- **Matthew 6:14-15**
- **Colossians 3:13**
- **Ephesians 4:31-32**

#### Reflection:

Forgiveness is a choice that brings freedom and healing. When we forgive, we release others from the debt they owe us, but we also free ourselves from the emotional and spiritual bondage that unforgiveness brings. This day focuses on understanding the foundational importance of forgiveness in our spiritual lives and how it impacts our relationship with God, ourselves, and others.

#### Prayer Prompt:

Father, thank You for the forgiveness You have extended to me through Jesus. Help me to understand the weight and power of forgiveness in my life. Show me the areas where I need to forgive, and help me to release bitterness and resentment. Give me the strength to let go of past hurts and embrace Your peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### Journaling Prompt:

- What areas in your life do you feel you are holding onto unforgiveness?
- How has unforgiveness affected your relationship with others, and with God?
- Ask God to reveal any places in your heart where you need to forgive.

## **Day 2: The Healing Power of Forgiveness**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Matthew 18:21-35**
- **Luke 6:37**
- **Hebrews 12:14-15**

### **Reflection:**

Forgiveness is not just about letting go of the past, but it is also an act of healing. Jesus calls us to forgive not just seven times, but seventy-seven times (Matthew 18:22). This day focuses on the healing that forgiveness brings—not just to the person we forgive, but also to us. It allows us to experience freedom from the emotional baggage that we have carried for too long.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, I confess that I have held onto bitterness and hurt. Help me to understand that forgiveness is not about excusing what happened, but about freeing myself from its power over me. Show me the healing that forgiveness can bring, and help me to walk in Your freedom. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- In what ways have you felt emotionally burdened or bound by unforgiveness?
- Write about the emotional release you experience when you choose to forgive.
- Ask God to heal the wounds caused by the offenses in your life.

## **Day 3: Living Unoffendably**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Proverbs 19:11**
- **Romans 12:17-21**
- **1 Corinthians 13:5**

### **Reflection:**

To live unoffendably is to choose peace over offense and grace over retaliation. This day focuses on how we can develop a heart that is quick to forgive, not easily offended, and willing to live with others in harmony. As we embrace forgiveness, we begin to develop the strength to release offenses before they take root, choosing peace and patience in all our relationships.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, help me to live unoffendably. Teach me how to overlook offenses and respond with grace and love, just as You have shown to me. Remove any bitterness or resentment in my heart and fill me with Your peace. Help me to be quick to forgive and slow to take offense. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- Are there areas in your life where you tend to hold onto offense?
- How can choosing to forgive more quickly bring peace and unity in your relationships?
- Ask God to give you the grace to live unoffendably and to see people through His eyes.

# MODULE #6

## Prayer and Journaling - Deepening Forgiveness

### **Overview:**

In **Module #6**, we will dive deeper into the practice of forgiveness. While the initial decision to forgive may release us from some emotional burdens, forgiveness is an ongoing process that requires us to continually walk in grace, release bitterness, and find true emotional freedom from past relational wounds.

Through prayer and journaling, this module will help you unpack the deeper layers of forgiveness and explore the emotional healing that forgiveness can bring. We will focus on allowing God to illuminate areas in our hearts that still need healing and transformation, and we'll practice deeper levels of surrender to God's healing power.

Forgiveness doesn't mean the wrong was okay or that it no longer hurts, but it does mean choosing to release the person or situation to God, trusting that He will handle the justice, and allowing Him to heal our hearts. This time of reflection and prayer will enable you to move forward, not defined by your wounds, but free in Christ's love and peace.

### **Group Prayer & Journaling Time**

#### **Prayer Prompt:**

"Father, we come before You today with open hearts, desiring to experience the fullness of freedom that forgiveness brings. Help us to release any lingering bitterness, anger, or unforgiveness that may be holding us back from walking in the peace You've provided. Show us the deep areas of our hearts that still need healing, and help us to choose forgiveness and live unoffendably. We surrender our hurts to You and ask for Your healing power to work in our hearts. In Jesus' name, Amen."

#### **Journaling Time:**

- Reflect on how it feels to walk in the freedom of forgiveness.
- Are there areas where you are still holding on to bitterness or hurt?
- Write down any names or situations where you need to release forgiveness.
- Ask God for healing and restoration in these areas, and surrender the offense to Him.

## **Small Group Breakout Questions**

### **1. The Process of Forgiveness:**

- What has the process of forgiveness looked like for you in your life? How has God worked in your heart through this process?

### **2. Freedom in Forgiveness:**

- How does it feel to walk in the freedom that comes with forgiving others? Are there any areas where you still feel bound by bitterness or unforgiveness?

### **3. Living Unoffendably:**

- How can you choose to live unoffendably in your daily life? What steps can you take to let go of offenses quickly and extend grace to others?

## **Module #7: Healing from Shame, Fear, and Guilt**

In **Module #7**, we will address the deep emotional wounds of shame, fear, and guilt that can hold us back from fully experiencing the freedom and peace God offers. These emotions often stem from past mistakes, painful experiences, and distorted beliefs about ourselves, and they can affect how we live and relate to others.

However, God's Word tells us that He is a healer and that His grace is greater than all our shame, fear, and guilt. Through the power of the cross and the unconditional love of Christ, we can find healing and restoration from these emotional burdens. In this module, we will explore how God's grace covers our shame, His love casts out our fear, and His forgiveness removes our guilt. We will learn how to embrace God's truth in these areas and experience the freedom He desires for us.

Through prayer and journaling, we will invite God to heal our hearts and renew our minds, so that we can walk in the fullness of His grace and freedom.



# Module #6 Homework

## Forgiveness: Releasing the Past & Living Unoffendably

In **Module #6**, we will dive deeper into the practice of forgiveness. While the initial decision to forgive may release us from some emotional burdens, forgiveness is an ongoing process that requires us to continually walk in grace, release bitterness, and find true emotional freedom from past relational wounds.

Through prayer and journaling, this module will help you unpack the deeper layers of forgiveness and explore the emotional healing that forgiveness can bring. We will focus on allowing God to illuminate areas in our hearts that still need healing and transformation, and we'll practice deeper levels of surrender to God's healing power.

Forgiveness doesn't mean the wrong was okay or that it no longer hurts, but it does mean choosing to release the person or situation to God, trusting that He will handle the justice, and allowing Him to heal our hearts. This time of reflection and prayer will enable you to move forward, not defined by your wounds, but free in Christ's love and peace.

### Day 1: Choosing to Forgive Again

#### Scriptures:

- **Matthew 18:21-22**
- **Colossians 3:13**
- **Mark 11:25**

#### Reflection:

Forgiveness is a choice we make, even when the emotions of hurt, betrayal, and pain are still fresh. Just as Jesus teaches Peter that forgiveness is not limited to a set number of times but should be a continual choice, we are called to forgive even when it feels difficult. True forgiveness is not dependent on the other person's repentance or our emotions. It is about choosing obedience to God's command to forgive and trusting Him with the process of healing.

Today, think about the power of choosing forgiveness repeatedly, even in the face of deep hurt. Each time we forgive, we free ourselves from the grip of bitterness, and we align ourselves with God's will for peace and reconciliation.

#### Prayer Prompt:

Father, thank You for forgiving me time and time again. Help me to forgive others in the same way, without limit, and with a heart of grace. I choose to forgive again today, even when the hurt remains. Help me to release the anger and bitterness to You. I trust You to heal my heart and to bring restoration in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### Journaling Prompt:

- What is one area of your life where you need to forgive again?
- Are there emotions or thoughts that prevent you from releasing the hurt?
- Ask God to give you the grace to forgive as He forgives you.

## **Day 2: Releasing the Hurt and Choosing Healing**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Isaiah 61:1-3**
- **2 Corinthians 5:18-19**
- **Ephesians 4:31-32**

### **Reflection:**

Forgiveness doesn't erase the hurt, but it allows us to release the control that the offense has over us. Jesus promises to heal the brokenhearted and bind up their wounds (Isaiah 61:1-3). While forgiveness may be an ongoing choice, the emotional release that comes from letting go of the hurt can bring immediate freedom.

Today, as you reflect on forgiveness, consider the hurt you've carried for too long. Recognize that releasing it isn't about excusing the offense; it's about choosing to hand it over to God, trusting that He can bring healing where there was once pain. As you forgive, allow God to heal your broken heart and transform the pain into freedom.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, I give You the hurt and the pain I've been carrying. I choose to release the anger and resentment that have been holding me back from true healing. I trust that You are a healer and that You will restore me to wholeness. Thank You for the healing power of forgiveness, and help me walk in the freedom You've provided. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- What is the hurt that you are still holding on to?
- How has this hurt impacted your emotions, thoughts, and relationships?
- Ask God to begin the healing process as you release this hurt to Him.

## **Day 3: Living in the Freedom of Forgiveness**

### **Scriptures:**

- **John 8:36**
- **Romans 6:6-7**
- **Galatians 5:1**

### **Reflection:**

Forgiveness leads us to freedom. When we choose to forgive, we release the chains that keep us bound by past hurt, and we step into the freedom Christ has already secured for us. Jesus said, "If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed" (John 8:36). Freedom is a continual choice to forgive, release, and walk in the peace of God, trusting that He will provide justice and healing.

Living in the freedom of forgiveness means that we no longer allow the offense to define us. We are no longer prisoners to the pain or resentment, but we are free to live as God intended, with joy, peace, and a heart that reflects His grace. Today, ask God to help you walk fully in the freedom that comes from releasing bitterness and living in His peace.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, thank You for the freedom You have already provided me through forgiveness. I no longer want to live as a prisoner to bitterness and resentment. Help me walk in the freedom that You have secured for me through Christ. Give me the strength to continue living in Your grace and peace, and to forgive quickly as You have forgiven me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- How does it feel to know that you are free in Christ and no longer bound by unforgiveness?
- In what areas of your life do you need to continue to walk in the freedom of forgiveness?
- Ask God to help you live out the freedom of forgiveness in your daily life.

# MODULE #7

## Healing from Shame, Fear, and Guilt

### Overview:

**Module #7** focuses on finding healing from shame, fear, and guilt through God's grace and unconditional love. These emotions can hold us back from living freely in God's truth. By understanding the root causes of these feelings and embracing God's forgiveness, we can experience transformation and emotional freedom.

### Teaching Points:

#### 1. Understanding Shame, Fear, and Guilt

- **Shame:** A feeling of unworthiness or defectiveness that makes us hide from God and others. *Romans 8:1* reminds us there is no condemnation for those in Christ.
- **Fear:** A barrier that keeps us from trusting God's promises and stepping into His plans for us. *1 John 4:18* says perfect love casts out fear.
- **Guilt:** A result of moral wrongdoing, often leading to self-condemnation. *Psalm 103:12* assures us that God forgives and removes our sins.

#### 2. Impact on Spiritual Life

- **Shame:** Prevents intimacy with God and others. We tend to hide, just like Adam and Eve did after sinning in *Genesis 3:8*.
- **Fear:** Paralyzes us from moving forward and trusting in God. *2 Timothy 1:7* reminds us that God gives us a spirit of power, not fear.
- **Guilt:** Causes us to focus on past mistakes, rather than the forgiveness available in Christ. *Romans 8:33-34* assures us that no one can bring a charge against us in Christ.

#### 3. Embracing God's Grace and Forgiveness

- **Grace:** God's unmerited favor is the foundation of overcoming shame, fear, and guilt. *Ephesians 2:8-9* reminds us that salvation is by grace, not works.
- **Forgiveness:** We must receive God's forgiveness and forgive ourselves to experience emotional freedom. *Matthew 6:14-15* teaches us that God's forgiveness is tied to our willingness to forgive others.

#### 4. Living in God's Love and Freedom from Fear

- **Living in God's Love:** God's love helps us overcome fear. When we embrace God's love, fear no longer has power. *Romans 8:38-39* assures us that nothing can separate us from His love.
- **Trusting in God's Protection:** We need to trust God's protection to let go of fear. *Psalm 23:4* reminds us that we need not fear because God is with us.

## 5. Walking in the Freedom of Forgiveness

- **Forgiving Ourselves:** It's often difficult to forgive ourselves. God's Word teaches that He has already forgiven us. *1 John 1:9* assures us that if we confess, God will forgive and cleanse us.
- **Living Out God's Forgiveness:** We need to live daily in the freedom God has given us, recognizing that in Christ, we are new creations. *2 Corinthians 5:17* reminds us that we are made new in Christ.

## 6. Practical Steps to Overcome Shame, Fear, and Guilt

- **Renew Your Mind:** Overcome negative emotions by renewing your mind with God's truth. *Romans 12:2* calls us to be transformed by the renewing of our minds.
- **Letting Go of the Past:** Letting go of past hurts is essential for healing. *Philippians 3:13-14* encourages us to press forward, forgetting what is behind.

## Prayer & Journaling Time

Through prayer and journaling, we will invite God to heal our hearts and renew our minds, so that we can walk in the fullness of His grace and freedom.

### Group Prayer Prompt:

"Father, we come before You today as a group, asking for Your healing touch in our hearts. We surrender the shame, fear, and guilt that have held us captive, and we invite You to replace these burdens with Your peace, love, and forgiveness. Help us to walk in the freedom that Christ has already provided for us, and teach us to live fully in Your grace. May Your love cast out all fear, and may Your forgiveness set us free from all guilt. In Jesus' name, Amen."

### Journaling Time:

- Reflect on the shame, fear, or guilt you've been carrying.
- How have these emotions impacted your relationship with God, yourself, and others?
- Ask God to show you the specific areas where you need healing, and write down any promises from Scripture that stand out to you.
- Spend time listening to God and journaling what He speaks to your heart regarding His healing power.

## Small Group Breakout Questions:

1. **Shame and Healing:**
  - How has shame affected your life in the past? How does understanding God's grace and forgiveness help you release shame?
2. **Facing Fear with God's Love:**
  - What is one fear that you've struggled with? How can you replace that fear with the truth of God's love for you?
3. **Embracing God's Forgiveness:**
  - How does the truth of God's forgiveness impact your life? In what areas do you still need to embrace His forgiveness fully?



# Module #7 Homework

## Healing from Shame, Fear, and Guilt

In **Module #7**, we will address the deep emotional wounds of shame, fear, and guilt that can hold us back from fully experiencing the freedom and peace God offers. These emotions often stem from past mistakes, painful experiences, and distorted beliefs about ourselves, and they can affect how we live and relate to others.

However, God's Word tells us that He is a healer and that His grace is greater than all our shame, fear, and guilt. Through the power of the cross and the unconditional love of Christ, we can find healing and restoration from these emotional burdens. In this module, we will explore how God's grace covers our shame, His love casts out our fear, and His forgiveness removes our guilt. We will learn how to embrace God's truth in these areas and experience the freedom He desires for us.

Through prayer and journaling, we will invite God to heal our hearts and renew our minds, so that we can walk in the fullness of His grace and freedom.

### Day 1: Understanding the Weight of Shame

#### Scriptures:

- **Romans 8:1**
- **Psalms 34:5**
- **Isaiah 54:4**

#### Reflection:

Shame is a heavy burden. It often causes us to feel unworthy, disconnected from others, and disconnected from God. However, the truth of God's Word says that there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1). When we embrace God's love and forgiveness, we can let go of shame and begin to walk in the freedom He has for us. God sees us through the lens of grace, and His love is not dependent on our past mistakes.

Today, consider the weight of shame that you may be carrying. What lies have you believed about your identity because of shame? Remember that God's love and grace are sufficient to cover your shame, and He wants to restore your sense of worth in Him.

#### Prayer Prompt:

Father, I bring my shame before You today. I ask You to reveal the areas in my life where I have been holding onto shame. Help me to see myself through Your eyes—loved, forgiven, and redeemed. Thank You for the truth that there is no condemnation in You. I choose to release my shame to You and walk in the freedom of Your grace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### Journaling Prompt:

- Reflect on any areas of your life where you still feel shame.
- How has shame affected the way you see yourself and relate to others?
- Ask God to help you release any shame you are still carrying and embrace His grace.

## **Day 2: Confronting Fear with God's Love**

### **Scriptures:**

- **1 John 4:18**
- **Isaiah 41:10**
- **Psalm 27:1**

### **Reflection:**

Fear can paralyze us, keeping us from stepping into the fullness of God's plans for our lives. The Bible tells us that perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:18). When we understand and experience God's love, we realize that there is nothing to fear because He is with us. Fear thrives on the belief that we are alone or unsupported, but God's love assures us that He is always with us, and He will strengthen and help us in every situation (Isaiah 41:10).

Today, think about the fears that may be holding you back—whether they are fears about the future, fear of rejection, or fear of failure. Allow God's perfect love to cast out these fears and fill you with His peace.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, I invite Your perfect love to cast out any fear in my life. I choose to trust in Your promise that You are with me and will strengthen and help me. Show me the areas where I am still allowing fear to control me, and help me to embrace the courage that comes from knowing You are always by my side. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- What fears are you holding onto that are preventing you from moving forward?
- How does God's perfect love give you the courage to face these fears?
- Ask God to replace your fear with His peace and trust in His ability to lead you.

## **Day 3: Freedom from Guilt through God's Forgiveness**

### **Scriptures:**

- **1 John 1:9**
- **Psalm 103:12**
- **Isaiah 43:25**

### **Reflection:**

Guilt often comes from the weight of past mistakes or sin, causing us to feel unworthy of God's love and forgiveness. However, God promises that when we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us (1 John 1:9). God's forgiveness is not based on our performance or worthiness; it is a gift of grace. Through Jesus' sacrifice on the cross, our sins are forgiven, and we are made new. As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us (Psalm 103:12).

Today, reflect on the areas where you may still feel guilt or condemnation. Know that God has already forgiven you, and He desires for you to experience the freedom that comes from His forgiveness. You are no longer defined by your mistakes; you are defined by His love and grace.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, thank You for the forgiveness You offer through Christ. I confess the areas where I've carried guilt and shame, and I ask You to remind me of Your grace. Help me to fully embrace Your forgiveness and walk in the freedom You've given me. I no longer want to be defined by my mistakes, but by Your love and mercy. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- What areas of guilt are you still carrying with you?
- How has God's forgiveness already set you free?
- Ask God to help you fully embrace His forgiveness and walk in the freedom He has provided.

# MODULE #8

## Truth-Telling & CRCR Process Overview

### Overview:

In this module, we will explore the CRCR process (**Confess, Repent, Cleanse, Restore**), a biblical framework designed to help us break free from sin and heal relationships with God and others. Truth-telling is a vital part of our spiritual growth, as it opens the door for healing and restoration. The CRCR process gives us the tools to cleanse ourselves from sin, repent, confess to God and others, and restore relationships with His healing power.

### Teaching Points:

#### 1. The Importance of Truth-Telling:

Truth-telling allows us to break free from the chains of guilt, shame, and fear, which keep us from walking in God's fullness. Speaking truth aligns our hearts with God's will and opens doors for healing.

#### 2. The CRCR Process:

- **Confess:** Acknowledging our wrongdoings before God and others for healing and restoration.
- **Repent:** Turning away from sin and choosing to follow God's direction.
- **Cleanse:** Purifying our hearts from sin and shame through God's forgiveness.
- **Restore:** Rebuilding relationships through reconciliation and God's grace.

#### 3. Walking in Freedom:

By using the CRCR process, we can experience true freedom, not only from our past sins but also from the bitterness and relational wounds that have kept us trapped.

## **Group Prayer & Journaling Time**

### **Group Prayer Prompt:**

"Father, we come before You today, acknowledging the areas in our hearts that need cleansing. We desire to walk in the fullness of Your forgiveness. We ask You to show us where we need to repent and turn away from sin. Give us the courage to confess our sins and bring the truth into the light. We ask for healing and restoration in our lives and relationships. In Jesus' name, Amen."

### **Journaling Time:**

- *Reflect on any areas of sin, unforgiveness, or relational brokenness you need to bring to God today.*
- *Are there any relationships that need confession or restoration?*
- *Write down the truths you've learned about God's forgiveness and restoration and how you can walk in these truths in your life.*

## **Small Group Questions**

1. *What part of the CRCR process do you find most difficult, and why?*
2. *How have you seen the power of confession bring healing to your heart and relationships?*
3. *How can we support one another in the process of restoration and healing, and what role does truth-telling play in that support?*

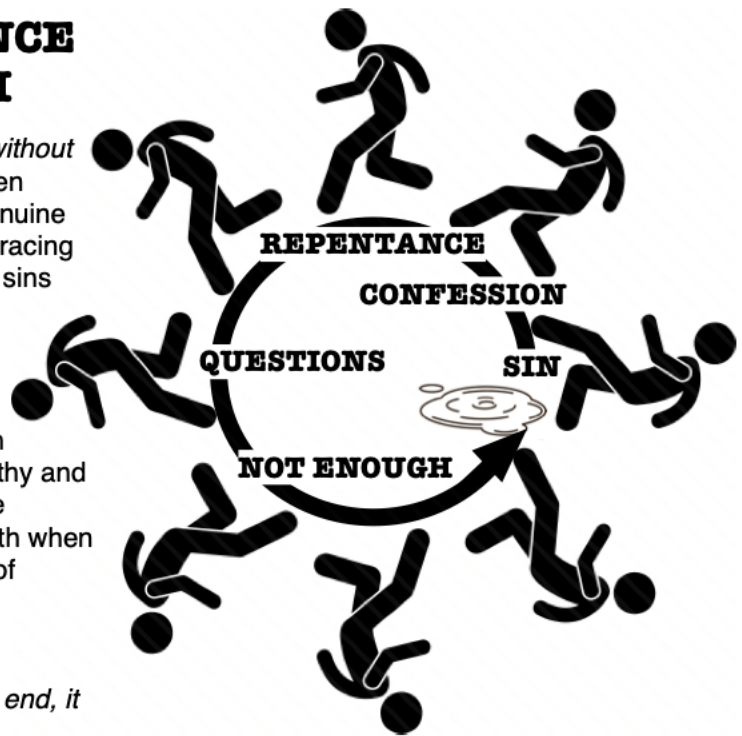
## **Module #9: Understanding Your Identity & Embracing Your Purpose**

**Module #9** will guide you through a deeper understanding of your identity in Christ, and how to embrace and live out God's unique purpose and calling for your life. You will explore how your identity is shaped by God's truth, not by past experiences or the world's standards. As you grow in understanding who you are in Christ, you will begin to walk in the confidence of your purpose and calling.

This module will help you uncover the unique gifts, talents, and calling that God has placed within you. When you embrace your identity in Christ, you will gain the clarity and confidence to live out your purpose in every area of your life. You will no longer be bound by the lies of inadequacy or fear but empowered to boldly step into the calling God has for you.

## CONFESSION/REPENTANCE IN YOUR OWN STRENGTH

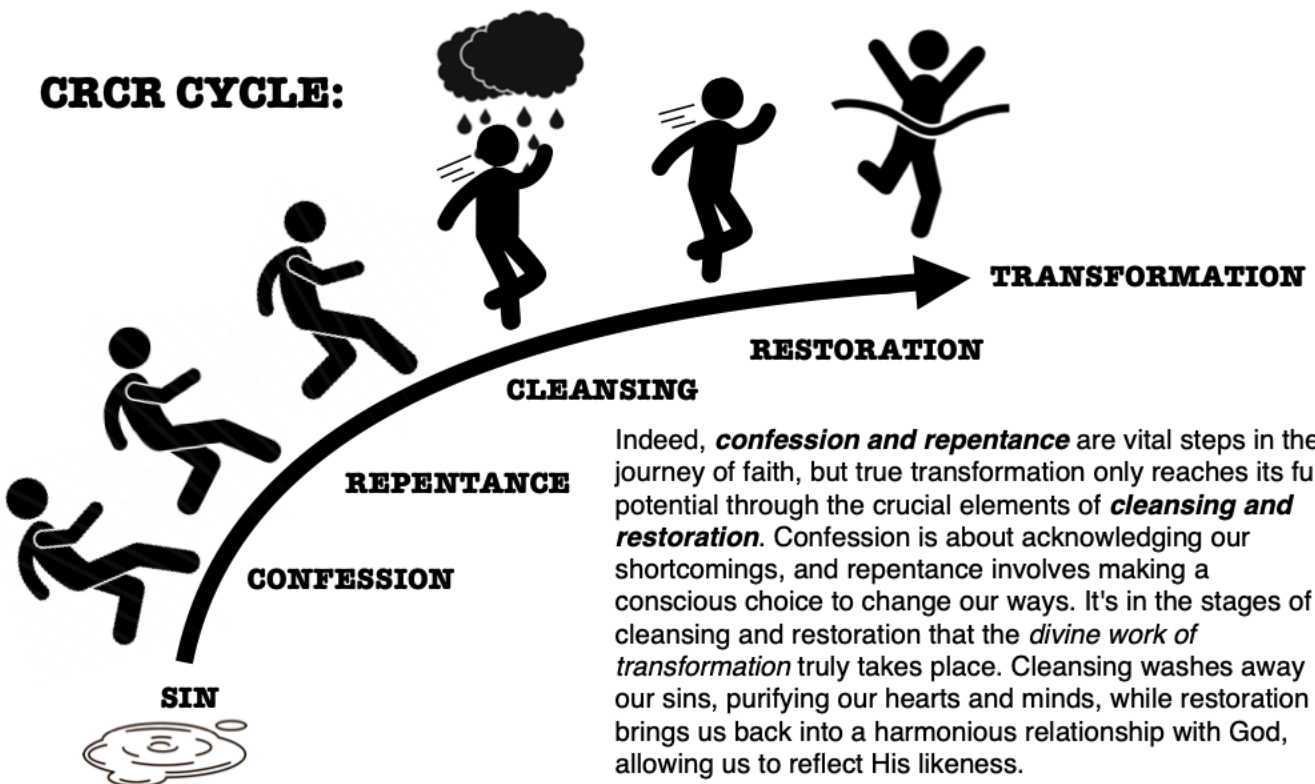
The Christian confession and repentance cycle, *without experiencing God's cleansing and restoration*, often becomes a **relentless struggle**. It begins with genuine remorse and confession of sins. Rather than embracing God's redemption, individuals try to conquer their sins through their own strength, believing they can overcome temptations. In this process, doubt creeps in, fueled by Satan's questions that challenge the power of God's healing and forgiveness. This doubt erodes their confidence in God's redemptive grace, making them feel unworthy and insufficient to break free from sin's grip. This cycle demonstrates the inherent frailty of human strength when confronting sin, as it inevitably leads to a pattern of spiritual decline.



### Proverbs 14:12 (NIV)

*There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end, it leads to death.*

## CRCR CYCLE:



Indeed, **confession and repentance** are vital steps in the journey of faith, but true transformation only reaches its full potential through the crucial elements of **cleansing and restoration**. Confession is about acknowledging our shortcomings, and repentance involves making a conscious choice to change our ways. It's in the stages of cleansing and restoration that the *divine work of transformation* truly takes place. Cleansing washes away our sins, purifying our hearts and minds, while restoration brings us back into a harmonious relationship with God, allowing us to reflect His likeness.

### 2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*

This transformation, enabled by God's grace through cleansing and restoration, is what empowers us to live out our faith and become more Christ-like in every aspect of our lives

# **CRCR STEPS**

## **A CONSTANT PATH TO TRANSFORMATION**

### **Step 1: Confession**

Begin by taking time in quiet reflection and prayer. Bring to mind any lies you've uncovered through Activate, whether they're related to your self-image, past mistakes, or any area where you've felt deceived or held captive. Confession is about honesty and vulnerability before God. Write these down if it helps.

### **Step 2: Repentance**

With each lie identified, move to the stage of repentance. This isn't just about feeling sorry but involves a sincere change of heart and mind. Ask God for deep repentance, turning away from the lies and schemes and turning toward God's truth. Let the Holy Spirit guide you in this transformation process.

### **Step 3: Cleansing**

As you repent, understand that God's forgiveness is immediate. Allow His cleansing power to wash away the guilt, shame, and burden associated with the lies you've confessed. Picture this purification process in your mind, and let it renew your spirit, as you actually picture yourself handing your sins to Him.

### **Step 4: Restoration**

*Here you have two options based on personal preference:*

**Option 1:** Throughout the process, ask God to reveal the restoration or truth He is using to replace each lie or scheme as you address them one by one. Embrace these truths as they come, allowing them to reshape your thinking and beliefs.

**Option 2:** Alternatively, you can complete the CRCR process for all the lies and schemes before seeking the final "R" - restoration. This can be a powerful culmination of the transformation journey, receiving all the truths at once to fully renew your mind.

*Remember, the specific words used are less important than your heart attitude during this process. It's about surrendering to God's transformative work in your life. This CRCR process is your part in breaking the enemy's hold and living in the truth that God intends for you. It's a path to personal transformation through the power of confession, repentance, cleansing, and restoration.*



# Module #8 Homework

## Truth-Telling & CRCR Process

**Module #8** focuses on the powerful practice of truth-telling and the CRCR process (**Confess, Repent, Cleanse, Restore**) to heal and restore relationships with God and others. We will learn how to open our hearts and speak the truth with vulnerability, allowing God's Word and His Spirit to cleanse us. This process will bring emotional healing, spiritual freedom, and restoration of trust in relationships.

The CRCR process provides a biblical framework for dealing with sin and relational wounds. It guides us to cleanse ourselves of the guilt and shame, repent from the areas where we've fallen short, confess to God and others, and restore our relationships with His healing power.

### **Day 1: Cleanse - Purifying the Heart**

#### **Scriptures:**

- **Psalm 51:10**
- **1 John 1:9**
- **James 4:8**

#### **Reflection:**

Cleansing begins with purifying our hearts before God. Sin, unforgiveness, and unconfessed actions leave us with a defiled heart, preventing us from experiencing true peace. The cleansing process allows God's truth to bring healing by clearing the guilt and shame that have accumulated in our lives. God is always ready to forgive when we come to Him with a sincere heart.

#### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, I come before You asking for the cleansing of my heart. I acknowledge the areas where I have allowed sin to defile me, and I ask for Your forgiveness. Wash me clean and renew my spirit today. Help me to let go of any guilt and shame that I have been carrying. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### **Journaling Prompt:**

- What areas of your heart feel stained or burdened by guilt?
- In what areas do you need God's cleansing touch?
- Reflect on any sin or hurt that you need to bring to God for forgiveness and cleansing.

## **Day 2: Repent – Turning Away from Sin**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Acts 3:19**
- **2 Corinthians 7:10**
- **Matthew 4:17**

### **Reflection:**

Repentance is not just feeling sorry for our wrongs; it is a turning away from them and a conscious decision to change direction. It's recognizing the harm sin causes and making the choice to align our hearts and actions with God's will. Repentance leads to freedom and brings the opportunity for restoration with God and others.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Lord, I come to You with a heart that longs to be in right standing with You. Help me to truly repent and turn away from the sin in my life. Give me the strength to change my direction and align myself with Your will. I want to walk in Your freedom and leave behind the things that separate me from You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- Is there an area of your life where you have not fully repented and turned away from sin?
- What does godly sorrow look like in your life, and how does it lead to true repentance?
- Ask God for strength and courage to turn from any sin or temptation you may be facing.

## **Day 3: Confess – Bringing Truth into the Light**

### **Scriptures:**

- **1 John 1:8-9**
- **James 5:16**
- **Proverbs 28:13**

### **Reflection:**

Confession is an essential part of healing and restoration. When we confess our sins, we align our hearts with God's truth and invite His healing power into our lives. Confession also brings freedom in relationships, as it breaks the chains of secrecy and restores trust. We are called not only to confess to God but also to others when needed to heal relational wounds.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Lord, I confess my sins before You and ask for Your forgiveness. I lay down any secrets or hidden sin that I have been holding onto. I pray that You would help me bring the truth into the light, where it can no longer control or harm me. Give me the courage to confess to others when necessary and restore broken relationships. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- What sins or hidden things do you feel God is calling you to confess today?
- Are there relationships that need healing through confession and truth-telling?
- Write down your thoughts and ask God for the wisdom and courage to confess and heal.

# MODULE #9

## Understanding Your Identity & Letting Go of the Past

### Overview:

In Module #9, we focus on three life-changing truths:

who you are in Christ, why you are here, and how your past no longer gets to define you.

Many believers want to move forward with God, but they keep dragging yesterday into today.

Old failures, wounds, labels, and regrets quietly shape their confidence, decisions, and sense of worth. This module teaches you how to anchor your identity in Christ, discover your God-given purpose, and gain mastery over your past—so your story becomes a tool for growth, not a trap that keeps you stuck.

God does not erase your history. He redeems it.

And when your past is placed under Christ's authority, it becomes part of your calling instead of an obstacle to it.

### Teaching Points:

#### 1. Your Identity in Christ

Who you are in Christ is the foundation of everything else. Your identity is not based on your failures, your trauma, your achievements, or what people have said about you. It is based on who Jesus says you are. When you are in Christ, you are made new. The old story no longer has authority over your future.

#### Key Scriptures:

2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 2:20, Ephesians 2:10

#### 2. God's Unique Purpose for You

God's purpose is not just about what you do — it is about who He is shaping you to become.

Your gifts, experiences, and even your wounds all become part of how God expresses His love through you. Your past does not disqualify you. In God's hands, it often becomes the very thing that qualifies you to minister to others.

#### Key Scriptures:

Jeremiah 29:11, Romans 8:28, Ephesians 4:1

#### 3. Mastery Over Your Past

Holding on to the past too long will cost you the future. The past has only the power you give it in the present. God calls us to learn from yesterday without living in it. Scripture teaches us to remember God's faithfulness, not rehearse our failures. When you bring your story under the authority of Christ, it becomes redeemed "game film" — something that trains you, not something that chains you. Jesus doesn't erase your past. He redeems it and reassigns it for His glory.

#### Key Scriptures:

Isaiah 43:18–19, Philippians 3:13–14, Romans 8:1

#### 4. Living Boldly in Your Purpose

When you know who you are and you stop being ruled by your past, you can walk forward with courage. Confidence does not come from having no story — it comes from trusting God with the one you have. You were never meant to hide your light behind shame or fear. You were created to live free, visible, and purposeful in Christ.

#### Key Scriptures:

Matthew 5:14–16, Philippians 4:13, Hebrews 10:23

## **Group Prayer & Journaling Time:**

### **Group Prayer Prompt:**

"Father, thank You for creating me with a unique identity and a purpose in Your Kingdom. Help me to see myself as You see me and to walk boldly in the calling You have placed on my life. I surrender my past mistakes and fears, and I embrace the truth of who You say I am. Give me the courage to live out my purpose and to shine Your light in the world around me. In Jesus' name, Amen."

### **Journaling Time:**

- *What part of your past still tries to define how you see yourself?*
- *What lie about your identity do you need to replace with God's truth?*
- *Where do you sense God inviting you to move forward with more courage?*
- *Ask God to show you how He has already been redeeming your story.*

## **Small Group Questions:**

1. **Identity**  
*What truth about who you are in Christ has been the most freeing for you?*
2. **Mastery Over the Past**  
*How has your past shaped your confidence, choices, or faith? Where do you sense God inviting you to release its power?*
3. **Purpose**  
*What bold next step do you feel God nudging you toward as you move forward in this season?*

## **Module #10: Asking New Questions - Developing Spiritual Discernment**

In **Module #10**, we will explore the importance of asking new questions and developing a mindset of spiritual growth and discernment. Spiritual discernment allows us to move beyond surface-level understanding and engage more deeply with God. By learning to ask the right questions, we can begin to explore the depths of God's will for our lives and become more sensitive to His guidance.

This module is about cultivating a heart and mind that is always seeking, questioning, and listening for God's voice in every situation. When we develop spiritual discernment, we are better able to navigate life's challenges with clarity, understanding, and faith. This is an essential part of our spiritual journey, as it helps us deepen our relationship with God and align more closely with His plans.

Through this module, you will learn to ask new questions that help you grow in your faith and discern God's will for your life. You'll also practice applying spiritual discernment in your day-to-day decisions and challenges.



# Module #9 Homework

## Understanding Your Identity & Letting Go of the Past

**Module #9** will guide you through a deeper understanding of your identity in Christ, and how to embrace and live out God's unique purpose and calling for your life. You will explore how your identity is shaped by God's truth, not by past experiences or the world's standards. As you grow in understanding who you are in Christ, you will begin to walk in the confidence of your purpose and calling.

This module will help you uncover the unique gifts, talents, and calling that God has placed within you. When you embrace your identity in Christ, you will gain the clarity and confidence to live out your purpose in every area of your life. You will no longer be bound by the lies of inadequacy or fear but empowered to boldly step into the calling God has for you.

### **Day 1: Embracing Your True Identity in Christ**

#### **Scriptures:**

- **2 Corinthians 5:17**
- **Galatians 2:20**
- **Ephesians 2:10**

#### **Reflection:**

Today's focus is on embracing your new identity in Christ. The old you has passed away, and now you are a new creation with a fresh start. Understanding that your identity is not shaped by your past mistakes or the opinions of others but by God's perfect love and grace is vital for your growth. When you recognize that you are God's handiwork, created for a specific purpose, it gives you the foundation to confidently step into your calling.

#### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, thank You for creating me in Your image and giving me a new identity in Christ. I choose to embrace who You say I am and reject the lies that have held me back. Help me to see myself through Your eyes and to live confidently in the purpose You've called me to. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### **Journaling Prompt:**

- What are some lies you've believed about your identity in the past?
- How does it feel to know that you are a new creation in Christ?
- Write down one truth about your identity in Christ that you need to embrace today.

## **Day 2: Understanding Your Purpose in Christ**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Jeremiah 29:11**
- **Ephesians 4:1**
- **Romans 8:28**

### **Reflection:**

Today, we focus on understanding the unique purpose God has for your life. God has an individual plan for you, designed specifically with your gifts, talents, and life experiences in mind. It's easy to doubt or feel unsure of your purpose, but today's reflection reminds us that God is purposeful in all things. As you begin to understand and align with His calling for your life, you will find greater fulfillment and confidence in your role in His Kingdom.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Lord, thank You for the unique purpose You've given me. Help me to embrace the calling You've placed on my life with confidence. Show me how to live a life worthy of that calling, and help me to trust that You are using every part of my story for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- What do you feel God is calling you to do or be in this season of life?
- Reflect on a moment when you felt most connected to God's purpose for you.
- Write down one action step you can take today to align with your purpose.

## **Day 3: Living Boldly in Your Purpose**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Matthew 5:14-16**
- **Philippians 4:13**
- **Hebrews 10:23**

### **Reflection:**

Today's devotional is about stepping into the fullness of your purpose and living it out boldly. It's easy to feel hesitant or fearful about fully embracing your calling, but God has already equipped you with everything you need. Your purpose is not just about what you do; it's about being who God created you to be and shining His light in the world. When you trust in God's strength and remain faithful to His promises, you will be empowered to live boldly in your calling.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, I ask for the courage to step out boldly in the purpose You've given me. Help me to trust in Your strength and to live each day fully aware of Your presence in my life. I want to be a light to the world around me and to live according to Your plan for my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- What is one area of your life where you need more boldness to step into God's calling?
- How does it feel to know that God has equipped you with everything you need to fulfill your purpose?
- Write down any fears or obstacles that are holding you back, and ask God to give you the courage to overcome them.

# MODULE #10

## Asking New Questions - Developing Spiritual Discernment

### **Overview:**

In **Module #10**, we will focus on fostering a mindset of growth and developing spiritual discernment. Spiritual discernment is the ability to recognize God's voice in our lives and distinguish between His truth and the distractions or lies around us. Through asking new questions, we open ourselves to deeper understanding and clarity from God.

This module will teach you how to ask questions that will allow you to grow spiritually and engage more deeply with God's will. You will also learn how to discern God's voice and respond to His leading in your life, allowing you to make decisions that align with His purpose for you.

### **Teaching Points:**

#### **1. The Importance of Asking the Right Questions:**

- Asking questions is a vital tool in spiritual growth.
- God invites us to ask Him for wisdom and clarity in our journey.

#### **2. What is Spiritual Discernment?**

- Spiritual discernment is the ability to recognize God's will in everyday life.
- Discernment is developed through prayer, Scripture, and experience.

#### **3. How to Cultivate Spiritual Discernment:**

- Practice listening to God through prayer and reflection.
- Ask questions that encourage growth, such as, "What is God saying in this moment?"

#### **4. The Role of Discernment in Making Godly Decisions:**

- Discernment helps us align our decisions with God's will.
- It gives us confidence in difficult situations, knowing that we are following God's plan.

## **Group Prayer & Journaling Time:**

### **Group Prayer Prompt:**

"Father, I ask that You fill me with the knowledge of Your will through Your wisdom and understanding. Teach me how to discern Your voice in every situation and give me the courage to follow Your leading. Help me to grow in faith as I seek Your direction for my life. In Jesus' name, Amen."

### **Journaling Time:**

- Reflect on the questions you have about your faith and life.
- Ask God to reveal any areas where you need greater discernment or understanding.
- Write down any insights God gives you as you ask Him to lead you in all things.

## **Small Group Questions:**

1. What is one area of your life where you feel God is calling you to ask more intentional questions?
2. How has God spoken to you in the past through the process of discernment?
3. What practices or habits can you implement in your life to grow in spiritual discernment?

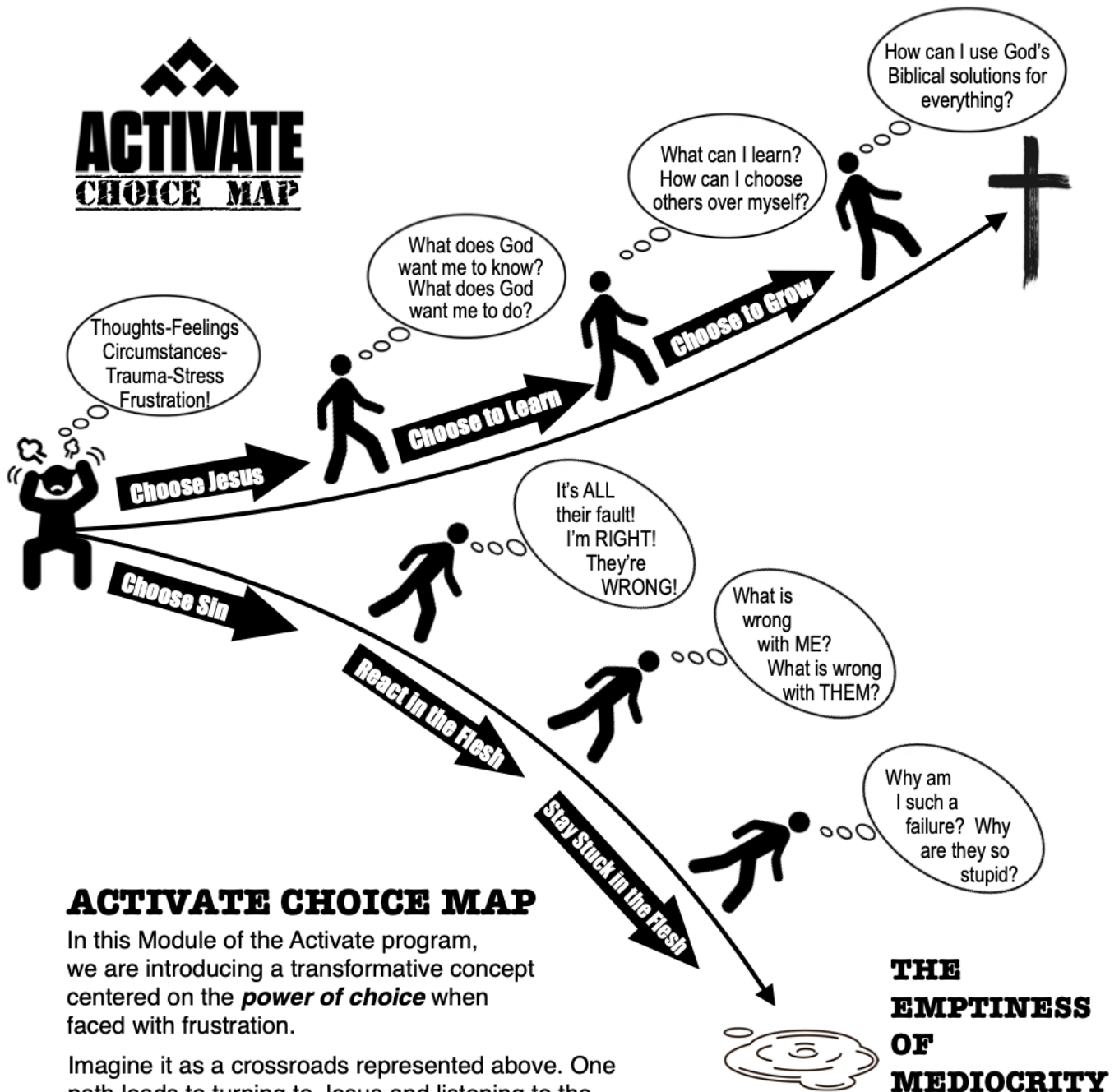
## **Module #11: Prayer and Journaling About Next Steps**

**Module #11** is designed to help you reflect on your journey thus far and take intentional steps forward in activating your unique calling. This module will help you identify clear, practical next steps in ministry, service, or leadership, while grounding those steps in God's guidance. You will be invited to reflect on where God is leading you and how you can align your life with His purpose in bold ways.

God calls each of us to specific roles in His kingdom, and the process of activation involves moving forward with confidence and clarity in these callings. As you move through this module, you will be challenged to be intentional about the actions you take in response to God's calling on your life. This will require reflection, action, and a willingness to take bold steps in faith.

This module will provide time for deep prayer and journaling, where you'll reflect on the steps God is asking you to take next, whether it's in your personal life, community, or church ministry. By the end of this module, you will feel equipped to step into your God-given purpose with clarity and confidence.

## Choice Map from Module #10



### ACTIVATE CHOICE MAP

In this Module of the Activate program, we are introducing a transformative concept centered on the *power of choice* when faced with frustration.

Imagine it as a crossroads represented above. One path leads to turning to Jesus and listening to the Holy Spirit, where individuals embrace a growth mindset.

This involves asking new questions, learning from every situation, and striving to embody the qualities of Jesus in their actions. The alternative path leads to sin, where one remains ensnared in a judgmental and stuck mindset, hindering personal and spiritual growth.

This visual reference serves as a guide, illustrating the pivotal moment when frustration strikes — the moment you consciously choose between pursuing a path of continuous learning and transformation, or succumbing to patterns that impede progress and purpose. It aligns with the Activate experience, urging participants to adopt the growth mindset, ensuring they walk fully in God's purpose and away from the mediocrity that a judgmental mindset can impose.

## Are YOU Choosing to Follow Jesus or Sin? From Module #10

### Sinful Mindset

- Judgemental
- Reactive
- Critical/Negative
- Close Minded
- Self-Righteous
- Blame Oriented
- Problem Focused
- Know It All
- Rigid
- Defend Assumptions
- Mistakes=Failure
- Scarcity Mindset
- Limited Possibilities
- Self Protective

### Spirit-Led Mindset

- Accepting
- Responsive
- Understanding
- Open Minded
- OK Not Knowing
- Responsible
- Solution Focused
- Humble
- Adaptive
- Question Assumptions
- Failure=Opportunity for Growth
- Content
- Unlimited Possibilities with God
- Trusting God

### Sin in Relationships

- Dismissive
- Isolating
- Fear Differences
- Feedback=Rejection
- Focused on Own Agenda
- Conflict is Destructive
- Seeks to Defend
- Blame Oriented

### Spirit-Led Relationships

- Accepting
- Connected
- Value Differences
- Feedback=Growth
- Focused on Collaboration
- Conflict is Constructive
- Seeks to Resolve/Create
- Resolution Oriented



# Module #10 Homework

## Asking New Questions - Developing Spiritual Discernment

In **Module #10**, we will explore the importance of asking new questions and developing a mindset of spiritual growth and discernment. Spiritual discernment allows us to move beyond surface-level understanding and engage more deeply with God. By learning to ask the right questions, we can begin to explore the depths of God's will for our lives and become more sensitive to His guidance. This module is about cultivating a heart and mind that is always seeking, questioning, and listening for God's voice in every situation. When we develop spiritual discernment, we are better able to navigate life's challenges with clarity, understanding, and faith. This is an essential part of our spiritual journey, as it helps us deepen our relationship with God and align more closely with His plans. Through this module, you will learn to ask new questions that help you grow in your faith and discern God's will for your life. You'll also practice applying spiritual discernment in your day-to-day decisions and challenges.

### Day 1: The Power of Asking the Right Questions

#### Scriptures:

- **James 1:5**
- **Matthew 7:7-8**
- **Proverbs 2:6**

#### Reflection:

Asking the right questions is the first step in developing spiritual discernment. In life, we are often faced with decisions, challenges, and uncertainties, and it's crucial to ask God for the wisdom and clarity to move forward. God promises to give us wisdom when we ask, and He invites us to seek Him wholeheartedly. Reflect today on how asking the right questions—such as "What is God saying to me in this situation?"—can open doors for deeper understanding.

#### Prayer Prompt:

Father, help me to ask the right questions in my life. Teach me to seek Your wisdom and understanding in all things. Give me a heart that is open and willing to hear Your answers, and guide me through every decision I face. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### Journaling Prompt:

- What are some questions you have about your faith or your journey that you need to bring before God?
- How does it feel to know that God promises to give wisdom generously when we ask?
- Write about a time when God gave you clarity after asking for His wisdom.

## **Day 2: Developing Spiritual Discernment**

### **Scriptures:**

- **1 John 4:1**
- **Romans 12:2**
- **Hebrews 5:14**

### **Reflection:**

Spiritual discernment is the ability to distinguish between God's voice and other voices. It's a skill that grows with maturity, prayer, and meditation on God's Word. As we practice hearing God's voice and being obedient to His lead, our ability to discern His will becomes clearer. The more we seek God's direction and apply His truth, the more we are able to identify what is from God and what is not.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Lord, I ask You to help me grow in spiritual discernment. Teach me how to listen for Your voice above all others and to make decisions that align with Your will. Help me to test everything against Your Word and follow Your truth. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- In what areas of your life do you need more discernment right now?
- How can you become more intentional about practicing discernment in your daily life?
- Ask God to show you how He has already been guiding you and to make His will clear for the future.

## **Day 3: Asking Questions to Grow in Faith**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Matthew 16:13-15**
- **Psalms 25:4-5**
- **Colossians 1:9**

### **Reflection:**

Jesus often asked questions to invite His followers into a deeper understanding of who He was and to challenge their faith. Asking questions is not a sign of doubt but an opportunity for growth. As you engage in this journey of spiritual discernment, don't be afraid to ask God the hard questions. He wants to reveal Himself more deeply to you, and as you seek His wisdom, He will guide you into greater faith and understanding.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, I come before You today asking for the wisdom and understanding to know Your will. Teach me how to ask the right questions and seek Your truth in every circumstance. I want to grow in my faith and be open to all that You want to reveal to me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- Reflect on how asking the right questions can lead to deeper faith.
- What questions are you struggling with in your journey with God right now?
- Ask God for the courage to ask bold questions and trust that He will guide you in His truth.

# MODULE #11

## Prayer and Journaling About Next Steps

### **Overview:**

**Module #11** is a time of reflection and action, where you will reflect on the steps God is calling you to take in ministry, service, or leadership roles. You will be encouraged to move forward with clarity, confidence, and purpose in God's unique calling on your life. This module focuses on intentional planning and preparation for the next steps in your journey, while deepening your prayer life and journaling practice to align with God's direction.

Through prayer, journaling, and small group discussions, you will reflect on your current season and the bold actions God is calling you to take. You will be invited to make intentional plans to activate your calling, whether in your personal life, the church, or the wider community.

### **Teaching Points:**

#### 1. **Reflecting on God's Calling:**

- Look back on what God has revealed about your identity and purpose.
- Acknowledge how He has been guiding you toward His plans for your life.

#### 2. **Moving Forward with Boldness:**

- Stepping out in faith requires courage and trust in God's guidance.
- Bold steps are essential for breaking free from comfort zones and walking in obedience.

#### 3. **Making Intentional Plans for the Next Steps:**

- Being intentional about your next steps is key to activating your calling.
- Plan with purpose, seeking God's direction through prayer and reflection.

#### 4. **Confidence in God's Will:**

- Trust that God is at work in every step you take toward fulfilling your calling.
- Confidence comes from knowing God is guiding you and that His plans are good.

## **Group Prayer & Journaling Time:**

### **Group Prayer Prompt:**

"Father, thank You for the work You have done in my life thus far. Help me to move forward with clarity and confidence as I take the next steps in my journey. Show me the bold actions You are calling me to take, and empower me to walk in Your will. I trust that You are guiding me every step of the way. In Jesus' name, Amen."

### **Journaling Time:**

- Reflect on the clarity you've gained regarding your next steps.
- Write down any specific actions you believe God is calling you to take in this season.
- Ask God to give you the confidence and courage to move forward in His will.

## **Small Group Questions:**

1. What specific next step do you feel God is calling you to take, and why is it important to you?
2. What fears or doubts are you facing as you step into this next season of growth and purpose?
3. How can your small group support and pray for you as you take bold steps in your calling?

## **Use this QR Code**

### **for the Activate Assessment:**



## **Module #12: Activate! Living Out Your Calling with Service and Bold Action & Living as a Transformational Leader**

**Module #12** marks the culmination of the Activate Your Life Journey program—a time of reflection, celebration, and intentional action. In this final module, we celebrate the transformation that has taken place over the last 11 weeks and look forward to the bold steps God is calling each participant to take moving forward.

This module is dedicated to helping you activate your calling with service, bold action, and a heart of leadership. You will have the opportunity to share your personal transformation story, reflecting on the growth you've experienced and the steps you're ready to take next. The focus is on how you will continue to serve, grow, and lead as a transformational leader in your community, ministry, or wherever God calls you.



# Module #11 Homework

## Asking New Questions - Developing Spiritual Discernment

**Module #11** is designed to help you reflect on your journey thus far and take intentional steps forward in activating your unique calling. This module will help you identify clear, practical next steps in ministry, service, or leadership, while grounding those steps in God's guidance. You will be invited to reflect on where God is leading you and how you can align your life with His purpose in bold ways.

God calls each of us to specific roles in His kingdom, and the process of activation involves moving forward with confidence and clarity in these callings. As you move through this module, you will be challenged to be intentional about the actions you take in response to God's calling on your life. This will require reflection, action, and a willingness to take bold steps in faith.

This module will provide time for deep prayer and journaling, where you'll reflect on the steps God is asking you to take next, whether it's in your personal life, community, or church ministry. By the end of this module, you will feel equipped to step into your God-given purpose with clarity and confidence.

### **Day 1: Reflecting on Your Journey - What Has God Revealed?**

#### **Scriptures:**

- **Philippians 3:13-14**
- **Psalms 32:8**
- **Jeremiah 29:11**

#### **Reflection:**

As you consider the journey you've been on, it's important to reflect on the ways God has already been moving in your life. What has He revealed about who you are, your identity, and your calling? The road to discovering our purpose is often full of twists and turns, but as we press forward, God invites us to leave behind past mistakes and look ahead with hope. This day is about reflecting on where you've come from, what God has already shown you, and what lies ahead.

#### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, I thank You for the journey You've brought me on so far. Help me to reflect on the ways You've been guiding me, teaching me, and revealing my purpose. Show me the areas where I need to let go of the past and press forward with hope in the plans You have for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### **Journaling Prompt:**

- Reflect on the key moments in your life that have shaped your sense of purpose.
- What has God revealed to you about who you are and your unique calling?
- What fears or doubts do you need to surrender in order to move forward confidently?

## **Day 2: Taking Bold Next Steps - Moving in Faith**

### **Scriptures:**

- **2 Timothy 1:7**
- **Isaiah 41:10**
- **Joshua 1:9**

### **Reflection:**

Taking bold steps often requires courage, and God gives us that courage through the Holy Spirit. Today's focus is on moving forward in bold faith, despite the obstacles or uncertainties you may face. Boldness doesn't mean you have everything figured out; it means stepping out in trust, knowing that God is with you. What bold next steps is God asking you to take in your life, relationships, or ministry? Reflect on how you can move forward with faith and confidence in His guidance.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, I ask for Your boldness today. Help me to step forward in faith, trusting that You will guide my every step. Show me the bold actions I need to take in obedience to Your calling. I surrender my fears to You and choose to move forward in confidence, knowing that You are with me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- What is a specific bold step that God is calling you to take in this season?
- What fears or insecurities are holding you back from taking that step?
- Write out a prayer of courage, asking God to empower you to step forward in faith.

## **Day 3: Clarity and Confidence - Moving Forward in Purpose**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Proverbs 3:5-6**
- **Psalms 37:4**
- **Romans 8:28**

### **Reflection:**

As you prepare to take the next steps, it's important to move forward with clarity and confidence. Trusting in God's plan for your life gives you the confidence to make bold decisions and act with purpose. He is always at work in your life, even when you can't see the full picture. Today, reflect on the purpose God has placed in your heart and how you can align your actions with His will. Trust that He is guiding you, and take the next steps with confidence and clarity.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, thank You for the clarity and confidence You give me. Help me to trust in Your plan and move forward with boldness in the steps You are calling me to take. I choose to walk in Your purpose for my life and trust that You will continue to guide me every step of the way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- How does it feel to know that God is working everything in your life for your good?
- What is one step you can take today to align yourself more closely with God's purpose for you?
- Ask God for the confidence and clarity to move forward with His will in mind.

# MODULE #12

## Activate! Living Out Your Calling: Service, Bold Action & Living as a Transformational Leader

### Overview:

In **Module #12**, we celebrate the transformation that has occurred during your journey in Activate and focus on how to live out your calling with bold action and service. This final session is about taking what you've learned and applying it to your life by embracing your role as a transformational leader in your community. You'll be encouraged to take bold steps in service and leadership, step into your unique calling, and continue growing as you live a life of purpose. You will also have the opportunity to share your transformation story with the group, reflecting on your journey and sharing the steps you are taking next. This module celebrates the journey of growth and encourages you to continue living out your faith in tangible ways.

### Teaching Points:

- 1. Celebrate Your Transformation:**
  - Reflect on the growth and changes you've experienced during Activate.
  - Acknowledge how God has been shaping you and preparing you for this next phase of your life.
- 2. Embrace Bold Action:**
  - Take intentional steps forward to live out your calling.
  - Identify the bold actions you need to take in service, ministry, and leadership.
- 3. Serve as a Transformational Leader:**
  - Leadership is rooted in serving others, just as Jesus modeled.
  - Reflect on how you can lead with humility and use your gifts to serve the body of Christ.
- 4. Make a Plan for the Next Steps:**
  - Create actionable steps for living out your calling and embracing your role as a leader.
  - Commit to continue growing and serving in your God-given purpose.

### Large Group Questions:

1. How has God transformed you during this Activate journey, and how do you plan to live out that transformation in your daily life?
2. What bold steps is God calling you to take next in your ministry, service, or leadership roles?
3. How can you lead with a servant's heart and influence others to walk in their calling?



# Module #12 Homework

## Activate! Living Out Your Calling with Service and Bold Action & Living as a Transformational Leader

**Module #12** marks the culmination of the Activate Your Life Journey program—a time of reflection, celebration, and intentional action. In this final module, we celebrate the transformation that has taken place over the last 11 weeks and look forward to the bold steps God is calling each participant to take moving forward.

This module is dedicated to helping you activate your calling with service, bold action, and a heart of leadership. You will have the opportunity to share your personal transformation story, reflecting on the growth you've experienced and the steps you're ready to take next. The focus is on how you will continue to serve, grow, and lead as a transformational leader in your community, ministry, or wherever God calls you.

Through this final session, you will also receive practical tools and encouragement for continuing your journey beyond Activate. You'll be encouraged to step confidently into the role God has for you, using your unique gifts to serve others and make a lasting impact in the world.

### Day 1: Embracing Your Transformation

#### Scriptures:

- **2 Corinthians 5:17**
- **Romans 12:1-2**
- **Philippians 3:13-14**

#### Reflection:

As you prepare for this final module, take time to reflect on the transformation God has worked in you. The journey through Activate has equipped you to live out your calling, but it's important to recognize the change that has already occurred. This day's focus is on embracing that transformation with a heart of gratitude and humility, acknowledging the work God has done and the new path He's set before you.

#### Prayer Prompt:

Father, thank You for the transformation You have worked in my life. Thank You for revealing Your will to me and for helping me grow in my faith, purpose, and calling. Help me to embrace this transformation and walk boldly into the next season of my journey with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

#### Journaling Prompt:

- What transformation have you experienced during the Activate program?
- What new understanding do you have about yourself, your identity, and your purpose?
- How can you continue to embrace this transformation moving forward?

## **Day 2: Bold Action - Stepping into Your Calling**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Joshua 1:9**
- **Matthew 5:14-16**
- **1 Corinthians 15:58**

### **Reflection:**

Bold action is key to activating your calling. This day is about considering the steps you need to take to step into your purpose with courage and confidence. You may feel uncertain about the future, but God's Word assures you that He is with you, strengthening and guiding you every step of the way. Today, reflect on the bold actions you can take to live out your calling, whether it's in your ministry, work, or relationships.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, I ask for Your courage and strength to step into the calling You have for me. Help me to take bold action, trusting that You are with me every step of the way. Give me the courage to step out in faith and to use my gifts to serve others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- What bold step is God calling you to take next in your life or ministry?
- How can you step out in faith and take action on your calling?
- What fears do you need to surrender to God in order to take this step?

## **Day 3: Living as a Transformational Leader**

### **Scriptures:**

- **Matthew 20:26-28**
- **1 Peter 4:10-11**
- **Ephesians 4:11-13**

### **Reflection:**

Living as a transformational leader requires a heart of service. Jesus modeled leadership through humility and service, showing us that the greatest leaders are those who serve others. As you reflect on this, consider how you can use your gifts to serve others and lead them toward Christ. Leadership is about influence, not power, and it's essential to focus on serving with humility as you embrace your calling to lead.

### **Prayer Prompt:**

Father, thank You for the example of Jesus, who taught us that true leadership is about serving others. Help me to lead with humility and to use the gifts You've given me to serve others. Show me how I can influence others for Your glory and build up the body of Christ through my leadership. In Jesus' name, Amen.

### **Journaling Prompt:**

- What does it mean to you to live as a transformational leader?
- How can you serve others with humility and purpose?
- What role is God calling you to in leading and serving others?

# Final Summary:

## Moving Forward in Faith

### **Do Not Go Back to Egypt**

Congratulations on completing the Activate Your Life Journey program! This is a monumental step in your spiritual growth and transformation. Over the past 12 weeks, you've deepened your relationship with God, encountered His healing truth, and discovered your unique calling and purpose. But now comes the real challenge: to live out what you've learned, and to move forward in faith, continuing to trust and obey God.

Throughout this journey, you have experienced powerful moments of transformation, as you've replaced lies with God's truth, walked in freedom from past wounds, and embraced your true identity in Christ. You've taken bold steps, heard God's voice more clearly, and begun to step into the leadership and service roles He has called you to. But now, as you conclude this phase, it's essential to remember one powerful truth: **you cannot go back to Egypt.**

#### **What does "Egypt" mean for you?**

For the Israelites, Egypt represented bondage, fear, and comfort in the form of a familiar but toxic past. It was a place of slavery and spiritual complacency. Just as God led the Israelites out of Egypt to a promised land, He has led you out of past struggles, false beliefs, and old habits that kept you in spiritual slavery. **Do not return to those old patterns** or back to the place of comfort where God's transformation and calling seem distant. The journey is just beginning!

**This is your moment to step out boldly, just as God called the Israelites to step out in faith.**

### **Moving Forward in Faith**

- **Trust God's Voice:** Over the last 12 weeks, you've learned to recognize God's voice and discern His will. Don't let fear or doubt keep you from stepping forward in obedience to what He has shown you. Trust that He is with you every step of the way.
- **Live Out Your Purpose:** You've spent time uncovering your identity in Christ and discovering your calling. Now it's time to **act on it.** Begin to serve in your church, community, or ministry with boldness, remembering that God has equipped you to make a lasting impact.
- **Take Bold Next Steps:** The call to leadership and service is not easy. It will require courage, sacrifice, and obedience. But remember that **God goes before you**, and He will provide everything you need. Whether it's a small step or a leap of faith, take it. Move out of your comfort zone, just as the Israelites had to move forward into the unknown territory of the Promised Land.
- **Stay Connected to the Community:** The Activate community is a powerful support system. Don't isolate yourself. Continue to grow in faith by staying connected to the people who have journeyed with you, and by serving as a mentor and leader to others. This community will hold you accountable and encourage you as you move forward.

# ADDITIONAL APPENDIX

## Modules #1-2: How Can We Recognize the Voice of God? <sup>1</sup>

This question has been asked by countless people throughout the ages. Samuel heard the voice of God, but did not recognize it until he was instructed by Eli (1 Samuel 3:1–10). Gideon had a physical revelation from God, and he still doubted what he had heard to the point of asking for a sign, not once, but three times (Judges 6:17–22, 36–40). When we are listening for God’s voice, how can we know that He is the one speaking? First of all, we have something that Gideon and Samuel did not. We have the complete Bible, the inspired Word of God, to read, study, and meditate on. “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work” (2 Timothy 3:16–17). When we have a question about a certain topic or decision in our lives, we should see what the Bible has to say about it. God will never lead us contrary to what He has taught in His Word (Titus 1:2).

To hear God’s voice we must belong to God. Jesus said, “My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me” (John 10:27). Those who hear God’s voice are those who belong to Him—those who have been saved by His grace through faith in the Lord Jesus. These are the sheep who hear and recognize His voice, because they know Him as their Shepherd. If we are to recognize God’s voice, we must belong to Him.

We hear His voice when we spend time in Bible study and quiet contemplation of His Word. The more time we spend intimately with God and His Word, the easier it is to recognize His voice and His leading in our lives. Employees at a bank are trained to recognize counterfeits by studying genuine money so closely that it is easy to spot a fake. We should be so familiar with God’s Word that when someone speaks error to us, it is clear that it is not of God.

While God *could* speak audibly to people today, He speaks primarily through His written Word. Sometimes God’s leading can come through the Holy Spirit, through our consciences, through circumstances, and through the exhortations of other people. By comparing what we hear to the truth of Scripture, we can learn to recognize God’s voice.

## Modules #1-2: How Can I Know If I Am Hearing God, Hearing Satan, or Hearing My Own Thoughts? <sup>2</sup>

Life is full of decisions we must make that do not have absolute, specific-by-name, how-to directions in the Bible. How many hours a day should my kids watch TV? Is it okay to play shoot-em-up video games? Am I allowed to go on a date with a co-worker? Does God get mad if I miss work because I stayed up too late the night before? We all have notions about the truth, but how do we know for sure that these ideas are coming from a Divine Source? Sometimes distinguishing our own ideas from God’s leading is difficult. And what if our urges are actually coming from the enemy of our souls and not from God? How do we “take every thought captive” (2 Corinthians 10:5) when we aren’t sure where the thoughts are coming from?

God speaks in varied ways to each individual. He knows how we will respond and will use whatever methods are necessary to get through to us. The three most common ways God communicates are through prayer, the Bible, and leadings of the Holy Spirit. Also, God can use a godly mentor to provide wise counsel (Proverbs 12:15). If God wants to speak to us, nothing can stop Him. He may use one, all, or a combination of methods to make Himself known, but one thing remains the same: our duty is to listen and obey.

### Pray

Prayer is an honest, two-way conversation with God that involves both speaking as God hears us and being quiet as we hear God. When we pray, we “must believe and not doubt, because the one who doubts is like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed by the wind” (James 1:6). If we have no faith, we “should not expect to receive anything from the Lord” (James 1:7). We must “be still” and willing to hear (Psalm 46:10; Matthew 13:16).

Talk to God in prayer and earnestly listen for His response. However, keep in mind that sometimes He doesn’t give us all the answers we desire. He knows what we need to know at any given time, and He will tell us if it is best.

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<sup>1</sup> Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). [Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered](#). Logos Bible Software.

<sup>2</sup> Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). [Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered](#). Logos Bible Software.

## Study the Word

Reading the Bible is the best way to learn about God's character and His dealings with people throughout history. All Scripture is "breathed out by God" and is a guide for the righteous life (2 Timothy 3:16). The more familiar you are with how God works, His desires for His people, and what He has said to others in the past, the more you will be able to recognize what He is saying to you now (Psalm 32:8). While we speak to God in prayer, He will very often speak to us through His Word. Again, as we read, we must listen.

## Listen to the Holy Spirit's Voice

The Holy Spirit is God—a divine Being with a mind, emotions, and will. He is always with us (Psalm 139:7–8). His purposes include interceding for us (Romans 8:26–27) and making decisions to benefit the church (1 Corinthians 12:7–11). His voice comforts, and He offers counsel when we ask and listen (John 14:16).

When we feel that we have received personal instruction from God, we need to remain wise (Proverbs 4:7). We must "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1). The world is full of noise and distractions, and so are our minds. Life on earth is a spiritual battle. The enemy is eager to supply diversions to detract us from God's will (1 Peter 5:8). We must be vigilant to ensure that what we have heard is more than a feeling but is truly from God Himself.

Remember, God *wants* to show us the right path to take. He's not in the business of hiding His will from those who seek Him. Isaiah 30:21 says, "Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you, saying, 'This is the way; walk in it.'"

Here are some good questions to ask as we examine whether or not promptings are from the Lord: Are the promptings confusing or vague? God is not the author of confusion; He is the bringer of peace (1 Corinthians 14:33). Do they go against God's Word? God will not contradict Himself. Will following these promptings lead to sin? Those who live by the Spirit will not gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Galatians 5:16).

In addition to prayer, studying God's Word, and listening to the Holy Spirit, you may want to seek counsel from a Christian friend, family member, or pastor (Proverbs 15:22).

God does not want us to fail. The more we listen to God, the better able we will be at distinguishing His voice from the other noises in our heads. Jesus, the Good Shepherd, gives His promise: "He goes on ahead of them, and his sheep follow him because they know his voice" (John 10:4). Others may speak, "but the sheep [do] not listen to them" (verse 8). The better we know our Shepherd, the less we have to worry about heeding the wrong voice.

## Module #2: Does God still speak to us today? <sup>3</sup>

The Bible records God speaking audibly to people many times (Exodus 3:14; Joshua 1:1; Judges 6:18; 1 Samuel 3:11; 2 Samuel 2:1; Job 40:1; Isaiah 7:3; Jeremiah 1:7; Acts 8:26; 9:15—this is just a small sampling). There is no biblical reason why God could not or would not speak to a person audibly today. With the hundreds of times the Bible records God speaking, we have to remember that they occur over the course of 4,000 years of human history. God speaking audibly is the exception, not the rule. Even in the biblically recorded instances of God speaking, it is not always clear whether it was an audible voice, an inner voice, or a mental impression.

God does speak to people today. First, God speaks to us through His Word (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Isaiah 55:11 tells us, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth: it will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it." The Bible records God's words, everything we need to know in order to be saved and live the Christian life. Second Peter 1:3 declares, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of Him who called us by his own glory and goodness."

Second, God speaks through impressions, events, and thoughts. God helps us to discern right from wrong through our consciences (1 Timothy 1:5; 1 Peter 3:16). God is in the process of conforming our minds to think His thoughts (Romans 12:2). God allows events to occur in our lives to direct us, change us, and help us to grow spiritually (James 1:2–5; Hebrews 12:5–11). First Peter 1:6–7 reminds us, "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed."

Finally, God may sometimes speak audibly to people. It is highly doubtful, though, that this occurs as often as some people claim it does. Again, even in the Bible, God speaking audibly is the exception, not the ordinary. If anyone claims that God has spoken

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<sup>3</sup> Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). [Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered](#). Logos Bible Software.

to him/her, always compare what is said with what the Bible says. If God were to speak today, His words would be in full agreement with what He has said in the Bible (2 Timothy 3:16–17). God does not contradict Himself.

## Module #2: How Can I Know When God Is Telling Me to Do Something? <sup>4</sup>

Pray, especially when you're unsure of God's will for your life. "If any of you lacks wisdom, he should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to him" (James 1:5). "Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him" (Psalm 37:7). If you don't know what to pray, you can always personalize & pray verses such as, "Show me the way I should go, for to You I lift up my soul" (Psalm 143:8) and, "Guide me in Your truth and teach me" (Psalm 25:5).

The primary way God commands us is through His Word. "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness" (2 Timothy 3:16). If Scripture commands something of us, there's no need to hesitate and wonder if it's really God's will for us. He cares so much about us that He already gave a plain and clear guidebook to life—the Bible. "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path" (Psalm 119:105). "The Law of the Lord is perfect, reviving the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple" (Psalm 19:7). "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your Word" (Psalm 119:9). Likewise, God never contradicts Himself, so He'll never ask you to something contradictory to Scripture. He will never ask you to sin. He will never ask you to do something Jesus Christ wouldn't do. We need to immerse ourselves in the Bible, so we will know which actions meet God's standards. "Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth: meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything that is written in it" (Joshua 1:8).

Christians also have the Holy Spirit to discern what is, or is not, God's will for our lives. "The Spirit of truth ... will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). Sometimes the Holy Spirit will either agitate our conscience if we're making a wrong decision, or He will pacify and encourage us when we're leaning toward the right decision. Even if He doesn't intervene in such noticeable ways, we can have confidence that He's always in charge. Sometimes God will alter a situation without us even realizing He has acted. "The Lord will guide you always" (Isaiah 58:11).

If God is calling you to take a leap of faith, be encouraged by His presence. "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). And remember, "Cast all your anxiety on Him because He cares for you" (1 Peter 5:7). "Trust in the Lord with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding, in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will direct your paths" (Proverbs 3:5–6).

What we are not to do is expect to hear voices from God. There is a dangerous trend today where people seek to hear a "word from the Lord," extraneous to what He has already given us in the Bible. "The Lord told me ..." has become the mantra of experience-driven Christianity. Unfortunately, what He "tells" one person often contradicts what He "tells" another, and these extra-biblical revelations have proven to be very divisive, tearing apart church after church as one person's experience seeks to take precedence over another's. This results in chaos, benefiting no one except Satan, who loves to sow discord among believers. We should make the apostle Peter our example in these matters. In spite of the miraculous experience on the Mount of Transfiguration, where he beheld the glorified Christ speaking with Moses and Elijah, Peter refused to rely on that experience, declaring instead that "We also have the more sure prophetic word which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place" (2 Peter 1:18–19, NKJV).

## Modules #5-6: From Your Heart ... Forgive<sup>5</sup>

by Aaron Sironi

Recently, I met with a successful businesswoman who entered counseling after her husband revealed that he was fearful and leery of her resentment, bitterness, and anger. This painful conversation brought her into counseling with me. As I listened to her describe her relationship with her husband, I was increasingly interested in knowing how she was able to maintain her forty year marriage to a man against whom she held such ill will. So I asked. Her response gave me a surprising amount of hope for her and her husband. She recounted a pivotal moment in her marriage.

A few years prior, she and her husband met with a Christian mediator to agree upon the details and terms of a divorce. They both were finished with the marriage. The mediator asked them each a very poignant and clarifying question: "Is there anything that your spouse has done that is unforgiveable?" Stunned, she was immobilized by this question. As the rancor and self-righteousness drained from her heart, she humbly answered "No." God used this one question to turn her away from divorce and toward reconciliation with her husband. It was in this moment that she realized her chronic unwillingness to forgive her husband. Although there had been years of unresolved conflicts, wounds, and wrongs, she suddenly saw the pathway to reconciliation that

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<sup>4</sup> Got Questions Ministries. (2002–2013). [Got Questions? Bible Questions Answered](#). Logos Bible Software.

<sup>5</sup> Sironi, A. (2012). [From Your Heart ... Forgive](#). *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, 26(3), 46–61.

had long been obscured from her mind. It was so simple and yet so profound. Although she continued to struggle with ongoing forgiveness, clearly she was growing, and I was hopeful for her and her marriage.

Contrast this story of forgiveness with another. I know a young man who is separated from his wife. Although separated, they came in for marriage counseling hoping to reconcile their relationship. In one stunning conversation, the husband said, “If I were able to forgive her for what she’s done, that would almost completely heal our marriage.” Shocked by this man’s clarity and ownership of the remedy to his marital problems, I gently probed his reasons for withholding forgiveness from his wife. He explained that although he knew that withholding forgiveness was wrong, he refused to forgive his wife until he trusted her. He said, “So what will change if I do this? What do I get out of this? It would just endorse what she’s done.” He was not about to forgive her without a guarantee and consistent evidence of her trustworthiness. Self-protection was more important than forgiveness, and he had no qualms about it. From the start, I suspected reconciliation would be elusive.

Why tell these stories? Because forgiveness is central to our Christian life. Forgiveness is the heart of the gospel. It pervades Christ’s relationship with his church. It is the core of our identity in Christ. Forgiveness is powerful and transformative, and yet it can be complex and slippery. You may have a sense that “I have to forgive,” but merely nodding to forgiveness may not get you any closer to obedience. Forgiveness is central—and hard to do.

There is much confusion today as to what forgiveness is and how it is lived out. But Scripture says many things about forgiveness. Given our sinfulness before God and our sins against each other, forgiveness is a lens on the entire Bible. In this article I will first unpack a few defining parameters from Scripture’s overall witness, contrasting these with some common misunderstandings. Then I will look at the longest passage on forgiveness, Jesus’ parable in Matthew 18:21–35. Please note that though all of us are called to forgive others, many of the examples used in this article are marital ones. Marriage is a relational context in which opportunities to forgive abound, but the principles discussed apply broadly to other relationships. At the end of the article, you will find a worksheet that encourages a more personal interaction with this content. Please use it as a resource to help you with forgiveness in your own life and relationships.

### What Forgiveness Is and Is Not

We hear many confusing definitions of forgiveness. To misunderstand forgiveness brings some serious consequences. To rightly understand it brings light. So let me start with a simple definition. Forgiveness is a decision and a promise to release a person by canceling the real debt the person has with you. With this general definition in mind, let’s get more specific about what biblical forgiveness is and what it is not.

#### *Forgiving others is modeled after God’s forgiveness of us.*

As followers of Christ, we don’t have to make up our own definition of forgiveness. Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” Colossians 3:13 says, “as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.” So, the starting point is with what our Lord does. What is forgiveness? How do I forgive? God says, “Watch what I do. That’s how you’re supposed to do it. Model your forgiveness after mine.” It is essential that we see forgiveness from the Lord’s perspective so that we might rightly understand and embody true forgiveness. All other definitions of forgiveness do not start with God and certainly never get to him.

#### *Forgiveness is not primarily for personal psychological gain.*

Think about the following statement: “Forgiveness is a gift we give ourselves so that we can make peace with ourselves and move on.” This sentiment might resonate with us, but it immediately leads us off course. We’ve all been there—stewing resentfully on an offense. It’s toxic. The wrong continually plays in the background of our hearts whether we are actively thinking about it or not. And it would be wonderful to release this bitterness and to move on from the injury. Aren’t we the ones poisoning ourselves? Don’t we deserve this “gift” of forgiveness? But notice how the starting point is self-oriented around my peace. It is all about me—not the Holy One. Remember, forgiveness must start with God. It is a spiritual reality. It is not primarily something I do to move on with my life or to gain some elusive psychological well-being. We shouldn’t forgive only to keep ourselves from growing embittered in old age.

#### *Forgiving others flows from a relationship with God.*

Forgiving others is a crucial aspect of our new life in Christ. It is a natural and daily token of our gratitude for his salvation. Rather than being an extraordinary manifestation of faith, it is an expected attribute of all Christ-followers who have been forgiven by Christ himself and who now seek to imitate him.

If I refuse to forgive others, my very status with God is in question. Jesus told us to talk to God saying, “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.” Then in the next breath he says, “For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins” (Matt 6:12, 14–15). Mark 11:25 has a similar message. The stakes are high. And the results of refusing to forgive could not be

more devastating. Forgiveness therefore, is less about emotional peace and moving forward than it is about our relationship with God. Emotional peace and well-being are related to forgiveness, but they are outcomes of it, not antecedents or primary motives.

*Forgiveness reflects your heart attitude toward God and the person who sinned.*

Since forgiveness flows from our relationship with God and even reflects the status of that relationship (Matt 6:12, 14–15), we are called to forgive those who sin against us even before they request it or take responsibility for what they have done. Mark 11:25 says, “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone.” You can forgive, even while you stand praying, because there are two components to forgiveness: attitudinal and transactional. We are to wrestle and quarrel before God in prayer with the “attitude” of sin in our hearts that harbors resentment and ill will before we “transact” forgiveness with another person. Before we approach the person who has sinned against us, we must approach God and battle to have a forgiving and merciful heart. If this “attitudinal forgiveness” is incomplete or lacking, “transacting” with someone may actually be an attempt to make this person pay for what was done. It may be a way of getting revenge even though it is cloaked in an air of seeking forgiveness. And it’s less likely to go well. Aiming for a forgiving attitude means working to forgive those who sin against us in our hearts, being prepared to offer mercy to the offender if and when asked, and being ready to forgive even if reconciliation may not happen at this time. Attitudinal forgiveness paves the way for transactional forgiveness and readies your heart to fight temptations to rehash the person’s sin.

*Forgiveness is more than a feeling; it’s obedience.*

It’s not something we wait to do until we “feel ready” (which often feels intuitive for us to do). Notice that Jesus uses the imperative (a command or exhortation) about attitudinal forgiveness before God: “Whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone” (Mk 11:25). Notice that Jesus also uses the imperative about transacted forgiveness with others: “If [your brother] sins against you seven times in a day, and turns to you seven times, saying ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him” (Luke 17:4). This is urgent: whenever you stand praying. This is a lot of forgiving: seven times in a day. This is without exception or exclusion: anything against anyone. He also teaches that forgiveness has less to do with an enormous amount of Daniel-like spirituality than it has to do with a servant-like humility and meekness.

We should not wait for our feelings to catch up to our need to forgive. They may never catch up. We must not put up with mercilessness when we see it in our hearts. We must not be gentle or tolerant here. Take your soul to task. Forgiveness is obedience, and we should cry out to God for help as we wrestle with a lack of desire to obey. And if we make the decision to forgive, our feelings most often follow our lead.

*Forgiving is not the same as forgetting.*

We are often told that to *forgive is to forget*. That saying should rightly bother us, because forgiveness is not forgetting. Forgetting is passive. Forgiveness is active. Forgetting occurs when I’m overwhelmed, or something I do as I get older and my mind weakens. But how is a husband supposed to forget about his wife’s adultery with his best friend? Of course he will not forget this shattering infidelity. Or how is a wife supposed to forget about her husband’s physical and verbal abuse? Again, let’s return to our starting point. Does God forget when we sin? God does not forget. How could he forget? He’s all-knowing and does not struggle with memory problems as we do.

So what does Jeremiah 31:34 really mean? “I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” It must mean that when God forgives us, he promises not to dwell on or think about our sin. In his mind, he actively removes our sin “as far as the east is from the west” (Ps 103:12). In other words, he puts our sin in the rearview mirror and steps on the gas. In Isaiah 43:25, God says, “I, I am he who blots out your transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins.” Here too we see an active refusal to call to mind our sins once they are forgiven. God does not forget our sins in the same way I forget to bring the trash can in from the curb. He emphatically refuses to remember our sins against us. It’s quite different. It’s not a matter of cognitive recall, but of core attitude toward the offending person.

Recently, I watched a movie that helped me to understand this aspect of God’s forgiveness. In this movie, an overwhelmed mother struggles to provide for her rambunctious children. Her husband is away at war and missing in action. Over time they lose hope that he will ever return. As they plunge into poverty, it becomes evident that they will not be able to keep their beautiful country estate. Finally the mother capitulates to an opportunistic relative and signs away the estate. Yet, in a moment of chaos, a bottle of ink spills onto the deed completely covering her signature. Although she had signed the deed, her signature is utterly blotted out. There is no evidence of what transpired. The estate is saved (and the husband returns!). In the same way, when God forgives us, he pours ink over the record of our sin. He blots out our transgressions, ruins the evidence, and promises never to use it against us.

This is helpful when faced with forgiving something devastating. It shows us the nature of what we are doing. It is actively promising not to stew on an offense when it comes to mind. When I forgive I make an ongoing commitment not to ruminate, not to obsess, and not to punish this person ever again when this offense enters my memory.

*Forgiveness is not a minimization of the wrong that has been done.*

It does not mean that we excuse or accept the wrong. If you are called to forgive someone then, by definition, that means the offender has sinned against God and against you. There was a real wrong and a real injury. It is tempting to want to delay forgiveness out of the concern that forgiving this person will somehow miscommunicate that it is “not that big of a deal” to me or to God. Truly, forgiveness does not communicate to the person that it is okay to continue sinning or to perpetuate the status quo.

*Seeking forgiveness is not the same as saying “I’m sorry”.*

It is important to differentiate between saying “I’m sorry,” and “Please forgive me.” Is there a difference? Ask the victim. When we say we are sorry, we communicate that we feel bad about something. We sadly realize that we have been the cause of another’s pain. This grief is a crucial part of repentance but merely *feeling sorry* falls short of taking *full responsibility* for having done wrong. It may only communicate that I regret that the other person has been hurt. Far too often, saying “I’m sorry” is motivated by wanting to get off the hook rather than fully acknowledging and accepting responsibility for a real wrong committed. When we ask for forgiveness, we go beyond communicating sorrow or regret. We see ourselves and our indebtedness accurately. And we ask for mercy.

Yet experience shows each of us that it is painful to ask, “Will you please forgive me?” Why? Might it be that saying these words require us to both humbly articulate our wrong to the other person and take full responsibility for our sin, including accepting the consequences?

*Forgiving is a relational commitment.*

To say “I forgive you” stamps “Paid In Full” across the record of wrong. You cancel the debt, blot out the record. You cannot and will not hold this sin against the offender. When you forgive, you relinquish the rights to exact payment. It’s done.

If a person seems to be struggling with excessive sorrow after receiving forgiveness, do not let this opportunity pass without assuring this person of the reality and nature of forgiveness. Look this person in the eyes and lovingly proclaim, “It is done! It’s gone! You are forgiven. God has forgiven you and cleansed you. And I have forgiven you. We are good. I do not and will not hold this against you.” Do not miss this chance to reaffirm your love (See 2 Cor 2:5–11), and in doing so, you will remind yourself of what you have done too.

*Forgiveness does not remove the consequences of sin.*

Though forgiveness does mean the sin will no longer be held against the offender, it doesn’t mean that the relationship immediately returns to where it was before the sin. For example, a wife may fear that forgiving her husband who has committed adultery means she will immediately have to trust him again. Trust takes time to rebuild. She can forgive him *and* he may still have to live out consequences of his sin. Consequences like making a weekly call to his pastor to share his comings and goings. Consequences like submitting to counseling, where his deeper motivations and sin patterns can be addressed.

It is also important to realize in this adultery example that trust will only come in time. That means that forgiveness can be extended *before* trust is rebuilt. Since we base our forgiveness on God’s forgiveness, we can biblically root this in the understanding that God does not trust us before he forgives us. Listen to what John tells us about Jesus in John 2:24–25: “But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people ... for he himself knew what was in man.” God does not wait for us to be trustworthy before forgiving us. In fact, he sees the sin deep in our hearts and knows that it would be foolish to entrust himself to us. And yet he moves toward us in the midst of our betrayal, guilt, and shame and offers us generous forgiveness. We too can and do move mercifully toward others before we feel safe, before we trust, and before we have proof of change.

*Forgiveness is not an end in itself.*

It’s part of a larger process of reconciliation that aims toward the restoration of a wounded relationship. If you staunchly say “I forgive you but I don’t want to have a relationship with you anymore,” then there is no process underway. Imagine if God were to say to us, “I forgive you, but I don’t want a relationship with you anymore. Please leave me alone. You’re on your own now.” Rather, God forgives us and makes us his beloved children. He doesn’t blacklist us. We now belong to him as children who owe him an infinite debt of love. God’s forgiveness leads to relationship, not away *from* relationship.

Proverbs 17:9 says, “Whoever covers an offense seeks love.” To cover an offense is a figure of speech for forgiveness. To cover is to draw a curtain over another’s sin. Here, the future goal of forgiveness is to have goodwill toward the sinner, to avoid alienation, to make a future friendship possible, and to restore community. The relationship has been threatened and damaged by sin, but the motive in forgiveness is future reconciliation, not separation.

### *Forgiveness does not guarantee a relationship will continue.*

The previous section points to the normal reconciliation of relationships when the party in the wrong seeks forgiveness. But there are situations and sins that call for a delay in reconciliation or even an intentional separation from one another. This may at first seem to be in contradiction to what has been already shared in this article, but remember that situations vary and wisdom is needed.

Though we are called to forgive those who sin against us, and we must be ready and willing to do so (attitudinal forgiveness), pursuing relational reconciliation is complex and not automatic. As a general rule, if the offender has not repented, has not acknowledged the sin, and does not ask for forgiveness (transactional forgiveness), reconciliation is not warranted. The decision to reconcile is also impacted by the duration and severity of the sin involved.

Reconciliation may need to be delayed because of an exceptional circumstance (e.g., protection from immediate danger or harm, to bring the offender to true repentance, etc.). But even when reconciliation is delayed, forgiveness is not. We still must pursue a merciful and forgiving attitude (praying for the person who has sinned against us, honestly desiring this person's good, imploring God to restore right relationship with him, etc.) while we look forward to reconciliation sometime in the future.

In certain circumstances, *not* creating and maintaining separation may facilitate and assist a person's sin. A purposeful distance must be motivated by a desire for God to rescue a loved one from a particular evil such as child abuse, chronic deceit/lying, physical and sexual assault, adultery, drunkenness, persistent verbal and emotional cruelty, a gambling addiction, and things like these. At times, constructive loving kindness says "No" and waits for genuine change.

I witnessed this truth years ago working with a couple. Although the husband had never struck his wife with his hands, he continually used his words and moods in manipulative and cruel ways. Her many attempts to help him see his sin and its effects on her had been ineffectual. She decisively separated from him. Maintaining communication from a distance, she pleaded with him to take his angry moods and vicious words seriously. The impact of this woman's courageous move fell squarely on this man's heart and conscience. Although he had never been open to counseling in the past, he soon begged his wife to go to marriage counseling with him. In our weekly conversations, God clearly used her difficult decision for her husband's good. We saw the fruit of contrition and humility growing as God worked through the painful separation to restore hearing to the husband's deaf ears and to soften his stony heart. Within months their relationship was restored and they were living together in a God-honoring way. God had used this wife's righteous "No more!" to redeem her husband from his disrespectful and pernicious ways.

In these situations, it is always wise to seek godly counsel and the assistance of church leadership. When trust is deeply broken, restoration is often a lengthy process largely determined by the changing attitudes and actions of the abuser. Words and tears are not and will never be enough to restore trust. When an abusive person genuinely repents, there is an understanding and acceptance that rebuilding trust will take time. Restoration in these situations requires clarity of confession, authenticity in repentance, taking responsibility, and restitution when appropriate.

When we look at the story of Joseph in Genesis 42–45, we see an example of someone who had forgiven his brothers for their severe sin against him (attitudinal forgiveness). But Joseph wisely withheld reconciliation until they acknowledged their sins and expressed true remorse. Joseph strongly desires to be reunified to his family, but refrains from restoring relationship with them until they bear real fruit "in keeping with repentance" (Matt 3:8). This fruit comes in the form of changed attitudes, new desires, and self-sacrificing behavior that promotes others' well-being.

These parameters for forgiveness do not answer every question, nor do they address the particulars of complex situations. Remember, these circumstances require wise pastoral guidance and oversight. Now that forgiveness has been more clearly defined and considered, let's tune in to a conversation between Peter and Jesus as they discuss forgiveness.

### **Matthew 18:21–35: Jesus Teaches Peter (and Us) about Forgiveness**

*Matthew 18:21–35 (ESV)*

*21 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.*

*23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were*

*greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.'*

Before delving into this passage, it is important to note that Peter goes directly to Jesus with his personal questions about forgiveness. He asks the Lord what to do, and we get the impression that the situation is pretty messy. He cries out to him in distress and speaks plainly. Crying out to Jesus is a sign of deep faith. All too often, Christians ask questions about forgiveness to everyone but the Lord. If we are going to forgive from the heart, crying out to Jesus when we are hurt is crucial.

In response to Peter, Jesus tells a story about mercilessness that leads us to genuine forgiveness. There is no deeper analysis available on forgiveness.

*Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" (Matt 18:21).*

Immediately, we lean in hoping to overhear Jesus' response. We know exactly what he is talking about. Do you see Peter's suffering in this question? He is not speaking theoretically. Other people batter him, and we can identify with that. Peter does not and cannot trust his nearest and dearest brother. Being wronged once would be enough, but it happens repeatedly. These sins against Peter hurt him, aggravate him, weary him. Essentially, Peter asks, "When can I start to put up boundaries between my brother and me? When can I start to protect myself? When can I say, 'Enough is enough!' When can I walk away from this toxic person?" We all identify with the pain and frustration. He's been hurt, and he's asking an earnest question. Now listen to how Jesus, the Lamb of God, responds.

*Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven" (Matt 18:22).*

Do you see what Jesus does here? He too speaks plainly. He says, "Peter, this is where I'm going. This is what I desire for you. I want you to be profoundly and persistently merciful. I want you to be unrestrained in your forgiveness." As you can imagine, Peter is stunned. Maybe he is even offended. "Yeah Jesus, forgiveness sounds like a lovely idea until you have something to forgive. You don't know how hard this has been. Do you know what it's like to ..." And you can almost hear Peter as he thinks, "Jesus, there are some repeated offenses that no sane person would continue to forgive."

Make no mistake. Jesus definitely is saying that we are to be extravagantly forgiving. But he knows something about Peter (and the rest of us as well). Remember John 2:25. "He himself knew what was in man." Where might Jesus get this number (seventy times seven)? Is it just a random number? I don't think so. Jesus may be alluding to another Bible story that Peter has known since he was a child. In fact, it was probably one of the first stories that Peter's parents told him when he was a boy. The first time this number was used was in a different context—in a context of revenge. We read about it in Genesis 4:23–24. "*Lamech said to his wives: 'Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is seven fold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold.'*"

You know the backstory: Adam and Eve have two children—Cain and Abel. Cain murders Abel. God punishes Cain; he will have to be a fugitive and wander the earth. But Cain is afraid that others might kill him. So God places a mark on Cain and promises that if anyone should kill Cain, God's vengeance would be sevenfold. In other words, he says, "Do not be afraid Cain, I will protect you." Now, Lamech is one of Cain's descendants by seven generations and seems to resemble him, but is even more godless.

So what is Lamech doing as he boasts to his wives? He is comforting them by overstating his protection of them—far greater than even God's promise of protection of Cain. Lamech promises to erect an impenetrable boundary between his family and other unsafe people. But look how Lamech's response is completely disproportionate to the injury. A "young man" struck him, and he responds by murdering the boy. This is not justice. This is over-the-top revenge. Do you see how Lamech proudly boasts of safety, protection, and revenge to his wives? There is no sovereign God in Lamech's story—only pride. He doesn't stop to ask the Lord what he should do. He goes straight from being wounded to striking back.

Can you see why Jesus takes Peter back to Lamech's vengeful boast? He's saying, "Peter, before you can forgive your brother, you must know something about yourself. You too desire safety, self-protection, and vengeance." And this is what unwillingness to forgive is all about—securing safety, ensuring self-protection, and retaliation. The more we look at Lamech, the more we see our proud selves.

Because refusing to forgive is about self-protection and revenge, we must be willing to test ourselves if we are unwilling to forgive. Can you articulate why you refuse to forgive this person? Naming these hidden motives helps us to see clearly what controls us. It reveals what our hearts deeply desire. Typically, refusing to forgive is not complex.

Jesus is clear with Peter and with those of us looking over his shoulder. Jesus says, “I’ve come to reverse this tendency toward retaliation and self-protection. My desire for you is to entrust yourself to me and to deeply forgive others.” And Jesus is worthy of our trust. His sovereign hand is in the course of events and over our lives. We may not understand God’s plan. When another person “means evil against” us, “God means it for good” (Gen 50:20). He even uses another’s sin against us in redemptive ways. It is God’s will, not the will of people who hurt us, that is the controlling reality in the details of our lives. If God isn’t sovereign, then bitterness, self-protection, and revenge make sense. But when we perceive and embrace God’s sovereignty, we are able to forgive even the deepest wrongs. This is why we cannot bear a grudge or take revenge. This is at the heart of forgiveness.

At this point you may be thinking, “Well I know that Jesus wants me to forgive \_\_\_\_\_. But it’s not that easy. I don’t have forgiveness for this person. I’m too hurt and too angry. I don’t like this person.” And it’s here where Jesus says, “Let me tell you another story. Things will become clearer as you listen.”

*Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants (Matt 18:23).*

Jesus is full of surprises. You’d think he would assess Peter’s situation by asking about what happened, or how wrong and hurtful the offense was, or who it was and how frequently it had occurred. But he doesn’t. He starts by telling a story about the kingdom of heaven and a king. This response astonishes us. Jesus starts by reorienting Peter and reminding him that he lives in God’s kingdom. And the King *is* on the throne. As the story unfolds, it will become increasingly clear that all of us fall into the category of “his servants.” We must never lose sight of the reality that there are many servants but only one King.

Isn’t it true that when I refuse to forgive, I act as if I were the king? In my heart I take the place of God. And I respond in defense of my kingdom. But we must remember and humbly believe that we live in God’s kingdom. He is the King. We are merely unworthy servants in God’s kingdom. This is why Jesus reminds us to speak to our Father saying, “Your kingdom come, your will be done.” Jesus knows that we are all about our kingdoms. And when we are concerned with our own kingdoms, we fiercely seek our own protection and our own vigilante justice. Again, Jesus reminds us, “Remember where you live. Remember who you are. Remember who the King is—he’s your father. And he’s still on the throne. He cares for you. You are very valuable to him. He sees and knows. He is just. He will repay. Leave room for his wrath. You are merely servants.”

When we are deeply hurt and betrayed by our spouses—when trust is broken, we must go before the King. Remember, this is important if you are going to forgive from the heart. We could say, “If you want to forgive your spouse, first forget your spouse. Go to the Lord.” You are not the King and you no longer live for your kingdom. This is what Joseph tells his brothers when they ask him to forgive them. Joseph says, “Do not fear, for am I in the place of God?” (Gen 50:19). Joseph humbly sees himself rightly. He is a servant, not the King. And in this, he is able to forgive his brothers. You too are a fellow servant.

*When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made (Matt 18:24–25).*

After setting the context, Jesus tells us that the King settles accounts. In other words, there is a day of reckoning—and it starts with the household of God. This is where we (and Peter) make our way into Jesus’ story. We are his servants and we all have debts with the King. Now, just how big is this debt? It’s enormous, unimaginable, and unpayable. One talent was equivalent to twenty years of wages for the average laborer. Ten thousand talents is ten thousand times twenty annual salaries. This is billions of dollars in today’s terms. Jesus’ point is clear: we each must apprehend, fathom, and feel this unpayable debt we have with God. When we move into this awareness, our hearts soften in clarity, humility, and gratitude.

But why would Jesus use such a large number? I think Jesus uses this enormous number because he has to wake us up. He magnifies our sin in the same way a telescope magnifies an object, and we are able to perceive the object more accurately. What was once far away is brought near. And now that the magnitude of your debt is clearer, can you imagine trying to repay it? Even if you sell yourself, your spouse, your kids, your house, your cars, your camper, liquidate your retirement and all your savings accounts—it still would only be a drop in the bucket toward paying back this debt! We don’t believe or grasp this reality. We often live unconscious of the load of our guilt. But we each have a massive debt of sin with God that continues to grow. We cannot catch up. When Jesus speaks of the master ordering his servant to be sold along with his wife and children and all that he has, he is not being angry or sharp. The master does become angry, but not until the end of Jesus’ story. At the beginning, the master is mercifully trying to awaken his servant—to transform him so that he might know the weight of his guilt and turn in humility, gentleness, and kindness.

But herein lies the problem: if we don’t know and understand the immensity of our own debts of sin, we don’t have a chance of having forgiving hearts. Most of us think we’re pretty nice people. We think we’re a little better than average, or at least better than the person who sinned against us. We’re full of spiritual pride and self-righteousness. When a loved one wrongs us, we deeply believe that we “would never do that!” For the most part, we’re absolutely dull to the height and depth and breadth of our sin. We are unschooled in our own wretchedness, while living under an illusion of our own goodness. And when we are blind to

the magnitude of our sin, all we see is our neighbor's sins. His sins look bigger than ours, and we feel better about ourselves. As a result, we deal harshly with other sinners, while being blind to the fact that our debts are just as sizable.

What shall we do then? We must pray. We pray that God would give us grief for our sin. We ask that he would make us know something of how much we owe and make our own forgiveness more precious to us. When we are faced with the need to forgive, we must remember and behold who we are: mere servants who have enormous debts with the King—debts that are absolutely unpayable.

*So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt (Matt 18:26–27).*

What just happened?! Did you hear what the servant asks for? He wants a payment plan. But there is absolutely no way he can pay his debt back! He is a servant, not a king. He buses tables at the local diner. He's a paperboy. Despite his lowly status, when the King says that he has an unpayable debt, the servant begs to differ.

This is where forgiveness short-circuits. This servant underestimates his debt and actually believes that he can eventually pay it off. Therefore he asks for a payment extension, not debt cancellation. He is delusional in thinking his sin is not all that bad. His hope does not lie in the King cancelling his debt. It lies in working his way out of his debt. But after a lifetime of trying on his own, he will not have even put a dent in his debt. At this point, we don't need Jesus to finish his story. We could finish it ourselves. We know this story is not going to end well.

In light of this servant's request, it is even more shocking that the king generously and mercifully releases him from the debt. The king actually gives him far more than he asks for. Why would the king do such a thing? In Scripture there are very few examples of perfect apologies. And yet God's word is full of examples of extravagant forgiveness. Truly, we are forgiven not based on the perfection of our confession and contrition, but on Christ's gift to us. The only sense we can make of this outrageous act is that the king is compassionate, sympathetic, merciful, and gracious. The motive must come from who he is. When Jesus says, "out of pity for him," we realize that forgiveness comes from the tender heart of the Forgiver, not the merit of the sinner. Isaiah makes a precious and mysterious declaration of God's glorious goodness. "I, I am he who blots out your transgressions *for my own sake*" (Is 43:25). For his own sake? God forgives us because he is gloriously merciful and gracious. The reason for his mercy is located in himself, not within us. He takes great pleasure in forgiving because it brings his name praise, glory, and fame.

If hope lies in ourselves—that we are good enough, that we can grow enough to work our way out of debt with God, or that we are morally superior to others—then forgiveness will again be elusive. Self-righteousness is poison to forgiveness. It is the "white devil" of spiritual sins, the wellspring of mercilessness. Forgiveness is possible if our only hope is that the King is merciful and gracious and that he has compassionately released us and cancelled our debts of sin. True forgiveness springs from the unspeakable preciousness of God's mercy and acceptance in Christ.

*But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii (Matt 18:28).*

So what happens next? Well, as soon as he steps out of the king's presence, he goes looking for a "fellow servant," another person in the same boat. And this fellow servant has a debt with him of 100 denarii. Jesus says that this servant goes out and finds another servant who owes him about \$10,000.

I am so thankful that Jesus says 100 denarii (\$10,000) and not "a quarter of a denarius" (\$25). 100 denarii hurts! It's a real debt. When we sin against one another, it's painful. Other people suffer when we sin, and we suffer when they sin. In Jesus' choice of 100 denarii, he communicates that he knows that we sin against one another—and that sin has real consequences. He doesn't minimize the impact on us or pat us on the head and say, "Come on now. You are being petty. It is just a peccadillo." With this debt, Jesus reveals his sympathy toward the impact of our suffering when a person sins against us. He really does understand.

*... and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt (Matt 18:28–30).*

How dare he treat another servant in this way! Did he already forget that his debt was paid in full? That is impossible! Forgiveness on this scale is not something we ever forget. He never knew what it was to be forgiven in the first place. It is as if he has a terminal illness, yet feels no pain. He disassociates from the deadly disease. Somehow he doesn't feel the weight of his debt. Somehow he has presumed upon, felt entitled to, and deserving of the master's mercy—as if he is worthy of the master's compassion. But whose debt moves him? Whose debt disturbs him? His fellow servant's debt is more real than his own. In his heart, his fellow servant is less deserving of mercy. This is what we do when we do not understand our own debt—when our hope is in ourselves and our goodness and not in a merciful God who forgives sinners. We are sinned against, wronged, and hurt. In return, we strangle the people who hurt us by demanding repayment. We are shown compassionate mercy, and yet we are ruthless with others. We decidedly stay bitter, resentful, and angry. We withdraw, avoid eye contact, and walk around the

house in cold silence. Or we are seduced by self-pity and destructively accuse and counter-attack. Our hearts wear blinders that fix our eyes upon another's debt to us. Forgiveness seems impossible.

The second servant requests the very same thing that the first servant asks for. But it is as if the first servant does not even recognize or respect the very words that brought about his own salvation. With these exact words he had been delivered from a debt of 10,000 talents! He does not recognize the identical request that brought immense compassion and mercy to him. As a result of this amnesia, his response could not have been more different. The king is merciful and generous. The unforgiving servant is ruthless and stingy. Tragically, the king's compassion has had no effect on the unforgiving servant's soul.

Unfortunately, we can all identify. We are so hurt by another's sin that the mercy that we've been shown flies from our hearts and minds. We react and mistreat others. I counseled a young married woman who had been pursued romantically by a spiritual mentor. It happened slowly and subtly over time. Thankfully, she was able to stop him from pursuing her by approaching the leadership in the church. But she had been hurt. She didn't feel comfortable around him. He had betrayed her trust and used her for his own desires. But then there came a time when God called her to forgive her mentor. As we looked at this parable, she began to weep and said, "He really did hurt me. But I have responded just like this unforgiving servant. All this time I have been on my high horse demanding that he come crawling to me on his knees begging my pardon. I wanted him to pay for what he'd done ... to be humiliated in front of the church. But I now see that we are in the same boat. I too have a debt with the King. Who am I to demand payment?"

Do you see what happened? This woman was hurt by her mentor's selfish sin. Afterward, she turned and sought revenge. But part of the reconciliation that took place was her asking her mentor for forgiveness for her proud and self-righteous attitude. She had been victimized. But then she turned and became a victimizer. We are not so different. We have been sinned against, and then we sin by strangling, demanding repayment, and incarcerating others in our hearts forever, or until the debt is paid to our satisfaction. This is what refusing to forgive looks like.

Unfortunately, our mercilessness is not a private affair. It affects others. This is where Jesus goes next.

*When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place (Matt 18:31).*

Bitterness and resentment do not stay hidden. People are watching. Your children are watching. Your friends, family, and neighbors are watching. And these onlookers are servants who also have debts of their own. What do they see? They know if your heart is a storehouse of animosity and revenge. Your children painfully watch as you strangle one another and demand payment. Are they "greatly distressed," fearful, or despairing as they witness the bitterness on display? Are they hardening their hearts toward God as they helplessly and hopelessly experience your refusal to forgive? Can you imagine your children, in the privacy of their prayers, going to God in distress, reporting what they see, and crying themselves to sleep because of what they witness in your marriage? Refusing to forgive someone has a demoralizing and disheartening impact on those who know and love you.

*Then his master summoned him and said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" (Matt 18:32–33).*

Jesus says, "I forgave you all that debt ... because you pleaded with me." Again, Jesus restates what he's already emphasized. "You didn't pay back anything! You didn't work off anything! You didn't deserve anything! All you did was ask me for mercy. I was the One who paid this debt. Don't dupe yourself into believing that somehow you paid this thing off. You did nothing ... but plead. Please don't treat the person who sinned against you any differently than I treated you. Instead show this person mercy reflecting the truth that someone else paid your debt."

We must know the greatness of our debt with God and believe the greatness of God's forgiveness for us. How do we nurture forgiving hearts? It's in entering the throne room and spending time there. It's in seeing and remembering our unpayable debt with God and hearing his words over and over again, "I release you and forgive you from all this debt." As we behold our forgiveness, God changes our hearts so that they are so full of gratitude that we cannot and will not and do not desire to strangle and demand payment from others.

What is Jesus attempting at this point in his story? Is he guilt-tripping us into forgiving? No. Neither is he shaming us by saying, "You should know better!" Rather, he is both comforting us and warning us, "If you are my child, this is who you are—forgiven. You personally know forgiveness and you are a generously forgiving person—even in this." If we are not a forgiving people, are we really Christians at all? Christians, at the heart, are a people who can never forget that we have been forgiven a debt that we could never repay. And we, who know our own forgiveness, cannot not forgive. Forgiven people are forgiving people.

*And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart (Matt 18:34–35).*

Don't forget whom Jesus is speaking to. At this point in Jesus' story, it's natural to lose sight of his audience. He's not addressing the Pharisees or Sadducees or unbelievers. He's speaking to Peter and to his closest friends! This is an intimate conversation with his closest companions. He is speaking to us, his beloved. Forgiveness is serious business, and he wants his friends to know this.

Some people consider God's forgiveness to be unconditional, but it is not. Our forgiveness is conditioned upon our forgiving others. It is not a precondition, but it is an after-condition, an evidence, a fruit. It shows we are his. Its presence shows that we are passing on to others what we have received. Its absence calls our salvation into question. Notice that Jesus says, "my heavenly Father" and not "our Father." At this point, Jesus is making distinctions. He's separating the sheep from the goats, his children from strangers.

When our hearts continue to withhold forgiveness from others, we can be sure that we arouse God's just wrath when we despise his good gift. God does not generously give to us so that we might waste it by spending it all on ourselves. His purpose is that out of the riches of his forgiveness we give generously to serve the community. If our hearts are withdrawn and miserly, it is a wake-up call to reconsider our faith commitment. It is an eternally significant warning for those with a stubborn unwillingness to forgive.

Jesus ends this intimate conversation by summarizing the nature of the forgiveness his Father requires—forgiveness "from your heart." The entire soul must be in agreement. Our minds must concur. Our spirits must be willing. There is nothing superficial or manipulative about forgiveness. It is hard and costly, but we must be devoted to this work.

Let's end by returning to Lamech. Remember him from Genesis 4? He boasted, "*Listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain's revenge is sevenfold, then Lamech's is seventy-sevenfold.*" Jesus doesn't come right out and say this, but in effect we hear another boast in Jesus' story. And it's this: "*Now listen to what I say. You were the man who struck me. You were the one who wounded me. And I, the King, was killed so that you might die to the hard heartedness that refuses to forgive others. I was killed so that you might live and live to forgive. I promise you, if your forgiveness is sevenfold, then my forgiveness is seventy-sevenfold.*"

### From Your Heart ... Forgive

In conclusion, forgiveness must be more than something we remember and proclaim from the past (whether on Calvary, or our own salvation). It must be freshly enacted each day as concrete situations and conflicts arise in our lives. We, the church, proclaim God's forgiveness in Christ as we humbly and gratefully do the work of forgiveness in the community. Without this, forgiveness grows distant and stale and is in danger of being trivialized as something merely historical, psychological, or irrelevant.

God forgives us for his own sake—for his own magnificent glory. And when we forgive others their sins, we too reflect this glory. Proverbs 19:11 says it is a person's "glory to overlook an offense." Forgiveness, therefore, is like wearing an elegant adornment that reflects great beauty, honor, and distinction. When we forgive others, the watching world delights in us, is drawn toward Christ's bride, and ultimately toward Christ himself. May we reflect this glory as we forgive from the heart.

### "From Your Heart ... Forgive" Application Questions

- 1) Before reading this article, how did you define forgiveness?
- 2) Are you encouraged or discouraged knowing that forgiving others is to be modeled after God's forgiveness? Explain.
- 3) What is the purpose of God's forgiveness? Why does God forgive? What about forgiveness is a component of God's character and relationship with us?
- 4) When we say, "Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors," what are we asking for?
- 5) What is the risk in waiting to "feel ready" to forgive someone?
- 6) If forgiveness is not forgetting and must be an active process (like refusing to remember or blotting out a record), what might this look like practically in your situation?
- 7) How often do others hear you ask, "Will you please forgive me?" Why are these words so difficult to say?
- 8) Have you ever made trust a prerequisite to forgiving another person? How might doing so delay forgiveness?
- 9) When we are hurt, it is tempting to "forgive," yet avoid the person in the future. How is this wrong in the reconciliation of normal conflicts?
- 10) Can you think of some ways you have avoided true reconciliation with someone you have been called to forgive?
- 11) What are some ways you could start to pursue true reconciliation with that person today?

- 12) When would it be right to distance yourself from a person who is sinning against you?
- 13) How do you know you have truly forgiven a person even though reconciliation is delayed?
- 14) How can intentionally creating distance in a relationship be motivated by a desire to reconcile?
- 15) What does forgiveness look like when reconciliation has not yet occurred?
- Matthew 18:21–35*
- Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?”*
- 16) Think about a current (maybe ongoing) situation where someone has pointedly wronged you. What happened, and how did it affect you?
- Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven.”*
- 17) How do Jesus’ words strike you?
- Lamech said to his wives: “Adah and Zillah, hear my voice; you wives of Lamech, listen to what I say: I have killed a man for wounding me, a young man for striking me. If Cain’s revenge is seven fold, then Lamech’s is seventy-sevenfold.” (Gen 4:23–24)*
- 18) Lamech was motivated by revenge and self-protection. What are your underlying motivations when you withhold forgiveness?
- 19) When you feel hurt, how is it a comfort to refuse to forgive?
- 20) If you took to heart God’s promise to use another’s sins against you for your good, how would this release you to forgive this person?
- Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants.*
- 21) In your refusal to be merciful, how have you seen yourself as a “king” and not as a “fellow unworthy” servant?
- 22) What does it mean to “leave room” for God’s wrath (Rom 12:19)?
- 23) When you don’t leave room for God to be the arbiter and judge, what do you tend to do?
- When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him 10,000 talents. And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made.*
- 24) What does this imply about your debt to God?
- 25) How does self-righteousness (seeing yourself as a pretty good person who is morally better than another) weaken your willingness and ability to forgive?
- So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.” And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt.*
- 26) God does not wait for us to “deserve” or “earn” forgiveness. How does knowing this help you fight against the temptation to withhold forgiveness until a person “earns” or “deserves” it?
- But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, “Pay what you owe.” So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, “Have patience with me, and I will pay you.” He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt.*
- 27) How is it possible that God’s mercy had little effect on the servant’s heart toward others?
- 28) How are you stingy when it comes to showing mercy to others? How have you “punished, exacted payment, and imprisoned” a person who sinned against you?
- 29) Alternatively, have you ever minimized another’s sin against you hoping to make forgiveness easier? What are the potential drawbacks of minimizing the sin?
- When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place.*

- 30) Who has witnessed your bitterness and resentment? How do you think this has affected them?  
*Then his master summoned him and said to him, "You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?"*
- 31) Do you feel you have a heart "full of gratitude" for God's mercy? If yes, how did this happen? How can you ensure that your grateful heart continues to grow?  
 If no, how can you actively participate in the Lord's work to grow a heart of gratitude?  
*And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.*
- 32) God forgives you based on what condition?
- 33) Practically, how do you waste God's forgiveness by "spending it all" on yourself?
- 34) Thinking about a present situation, what is the next step God is calling you to? Attitudinal forgiveness? Transactional forgiveness? Reconciliation?

## Module #8: David Powlison's "Three Trees" model for understanding the Dynamics of Biblical Change and the Confess, Repent, Cleanse, Restore Process

*Jeremiah 17:5-10 (ESV)*

*5 Thus says the LORD: "Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart turns away from the LORD. 6 He is like a shrub in the desert, and shall not see any good come. He shall dwell in the parched places of the wilderness, in an uninhabited salt land.*

*7 "Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose trust is the LORD. 8 He is like a tree planted by water, that sends out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit."*

*9 The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? 10 "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."*

Checkout this [Audio Podcast Discussion](#) describing the use of this method to help walk yourself through this method.

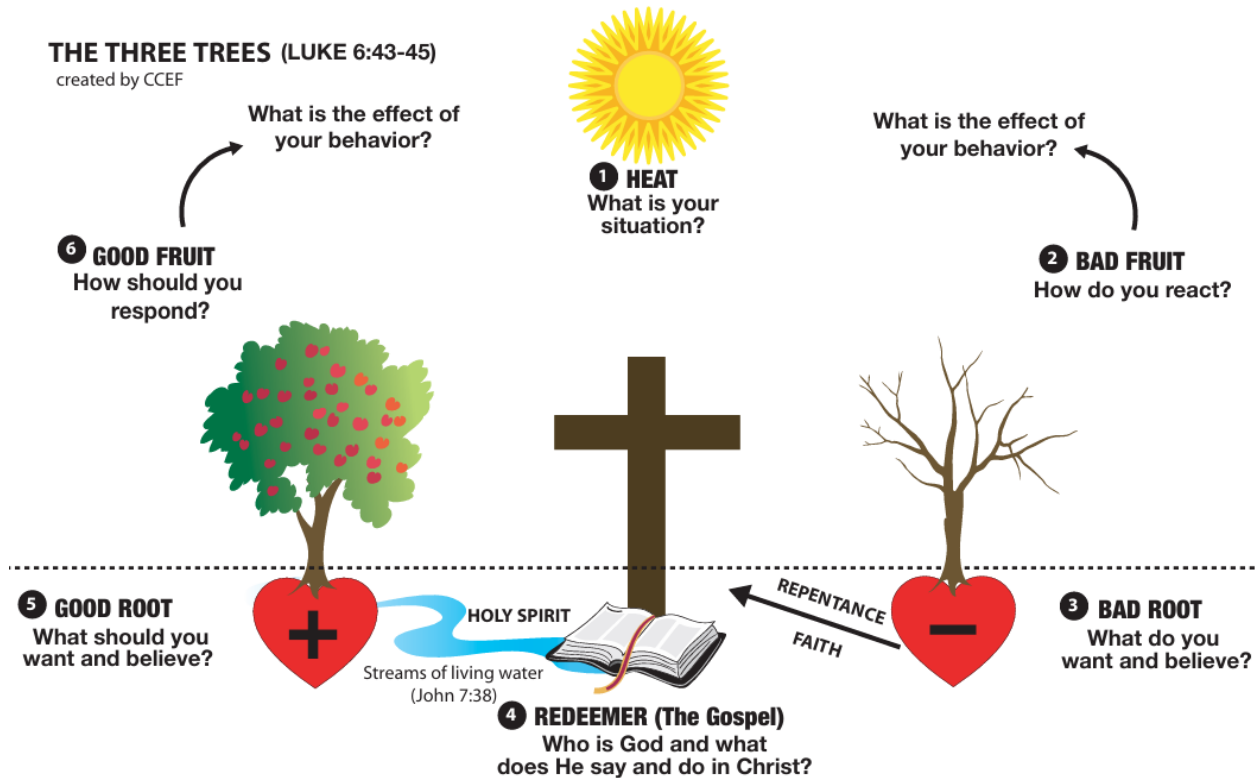
### Utilizing the "Three Tree" Model for Confession, Repentance, Cleansing, and Restoration

The "Three Tree" model, developed by David Powlison, offers a powerful framework for understanding biblical change and guiding individuals through a process of confession, repentance, cleansing, and restoration. Inspired by the imagery in Jeremiah 17:5-10, this model helps individuals diagnose their struggles, uncover heart-level issues, and apply God's provisions for lasting transformation.

#### *Understanding the "Three Tree" Model*

The "Three Tree" model is visually represented by three distinct trees: a thorny bush, a cross, and a fruitful tree. Each tree symbolizes different aspects of a person's spiritual condition and response to life's challenges.

**THE THREE TREES (LUKE 6:43-45)**  
created by CCEF



1. **Thorny Bush:** Represents the ungodly person who trusts in human strength and turns away from God. This person faces the same heat (trials and difficulties) as the fruitful tree but responds with sinful behavior and bears bad fruit. (Jeremiah 17:5-6)
2. **Cross:** Symbolizes God's redemptive work through Jesus Christ, providing the resources for change, comfort, cleansing, and power to transform.
3. **Fruitful Tree:** Represents the godly person who trusts in the Lord. This person faces the same heat but responds with godly behavior and bears good fruit. (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

*The Six-Box Model*

The "Three Tree" model has been adapted into a "Six-Box" model, which provides a detailed framework for diagnosing and addressing personal struggles. The six boxes are:

**Box 1: Situational Heat and Dew**

This box summarizes the external circumstances, including hardships (heat) and blessings (dew). These factors are important but not the ultimate cause of behavior; they are the occasion or soil where responses grow.

- What is your situation?
- Describe and confess the situation you find yourself in.
- Detail the trials, tribulations, persecutions, temptations, and circumstances that are difficult to face.

### Box 2: Bad Fruit

This box summarizes the sinful words, actions, and emotions that flow from the heart in response to Box 1 situations. It includes both sins of commission and omission. (Jeremiah 17:6)

- How did you react?
- Specifically itemize the sinful reactions. Consider your thoughts, words, and deeds (behaviors).

### Box 3: Bad Roots

This box summarizes the underlying sinful beliefs and motives in the heart that produce the Box 2 behavior. It represents how individuals wrongly interpret themselves, God, and their world. (Jeremiah 17:5)

- What do you want and believe?
- What desires are ruling your heart and motivations as you respond in this way?
- What are the lies you are believing in this situation?

### Box 4: God's Provisions in Christ

This box represents the resources God provides for change, primarily specific truths from God's Word, empowered by the Holy Spirit. It also includes God's people (the church) and scripturally sound resources.

- Who is God and what does He say and do in Christ?
- The cross symbolizes God's redemptive work through Jesus Christ, providing the resources for change, comfort, cleansing, and power to transform.
- Correct the lies with the truth found in the Scripture and in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### Box 5: Good Roots

This box describes the godly beliefs and motives that God's Spirit forms in the heart, replacing the bad roots from Box 3. It involves repenting, embracing biblical truth, and growing into one's identity as God's child. (Jeremiah 17:7)

- What should you want and believe?
- What desires should be ruling your heart right now?
- If Jesus were the desire of your heart and the ruling Monarch (instead of yourself), what would you want?

### Box 6: Good Fruit

This box summarizes the godly words, actions, and emotions that naturally flow from a renewed Box 5 heart. It involves putting off sinful behavior and putting on godly replacements. (Jeremiah 17:8)

- How should you respond?
- What will be the effect of your godly response to the situation?
- How does the Holy Spirit, the living water that connects you to your Savior, Jesus Christ, help you produce fruit in the situation (refer back to Jeremiah 17:7-8 and Psalm 1:1-3)?

### *Walking Through the Model*

To utilize the "Three Tree" model for personal transformation, follow these steps:

#### Identify Situational Heat and Dew (Box 1):

- Reflect on your current circumstances, both hardships and blessings.
- Ask yourself: What specific heat (trials, difficulties) and dew (blessings) are you facing? How do these situations influence your responses?

#### Recognize Bad Fruit (Box 2):

- Examine your sinful words, actions, and emotions in response to Box 1 situations.
- Ask yourself: How do you react to the heat in your life? What specific bad fruit behaviors, words, emotions do you see in yourself?

### Uncover Bad Roots (Box 3):

- Identify the underlying sinful beliefs and motives that produce the bad fruit.
- Ask yourself: What do you really want? What do you desire, value, cherish, idolize, treasure, hope in other than God? What lies or distorted beliefs about God, yourself, or circumstances are fueling this bad fruit?

### Apply God's Provisions in Christ (Box 4):

- Engage with specific truths from God's Word that address your bad roots and bad fruit.
- Ask yourself: What specific gospel truths about who God is and what He did in Christ directly speak to your bad roots and bad fruit? How can you actively rely on the Holy Spirit and lean on your Christian community for support?
- What truths expose, confront, and correct the lies that you are believing in?

### Cultivate Good Roots (Box 5):

- Embrace godly beliefs and motives, replacing the bad roots.
- Ask yourself: What godly beliefs and motives are you asking God to cultivate in place of your bad roots? How can you grasp your identity in Christ more deeply and grow in knowing, loving, trusting, and obeying Him?
- What Scriptures do you have to meditate on and obey to redirect your heart so that Jesus is the ruling Monarch and not yourself?
- Confess your need and ask the Holy Spirit to heal the hurts and bring cleansing and restoration.

### Bear Good Fruit (Box 6):

- Respond differently now that your heart is being renewed and you have received cleansing from God.
- Ask yourself: What specific good fruit do you long to see growing in your life? What sinful thoughts, words, and deeds do you need to consciously put off, and what godly thoughts, words, and deeds do you need to actively put on?

### Key Movements in Godly Change

The process of moving from bad fruit/roots to good roots/fruit involves three key movements:

#### Believing:

- Cling to God and embrace His presence, provisions, and promises of forgiveness, wisdom, and power.
- Reflect on past provisions (election, redemption, forgiveness), present provisions (continual forgiveness, love, mercy), and future promises (perfect heart, perfect body, perfect place).
- Believe God's Word and rebuke and forsake the lies.

#### Repenting:

- Turn from and forsake both behavioral sins (bad fruit) and heart sins (bad roots).
- Use the "7 A's of Confession": Address everyone involved, avoid if, but, and maybe, admit specific sins, acknowledge the hurt, accept the consequences, alter your behavior, ask for forgiveness.

#### What are the "7 A's of Confession"?

The "7 A's of Confession" are a structured approach to repentance that helps individuals thoroughly and humbly admit their wrongs. Here are the details:

- **Address everyone involved:** Confess to God first, and then to any other individuals who have been affected by the sin.
- **Avoid if, but, and maybe:** Make no excuses or justifications for your actions.
- **Admit specific sins:** Clearly articulate the precise attitudes, words, and actions that were sinful.
- **Acknowledge the hurt:** Express genuine sorrow for how your sin impacted the other person.
- **Accept the consequences:** Be willing to make restitution and allow time for trust to be restored.
- **Alter your behavior:** Commit to changes in attitudes and actions to prevent recurrence.

- **Ask for forgiveness:** Directly ask for forgiveness from those you have wronged.

These steps are designed to facilitate genuine repentance and reconciliation, ensuring that the confession is thorough and heartfelt.

### Obeying:

- Love God and others by putting off sin and putting on righteousness.
- Practice grace-motivated obedience, renouncing sinful behaviors and adopting godly replacements.

### Conclusion

The "Three Tree" model provides a comprehensive roadmap for personal transformation, guiding individuals through a process of confession, repentance, cleansing, and restoration. By asking diagnostic questions and applying God's provisions, individuals can experience genuine change from the inside out, growing in Christlikeness and reflecting God's transforming power to those around them.

An Example of what a Completed "Three Tree" Diagram might look like:

Love / Kindness /  
Gentleness / Peace / Joy

Surrendered to Yahweh

No longer Replaying the  
Offense, instead Praying  
for and Forgiving them

Lean into and Trust God  
in all circumstances,  
especially when what's  
happening makes no  
sense to me

"I want to love others...

"I want to forgive others...

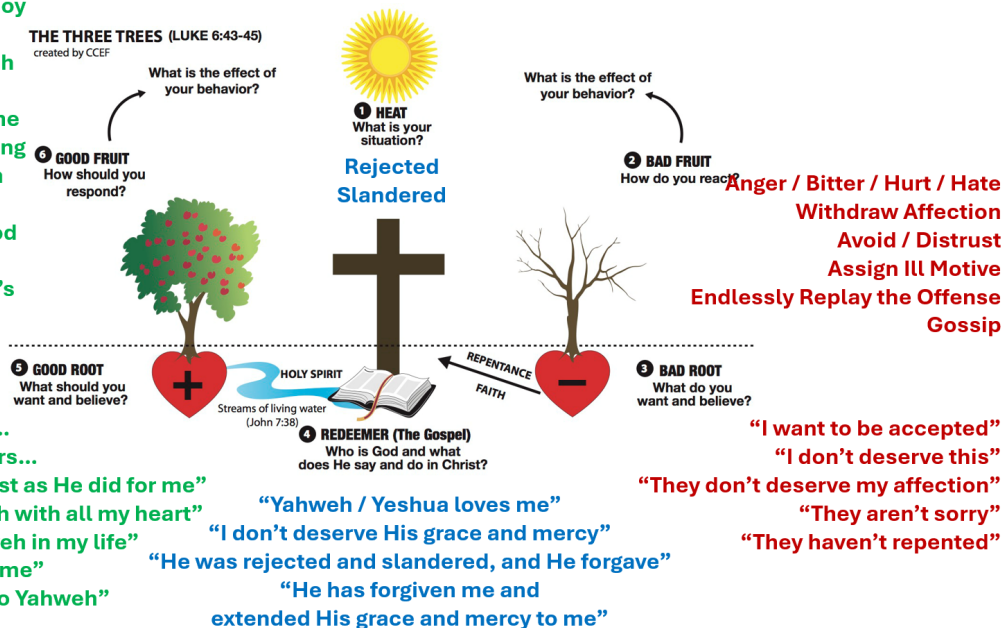
... just as He did for me"

"I want to trust Yahweh with all my heart"

"I want to glorify Yahweh in my life"

"God is good, all the time"

"Vengeance belongs to Yahweh"



Check out this [brief video presentation](#) discussing the above example.

Note: Even though the circumstances have not changed, the person is still being rejected and slandered, it is possible to respond in a Godly manner (exhibiting Good Fruit) which will flow out of a Good Root nourished by the streams of Living Water (the Holy Spirit).

The entire process of working through this framework involves honest confession and dialogue with your Heavenly Father Who loves you, and sent His Son to die for you so you can be reconciled to Him. Share with Him your hurt and faults. Ask Him to heal you and strengthen you. Repent specifically of the sins at the fruit and root domains. Receive His cleansing and allow His restoration in your life.

## Appendix: Bible Verses for Meditation and Reflection

These scripture lists are provided to help you locate in God's Word verses or passages that relate to these questions. It is important to study and meditate on God's Word in its context. Once you find a passage that you want to study and understand more deeply, look it up in your Bible. Read and observe the surrounding context, and consider consulting a study Bible or commentary for some additional insights. All the while, pray, and ask God, "What do you want me to know and observe in this passage?" and "What do you want me to do?". And then obey Him.

## What does the Bible say about knowing God and hearing His voice? God Speaks to His People (and you can learn to hear His voice)

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <u>Exodus 33:11</u>     | Thus the Lord used to speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent.  |
| <u>1 Samuel 3:9-10</u>  | <u>9</u> Therefore Eli said to Samuel, "Go, lie down, and if he calls you, you shall say, 'Speak, Lord, for your servant hears.'" So Samuel went and lay down in his place. <u>10</u> And the Lord came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."   |
| <u>1 Samuel 3:10</u>    | And the Lord came and stood, calling as at other times, "Samuel! Samuel!" And Samuel said, "Speak, for your servant hears."   |
| <u>1 Kings 19:11-13</u> | <u>11</u> And he said, "Go out and stand on the mount before the Lord." And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great and strong wind tore the mountains and broke in pieces the rocks before the Lord, but the Lord was not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. <u>12</u> And after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire the sound of a low whisper. <u>13</u> And when Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. And behold, there came a voice to him and said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?" |
| <u>Job 33:14-16</u>     | <u>14</u> For God speaks in one way, and in two, though man does not perceive it. <u>15</u> In a dream, in a vision of the night, when deep sleep falls on men, while they slumber on their beds, <u>16</u> then he opens the ears of men and terrifies them with warnings,   |
| <u>Psalms 81:13-14</u>  | <u>13</u> Oh, that my people would listen to me, that Israel would walk in my ways! <u>14</u> I would soon subdue their enemies and turn my hand against their foes.  |
| <u>Psalms 85:8</u>      | Let me hear what God the Lord will speak, for he will speak peace to his people, to his saints; but let them not turn back to folly.  |
| <u>Psalms 95:7-8</u>    | <u>7</u> For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, if you hear his voice, <u>8</u> do not harden your hearts, as at Meribah, as on the day at Massah in the wilderness,  |
| <u>Isaiah 30:21</u>     | And your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," when you turn to the right or when you turn to the left.   |
| <u>Isaiah 55:3</u>      | Incline your ear, and come to me; hear, that your soul may live; and I will make with you an everlasting covenant, my steadfast, sure love for David.   |
| <u>Matthew 11:15</u>    | He who has ears to hear, let him hear.  |
| <u>John 6:45</u>        | It is written in the Prophets, 'And they will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to me—  |
| <u>John 8:47</u>        | Whoever is of God hears the words of God. The reason why you do not hear them is that you are not of God."  |
| <u>John 10:3-5</u>      | <u>3</u> To him the gatekeeper opens. The sheep hear his voice, and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. <u>4</u> When he has brought out all his own, he goes before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice. <u>5</u> A stranger they will not follow, but they will flee from him, for they do not know the voice of strangers."   |
| <u>John 10:27</u>       | My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me.  |
| <u>Hebrews 3:7-8</u>    | <u>7</u> Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, "Today, if you hear his voice, <u>8</u> do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness,  |
| <u>Revelation 3:20</u>  | Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me.   |

## God Desires you to Know Him

Deuteronomy  
4:29

But from there you will seek the Lord your God and you will find him, if you search after him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Psalms 25:14

The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant.

Psalms 46:10

"Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!"

James 4:8

Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

2 Peter 3:18

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.

1 Corinthians  
2:9–10

9 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

Hebrews 11:6

And without faith it is impossible to please him, for whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.

## You Know Him through His Word

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <u>Joshua 1:8</u>        | This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success.   |
| <u>Psalm 1:1-3</u>       | <sup>1</sup> Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the wicked, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of scoffers; <sup>2</sup> but his delight is in the law of the Lord, and on his law he meditates day and night. <sup>3</sup> He is like a tree planted by streams of water that yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither. In all that he does, he prospers. |
| <u>Psalm 40:8</u>        | I delight to do your will, O my God; your law is within my heart.”   |
| <u>Psalm 119:11</u>      | I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you.  |
| <u>Psalm 119:18</u>      | Open my eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of your law.   |
| <u>Psalm 119:105</u>     | Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.   |
| <u>Proverbs 2:1-5</u>    | <sup>1</sup> My son, if you receive my words and treasure up my commandments with you, <sup>2</sup> making your ear attentive to wisdom and inclining your heart to understanding; <sup>3</sup> yes, if you call out for insight and raise your voice for understanding, <sup>4</sup> if you seek it like silver and search for it as for hidden treasures, <sup>5</sup> then you will understand the              |
| <u>Matthew 4:4</u>       | But he answered, “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ”  |
| <u>John 6:63</u>         | It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh is no help at all. The words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life.   |
| <u>John 14:26</u>        | But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.   |
| <u>John 15:7</u>         | If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.   |
| <u>John 16:13-14</u>     | <sup>13</sup> When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth, for he will not speak on his own authority, but whatever he hears he will speak, and he will declare to you the things that are to come. <sup>14</sup> He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you.  |
| <u>Acts 17:11</u>        | Now these Jews were more noble than those in Thessalonica; they received the word with all eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so.   |
| <u>Romans 10:17</u>      | So faith comes from hearing, and hearing through the word of Christ.   |
| <u>Romans 12:2</u>       | Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.   |
| <u>Colossians 3:16</u>   | Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.   |
| <u>2 Timothy 3:16-17</u> | <sup>16</sup> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <sup>17</sup> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.   |
| <u>Hebrews 4:12</u>      | For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.  |

## You Know Him through Prayer

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <u>2 Chronicles 7:14</u>    | if my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land.   |
| <u>Psalms 25:4-5</u>        | <u>4</u> Make me to know your ways, O Lord; teach me your paths. <u>5</u> Lead me in your truth and teach me, for you are the God of my salvation; for you I wait all the day long.   |
| <u>Psalms 63:1-3</u>        | <u>1</u> O God, you are my God; earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you; my flesh faints for you, as in a dry and weary land where there is no water. <u>2</u> So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and                   |
| <u>Psalms 145:18</u>        | The Lord is near to all who call on him, to all who call on him in truth.   |
| <u>Proverbs 3:5-6</u>       | <u>5</u> Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding. <u>6</u> In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.   |
| <u>Isaiah 55:6-7</u>        | <u>6</u> "Seek the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near; <u>7</u> let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the Lord, that he may have compassion on him, and to our God,               |
| <u>Jeremiah 29:12-13</u>    | <u>12</u> Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will hear you. <u>13</u> You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.  |
| <u>Jeremiah 29:13</u>       | You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart.   |
| <u>Jeremiah 33:3</u>        | Call to me and I will answer you, and will tell you great and hidden things that you have not known.  |
| <u>Lamentations 3:25-26</u> | <u>25</u> The Lord is good to those who wait for him, to the soul who seeks him. <u>26</u> It is good that one should wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord.   |
| <u>Matthew 6:6</u>          | But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.  |
| <u>Matthew 7:7-8</u>        | <u>7</u> "Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <u>8</u> For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.                                |
| <u>Mark 1:35</u>            | And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.   |
| <u>Luke 11:9-13</u>         | <u>9</u> And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <u>10</u> For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened. <u>11</u> What |
| <u>Luke 11:9-10</u>         | <u>9</u> And I tell you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. <u>10</u> For everyone who asks receives, and the one who seeks finds, and to the one who knocks it will be opened.                |
| <u>Romans 8:26-27</u>       | <u>26</u> Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness. For we do not know what to pray for as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words. <u>27</u> And he who searches hearts knows what is the                 |
| <u>Ephesians 1:17-18</u>    | <u>17</u> that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him, <u>18</u> having the eyes of your hearts enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to              |
| <u>Ephesians 6:18</u>       | praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints,  |
| <u>Philippians 4:6-7</u>    | <u>6</u> do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. <u>7</u> And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your                         |
| <u>1 Thessalonians 5:17</u> | pray without ceasing,   |
| <u>James 1:5</u>            | If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.  |
| <u>Psalms 40:1-3</u>        | <u>1</u> I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry. <u>2</u> He drew me up from the pit of destruction, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure. <u>3</u> He put a new song in my mouth, a       |
| <u>1 John 5:14-15</u>       | <u>14</u> And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. <u>15</u> And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked                 |

## You Know Him by Walking in His Ways

|                          |  |
|--------------------------|--|
| <u>Ezekiel 36:26–27</u>  | <u>26</u> And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. <u>27</u> And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my            |
| <u>Micah 6:8</u>         | He has told you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?   |
| <u>John 14:21</u>        | Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.”  |
| <u>Galatians 5:16–18</u> | <u>16</u> But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. <u>17</u> For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep |
| <u>Colossians 1:9–10</u> | <u>9</u> And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, <u>10</u> so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord,                  |
| <u>2 Peter 1:3–4</u>     | <u>3</u> His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, <u>4</u> by which he has granted to us his precious and very great                    |
| <u>1 John 2:3–4</u>      | <u>3</u> And by this we know that we have come to know him, if we keep his commandments. <u>4</u> Whoever says “I know him” but does not keep his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him,   |

## What does the Bible say about finding freedom?

God’s Word, Sacred Scripture, Contains the Truth that Sets us Free

|                           |  |
|---------------------------|--|
| <u>John 8:31–32</u>       | <u>31</u> So Jesus said to the Jews who had believed him, “If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, <u>32</u> and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”   |
| <u>Romans 12:2</u>        | <u>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.</u>  |
| <u>2 Corinthians 10:5</u> | <u>We destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ.</u>  |
| <u>Psalms 119:160</u>     | <u>The sum of your word is truth, and every one of your righteous rules endures forever.</u>   |
| <u>John 17:17</u>         | <u>Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth.</u>   |
| <u>James 1:25</u>         | <u>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.</u>   |
| <u>Ephesians 6:14</u>     | <u>Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness,</u>  |
| <u>Zechariah 8:16</u>     | <u>These are the things that you shall do: Speak the truth to one another; render in your gates judgments that are true and make for peace;</u>  |
| <u>Psalms 51:6</u>        | <u>Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart.</u>  |
| <u>2 Timothy 2:25–26</u>  | <u>25</u> correcting his opponents with gentleness. God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth, <u>26</u> and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, after being captured by |
| <u>Proverbs 30:5–6</u>    | <u>5</u> Every word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him. <u>6</u> Do not add to his words, lest he rebuke you and you be found a liar.  |
| <u>2 Timothy 3:16–17</u>  | <u>16</u> All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, <u>17</u> that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.                   |
| <u>Hebrews 4:12</u>       | <u>For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.</u>                       |

## Freedom is Found in our Union with Jesus Christ and our New Identity in Jesus Christ

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <u>Galatians 5:1</u>     | <u>For freedom Christ has set us free; stand firm therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.</u>  |
| <u>Ephesians 4:22–24</u> | <u>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</u> |
| <u>Colossians 3:9–10</u> | <u>9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator.</u>   |
| <u>John 14:6</u>         | <u>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.</u>   |
| <u>Isaiah 61:1</u>       | <u>The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those</u>         |
| <u>Romans 6:6–7</u>      | <u>6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. 7 For one who has died has been set free from sin.</u>                          |
| <u>John 1:14</u>         | <u>And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth.</u>   |
| <u>2 Peter 1:3–4</u>     | <u>3 His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence, 4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great</u>              |

## Freedom is Found Through Confession and Repentance

|                         |   |
|-------------------------|---|
| <u>1 John 1:8–9</u>     | <u>8 If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. 9 If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.</u>   |
| <u>Galatians 4:9</u>    | <u>But now that you have come to know God, or rather to be known by God, how can you turn back again to the weak and worthless elementary principles of the world, whose slaves you want to be once more?</u>   |
| <u>1 John 3:18</u>      | <u>Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.</u>   |
| <u>Psalms 34:13</u>     | <u>Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit.</u>   |
| <u>Ephesians 5:6–11</u> | <u>6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.</u> |
| <u>James 4:7</u>        | <u>Submit yourselves therefore to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.</u>   |
| <u>1 Peter 1:22</u>     | <u>Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart,</u>  |

## What does the Bible say about my purpose?

### Our Identity is Found in our Union with Jesus Christ

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <u>Galatians 2:20</u>        | <u>I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.</u>                                 |
| <u>2 Corinthians 5:17</u>    | <u>Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.</u>  |
| <u>Romans 8:1–2</u>          | <u>1 There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death.</u>  |
| <u>Colossians 3:3</u>        | <u>For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.</u>   |
| <u>Colossians 2:9–10</u>     | <u>9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.</u>   |
| <u>2 Corinthians 5:21</u>    | <u>For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.</u>   |
| <u>Ephesians 2:4–5</u>       | <u>4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—</u>   |
| <u>Romans 6:6</u>            | <u>We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.</u>   |
| <u>1 Corinthians 12:27</u>   | <u>Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.</u>   |
| <u>Galatians 3:26–28</u>     | <u>26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and</u>           |
| <u>Ephesians 4:22–24</u>     | <u>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</u> |
| <u>Colossians 1:21–22</u>    | <u>21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,</u>                         |
| <u>Ephesians 1:7–8</u>       | <u>7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, in all wisdom and insight</u>   |
| <u>1 Peter 1:23</u>          | <u>since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;</u>  |
| <u>Titus 3:5</u>             | <u>he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit,</u>  |
| <u>1 Corinthians 1:30</u>    | <u>And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption,</u>   |
| <u>2 Peter 1:4</u>           | <u>by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.</u>                |
| <u>Romans 5:1</u>            | <u>Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.</u>  |
| <u>Colossians 1:13–14</u>    | <u>13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.</u>   |
| <u>2 Corinthians 5:18–19</u> | <u>18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and</u>         |
| <u>Isaiah 49:16</u>          | <u>Behold, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands; your walls are continually before me.</u>  |
| <u>Ezekiel 11:19–20</u>      | <u>19 And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And</u>  |
| <u>Jeremiah 32:38–39</u>     | <u>38 And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. 39 I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them.</u>   |
| <u>Jeremiah 33:16</u>        | <u>In those days Judah will be saved, and Jerusalem will dwell securely. And this is the name by which it will be called: 'The Lord is our righteousness.'</u>  |

## Our Identity is Found in Belonging to God's Family

|                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| <u>1 Peter 2:9</u>           | <u>But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.</u>                                |
| <u>Ephesians 2:10</u>        | <u>For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.</u>  |
| <u>1 John 3:1-2</u>          | <u>1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and</u>        |
| <u>Romans 8:14-17</u>        | <u>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!" 16 The</u>   |
| <u>Ephesians 1:3-6</u>       | <u>3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should</u>         |
| <u>John 1:12</u>             | <u>But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God.</u>   |
| <u>1 Corinthians 6:19-20</u> | <u>19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own. 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.</u>                                      |
| <u>Philippians 3:20</u>      | <u>But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.</u>  |
| <u>1 Peter 2:5</u>           | <u>you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.</u>  |
| <u>1 Corinthians 3:16</u>    | <u>Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?</u>   |
| <u>Ephesians 2:19</u>        | <u>So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God.</u>   |
| <u>Revelation 1:5-6</u>      | <u>5 and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood 6 and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to</u> |
| <u>Ephesians 1:13-14</u>     | <u>13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it.</u>    |
| <u>Deuteronomy 7:6</u>       | <u>"For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.</u>  |
| <u>Jeremiah 29:11</u>        | <u>For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.</u>   |
| <u>Exodus 19:5-6</u>         | <u>5 Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; 6 and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'</u>         |
| <u>Psalms 100:3</u>          | <u>Know that the Lord, he is God! It is he who made us, and we are his; we are his people, and the sheep of his pasture.</u>  |
| <u>Isaiah 54:5</u>           | <u>For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called.</u>   |
| <u>Hosea 1:10</u>            | <u>Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it was said to them, "You are not my people," it shall be said to them, "Children of the</u>    |
| <u>Hosea 2:19-20</u>         | <u>19 And I will betroth you to me forever. I will betroth you to me in righteousness and in justice, in steadfast love and in mercy. 20 I will betroth you to me in faithfulness. And you shall know the Lord.</u>                         |
| <u>Isaiah 62:12</u>          | <u>And they shall be called The Holy People, The Redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called Sought Out, A City Not Forsaken.</u>   |
| <u>Jeremiah 31:33</u>        | <u>For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.</u>    |
| <u>Malachi 3:16-17</u>       | <u>16 Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another. The Lord paid attention and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and esteemed his name. 17 "They shall be</u>             |

## God Knows You Personally and Called You Individually

|                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <u>Isaiah 43:1</u>     | <u>But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, he who formed you, O Israel: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine.</u>                              |
| <u>Jeremiah 31:3</u>   | <u>the Lord appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you.</u>   |
| <u>Zephaniah 3:17</u>  | <u>The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.</u>                |
| <u>Psalm 139:13–14</u> | <u>13 For you formed my inward parts; you knitted me together in my mother's womb. 14 I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Wonderful are your works; my soul knows it very well.</u> |
| <u>Psalm 17:8</u>      | <u>Keep me as the apple of your eye; hide me in the shadow of your wings.</u>  |

## Our Purpose is Connected to Being Imitators of Jesus Christ, Who Himself is the Perfect Reflection of the Image of God

|                            |  |
|----------------------------|--|
| <u>Romans 12:2</u>         | <u>Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.</u>  |
| <u>2 Corinthians 3:18</u>  | <u>And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.</u>                                     |
| <u>1 Thessalonians 5:5</u> | <u>For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.</u>   |
| <u>Ephesians 5:8</u>       | <u>for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light</u>   |
| <u>Philippians 1:6</u>     | <u>And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.</u>   |
| <u>Romans 8:37</u>         | <u>No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.</u>   |
| <u>1 John 4:17</u>         | <u>By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.</u>   |
| <u>Isaiah 43:7</u>         | <u>everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."</u>  |
| <u>Isaiah 43:21</u>        | <u>the people whom I formed for myself that they might declare my praise.</u>  |
| <u>Deuteronomy 14:2</u>    | <u>For you are a people holy to the Lord your God, and the Lord has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth.</u>   |
| <u>Ezekiel 36:26–27</u>    | <u>26 And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my</u> |
| <u>Isaiah 62:2</u>         | <u>The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the Lord will give.</u>   |

## What are the penitential Psalms?

### [Psalm 6](#)

**title** TO THE CHOIRMASTER: WITH STRINGED INSTRUMENTS; ACCORDING TO THE SHEMINITH. A PSALM OF DAVID. **1** O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath. **2** Be gracious to me, O LORD, for I am languishing; heal me, O LORD, for my bones are troubled. **3** My soul also is greatly troubled. But you, O LORD—how long? **4** Turn, O LORD, deliver my life; save me for the sake of your steadfast love. **5** For in death there is no remembrance of you; in Sheol who will give you praise? **6** I am weary with my moaning; every night I flood my bed with tears; I drench my couch with my weeping. **7** My eye wastes away because of grief; it grows weak because of all my foes. **8** Depart from me, all you workers of evil, for the LORD has heard the sound of my weeping. **9** The LORD has heard my plea; the LORD accepts my prayer. **10** All my enemies shall be ashamed and greatly troubled; they shall turn back and be put to shame in a moment.

### [Psalm 32](#)

**title** A MASKIL OF DAVID. **1** Blessed is the one whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. **2** Blessed is the man against whom the LORD counts no iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit. **3** For when I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. **4** For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was dried up as by the heat of summer. *Selah* **5** I acknowledged my sin to you, and I did not cover my iniquity; I said, "I will confess my transgressions to the LORD," and you forgave the iniquity of my sin. *Selah* **6** Therefore let everyone who is godly offer prayer to you at a time when you may be found; surely in the rush of great waters, they shall not reach him. **7** You are a hiding place for me; you preserve me from trouble; you surround me with shouts of deliverance. *Selah* **8** I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you. **9** Be not like a horse or a mule, without understanding, which must be curbed with bit and bridle, or it will not stay near you. **10** Many are the sorrows of the wicked, but steadfast love surrounds the one who trusts in the LORD. **11** Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, O righteous, and shout for joy, all you upright in heart!

### [Psalm 38](#)

**title** A PSALM OF DAVID, FOR THE MEMORIAL OFFERING. **1** O LORD, rebuke me not in your anger, nor discipline me in your wrath! **2** For your arrows have sunk into me, and your hand has come down on me. **3** There is no soundness in my flesh because of your indignation; there is no health in my bones because of my sin. **4** For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. **5** My wounds stink and fester because of my foolishness, **6** I am utterly bowed down and prostrate; all the day I go about mourning. **7** For my sides are filled with burning, and there is no soundness in my flesh. **8** I am feeble and crushed; I groan because of the tumult of my heart. **9** O Lord, all my longing is before you; my sighing is not hidden from you. **10** My heart throbs; my strength fails me, and the light of my eyes—it also has gone from me. **11** My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my nearest kin stand far off. **12** Those who seek my life lay their snares; those who seek my hurt speak of ruin and meditate treachery all day long. **13** But I am like a deaf man; I do not hear, like a mute man who does not open his mouth. **14** I have become like a man who does not hear, and in whose mouth are no rebukes. **15** But for you, O LORD, do I wait; it is you, O Lord my God, who will answer. **16** For I said, "Only let them not rejoice over me, who boast against me when my foot slips!" **17** For I am ready to fall, and my pain is ever before me. **18** I confess my iniquity; I am sorry for my sin. **19** But my foes are vigorous, they are mighty, and many are those who hate me wrongfully. **20** Those who render me evil for good accuse me because I follow after good. **21** Do not forsake me, O LORD! O my God, be not far from me! **22** Make haste to help me, O Lord, my salvation!

### [Psalm 51](#)

**title** TO THE CHOIRMASTER. A PSALM OF DAVID, WHEN NATHAN THE PROPHET WENT TO HIM, AFTER HE HAD GONE IN TO BATHSHEBA. **1** Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. **2** Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! **3** For I know my transgressions, and my sin is ever before me. **4** Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight, so that you may be justified in your words and blameless in your judgment. **5** Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin did my mother conceive me. **6** Behold, you delight in truth in the inward being, and you teach me wisdom in the secret heart. **7** Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow. **8** Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones that you have broken rejoice. **9** Hide your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. **10** Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. **11** Cast me not away from your presence, and take not your Holy Spirit from me. **12** Restore to me the joy of your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit. **13** Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will return to you. **14** Deliver me from bloodguiltiness, O God, O God of my salvation, and my tongue will sing aloud of your righteousness. **15** O Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise. **16** For you will not delight in sacrifice, or I would give it; you will not be pleased with a burnt offering. **17** The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise. **18** Do good to Zion in your good pleasure; build up the walls of Jerusalem; **19** then will you delight in right sacrifices, in burnt offerings and whole burnt offerings; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

[Psalm 102](#)

**title** A PRAYER OF ONE AFFLICTED, WHEN HE IS FAINT AND POURS OUT HIS COMPLAINT BEFORE THE LORD. **1** Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry come to you! **2** Do not hide your face from me in the day of my distress! Incline your ear to me; answer me speedily in the day when I call! **3** For my days pass away like smoke, and my bones burn like a furnace. **4** My heart is struck down like grass and has withered; I forget to eat my bread. **5** Because of my loud groaning my bones cling to my flesh. **6** I am like a desert owl of the wilderness, like an owl of the waste places; **7** I lie awake; I am like a lonely sparrow on the housetop. **8** All the day my enemies taunt me; those who deride me use my name for a curse. **9** For I eat ashes like bread and mingle tears with my drink, **10** because of your indignation and anger; for you have taken me up and thrown me down. **11** My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass. **12** But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever; you are remembered throughout all generations. **13** You will arise and have pity on Zion; it is the time to favor her; the appointed time has come. **14** For your servants hold her stones dear and have pity on her dust. **15** Nations will fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory. **16** For the LORD builds up Zion; he appears in his glory; **17** he regards the prayer of the destitute and does not despise their prayer. **18** Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD: **19** that he looked down from his holy height; from heaven the LORD looked at the earth, **20** to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die, **21** that they may declare in Zion the name of the LORD, and in Jerusalem his praise, **22** when peoples gather together, and kingdoms, to worship the LORD. **23** He has broken my strength in midcourse; he has shortened my days. **24** "O my God," I say, "take me not away in the midst of my days— you whose years endure throughout all generations!" **25** Of old you laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands. **26** They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away, **27** but you are the same, and your years have no end. **28** The children of your servants shall dwell secure; their offspring shall be established before you.

[Psalm 130](#)

**title** A SONG OF ASCENTS. **1** Out of the depths I cry to you, O LORD! **2** O Lord, hear my voice! Let your ears be attentive to the voice of my pleas for mercy! **3** If you, O LORD, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand? **4** But with you there is forgiveness, that you may be feared. **5** I wait for the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; **6** my soul waits for the Lord more than watchmen for the morning, more than watchmen for the morning. **7** O Israel, hope in the LORD! For with the LORD there is steadfast love, and with him is plentiful redemption. **8** And he will redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

[Psalm 143](#)

**title** A PSALM OF DAVID. **1** Hear my prayer, O LORD; give ear to my pleas for mercy! In your faithfulness answer me, in your righteousness! **2** Enter not into judgment with your servant, for no one living is righteous before you. **3** For the enemy has pursued my soul; he has crushed my life to the ground; he has made me sit in darkness like those long dead. **4** Therefore my spirit faints within me; my heart within me is appalled. **5** I remember the days of old; I meditate on all that you have done; I ponder the work of your hands. **6** I stretch out my hands to you; my soul thirsts for you like a parched land. *Selah* **7** Answer me quickly, O LORD! My spirit fails! Hide not your face from me, lest I be like those who go down to the pit. **8** Let me hear in the morning of your steadfast love, for in you I trust. Make me know the way I should go, for to you I lift up my soul. **9** Deliver me from my enemies, O LORD! I have fled to you for refuge. **10** Teach me to do your will, for you are my God! Let your good Spirit lead me on level ground! **11** For your name's sake, O LORD, preserve my life! In your righteousness bring my soul out of trouble! **12** And in your steadfast love you will cut off my enemies, and you will destroy all the adversaries of my soul, for I am your servant.

## How does the Bible teach me to live an unoffendable life, forgiving others as God in Christ has forgiven me?

By studying and meditating on these passages, God will show you how you can live the unoffendable life and forgive others, even those who have wronged you so severely and deeply.

### Matthew 18:21–35

21 Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" 22 Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times. 23 "Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with his servants. 24 When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. 25 And since he could not pay, his master ordered him to be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. 26 So the servant fell on his knees, imploring him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.' 27 And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. 28 But when that same servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, 'Pay what you owe.' 29 So his fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you.' 30 He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. 31 When his fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. 32 Then his master summoned him and said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. 33 And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?' 34 And in anger his master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all his debt. 35 So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart."

### Colossians 3:8-17

8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. 12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other, as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. 15 And let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body. And be thankful. 16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God. 17 And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

### Ephesians 4:17–32

17 Now this I say and testify in the Lord, that you must no longer walk as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their minds. 18 They are darkened in their understanding, alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, due to their hardness of heart. 19 They have become callous and have given themselves up to sensuality, greedy to practice every kind of impurity. 20 But that is not the way you learned Christ!— 21 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. 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

### Luke 6:37–42

37 "Judge not, and you will not be judged; condemn not, and you will not be condemned; forgive, and you will be forgiven; 38 give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you." 39 He also told them a parable: "Can a blind man lead a blind man? Will they not both fall into a pit? 40 A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher. 41 Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? 42 How can you say to your brother, 'Brother, let me take out the speck that is in your eye,' when you yourself do not see the log that is in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take out the speck that is in your brother's eye.

### Matthew 5:38–48

38 "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth.' 39 But I say to you, Do not resist the one who is evil. But if anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also. 40 And if anyone would sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you. 43 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' 44 But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? 47 And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? 48 You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Mark 11:25

And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone, so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses."

Luke 17:3-4

3 Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, 4 and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,' you must forgive him."

1 Peter 3:8-9

8 Finally, all of you, have unity of mind, sympathy, brotherly love, a tender heart, and a humble mind. 9 Do not repay evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary, bless, for to this you were called, that you may obtain a blessing.

Romans 12:1-21

1 I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. 2 Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect. 3 For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. 4 For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, 5 so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. 6 Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; 7 if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; 8 the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. 9 Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. 10 Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. 11 Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. 12 Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. 13 Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. 14 Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. 15 Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. 16 Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. 17 Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. 18 If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. 19 Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord." 20 To the contrary, "if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." 21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Proverbs 19:11

Good sense makes one slow to anger, and it is his glory to overlook an offense.

Matthew 6:5-15

5 "And when you pray, you must not be like the hypocrites. For they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and at the street corners, that they may be seen by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. 6 But when you pray, go into your room and shut the door and pray to your Father who is in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

7 "And when you pray, do not heap up empty phrases as the Gentiles do, for they think that they will be heard for their many words. 8 Do not be like them, for your Father knows what you need before you ask him. 9 Pray then like this:

"Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name.

10 Your kingdom come,

your will be done,

on earth as it is in heaven.

11 Give us this day our daily bread,

12 and forgive us our debts,

as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation,

but deliver us from evil.

14 For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, 15 but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Ephesians 4:1-7

1 I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, 2 with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, 3 eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit—just as you were called to the one hope that belongs to your call— 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. 7 But grace was given to each one of us according to the measure of Christ's gift.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. 3 If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant 5 or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; 6 it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. 7 Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 11 When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. 12 For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

James 1:19-27

19 Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20 for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God. 21 Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

22 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.

26 If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless. 27 Religion that is pure and undefiled before God the Father is this: to visit orphans and widows in their affliction, and to keep oneself unstained from the world.

Luke 15:11-32

11 And he said, "There was a man who had two sons. 12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.' And he divided his property between them. 13 Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. 14 And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. 15 So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. 16 And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. 17 "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! 18 I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. 19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Treat me as one of your hired servants.' " 20 And he arose and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and felt compassion, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. 21 And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' 22 But the father said to his servants, 'Bring quickly the best robe, and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand, and shoes on his feet. 23 And bring the fattened calf and kill it, and let us eat and celebrate. 24 For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found.' And they began to celebrate. 25 "Now his older son was in the field, and as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing. 26 And he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant. 27 And he said to him, 'Your brother has come, and your father has killed the fattened calf, because he has received him back safe and sound.' 28 But he was angry and refused to go in. His father came out and entreated him, 29 but he answered his father, 'Look, these many years I have served you, and I never disobeyed your command, yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might celebrate with my friends. 30 But when this son of yours came, who has devoured your property with prostitutes, you killed the fattened calf for him!' 31 And he said to him, 'Son, you are always with me, and all that is mine is yours. 32 It was fitting to celebrate and be glad, for this your brother was dead, and is alive; he was lost, and is found.' "

Luke 7:36-50

36 One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." 41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." 44 Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." 48 And he said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." 49 Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" 50 And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace."

Luke 10:25-37

25 And behold, a lawyer stood up to put him to the test, saying, "Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the Law? How do you read it?" 27 And he answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live." 29 But he, desiring to justify himself, said to Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and he fell among robbers, who stripped him and beat him and departed, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road, and when he saw him he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan, as he journeyed, came to where he was, and when he saw him, he had compassion. 34 He went to him and bound up his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he set him on his own animal and brought him to an inn and took care of him. 35 And the next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper, saying, 'Take care of him, and whatever more you spend, I will repay you when I come back.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell among the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." And Jesus said to him, "You go, and do likewise."

Luke 18:9-14

9 He also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and treated others with contempt: 10 "Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. 11 The Pharisee, standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. 12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' 13 But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

## Where are the put on / put off lists in the Bible?

These passages will help you work through the "Three Tree" diagram and the Confess, Repent, Cleanse, and Restore process.

Colossians 3:5-14

5 Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 On account of these the wrath of God is coming. 7 In these you too once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you must put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and obscene talk from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all. 12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, 13 bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. 14 And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.

Ephesians 4:22-32

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. 25 Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. 26 Be angry and do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27 and give no opportunity to the devil. 28 Let the thief no longer steal, but rather let him labor, doing honest work with his own hands, so that he may have something to share with anyone in need. 29 Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. 32 Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

Romans 13:12-14

12 The night is far gone; the day is at hand. So then let us cast off the works of darkness and put on the armor of light. 13 Let us walk properly as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and sensuality, not in quarreling and jealousy. 14 But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to gratify its desires.

Galatians 5:16-26

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. 25 If we live by the Spirit, let us also keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking one another, envying one another.

1 Peter 2:1-3

1 So put away all malice and all deceit and hypocrisy and envy and all slander. 2 Like newborn infants, long for the pure spiritual milk, that by it you may grow up into salvation— 3 if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is good.

James 1:21

Therefore put away all filthiness and rampant wickedness and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Ephesians 5:3–11      3 But sexual immorality and all impurity or covetousness must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints. 4 Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving. 5 For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not become partners with them; 8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light 9 (for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true), 10 and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead expose them.

## What does the Bible say about who I am and who I am in Christ?

These lists will help expose lies that need to be confronted and corrected with the truth of God's Word.

- Ephesians 2:10      For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.
- 2 Corinthians 5:17      Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
- 1 Peter 2:9      But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.
- Galatians 2:20      I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.
- Romans 8:1      There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.
- 1 John 3:1–2      1 See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him. 2 Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is.
- Colossians 3:3      For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.
- Romans 8:37      No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us.
- 1 Corinthians 6:19–20      19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.
- Philippians 4:13      I can do all things through him who strengthens me.
- John 1:12      But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,
- Ephesians 1:3–6      3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, 4 even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before him. In love 5 he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, with which he has blessed us in the Beloved.
- Romans 12:2      Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.
- Colossians 2:9–10      9 For in him the whole fullness of deity dwells bodily, 10 and you have been filled in him, who is the head of all rule and authority.
- 2 Corinthians 5:21      For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

1 Corinthians 12:27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Ephesians 2:4–5 4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, 5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—

Romans 8:14–17 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!" 16 The Spirit himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Colossians 1:21–22 21 And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, 22 he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him,

Ephesians 4:24 and to put on the new self, created after the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.

Galatians 3:26–28 26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

1 Peter 2:5 you yourselves like living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 3:18 And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.

Ephesians 2:19 So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God,

1 Thessalonians 5:5 For you are all children of light, children of the day. We are not of the night or of the darkness.

Philippians 3:20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Romans 6:6 We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin.

Colossians 3:12 Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience,

1 Corinthians 3:16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you?

2 Peter 1:4 by which he has granted to us his precious and very great promises, so that through them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of sinful desire.

Ephesians 5:8 for at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light

Romans 8:28–29 28 And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29 For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

1 John 4:17 By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world.

Ephesians 1:13–14 13 In him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in him, were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, 14 who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of his glory.

2 Corinthians 5:18–19 18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; 19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Titus 3:7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.

1 Peter 1:23 since you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God;

Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Colossians 1:13–14 13 He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son, 14 in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.

Ephesians 3:12 in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him.

## Can Jesus relate to the suffering I have experienced?

Often forgiving others who have hurt us deeply is very hard for us to do. In addition to meditating on how much God has forgiven us so we can forgive the “relatively” less serious offenses and abuses we have received, we can also meditate on the suffering Jesus Christ endured. He truly understands what we have experienced. He was brutally beaten, lied about, falsely accused, and crucified, and He declared “Father forgive them, for they know not what they do...” (Luke 23:34) Meditating on the sufferings of Christ can bring healing to our own hearts as we seek to forgive those who have abused or victimized us, and as we realized, He truly does understand. In fact, He experienced unimaginable suffering when He became sin for us and received the wrath of God in His own body for all of the sin (past, present, and future) of the world (1 John 2:2, John 3:16).

Isaiah 53:3–5 3 He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. 4 Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. 5 But he was pierced for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, and with his wounds we are healed.

Isaiah 53:10-12 10 Yet it was the will of the Lord to crush him; he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. 11 Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. 12 Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

Matthew 26:36–39 36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, “Sit here, while I go over there and pray.” 37 And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.” 39 And going a little farther he fell on his face and prayed, saying, “My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will.”

Mark 15:16–20 16 And the soldiers led him away inside the palace (that is, the governor’s headquarters), and they called together the whole battalion. 17 And they clothed him in a purple cloak, and twisting together a crown of thorns, they put it on him. 18 And they began to salute him, “Hail, King of the Jews!” 19 And they were striking his head with a reed and spitting on him and kneeling down in homage to him. 20 And when they had mocked him, they stripped him of the purple cloak and put his own clothes on him. And they led him out to crucify him.

Luke 22:44 And being in agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.

John 19:1–3 1 Then Pilate took Jesus and flogged him. 2 And the soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. 3 They came up to him, saying, “Hail, King of the Jews!” and struck him with their hands.

- Hebrews 4:15 For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.
- 1 Peter 2:21–24 21 For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps. 22 He committed no sin, neither was deceit found in his mouth. 23 When he was reviled, he did not revile in return; when he suffered, he did not threaten, but continued entrusting himself to him who judges justly. 24 He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.
- Philippians 2:7–8 7 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 humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.
- Matthew 27:46 And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, “Eli, Eli, lema sabachthani?” that is, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?”
- Isaiah 50:6 I gave my back to those who strike, and my cheeks to those who pull out the beard; I hid not my face from disgrace and spitting.
- Psalms 22:1–18 1 My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? Why are you so far from saving me, from the words of my groaning? 2 O my God, I cry by day, but you do not answer, and by night, but I find no rest. 3 Yet you are holy, enthroned on the praises of Israel. 4 In you our fathers trusted; they trusted, and you delivered them. 5 To you they cried and were rescued; in you they trusted and were not put to shame. 6 But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people. 7 All who see me mock me; they make mouths at me; they wag their heads; 8 “He trusts in the Lord; let him deliver him; let him rescue him, for he delights in him!” 9 Yet you are he who took me from the womb; you made me trust you at my mother’s breasts. 10 On you was I cast from my birth, and from my mother’s womb you have been my God. 11 Be not far from me, for trouble is near, and there is none to help. 12 Many bulls encompass me; strong bulls of Bashan surround me; 13 they open wide their mouths at me, like a ravening and roaring lion. 14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted within my breast; 15 my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to my jaws; you lay me in the dust of death. 16 For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me; they have pierced my hands and feet— 17 I can count all my bones— they stare and gloat over me; 18 they divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.
- Hebrews 2:9–10 9 But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone. 10 For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering.
- Romans 5:8 but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- 2 Corinthians 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- 1 Peter 3:18 For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit,
- Hebrews 5:7–8 7 In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence. 8 Although he was a son, he learned obedience through what he suffered.
- Matthew 4:1–11 1 Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. 2 And after fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. 3 And the tempter came and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread.” 4 But he answered, “It is written, “ ‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.’ ” 5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple 6 and said to him, “If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, “ ‘He will command his angels concerning you,’ and “ ‘On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.’ ” 7 Jesus said to him, “Again it is written, ‘You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.’ ” 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. 9 And he said to him, “All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.” 10 Then Jesus said to him, “Be gone, Satan! For it is written, “ ‘You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.’ ” 11 Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him.
- Luke 4:28–30 28 When they heard these things, all in the synagogue were filled with wrath. 29 And they rose up and drove him out of the town and brought him to the brow of the hill on which their town was built, so that they could throw him down the cliff. 30 But passing through their midst, he went away.

John 11:33–35 33 When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled. 34 And he said, “Where have you laid him?” They said to him, “Lord, come and see.” 35 Jesus wept.

Mark 14:32–36 32 And they went to a place called Gethsemane. And he said to his disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” 33 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. 34 And he said to them, “My soul is very sorrowful, even to death. Remain here and watch.” 35 And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that, if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 And he said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will.”

Isaiah 52:14 As many were astonished at you— his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the children of mankind—

Zechariah 13:7 “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me,” declares the Lord of hosts. “Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones.

Lamentations 1:12 “Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow, which was brought upon me, which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.

Psalms 69:7–9 7 For it is for your sake that I have borne reproach, that dishonor has covered my face. 8 I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother’s sons. 9 For zeal for your house has consumed me, and the reproaches of those who reproach you have fallen on me.

Romans 8:17 and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

2 Corinthians 1:5 For as we share abundantly in Christ’s sufferings, so through Christ we share abundantly in comfort too.

Colossians 1:24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,

Hebrews 12:2–3 2 looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. 3 Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted.

1 Peter 4:1 Since therefore Christ suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves with the same way of thinking, for whoever has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin,

Revelation 5:6-17 6 And between the throne and the four living creatures and among the elders I saw a Lamb standing, as though it had been slain, with seven horns and with seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. 7 And he went and took the scroll from the right hand of him who was seated on the throne. 8 And when he had taken the scroll, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb, each holding a harp, and golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. 9 And they sang a new song, saying,  
  
“Worthy are you to take the scroll and to open its seals, for you were slain, and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation, 10 and you have made them a kingdom and priests to our God, and they shall reign on the earth.” 11 Then I looked, and I heard around the throne and the living creatures and the elders the voice of many angels, numbering myriads of myriads and thousands of thousands, 12 saying with a loud voice,  
  
“Worthy is the Lamb who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing!” 13 And I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, and all that is in them, saying, “To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor and glory and might forever and ever!” 14 And the four living creatures said, “Amen!” and the elders fell down and worshiped.

1 John 2:2 2 He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world