

OVERCOME

SEPTEMBER 2021

ADULT
CONNECT CLASS
CURRICULUM



DONALD J. WILLS
SENIOR PASTOR

The purpose of First Baptist Church of Fort Worth is to **introduce** people into a loving relationship with Jesus, **instruct** them in spiritual growth through God's Word, **inspire** them to serve for God's kingdom, and **incorporate** them in authentic worship to glorify God.

A Note From Our Pastor

Dear FBC family and friends,

The Christian life is very much centered on relationships beginning with our relationship with Christ our Lord. Jesus often addressed the issue of relationships with His teachings of “love your neighbor as your self” or “do unto others as you have them do unto you” just for starters. Too often in relationships, we get caught up in our “hurts” that we allow them to cloud our judgment in how we should respond to others as an overcomer. This month’s lessons address the basics of how to relate and react to build healthy, lasting relationships while at the same time offering essentials for mending relationships.

As a reminder, the layout of this Curriculum begins with a 7-day approach for both the teacher and the members to get the most from each study. We also acknowledge that teachers may have their own methods for preparing the lessons and we encourage them to prepare in the way that makes them most effective in presenting God’s Word and the weekly lesson. We also encourage each teacher and member to use the suggested 7-day approach for their own personal study and encouragement.

Our greatest focus should always be our relationship with Christ. Seeking Him first as we see in Scripture is the priority. When our relationship with Christ is right, our relationship with others will also be right. 1 John 2 clearly talks about saying that we walk in the “Light.” But, if we are not right with our brother, then we are actually in darkness. When our walk with Christ is as it should be, then the subject matter in these lessons will be the natural response in relating to others.

-Blessings

Pastor Don



Suggested Plan for Using this Bible Study Guide Effectively

Introduce

Day 1: Read and meditate on the Scripture, asking God to guide you throughout the week as you study His Word and allowing Him to speak to you through the Spirit. Read the **INTRODUCE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Instruct

Day 2: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and read the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary. Concentrate on memorizing the focal verse for that particular week.

Day 3: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and answer the focal questions in the **INSTRUCT** portion of the lesson commentary.

Inspire

Day 4: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and begin thinking about tangible ways you can incorporate the principles you learned in your daily life. Read the **INSPIRE** portion of the lesson commentary.

Incorporate

Day 5: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and apply the theological principle that you learned from this week in a tangible way. Use the **INCORPORATE** portion of the lesson commentary to guide you.

Day 6: Read the Scripture, meditate on it, and in the journal section describe how God allowed you to apply this passage in a real and tangible way this week.

Day 7: Review the Scripture and share with others in your Connect Class on Sunday morning at 9:30 am. Be ready to share your experience about how God allowed you to apply the lesson for that week.

3



September 5, 2021
An Overcomer
Responds with Forgiveness

[Matthew 18:21-35](#)

17



September 12, 2021
An Overcomer
Reconciles with Family

[Genesis 45:1-28](#)

31



September 19, 2021
An Overcomer
Resists Frustration

[Numbers 20:1-13](#)

45



September 26, 2021
An Overcomer
Restores Fellowship

[Galatians 2:1-16](#)



Wednesday Evening
Children's Ministry

THE 2021-22 SESSION IS NOW IN SESSION!

PLEASE REGISTER YOUR CHILDREN FOR THE
NEW CLUB YEAR AS SOON AS POSSIBLE!

REGISTER AT KAZ.FBCFW.ORG

TO VIEW ALL VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES GO ONLINE TO
OPPORTUNITIES.FBCFW.ORG

DON'T MISS OUT ON ANY EVENTS!

Student Event Calendar



VIEW & DOWNLOAD
THE 4-MONTH CALENDAR AT
STUDENTS.FBCFW.ORG

GROUND
Student Ministry

For students who have
completed grades 7-12



Upcoming Women's Events

RESERVE YOUR SPOT TODAY!

**Dessert Night • Fall Bible Study
Board & Brush • Simulcast Event**

women.fbcbw.org

FIND LINKS & INFORMATION ON UPCOMING EVENTS ONLINE AT
EVENTS.FBCFW.ORG

UPCOMING EVENT LEGACY ADULTS (55+)

**Weekly Luncheons Resume
Tuesday, October 5**

*Following First Worship Tuesdays
Suggest donation, \$5 per person*



I.M.P.A.C.T.

September 5, 2021



*An Overcomer
Responds with Forgiveness
Matthew 18:21-35*

Focal Verse:

"Then Peter came to Him and said, 'Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?'"

Matthew 18:21

back to
Table of
Contents

Introduce

On June 8, 1972, villagers from Trang Bang, Vietnam, huddled in a pagoda hoping to find refuge from the raging battle which had advanced to their doorstep. Among them was nine-year-old Phan Ti Kim Phuc. Situated along a major trade route between North and South Vietnam, the area drew heavy air bombardment using napalm in an attempt to stop the Viet Cong from advancing southward. Mistaking these villagers for the Viet Cong, a South Vietnamese pilot unleashed his payload of napalm bombs blanketing them as they fled for their lives. The villagers scattered in tremendous agony as the conflagration inflicted unspeakable death and destruction upon their community. The moment was captured in a Pulitzer Prize winning photo by Nick Ut which quickly became the most iconic image of the war. It shows Kim with her clothes completely burned away and scars covering her badly burned body as she and the other villagers ran down the road in abject horror.

Although doctors at a hospital in Saigon did not expect Kim to survive, God had different plans. Enduring seventeen surgeries during the early 70s and a fourteen-month stay in the hospital, she still faces daily pain from the skin grafts and scars that cover her body as she continues to receive treatment for her injuries. For Kim, the heat proves especially intolerable on her wounds since she has no pores in the skin grafts and cannot sweat; coupled with the lack of blood flow, she experiences excruciating pain. In the immediate years after the attack, hatred and bitterness consumed Kim and the world would hardly blame her. In an interview aired by PBS, she recalls, "It built me up with hatred, bitterness, and anger. I just living [sic] with the question, 'why me.' Why that happened to me?" She continues, "In 1982, I wanted to take my life, because I thought, after I die, no more suffer [sic], no more pain." In another interview recorded by the *Napa Valley Register*, Kim recollects how she "wanted those who had caused me suffering to suffer even more than me [sic]."*



Picture from *The Orange County Register*

In her greatest moment of despair, she found hope and comfort which led to a miraculous transformation in her outlook. In 1982 during the Christmas season, she

Introduce

discovered a copy of “the New Testament in the library in Saigon” through which she began a relationship with Christ. In her own words transcribed by PBS *NewsHour*, Kim describes this transformation: “Since I have faith, my enemies’ list became my prayer list . . . This means you love. Forgiveness set my heart free. I forgave everyone who caused my suffering, even the pilot, commander, people controlling me.” From her interview in the *Irish Times*, she reminisces that “the napalm burn did not kill me, but the hatred, the people abusing me—that almost killed me.” Nowhere in the world could she find a respite from the trauma and affliction until she turned to Christ which led her to declare in that same interview, “I am not religious; I am not political . . . Religion doesn’t help me at all. But the relationship between me and God and Jesus, that changed my life.” Now in her 60s, Kim has a family and serves as an ambassador for the peace and healing only Christ can bring through forgiveness. Her perspective stands in utter contrast to the society in which we now live. Today, people are bent upon revenge for the perceived wrongs and injustices done to them. They don’t want healing or forgiveness; they don’t even truly want change. They want an outlet to vent their frustration and anger, fomenting their animosity. For those who have been perceived to err, society acts swiftly to punish them through ostracism or “cancellation” even before ascertaining all the facts. How can we as a society heal if there is no forgiveness? There can be no forgiveness, however, if we push Christ out of the equation! We need a change in perspective which we can only have, as Kim realized, through Christ. Let us become overcomers who respond with forgiveness as Jesus taught His disciples to forgive “seventy times seven.”

Key
Question

Who has Christ called you to forgive?

In Reference



Kim Phuc Phan Ti, “[Brief but Spectacular Take on Pain and Forgiveness](#),” *PBS Newshour* (Jan 16, 2020); Howard Yune, “[In Napa, ‘Napalm Girl’ Kim Phuc Shares Story of Suffering and Forgiveness](#),” *Napa Valley Register* (Feb 24, 2019); Kathy Sheridan, “[Kim Phuc, The Napalm Girl: ‘Love is More Powerful than Any Weapon](#),” *Irish Times* (May 28, 2016).

Matthew 18:21-22

THE CEASELESS NATURE OF FORGIVENESS:

After Jesus finished His teaching on correcting and restoring a “brother” who has committed an offense against “you” ([Matt 18:15-20](#)), it naturally leads Peter to postulate a question about how many times we should **forgive** the one who sins against us (v. 21). Respectfully, he asks, “**Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?**” He follows with the inquiry whether as much as **seven times** would be sufficient to fulfill any obligation to **forgive**. Symbolically, the number **seven** often represents perfection which perhaps in Peter’s mind would more than fulfill any righteous requirement to **forgive**, especially for someone who has repeatedly committed offenses against another. Thus, literally counting **seven times** would surely be the maximum extent to which we must endure offenses against us and extend forgiveness. After all, one strand of rabbinic tradition taught that one only need **forgive** three times.* Peter may have felt confident that **seven times** would satisfy any obligation to **forgive** because it more than doubled the most stringent requirements at the time!

In Reference



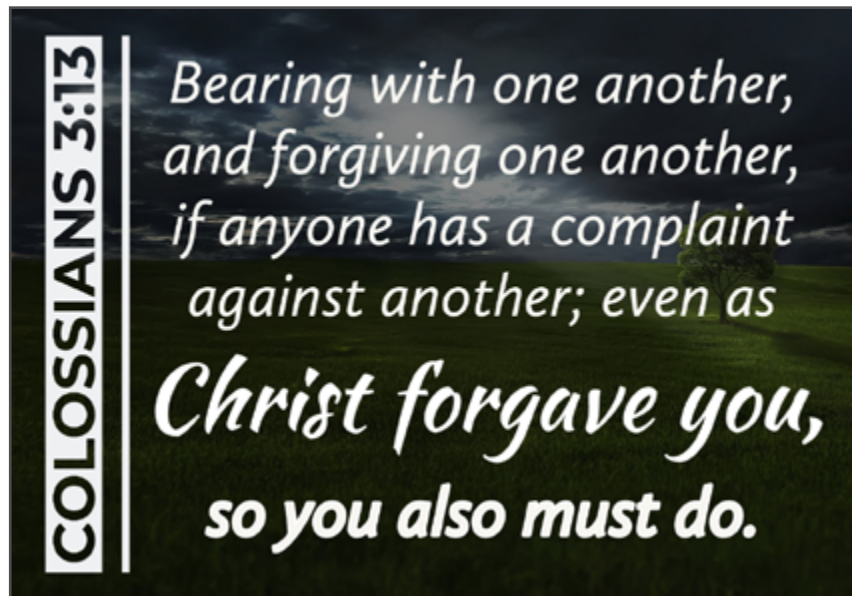
Leon Morris, The Gospel According to Matthew, Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1992), p. 471.

However, Jesus immediately corrects Peter’s wayward thinking. He explains, “**I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven**” (v. 22). The number with which Jesus responds can be translated either **seventy times seven** or seventy-seven times. In reality, either translation makes the same point: our forgiveness should know no bounds. It should be limitless. We should continue to **forgive** no matter the circumstances! Jesus isn’t expressing some legalistic mindset in which we can begrudgingly say, “That’s the last straw! That’s the 491st (or 78th) time. Now, I’m free from the requirement to **forgive**. I can allow my emotions to guide me and seek retaliation.” On the contrary, He wants us to forgive unconditionally even when people repeatedly wrong us. He simply calls us to **forgive**!

How has God called you to forgive others or for others to forgive you when repeatedly wronged?

Question
1

Therefore, Jesus wants us to follow the pattern He Himself established when He forgave us ([Eph 4:32](#); [Col 3:13](#)). He has no set number on how many times He will



forgive someone until He will **forgive** no more. He always stands ready to **forgive** no matter the circumstances or what the person may have done. Jesus unconditionally forgives anyone who sins against Him, including those who are repeat offenders! He graciously and mercifully forgives. And, as the recipients of that forgiveness, we must

be willing to **forgive** others just as He has forgiven us. For this reason, let's turn to Scripture as a whole to formulate four principles about forgiveness which will help us live righteously at all times and respond graciously in difficult times of conflict. First, like Christ, we should initiate forgiveness even if the person who has wronged us never asks for it nor ever apologizes to us. Jesus demonstrates this principle as He hung on the cross. While the soldiers divided His garments and hurled insults at Him, Jesus initiated forgiveness when He uttered, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do" ([Luke 23:34](#)). Although Jesus initiated forgiveness and forgave them unconditionally, reconciliation depended upon them. They couldn't be reconciled and in right fellowship with Him unless they intentionally sought it by asking for forgiveness and repenting of their actions. In this same way, Jesus has initiated forgiveness and has forgiven us through His death on the cross. But to be reconciled and in right standing, we must ask for forgiveness whereby we confess our sins and subsequently repent or turn from them.

Scripture is clear when it states, "He who covers his sin will not prosper, but whoever confesses and forsakes them will have mercy" ([Prov 28:13](#)). Likewise, as believers, Scripture tells us that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" ([1 John 1:9](#)). Through His sacrificial death, Jesus paved the way for forgiveness and offers it unconditionally to all, but it is our choice whether we reconcile with Him by turning from our sin and surrendering to

Him. The same principle applies to us today. We can initiate forgiveness and **forgive** unconditionally, but we cannot forcibly restore relationships. Reconciliation depends upon the other person. Yet, their choice not to be reconciled with us does not absolve us from forgiving them, thereby enabling us to seek revenge or retaliate. In any case, we are called by Christ to forgive and seek reconciliation with those who have wronged us.

With whom has God called you to initiate forgiveness just as Christ has forgiven you?

Question
2

Second, we should correct people who err or sin against us as defined in Scripture by pointing them to Christ and the standard found in His Word ([Matt 18:15-20](#)). However, we should not have a judgmental attitude or condemning spirit ([Matt 7:1](#)); rather, we should speak the truth in love, seeking restoration ([Eph 4:15](#); [Gal 6:1](#)). This does not

mean that we should intentionally place ourselves in situations where people can take advantage of us or enable them to continue sinning. We don't have to remain silent or suffer wrong without any recourse at all. On the contrary, it means that we must follow the biblical precedent for redressing such wrongs. As Judge, God can lovingly chastise us for sin ([Heb](#)



[12:5](#)) and issue a binding verdict for our actions ([Deut 32:35](#); [Rom 12:19](#)). All we can do is point others to the truth of His Word and model its tenets; we can only warn them of the consequences if they maintain their destructive course.

Third, we should not keep a record of wrongs, but **forgive** and move on. God doesn't hold the penalty of our sins over our heads, miring us in guilt once we have asked and received His forgiveness. He forgives us and restores us to walk obediently in the transformed life to which He has called us. [Psalm 103:12](#) notes that "as far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our transgressions from us." Elsewhere, the author of Hebrews reminds us what the prophet Jeremiah declared about the Lord: "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds

Instruct

I will remember no more” (Heb 8:12). In following God’s example, we should not hold grudges or seek retribution for past wrongs. We should not constantly put a guilt-trip upon those who have repented of their past actions. We should **forgive** and move forward.

Although God does not keep a record of our wrongs and He wipes the slate clean, we must understand three things in relation to His forgiveness. God employs conviction, sometimes equated with guilt, to correct us and bring us back into right standing with Him. He uses the Spirit to remind us of our past actions, so that we can avoid continually succumbing to the same sins. We, therefore, stand accountable to God for all our actions. Even though He forgives us and expunges our record so to speak, the consequences of our actions can remain. We will see this in a few weeks when we study Moses who disobeyed the Lord’s directive and was barred from leading Israel into the Promised Land ([Num 20:1-13](#)). Our job, therefore, is not to put a guilt-trip upon others, but point them to the Lord who can restore and will deal with them justly!

In what ways have you seen people who have said they forgive continually put a guilt-trip upon those whom they have supposedly forgiven? How does this strain a relationship?

Question
3

Fourth, we should never abuse God’s grace by repeatedly sinning—trivially thinking that He will always **forgive** us no matter what ([Rom 6:1-2](#)). Although Jesus will always **forgive**, believers should seek to honor and glorify Him through their obedience rather than using His grace as a license to sin. We should not look for “loopholes” or live selfishly according to the flesh to placate our own personal desires. Consequently, we should never think “it is better to ask for forgiveness than permission.” We should always seek Christ first and know the boundaries He has set forth in His Word ([Matt 6:33; Psalm 119:11](#)). With this biblical understanding, we can now properly evaluate both the forgiveness we have received ourselves and the forgiveness we must extend to others as Jesus teaches Peter and the disciples. Such an understanding of God’s gracious forgiveness will keep us on the right path in life.

Matthew 18:23-27

THE COMPASSION OF THE KING:

Jesus now illustrates the principle of forgiveness in the **kingdom of heaven** through

a parable or story about **a certain king** who mercifully forgave one of **his servants** who owed an astronomical sum of money (v. 23). These **servants** were likely trusted individuals who worked for the **king** in high-level government positions overseeing the finances and investments of the administration. Technically, we do not have an equivalent among our officials today who would bid their services in making revenue for the state. At that time, however, such officials would pledge to collect a certain amount in taxes or tributes, like Zacchaeus and other tax collectors, or to bring in a specific amount of revenue through investments ([Matt 25:14-30](#)). As this **king** settled or reconciled his accounts, one servant **who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him** so he could collect on all that was pledged to him (v. 24).



Although no exact correspondence exists in relation to modern wages, we can still get a rough idea about how huge this amount truly was. In the first century, a denarius was roughly equivalent to a day's wage for the average worker. There were approximately 6,000 **denarii** to one talent. **Ten thousand talents** would then total 60 million **denarii**. With one denarius being a day's wage, this servant would need to work 164,383.5 years to pay off his debt! Thus, he could never realistically repay this debt. Per standard practices to claim restitution for a debt in the first century, **his master commanded** that everything **he had be sold**, including his family as debtors, so that he might recover at least some of what he was **owed** (v. 25). Even then, the selling of all his possessions would not settle this staggering amount; it would come up well short! Because **the servant** over-promised and failed to pay the **king** what he had contracted, he **fell** prostrate on the ground before him to plead for leniency (v. 26). To highlight the seriousness of the situation, the word Jesus uses of the servant's actions is often translated "worshiped" in the New Testament in reference to God. But in this context, the definition signifies "to express in attitude or gesture one's complete dependence on our submission to a high authority figure."* Strikingly, **the servant** did not ask to be **released** from the **debt** completely, but only more time to **pay**. He begged his **master** for **patience** so that he might have time to repay **all** he owed. Yet, the king

Instruct

recognized that he would never be able to repay such a staggering amount. **Moved with compassion**, he **forgave him** and **released** him from the entire **debt**. He wasn't required to repay a single penny!

In Reference



See Frederick William Danker, ed. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), p. 882.

Like this **servant**, we have a huge **debt** that we cannot **pay** because we have willfully chosen to disobey the Lord. This **debt** means that we have a sentence of death that awaits us. We can do nothing to **pay** it; we cannot change our course on our own. We must depend completely upon the grace and mercy of the Lord which He offers through Christ if only we would turn from our sins and accept Him. In Christ, God has paid our penalty Himself and **released** us from all our sin **debt**; He counts nothing against us when we seek reconciliation through Him! Consequently, Jesus employs this example to illustrate from how great a **debt** the disciples and we have been **released** by God. If He has completely forgiven us and **released** us from our **debt**, we also ought to forgive others in the same way!

How would you quantify the amount which Jesus paid for you and how much "debt" He has forgiven you? How does this change your perspective about forgiving others?

Question
4

Matthew 18:28-30

THE CALLOUSNESS OF THE SERVANT:

The **servant** who had just been forgiven this extraordinary **debt** did not react with gratitude and grace toward another who owed him. Instead, he **went** to find **one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii** to demand restitution (v. 28). Although still a rather large sum of one hundred day's wages, it was nowhere comparable to the **ten thousand talents** he himself had **owed the king**! Today, it would be like a person who **owed** billions of dollars harassing someone who only owed a few thousand dollars. The servant who had been **released** from his **debt** by **the king** grabbed **his fellow servant by the throat** and threatened him to repay. **His**

fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged for more time to repay everything—just as he himself had just done before **the king** (v. 29). But this calloused **servant** wouldn't hear of it. Rather than extend mercy as he had been shown, he had him thrown **into prison** until **he** could repay **the debt** (v. 30).



Perhaps, in the eyes of the world, some tragic and terrible things have been perpetrated against you. They could be as serious as the murder of a loved one, physical or sexual abuse, infidelity in marriage, theft from someone you trusted, a coworker sabotaging you to gain favorable standing for a promotion, or a friend stabbing you in the back. I don't know what you've had to endure in life or the anguish it has brought upon you. But Christ does! And He has called us to **forgive** no matter what happened or the circumstances behind it. Unfortunately, forgiving someone cannot erase our memories, but it can release us from anger, bitterness, resentment, and a whole host of destructive emotions if we allow Christ to heal our wounds and submit to His guidance. An unforgiving attitude enslaves us to our emotions and distracts us on life's journey because we constantly relive the event in our minds. It then robs us of the joy and freedom that we can experience in Christ today by causing us to concentrate on past events that have wounded us. Only in Christ when we realize how much He has forgiven us and when we turn everything over to Him to deal justly with the challenges we have faced or will face can we overcome through forgiveness.

How has forgiveness freed you from emotional enslavement or constantly reliving the past?

Question
5

Matthew 18:31-35

THE CONDEMNATION BY THE KING:

When his fellow servants saw what he did, they were very grieved and went to inform **the king** (v. 31). Upon hearing the report, **the king** summoned **the servant** and began lecturing him: "**You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me**" (v. 32). He then asked, "**Should you not also have had compassion**

Instruct

on your fellow servant just as I had pity on you" (v. 33)? In response, **the king** had him **delivered to the torturers until he should repay all that was** owed. To conclude



His teaching, Jesus summarizes the point of this parable: God has forgiven us a great **debt** and we ought to likewise **forgive** others who have wronged us. If we do **not forgive** each other's **trespasses**, neither will the heavenly **Father** forgive us (v. 35). Jesus even puts it more bluntly in His teaching on prayer in the Sermon on the Mount: "But if you

do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matt 6:15).

When we have a relationship with Christ, part of the transformation we should observe in our lives is the ability to **forgive** others. It certainly won't be easy to do, but with Christ we have the power to **forgive** when we surrender to Him. As a believer, we are called to imitate Christ and display His way of thinking. This means that we must **forgive** others just as He has forgiven us. We should **forgive** unconditionally with a spirit that seeks restoration and reconciliation. If we fail to **forgive**, we must ask ourselves why. Maybe we have become distracted by the philosophy of the world and allowed our flesh to dictate our thinking. Or perhaps we don't have a relationship with Christ at all because we aren't bearing His attitude of forgiveness. In Christ, we must be willing to **forgive** others their **trespasses** so that we can point others to His forgiveness, glorify Him through our testimony, and free ourselves from the destructive emotions that constantly run through our minds when we harbor resentment and bitterness.

In cases where you have difficulty forgiving others, what prevents you from forgiving as Jesus has commanded?

Question
6

We live in a culture that radically differs from the biblical prescription for justice and

Jesus' call to **forgive**. Scripture affirms the right to due process in which charges must be corroborated by at least two witnesses ([Deut 17:2-7](#); [1 Tim 5:19](#)). Even when a case can be substantiated against a person, Scripture compels us to **forgive**! At one time, our society overwhelmingly affirmed the belief in one's innocence until proven guilty; they also practiced some grace in seeking to rehabilitate someone by offering a second chance—even subscribing to the motto “three strikes and you're out.” Even then, this falls short of Jesus' expectation of forgiveness! Yet, we aren't to ignore or overlook wrongdoing nor fail to take steps to prevent it biblically. Instead, we are to point to Scripture, correct, and seek to help them reform rather than enable them to continue their destructive course. But in all this, Jesus reveals that we must be willing to **forgive**! Today, the court of public opinion has become a weapon to ruin a person's life. People are often “tried” on the basis of hearsay or merely based on whether others agree with their view. Even when evidence can be corroborated, culture immediately reacts with judgment devoid of grace. Our culture retaliates instead of restores; it “cancels” rather than forgives in an effort to produce true transformation. People seek to destroy others instead of offering loving correction. Certainly, culture apart from Christ cannot produce authentic and lasting transformation in an individual. But the way society and some believers act today goes against everything Jesus teaches His disciples in this passage. Therefore, let us take to heart the tenets of the parable that follows, so we can practice forgiveness as Christ envisions!

How has the cultural view of forgiveness infiltrated some churches today? What must we do to correct that mindset?

Question
7

In the introduction, we read a powerful testimony about a woman who came to understand the power of forgiveness through Christ. Until she began a relationship with Christ, hatred and animosity nearly cost her her life through suicidal thoughts. So consumed with torment and rage, she could never find a moment of peace. But then Christ helped her find that peace she so desperately needed. Through His own forgiveness of our sins, Kim Phuc was now able to forgive those who had caused her so much pain. In Christ, she had become free not only from her own enslavement to sin, but also the destructive emotions directed toward people who caused her so much agony.

Like Kim Phuc, we may have experienced things in our lives that have caused us great agony and hardship. They may not have been the result of a physical war, but they may have caused as much psychological and physiological pain. No matter what we have gone through, we have a Savior who knows! For those of us who have a relationship with Him, He knows everything that we experience because He is present with us daily through His Spirit. And He Himself has experienced all the difficulties and hardships in life that we ever will ([Heb 4:15](#)). If you harbor unforgiveness in your heart, allow Jesus to set you free and enable you to forgive in the way He has instructed us in this passage. Let us forgive so that we can emulate Him, having the abundant joy in life that only He can give when we seek Him first.

Incorporate

Based on [Matthew 18:15-20](#), what is the proper way to address a grievance against someone? Why should we not remain silent when we see someone sinning? What is the purpose of speaking against sin?

How has the Lord shown you compassion when you erred? What did He teach you through that mistake? How has this influenced how you forgive others?

In what areas do you struggle with forgiveness? How has that affected the way you think and live? What steps has Christ called you to take to confront this attitude?

September 12, 2021



An Overcomer Reconciles with Family

Genesis 45:1-28

Focal Verse:

"But now, do not therefore be grieved or angry with yourselves because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life."

Genesis 45:5

back to
Table of
Contents

Introduce

As members of a family, we have the uncanny ability to know what irritates and sets off those in our households—particularly those of us who have siblings. We know the right buttons to push to elicit a desired response, whether in what we do or what we say. Most of us probably realized this long before the pandemic confined us to our homes for several months. It doesn't take long during car trips, vacations, or everyday casual interactions to discern that altercations and arguments occur because we have tremendous



insight into one another's personalities, pet peeves, and perspectives. Much ruckus is even intentionally created by members of a household selfishly wanting to agitate another—either to obtain something they desire or to make the other look bad by causing trouble for them.

As we grow older, the problems in our families don't magically cease; we don't automatically outgrow them. They evolve to become more complex and even more hurtful, completely severing relationships in some cases. In families, we can face a multitude of complicated issues that produce division. Arguments and disagreements can spawn much dysfunction within our families if we don't have our perspective rooted and grounded in Christ first. In addition to actions clearly defined by Scripture as sinful, differences in life goals and philosophies, the use of money, the division of inheritance, perceived favoritism, a spirit of entitlement, jealousy over another's achievements, politics, and children making wrong decisions require the need of repentance and reconciliation. We need the maturity and guidance only Christ can offer to navigate these complex issues and function as a healthy family in the way He intends!

A few weeks ago, I read an uncredited article by an unnamed author online that provided an interesting perspective on reconciliation in the family. Two siblings resided adjacent to one another on large tracts of land. For most of their lives, they had graciously helped each other to the point of sharing anything the other lacked. But

Introduce

suddenly their cooperation ceased when a feud began for some undisclosed reason. They now only spoke harshly to each other with great vitriol. To exact revenge, one sibling used heavy machinery to dig a creek between their two properties, destroying an idyllic meadow in the process. He knew this would spite his brother!

One day, an itinerate carpenter knocked on one brother's door, seeking any work that he may have. In retaliation for the construction of the creek, he quickly employed him to build a wall so that he would never have to see his brother again. The carpenter labored all day and returned to show the brother the work he had accomplished. Instead of building a wall to shut the other brother out, he built a bridge that spanned the creek and united the two properties. The other brother saw the bridge and was overjoyed that his brother would do such a thing! That day the two siblings reconciled and overcame the division which had separated them.

Many things may cause separation and division in life, but God has given us the power through His Son to overcome them. To overcome such dysfunction, we must first be reconciled with Him through Christ. When we have a relationship with Christ, then we can seek to restore our broken relationships here on earth. Even when we have a relationship with Christ, we can still sinfully follow the flesh at times which perpetuates our problems because we harbor bitterness, display anger, act selfishly, and seek revenge; this attitude then leads us to reject forgiveness and reconciliation. God hasn't called us to dysfunction, but reconciliation no matter what the situation may be. We must follow His Spirit who will lead us to be reconciled in the right way—just as He did Joseph with his brothers who had sold him into slavery in Egypt.

Key
Question

With whom in your family have you had need to reconcile before?

Genesis 45:1-2

THE PRIVACY NEEDED:

Approximately thirty-nine-years-old now, over two decades have passed since Joseph's brothers had sold him into slavery in Egypt at the age of seventeen ([Gen 37:2; 41:46](#)). According to God's plan, he now served as second in command answering only to Pharaoh in all Egypt. He would lead the nation to store food during seven prosperous years in preparation for seven filled with famine exacerbated by severe drought which engulfed the entire Middle East. When his brothers approached to beg for rations for their families back in Canaan who had already endured two years of the drought, they failed to recognize their brother even though he had recognized them. Although Joseph did not immediately reveal himself to them, the time had now come to make **himself known to his brothers** (v. 1).

No longer able to **restrain** his emotions, Joseph commanded **everyone to go out from** him. After all the servants and other Egyptians left, he **stood** alone with **his brothers**. He now had the intimacy with his family whereby he could reveal his identity and they could have a time of private reconciliation—just the eleven of them. Despite having this privacy, Joseph **wept** so loudly that **the Egyptians** and the household **of Pharaoh heard it** (v. 2). Although the text doesn't describe the exact emotions that he experienced, he was probably overjoyed at being reunited with his family whom he may have thought he would have never seen again. We do know, however, that Joseph did not weep from bitterness which sprang from anger spurring vengeance. He had already forgiven **his brothers** because he had come to understand God's overarching purpose for his life. We can learn a valuable principle about forgiveness and reconciliation from these verses. Reconciliation should generally occur in private only with the parties involved. In rare cases, such as when something occurs publicly, should people attempt to



Instruct

reconcile in public. Even then, the best course of action remains to discuss the matter privately and share the outcome with others as the situation warrants. When we seek reconciliation privately, we can testify about it later so that others may glorify the Lord, see how He helped us navigate the situation, and even learn from it so they may not repeat the same mistakes. Joseph wisely followed this model. He reconciled with **his brothers** privately; he sent everyone from the room except those involved. But as God led, he testified publicly as recorded in Scripture about the work the Lord had done through him to accomplish His purpose.

Many reasons exist why reconciliation should occur privately. First, it is the preferred biblical method! Jesus tells His disciples, “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him *alone*” ([Matt 18:15](#)). Others should only become involved in mediation if this private conversation fails to bear fruit. Second, involving other people at the onset can have dire consequences. People tend to choose sides based on partial, second-hand information; they often give their “two-cents” which makes the situation worse. Moreover, the people involved, particularly the accused, feel they must “save face”; they become defensive which often prohibits discussion and true reconciliation from occurring. The parties need the privacy to talk openly and frankly without outside influence interfering. To see the logic of Jesus’ admonition to reconcile privately, all we must do is look at the outcome of discussions on social media which become a free-for-all where people pile-on. And, if Scripture is even cited or used appropriately, the opinions of others often take precedent over the very words of God!

How have you either been involved in or witnessed a discussion that has gotten out of hand in public? What would have been the benefit of approaching them privately?

Question
1

Genesis 45:3-8

THE PERSPECTIVE GIVEN:

After everyone had gone as he requested, Joseph revealed his identity to **his brothers** and asked whether his **father**, Jacob, **still** lived (v. 3). But this only served to confuse them more. Perhaps, Joseph spoke directly to them for the first time in their native language of Hebrew without the use of a translator. Regardless of the reason, **his**

brothers did not yet recognize him. Joseph then instructs them to come closer so he could reveal an intimate detail that only he and they would know. He is their **brother whom they sold into Egypt** two decades earlier. With this explicit detail which only their **brother** could have known, they would now surely realize that they stood face to face with Joseph!



Perhaps, the expressions on his brothers' faces changed, alerting him that they now knew who he was. Therefore, he wanted to allay any fear that they may have had as well as to release them from any feelings of guilt and regret that they may experience. Joseph stood in a position of great power; he could have used it to his advantage and exacted revenge on each of them. **His brothers** knew this! Joseph wanted to reassure them he would not retaliate in kind, but that he forgave them. So, he bid them **not to be grieved or angry with** themselves for selling him there (v. 5). Instead, he explains the hope he found in the perspective of the Lord: **For God sent me before you to preserve life**. Joseph indeed had the power as the second in command in Egypt to take their lives in retribution for what they had done to him. But he chose to bear the character of the Lord whom he faithfully and obediently served.

When others offend or anger you, what characteristics do they see? How do they reflect upon the Lord?

Question
2

Joseph looked beyond his mere circumstances to see the bigger picture of why God had brought him to Egypt. Although he had often suffered for doing the right thing, such as when he fled Potiphar's wife and found himself imprisoned on trumped up charges, Joseph never wavered in his obedience; he recognized what the Lord wanted to accomplish through him. But this could only happen if he were found faithful in everything the Lord allowed him to experience. So, he explained to **his brothers** that **the famine** which had gripped **the land** for **two years** already will last another **five** (v. 6). It will be so severe that **neither plowing nor harvesting** will occur. As God revealed to Joseph, He **sent** him before his brothers to **preserve a posterity and save**

Instruct

their **lives by a great deliverance** (v. 7). He concludes by reiterating that **it was not** they who **sent** him there, **but God** (v. 8). God made him an advisor (i.e., **father**) to



Pharaoh and ruler throughout all the land of Egypt. It was all part of God's plan!

When we focus on our circumstances rather than look to the Lord, we will fail to see God at work and we will miss what he wants to do through us. We will view the world with pessimism instead of the hope that we have in Christ Jesus. This leads us to complain constantly and always point out the negative in lieu of the positive of what God has done for us. Complaints turn into criticism and criticism distracts us from our relationship with the Lord because we begin to see things from the perspective of the flesh. We throw a pity party and become jaded in our outlook. If we are a believer, however, God is at work regardless of the circumstances because His Spirit dwells within us!

The only reason we cannot see God working in difficult circumstances in life is because we haven't turned to seek Him! He's there and will always be there for us no matter what. We must ensure we remain focused on Him!

What are some things that can (or have) distract(ed) you from the Lord when tough times come?

Question
3

Too often, troubling circumstances in life push us to become independent when we should be depending upon God. As Americans in particular, we have resolve to solve things on our own. We are fiercely independent and look inwardly to find the strength within ourselves to persist and stand firm. But God calls us to look to Him for that resolve! Looking inwardly will often lead us to compromise; we lose self-control, allowing our flesh and emotions to dictate our actions instead of Scripture and the Spirit. Joseph, however, never looked to the flesh for his strength, but always to the Lord. He could have used his youthful handsomeness to gratify his desires and

hopefully exploit others for better positions, but he didn't. He could have used his position to retaliate against **his brothers**, but he didn't. He would have missed the bigger picture of **the great deliverance** that God wanted to perform through him! Too often, our circumstances and a fleshly mindset that lacks self-control causes us to miss the great work God is doing and wants to do through us.

When you fail to see God at work in the midst of troubling circumstances, what should be the first thing that you do?

Question
4

Genesis 45:9-15

THE PROVISION PROMISED:

Excited at the revelation he had just given his brothers, Joseph now expresses eagerness for them to return to Canaan to give his **father**, Jacob, the good news. He tells them to **hurry and go** without delay (v. 9). He even prescribes the exact message which they should relay to him: "**Your son Joseph says, 'God has made me lord of all Egypt; come down to me; do not tarry.'**" Although Joseph tailors the message specifically to his **father**, he still graciously includes provision for **his brothers** and their families. He invites his **father** and all his subsequent generations to bring everything they own from Canaan and live **near him in the land of Goshen** in the Nile River delta rich with natural resources (v. 10). This will give Joseph the opportunity to **provide for** them, so that they will not experience **poverty** during the remaining **five years of famine** (v. 11).

Whether to reassure his brothers who were perhaps still perplexed by this revelation, Joseph emphasized that they can **see**, and hear, him speaking with his **own mouth** (v. 12). Likely, he is speaking to them in Hebrew. Therefore, he wanted them to grasp that it's him, Joseph, who has made this promise to care for them as God enabled him by placing him in Egypt! After once again reiterating the expediency in reporting to their **father** and



Instruct

bringing him there to Egypt, Joseph displayed his affectionate joy at being reunited with **his brothers** and the prospect of seeing his **father** again (v. 13). He first embraced **Benjamin** and **wept** with joy on his shoulder (literally, **neck**). Then, he **kissed** the rest of **his brothers** while he continued to weep; eventually, the emotional reunion concluded as they **talked** (v. 15).

We can learn a valuable lesson based on Joseph's actions directed toward **his brothers** in these verses. He doesn't just say that he forgives them; he displays his forgiveness and reconciliation in a tangible way that they can see and that demonstrates his sincerity. First, he provides for them and their families out of his compassion and grace. Second, he embraces them and they continue to talk civilly—something they themselves could not do to him years ago when they had sold him into slavery. We, too, must show our sincerity through our actions whether we initiate the forgiveness or we must ask forgiveness for our own wrongdoings. With God, for example, we demonstrate our grief over sin through repentance. We stop and turn! Sometimes in life people say, "I'm sorry," simply because they got caught. They don't truly feel remorse; they want to avoid the consequences of their actions. Because they're not actually sorry for what they have done, they turn right around and do the exact same thing again!

In this case, Joseph didn't have anything of which he needed to repent. But he did need to show his sincerity to **his brothers** who were probably skeptical based on how they had treated him. By his actions, Joseph left no doubt that he forgave them and understood the larger purpose to which God had called him. We see the same precedent established in the New Testament when Paul became a follower of Christ on the road to Damascus. When the Lord appeared to Ananias to give him directives, he was understandably skeptical: "Lord, I have heard from many about this man, how much harm he has done to Your saints in Jerusalem" ([Acts 9:13](#)). No longer persecuting Christians, Paul "immediately" began to preach the gospel "in the synagogues" ([Acts 9:20](#)). There was evidence that he had truly repented and God had transformed his heart. It took time, however, for people to see Paul's genuineness. For those who heard him asked, "Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests" ([Acts 9:21](#))?

Although in Joseph's situation the reconciliation seemed to occur almost immediately

based on this passage, it still takes time to heal wounds and prove the sincerity of forgiveness. For the most part, we don't find ourselves in dysfunctional relationships overnight. It usually happens gradually over time. In the same way, we cannot always expect reconciliation to occur immediately. It takes time to prove one's sincerity and regain trust. This requires effort and remaining focused on the Lord. What this looks like will depend upon a number of factors, but most specifically the nature and source of the dysfunction. It will look different in each situation we encounter. For Joseph, it came through provision and an embrace with **his brothers**. But even then, years later when their father died, they wondered, "Perhaps Joseph will hate us, and may actually repay us for all the evil which we did to him" (Gen 50:15). Yet, Joseph never faltered in his promise and always treated them with grace and respect.

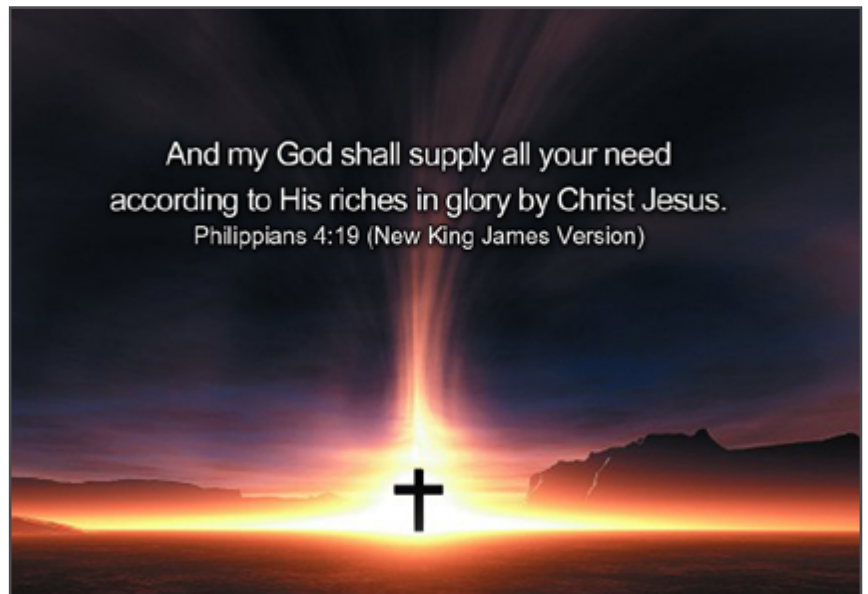
How do you show others you're truly sorry or that you've truly forgiven them?

Question
5

Genesis 45:16-24

THE PROMISE FULFILLED:

Pharaoh gives his authoritative stamp of approval on the promises Joseph had made and even provides the means by which to make it happen! After hearing that Joseph's **brothers** had arrived, he extends a formal invitation for them to bring their **father** and **households** to dwell in Egypt where he would give them the **best** the nation had to offer (vv. 16-18). He also makes sure that they are well equipped for the journey to and from Canaan. He commands **carts** to accompany them to **bring** their families and possessions back (v.



19). Pharaoh additionally reassures them that they have nothing about which to worry; he would make sure they have everything they need—**the very best** of the **land** (v. 20). Just as Joseph had envisioned and Pharaoh had commanded, Joseph provided **them carts** and **gave them** abundant **provisions for the journey** (v. 21). Specifically, he gave each a change of clothes, but to Benjamin **five changes of clothes** and **three**

Instruct

hundred pieces of silver—presumably some for their father although the text does not indicate for certain (v. 22). He additionally outfitted the caravan with twenty **donkeys** which carried the finest things **Egypt** had to offer along with enough supplies for their return journey (v. 23). With this, **his brothers** left with his blessing for safe travels (v. 24).

With all the provision they had received, the brothers must still maintain the right perspective. This goes back to verse 7 where Joseph declares that **God sent him to preserve a posterity and to save their lives**. They owe everything to God! Behind the generosity of Pharaoh and the provision offered by Joseph, we know that God is the One who orchestrated everything. God ultimately provides for His people! Long ago, Joseph came to understand this principle. If it were not for the Lord, he would not be in the position which he now holds. Even in the midst of the darkest times in life, he saw the hand of God at work through the provision He offered. Because he had seen God consistently at work, he could understand the greater plan which enabled him to forgive and seek reconciliation. He didn't focus on the circumstances; he found hope in the Lord. Like Joseph and his brothers, we too must have the right perspective to realize from whence our help comes and the provision that the Lord offers.

How has or does God want to use you to reconcile with others in a way that demonstrates His provision?

Question
6

In order for God to use Joseph to **save** his family, he must make himself available to be used and remain faithful in what he does. We may not become a high-ranking official who leads a nation in a time of great distress, but God has a plan for each one of us. Therefore, we must make ourselves available and remain faithful at all times in both the big things and the small. Because we live in a world wrecked by sin, we will all experience dysfunction in our relationships at times—whether we cause it ourselves or others perpetrate it against us. How we handle it depends upon the place which we give God in our lives. If we place Him first and remain faithful in everything, we will always respond in the right way because He will never lead us astray.

As we examine our lives through the lenses of Scripture with the aid of the Holy Spirit, let us ask ourselves what our goal is when we face dysfunction in our relationships. Above all, we should seek to emulate the character of Christ, allowing others to see His

righteousness working through us. If we fail to bear His character, we will never truly overcome dysfunction in our relationships and will continue to live self-centeredly. As a follower of Christ, we must forgive others no matter the circumstances and provide the way for reconciliation when they seek restoration with us. This can take time. During that time, we must remain consistent in our faith which will reveal the authenticity of our actions. Joseph provides an excellent example for us in overcoming dysfunction because he understood the importance of remaining faithful to the Lord in everything! Let's follow this pattern we see established through his actions.

How does your life compare to the standard set in Scripture for dealing with dysfunction when it occurs?

Question
7

Genesis 45:25-28

THE PATRIARCH REUNITED

This story, over two decades in the making, has a happy ending. Upon arriving in Canaan, Joseph's brothers inform his father that he **is still alive** and has become **governor over all Egypt** (vv. 25-26). But Jacob **did not believe them**, so they offered proof. They told him explicitly what Joseph **had said** and showed him all **the carts** packed with the goods which he had sent (v. 27). At this, Jacob rejoiced—literally **the spirit of their father revived**. Therefore, he quickly makes preparations to **go and see** his son **before** he dies (v. 28). The family disrupted by dysfunction and severed by sin has now been reunited through forgiveness and the providential provision of the Lord. When we place our hope and trust in the Lord, we can find comfort and peace regardless of the outcome of a specific event. Unfortunately, we may not always have a "happy ending" where reconciliation occurs because we live in a fallen world dominated by sin where people must actively choose to accept the forgiveness offered. Although we don't have control over the actions of others or their choices, it doesn't absolve us from following God's plan for overcoming dysfunction. We must forgive and seek reconciliation with all people. We should never be the ones who prevent reconciliation because we refuse to forgive and harbor grudges in our hearts. On the contrary, we must look for God at work even in the most difficult of circumstances, seeing how He wants to use us and understanding the grander purpose to which He has called us—that is to be His representatives who point others to His salvation and provision. Therefore, let us be peacemakers who forgive and reconcile with others no matter what they may have done.

Every one of us has experienced dysfunction in our relationships at some point in our lives. Sometimes we are the source because we sin. At other times, we are the recipients when someone sins against us. In either instance, we must be the vehicle through which Christ can mend a broken relationship whether by asking for forgiveness or being willing to forgive. Like the carpenter in the introduction, Jesus builds bridges rather than walls. He has made true reconciliation possible through His sacrifice and by the example He set for us to follow.

Even though Jesus builds bridges, we must act by crossing them. Reconciliation is our responsibility. We must forgive and take steps to reconcile with others. Although others may not choose to be reconciled with us, we cannot be a hindrance; we must take the initiative just as Christ took the initiative with us. Let us, therefore, be overcomers who forgive and provide the opportunity for reconciliation, allowing Christ to work through us to offer salvation and deliverance to all who will accept it.

Incorporate

How has God called you to be a “Joseph” who sets an example for his family, engaging in forgiveness and reconciliation? What did you learn from these situations? How did they turn out?

When faced with dysfunction, how has God provided you with the strength to remain faithful and do what is right regardless of the situation? If you haven’t always remained faithful, how has God brought you back on course?

When you have experienced dysfunction in a relationship, what Scripture did God bring to mind that helped you the most?

September 19, 2021



An Overcomer Resists Frustration

Numbers 20:1-13

Focal Verse:

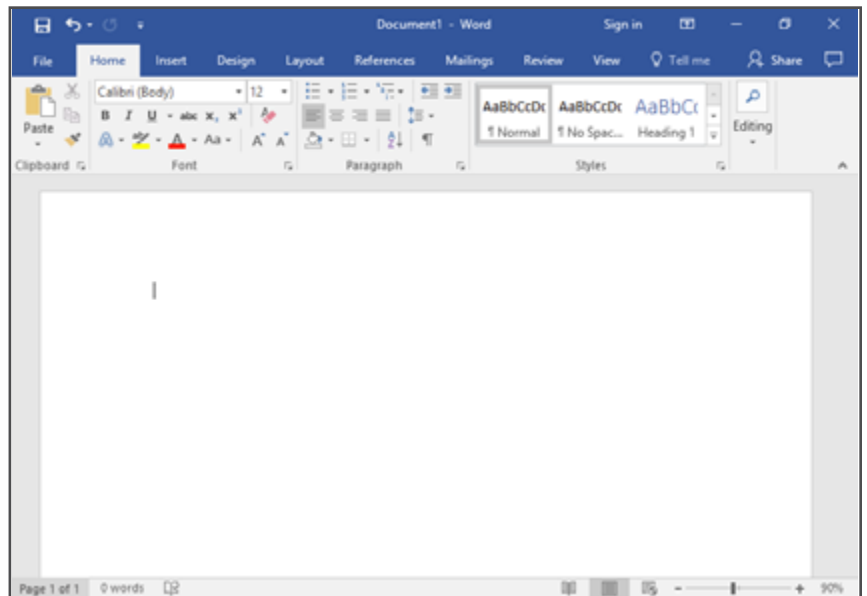
“And Moses and Aaron gathered the assembly together before the rock; and he said to them, ‘Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?’”

Numbers 20:10

back to
Table of
Contents

Introduce

Upon arriving at seminary as a twenty-two-year-old Master's student, I immediately endeavored to find a part-time job to help with tuition and living expenses. Within a week, I had an interview at the computer lab in the library where I would eventually work until I began teaching undergraduate courses. Very quickly I learned how frustrated and even agitated students could become when their computers malfunctioned or they could not operate them correctly to format their papers. Undoubtedly, many of us can identify with such frustration even more so today as technology rapidly changes, more functions are continually added, and devices have become more complicated to use. How we deal with frustration and react to situations can save us much grief if we would adopt the Lord's perspective and follow His plan, remembering that we exercise control over our responses even when we can't control our circumstances or other people. Still, at times, our frustration gets the better of us and we make the situation worse by the way we react. During my first year working in the computer lab, a middle-aged gentleman regularly came to type his research papers. He would spend hours reading and typing. One day, he encountered a problem in formatting his paper, so he sought assistance from my co-worker seated at the help desk inside the lab. She methodically began to assess the problem, so she could assist him in learning how to correct it. However, he grew impatient, thinking she was not working fast enough. She tried to explain what had caused the error and the steps to take to fix it, but language proved somewhat of a barrier since he was also an international student. The inability to communicate clearly compounded his frustration. Having lost all patience, he brushed her hands away from the keyboard and began pressing buttons while clicking the mouse. Suddenly, his entire research paper vanished and he was left staring at a blank screen. Raising his voice, he began to express his frustration verbally, increasing the tension of the situation. Since I had seen what had happened, I stepped into the fray. I tried undoing the changes and, when



Introduce

that didn't work, to save the file under a new name before closing and reopening the original. Still, it was blank.

Therefore, I explained that in his impatience he had erased his work and saved a blank document over the original file. He could not simply press "undo" because he had already closed and reopened the previously "saved" document. Seething with anger, he continued to levy complaints. Addressing him directly, I respectfully said, "Sir, you refused help when you pushed aside her hands and took control of the computer. You, not she, caused this by your own actions. You alone are responsible for the choice of pressing buttons and saving the blank document over your work." With this, he left—realizing the catastrophe which his frustration and impatience had caused.

After years of complaints from the people as they wandered in the wilderness, Moses experienced great frustration to the point of exasperation. Although he rightly sought the Lord to address their complaints, he allowed frustration to consume him. Overcome with emotion, Moses lashed out at the people and disobeyed God in the process. In the end, however, he suffered the consequence for losing self-control and bursting out in anger. As overcomers, we must resist frustration and respond in the right way no matter the circumstances. We must learn from Moses' mistake and take steps to avoid becoming overwhelmed by frustration in our own lives.

Key
Question

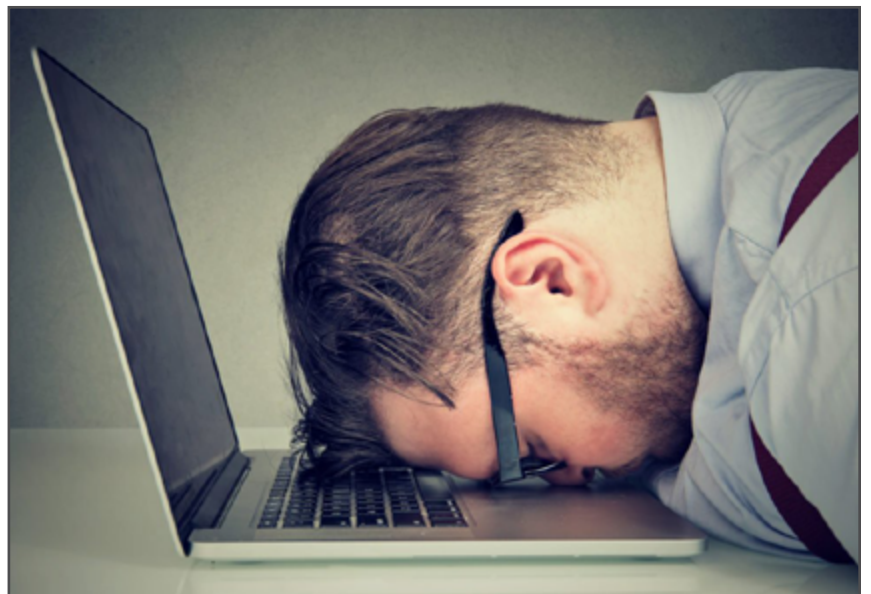
How do you deal with frustration when it inevitably arises in your life?

THE COMPOUNDING OF PROBLEMS:

Certainly, we can become frustrated with a single event or with a specific person, but frustration usually comes from a series of events which weigh on us day after day—compounding one problem with another. The modern term “triggered” captures the idea of how stress and frustration from previous life-events can build to the point that a single event pushes us over the edge and causes us to react with anger or aggression. We become like balloons in which one keeps forcing air with each breath with nowhere to escape; eventually, they will expand too much and burst. Generally, a single event may not be the direct “cause” of the outburst, but the many stressful events prior have “triggered” a response through this single event which provides the catalyst for our emotional reaction. Such outbursts, however, always cause more problems than they “resolve” and they can severely strain our relationships.

Frustration stems from three general areas: sin, self-induced stress, and stress from uncontrollable circumstances in life. Sin enters the picture when we become frustrated through our own self-centeredness: we don’t get what we want, we don’t get our way, or someone won’t agree with our opinions or placate our preferences. Frustration can also surface when others fail to meet our expectations, particularly in doing things that conflict with our pet peeves and prove a source of irritation. Sometimes others, especially family members, intentionally engage in this irritation to provoke a reaction!

In addition, self-induced stress can also lead to frustration. We can set expectations which can cause stress when we fail to meet them. It also arises when we worry about things beyond our control rather than trust in the Lord for guidance and provision. Finally, stressful or emotional events in life can become a source of frustration as they weigh upon us. Hardships, heartaches, and hurts can produce frustration if not dealt with in a biblical way—



Instruct

whether dysfunctional relationships, death, debt, illness, work, or a whole host of other things. We can't control others and make them do the right thing; we can't always control the circumstances either. But we always have control over how we respond and how we react.

Moses faced much adversity in life from his birth throughout the time God called him to shepherd Israel and take them to the Promised Land. As an infant when his mother weaved a basket in which to place him to float upon the Nile, he narrowly escaped death by edict of Pharaoh who feared that the Israelites had become too numerous ([Exod 1:15-22](#)). As a youth, he had to flee because he killed an Egyptian for abusing an Israelite ([Exod 2:11-15](#)). When the Lord wanted to use him as His spokesman to Pharaoh, Moses objected because he suffered a speech impediment, perhaps stuttering ([Exod 4:10](#)). And, during the period of the wilderness wanderings, he often endured challenges to his leadership, including by Miriam and Aaron ([Num 12:1](#))! Whether from circumstances beyond his control or situations induced by his own choices, Moses had plenty of reason to become frustrated with life.

As the one whom God had chosen to deliver Israel from Egypt, Moses increasingly encountered problems later in life because he dealt with an obstinate people who constantly complained. During the times he obediently surrendered to the Lord, however, he was able to overcome any obstacle and resist the temptation to lash out in frustration. But when he focused on his circumstances and allowed his problems to multiply his frustration, Moses momentarily became distracted and disastrously let his emotions rule his actions. Upon arriving in **the Wilderness of Zin** on the border of **Kadesh** with **the whole congregation of the children of Israel**, Moses was thrust into a period of grief when **Miriam**, his sister, **died** and **was buried there** (v. 1). The grief he undoubtedly felt upon the death of his sister coupled with constant complaints from the people would trigger Moses to an outburst of anger that would have grave consequences here in the **wilderness**.

What are some things that frustrate you the most or have frustrated you in the past? Why do they frustrate you?

Question
1

THE COMPLAINT OF THE PEOPLE:

In the midst of Moses' grief, another crisis arose amongst the people when they could find **no water** to drink (v. 2). Not only did they vociferously complain, but **they** also **gathered against Moses and Aaron**. So, they **spoke** contentiously with them,

lamenting that they would have been better off dead like their ancestors who had previously perished during their sojourn in the **wilderness** (v. 3). They groaned, "**If only we had died when our brethren died before the Lord.**" This wasn't the first time the people uttered complaints or had even risen against Moses in revolt. They had done so from



the very beginning! After the first time Moses met with Pharaoh to seek the release of Israel from Egypt, the people resented him and protested that he had made their lives harder because of his meddling in their affairs ([Exod 5:1-22](#)). Subsequently hemmed in by the Red Sea as Pharaoh's army pursued them from behind, the people clamored that he had brought them there to die; they thought that it would have been more favorable for them to have remained in Egypt as slaves ([Exod 14:10-12](#))!

At various points throughout their journey, the people complained about the lack of resources in the arid environment of the Sinai Peninsula: food ([Exod 16:1-4](#)) and water ([Exod 15:22-27; 17:1-6](#)). Each time they had a need or faced a daunting obstacle blocking their path, God graciously and miraculously provided—whether manna from heaven, water from a rock, or a dry path through the Red Sea. The people had seen the Lord God provide time and again. Yet, they still clamored and complained; they still doubted and failed to trust His providential care. So, they collectively asked Moses **why** he has **brought** them **into the wilderness** that they and their **animals should die** there (v. 4). To this, they also inquired **why** he has made them **come out of Egypt to this evil place** which has no **grain or figs, vines or pomegranates, or water to drink** (v. 5).

From these spoken complaints, we can learn two valuable lessons from the children of

Instruct

Israel which we can use to evaluate our own lives and apply to any situation which we may experience. First, the people had become misdirected in their focus which made them unable to see the Lord at work. Notice how the people blamed Moses for their predicament: **you brought** and **you made us come**. Moses only served as the servant whom God had selected to lead His children ([Deut 34:5](#)). The Lord is the One who **brought** them **out of Egypt** and delivered them from bondage. With such an attitude, the people could not see what God had already done nor could they comprehend what He wanted to do through them.

How has frustration in your life misdirected you and caused you not to see the Lord at work?

Question
2

Rather than see the opportunities we have in the Lord, we tend to focus on the ones we don't have. Likewise, we often focus on the things we can't do instead of what God can do and what He wants to accomplish through us. Therefore, we miss the

But the men who had gone up with him said, "We are not able to go up against the people, for they are stronger than we."

Numbers 13:31

opportunity for God to reveal Himself in a more intimate way as we learn to trust Him and walk according to His will. We simply miss God working in our lives and this results in discontentment and frustration! This entire generation who wandered in the **wilderness** missed a golden opportunity to dwell in the Promised Land because they doubted what God

could do and focused on the "strength" they personally lacked in overcoming the inhabitants of Canaan. Unfortunately, many respond this very same way today; we miss an opportunity to show the world what God can do and fail to testify about His gracious provision.

What opportunities has God given you to display His glory and power in your life by the things He has called and equipped you to do on His behalf?

Question
3

Second, the people did not take responsibility for their own actions which had sentenced them to wander in the **wilderness** for a generation. They protested that **this evil place** had no **grain** or other produce and it lacked sufficient **water** to sustain them. In reality, it was their own lack of faith that the people found themselves in this position! God had brought them to the precipice of the Promised Land which “flowed with milk and honey” ([Exod 3:17](#); [Num 13:27](#)). But they did not trust the Lord to deliver it into their hand because they feared the people in the land and their fortified cities ([Num 13:28-33](#)). Because of their unbelief, this generation could not enter the Promised Land and were sentenced to wander in the wilderness. They, therefore, chose to put their trust in what they could do rather than in what God had promised He would do. They should have come to the realization that they were responsible for their own choice!

Numbers 20:6-8

THE COMMAND FROM GOD:

Moses and Aaron did the right thing by seeking the will of the Lord first. After withdrawing from the people, they immediately went to the **tabernacle** where they **fell on their faces** in a posture of respect and submission to ask the Lord to intervene (v. 6). There **the glory of the Lord appeared to them** to give specific directives about how they should handle the people’s complaint. God instructed both him and Aaron to **take the rod** and **gather the congregation together** (v. 8). Next, He expressly tells Moses to **speak to the rock before** the people; at that point, it will produce **water for them** and **their animals to drink**. He will graciously meet their need!

In-Depth Information



*The text doesn't specify whether **the rod** belonged to Moses ([Exod 7:9-10](#)) or to Aaron ([Num 17:10](#)). From the context of the book of Numbers, it appears to be Aaron's **rod** which was kept in the Tent of Testimony as admonition for the people to stop complaining and a reminder of the fate (i.e., death) of those who rebel against the Lord. In [Numbers 17](#), each of the twelve tribes were represented by a **rod** with the name of the tribe's progenitor written on them. Aaron's rod bearing the name Levi miraculously blossomed and produced almonds after which God instructed him to keep it in the Tent of Testimony "as a sign against the **rebels**." Because of the people's stubbornness and consistent complaints, it triggered Moses to lash out against the **rebels** who now complained about the lack of **water** ([Num 20:10](#)).*

Instruct

Like Moses and Aaron, we should turn to the Lord first when we encounter problems and face the potential for frustration. We must take time to seek God, but we must always hear Him speak! We must listen and apply what He has said. Sometimes we can pray and pick up Scripture, but not “hear” God speak if we don’t tune out the distractions in our lives. Although prayer and reading Scripture are always good habits to develop and should be practiced daily, they do not do us any “good” if we don’t apply what God has said. It adds no “value” to our lives if we don’t practice its principles and live by what the Lord has said. It simply becomes “knowledge.” God’s Word, however, will add tremendous value to our lives and keep us on the right path when we hear it and apply it!

Before every commercial plane pushes back from the gate to begin taxiing toward the runway, a flight attendant takes time to explain the safety features of the aircraft and what to do in the event of an emergency. Having flown many times, I can probably recite most of their speech verbatim. For example, in the event of the loss of cabin pressure, a mask will drop from the overhead compartment in front of you. Put the strap around your head, covering your nose and mouth with the apparatus. Pull the straps to make it snug and then breathe normally. Once you have put on your mask, then you may assist others. Hopefully, however, none of us has ever been on a flight where we’ve had to experience this in a true emergency situation.

Now, imagine this scenario. I can repeat the basic tenets of the flight attendant’s directives almost verbatim. I can take a multiple-choice test and answer all the questions correctly. But when the oxygen mask drops during the loss of pressure in a true emergency, I decide there is a better way of doing things or I attempt to help others before wearing my own mask. What good does all this information do if I don’t use it? Unfortunately, we sometimes treat the information God has given us in the same way. We can take a test and answer all the questions. We can recite Scripture. Yet, when it comes to application, we don’t use what He has given us. We don’t apply it. In essence, we tell the Lord we know a better way! Moses will find out the hard way what happens when we “seek” the Lord, “hear” Him speak, and then don’t apply what He has told us.

When praying and reading Scripture, how do you keep yourself from becoming distracted? How difficult do you find it to apply what God has told you?

Question
4

THE CRITICISM AGAINST THE STUBBORN:

Now had come the time for them to act. Everything seems to start off well. Just as the Lord had **commanded**, Moses **took the rod** (v. 9). Along with Aaron, he **gathered the people before the rock** and began speaking **to them** (v. 10). At this point, however, Moses allows himself to become distracted by frustration and he deviates from God's instructions. He lashes out at the people saying, "**Hear now, you rebels! Must we bring water for you out of this rock?**" In this question, we see the first hint of trouble. Moses puts the spotlight on Aaron and Himself rather than on the Lord. God, not they, will be the One to provide **water** from **this rock!**

As God's chosen leader, Moses certainly bore the brunt of the people's complaints and they often blamed him directly for their perceived woes as we have seen. Yet, Moses should have been the one to reorient their thinking by pointing them to the Lord rather than to himself. He could have easily reminded the people of all the ways God had provided in the past. Instead, he chooses to focus on his role in bringing **water** from the **rock**. At this point, Moses ventures completely on his own. Rather than speaking to **the rock** as God had **commanded**, he **lifted his hand and struck the rock twice with the rod** (v. 11). Despite his disobedience, **water** gushed from **the rock** and all **drank** from it. Even though everything seems to work well, Moses will soon learn his fate for his disobedience.



Even amid frustration how can (or do) you point people to the Lord?

Question
5

If we're not careful, frustration can easily seize our emotions and cause us to lose self-control because we become focused on our needs and our desires rather than the Lord. God created us to have emotions, but He didn't create us to be controlled by them to have them dictate our thinking. Frustration can cause a wide array of emotions

Instruct

and it may affect each of us differently. For some, like Moses, frustration may lead to outbursts of anger, bitterness, or vengeance. While for others, it may cause them to draw back and quit, simply trying to ignore the situation. Still, others misdirect their frustration and project it upon other people—never dealing with the true source. Husbands and wives may have a bad day at work, but take their frustration out on each other; children may have a bad day at school and express their frustration toward their parents. In any case, one thing all these reactions have in common is that they omit God and focus on us. To overcome frustration, we must seek God to help us identify the true source and deal with it in the way He has outlined in His Word.

How does frustration generally affect you?

Question
6

Rather than deal with our frustration appropriately by bringing it to the Lord, we sometimes allow it to build up and then we explode. When we don't address the



source of our frustration and blow up, it only creates more problems. Two practical principles can help us effectively deal with our frustrations. First, we must hear God and apply what He says. We shouldn't come to Him with a list of demands and expectations. We should, however, approach God for guidance and take the admonition He gives to heart. Too often, we want His help and may even seek it, but we want things answered in a specific way. We have an idea about what should be done and how it should be done, so we go to

God as a token to seek a blessing for what we want rather than to hear what He wants! In the end, this will cause more frustration because we didn't get what we expected and we haven't listened to the Lord. Therefore, let us seek to hear what God says and act upon the direction He gives us.

Second, we must turn the situation over to the Lord, especially those things over which we have no control, to deal with the people or things involved. Moses couldn't

do anything about the people's complaints. He should have let God deal with them. And God had already dealt with their obstinacy and disobedience in the past. This doesn't mean, however, that we cannot address our source of frustration in a biblical way and say we have no recourse. On the contrary, God has given us the ability to communicate. We can communicate the source of our frustration to those directly involved. If something is frustrating you at work, at home, with your neighbors, or amongst your friends, communicate with them. But we must allow God to guide our communication in a way that glorifies Him. This may resolve the issue and it may not, but it can prevent us from being overwhelmed and guided by our emotions. If it is not resolved, we must turn the situation completely over to the Lord and allow Him to deal with it.

Numbers 20:12-13

THE CONSEQUENCE OF FRUSTRATION:

Since Moses had disobeyed the Lord, he must now learn the consequence for his actions. **Because** Moses did not listen (literally, **believe**) nor display God's holiness **before** the people (i.e., **hallow**), he would not be the one to lead them physically into the Promised Land (v. 12). He would stand on Mount Nebo peering into the land, but Joshua and Caleb would be the ones to enter as Israel's leaders. Consequently, this became known at the **water of Meribah** which means contention (v. 13). Even though the people **contended with the Lord** there, He revealed Himself as holy **among them**. Although God forgave Moses and still used him to lead Israel up to the point of crossing the Jordan River, there were still consequences for his actions.

God will also forgive us when we repent; He can still use us despite our mistakes. But we must remember that there will still be consequences for our actions. We are still responsible for the choices that we make. Therefore, we must think carefully about our actions and wisely base our decisions on what God has said in Scripture. Above all, we must apply what He has said in His Word precisely the way He intended. Let's not come to the Lord with an agenda, rather let us hear and obey the agenda He has established for us. If not, we must face the consequences for our actions. Let us be careful that we aren't overcome by frustration, but that we overcome frustration by seeking God and applying what He tells us.

We have all experienced frustration in our lives. It often becomes a vent for our emotions which makes it extremely dangerous because we can easily become distracted in our endeavors and muddled in our thinking. It never makes anything better nor does it do anything to resolve our problems. In fact, frustration can make a mess of our lives if we allow it because it will derail us from following God's plan. It can surface in ordinary, everyday situations and any event can trigger it whether computer problems or constant complaints. Each of us has our own source of frustration. It can strain relationships and cause us to stray off course in our relationship with the Lord. As followers of Christ, let us seek to overcome frustration rather than allowing it to control us. To overcome frustration, we must seek God first and actually take time to hear what He says to us through His Word. We must allow His Spirit to guide us so that we act upon what He has commanded us. Let's not be those who become so focused on our own problems and desires that we let the Word of God go in one ear and out the other. Let's listen and take it to heart. Let's apply it in every situation. When we listen to the Lord and surrender control to Him, we can overcome any source of frustration to live a productive life that honors and glorifies Him.

Incorporate

In what circumstances or situations do you find it most difficult for you to apply what God has said in His Word?

What do you do when you feel frustrated and about to lose control?

When you have become frustrated in the past and have been distracted or misdirected in your thinking, how did God help you to regain focus?

September 26, 2021



*An Overcomer
Restores Fellowship
Galatians 2:1-16*

Focal Verse:

"And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave me and Barnabas the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised."

Galatians 2:9

back to
Table of
Contents

Introduce

During the period known as the Gilded Age (ca. 1870-1900), many individuals began to diversify their investments and increase their wealth. The Rockford family had amassed their wealth by investing in mining operations throughout the West as well as in the transcontinental railroad that had just opened in 1869. During the late 1880s, the two Rockford brothers, John and James, purchased property on the Atlantic coastline of Newport, Rhode Island, where they planned to build a summer home amongst the other millionaires who had already settled there. When construction



Vanderbilt Summer Home, The Breakers

began on the palatial residence of sixty rooms, it would take nearly a decade to complete with all its marble, granite, and ornately carved exotic woods from around the world. It would be a grand showpiece which deserved an epic grand opening with all the societal elite in attendance.

Just prior to the grand-opening celebration, John needed to travel West to inspect and oversee his family's holdings there. He knew it would be an arduous journey because of the remote locations to which he must travel. He would lack many of the modern conveniences and societal perks to which he had grown accustomed. Nonetheless, he knew the job must be done and he was the only one who could do it. In all, his travels would take approximately six months. And the day he was slated to return they would host the party celebrating the completion of their stupendous home.

Having to spend much time on horseback and camping, John took less-formal, more comfortable clothes for his trip. Wanting to pack lightly, he took only the basic necessities which meant no mirror and shaving kit. With this, he set off to examine his family's investments. By the time he arrived at the train station in San Francisco for the cross-country return trip, he looked like an aged mountain man with leathery, dark skin from the sun and a grizzled beard. Before boarding the train, he refreshed himself but didn't bother to shave. As the steam locomotive sped across the countryside, it came to an abrupt stop in Upstate New York. John learned that it would take some time to repair and he had to get to Newport for the celebration.

So, he hiked to the nearest town where he would hire several carriages to speed him

Introduce

along toward his destination. Ten miles from Newport, the carriage hit a rut, broke an axle, and threw a wheel. Fortunately, the carriage had an extra axle in storage, but the driver would need help repairing it. John found himself crawling under the carriage to help because nothing would prevent him from getting home now. Arriving at the gate of his newly constructed home, he was covered in dirt and some of his clothing had become tattered. With his unkempt beard and haggard appearance, he approached the gatekeeper. But the gatekeeper did not recognize him and wouldn't let him enter. As guests poured into the compound, none of them recognized him either. They insisted that the servants take care of this rabble and escort him away from the premises. Dejected, he went into town to buy formal clothing which he paid extra to have fitted immediately. He then rented a hotel room where he bathed and shaved. From there, he hired another carriage to bring him home. This time the gatekeeper excitedly opened the gate and the guests flocked to greet him enthusiastically. Pointing his finger in their faces, he began passionately lecturing them. He explained how he had been there earlier and they had turned him away. He related how he had come to look the way he did because of the misfortune of his travels. He reminded them that what one looks like on the outside doesn't change who one is. What truly matters is one's character. Although fictitious for the purpose of illustration, this story about John Rockford can help us understand the historical situation Paul encountered with the Christians in Galatia. Because some instigators in the early church sought to impose legalistic rules on others, Peter had broken fellowship with the Gentiles and refused to eat with them. He did so based only on their outward appearance rather than their identity in Christ. Participation in religious festivals or performing rituals mindlessly doesn't matter to Christ. What matters is that one has a relationship with Him and has been forgiven of his or her sins. Salvation comes to both Jew and Gentile alike only through Christ—not Christ in addition to practicing a bunch of religious rituals. Let us resist becoming mired in legalistic preferences which cause frivolous division; instead, let us focus on the gospel of Christ which saves us through His blood. Therefore, let us be overcomers who seek to restore and maintain fellowship with all our brothers and sisters who are in right standing with the Lord.

Key
Question

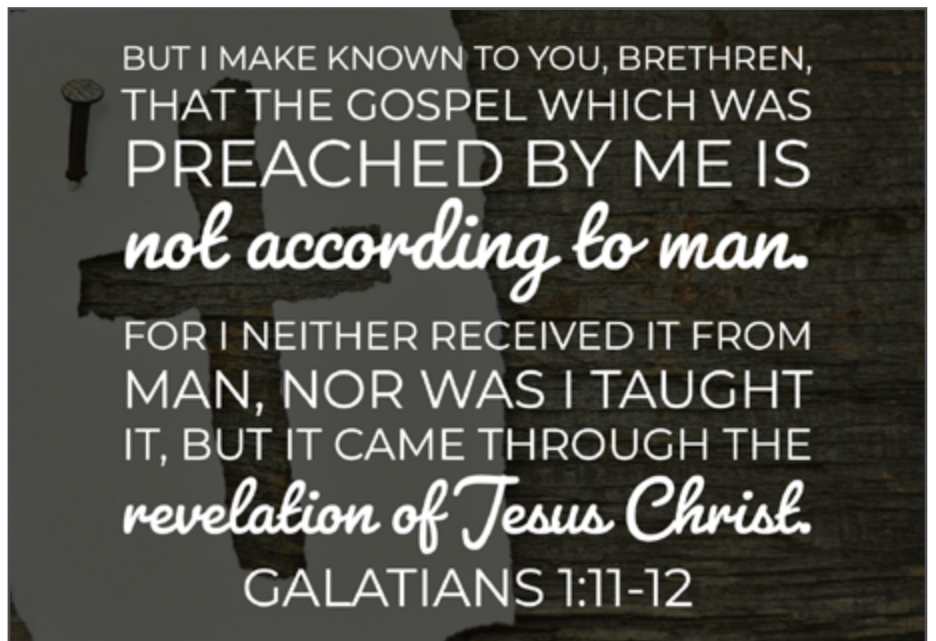
What is the danger of having and associating with cliques in the church?

Galatians 2:1-5

THE CORRUPTION BY INSTIGATORS:

Paul begins chapter 2 by setting the stage for the disruption of fellowship that had occurred in the church. He gives the historical background that led to unanimous agreement with the church in Jerusalem that salvation comes through Christ alone and not adherence to **circumcision** or any other ritualistic practice. Paul describes how he returned to Jerusalem **after fourteen years** along with his partners in ministry, **Barnabas and Titus** (v. 1). With the influx of Gentile Christians into the church after Paul's first missionary journey to South Galatia, dissension and debate had arisen in the church in Antioch when agitators from Jerusalem came to argue that one cannot be saved unless he follows the laws and customs outlined by Moses, particularly that of **circumcision** (see [Acts 15:1](#)). Consequently, the church in Antioch dispatched Paul and Barnabas to meet with the leaders in Jerusalem to resolve this matter ([Acts 15:2-5](#)). Paul also **took Titus with** him as his partner in ministry and an example of the work Christ was doing among the Gentiles.

Although commissioned by the church in Antioch, Paul's ultimate calling to defend **the gospel** came from the Lord. Therefore, he acknowledges that **he went up by revelation to communicate the gospel** he preached **among the Gentiles** (v. 2). God certainly gives both churches and individuals insight into **the gospel** and the grace to participate in ministry, but the message comes directly from Him! As a result, we must safeguard that message, keeping it free from mixing with any of our own personal opinions and preferences. Paul has already warned the church in Galatia not to deviate from **the gospel** they have heard from him because it comes by direct **revelation**



from the Lord. Therefore, he emphasized that he did not receive **the gospel** based

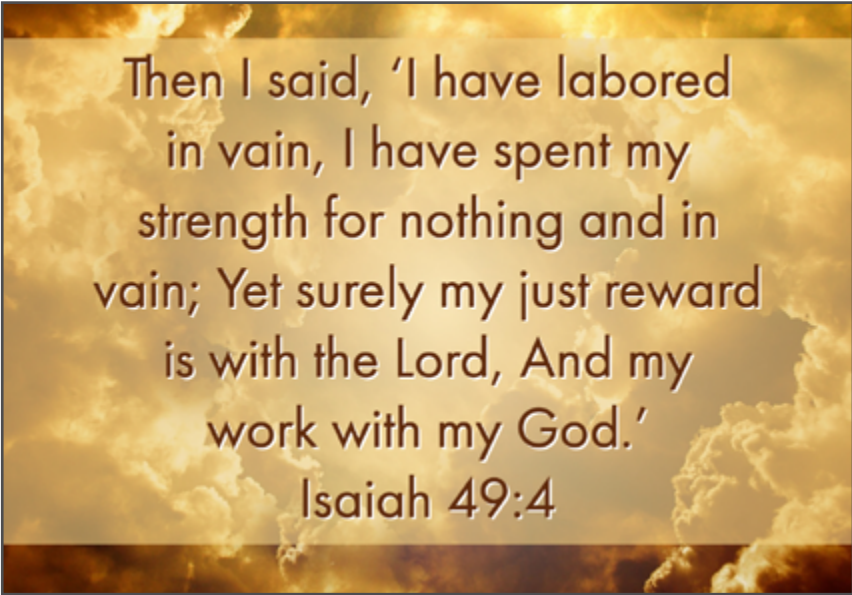
Instruct

upon tradition, human philosophy, or collective opinion. It came from Christ Himself ([Gal 1:11-12](#)).

How do you respond when conflict occurs between human beliefs and the Word of God?

Question
1

When Paul arrived in Jerusalem, he met privately with the leadership (i.e., **those who were of reputation**) in the church, so that they might have a fruitful discussion without interference from the instigators. This harkens back to the principle we learned through the reconciliation of Joseph with his brothers. So, we will simply remind ourselves that discussion and reconciliation is best handled **privately** when possible.



Then I said, 'I have labored
in vain, I have spent my
strength for nothing and in
vain; Yet surely my just reward
is with the Lord, And my
work with my God.'
Isaiah 49:4

Paul and his team traveled to Jerusalem to give an account of their missionary work and allow the church to see how God has used **the gospel** of Christ to save both Gentile and Jew in the same way. He is not submitting "his" **gospel** to the leaders for approval or debate. This would go against what he has already said about **the gospel** coming directly from

the Lord and not man. **The gospel**, as such, doesn't need man's "approval"; he is not seeking to "win" in his interpretation. Rather, he hopes to unify the church and focus on the message of salvation in Christ which is for all people!

For this reason, Paul laments that **by any means** he **might run, or had run, in vain**. In this statement, Paul is not speaking about the context of **the gospel**! God saves in the way He has chosen through Christ. And no earthly group of leaders can thwart His plan even though they may wrongly push their opinions. When Paul mentions his labor, it's in reference to unifying the church. In [1 Corinthians 1:13](#), he asks those wrongly divided by the personality of the preacher, "Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?" The message and focus should be on Christ, not personal preference. Elevating personal preferences weakens the church and sidetracks the mission. If this division were to happen, Paul notes his efforts would

be **in vain** to unify the church. **The gospel**, however, would continue to be preached and lives transformed despite one group's errant beliefs.

Yet, the meeting between these leaders proved amicable and all rightly emphasized the nature of **the gospel**. Salvation is through Christ alone—His death on the cross and resurrection three days later. To receive the life He offers, we must confess our sins, repent, and believe in Him. Following a bunch of rules and rituals cannot save us—a relationship does! Therefore, the leadership did not feel it necessary to compel **Titus**, a Gentile, **to be circumcised** (v. 3). [Acts 15:23-29](#) records this same outcome, while emphasizing the transformation that accompanies this belief in Christ. Although we are not saved by works, our relationship with Christ influences what we do and how we live. Therefore, we will love, practice compassion, and abstain from all immorality.

How do you ensure that you're not mixing your personal beliefs and preferences with the truth of the gospel?

Question
2

Even after this unanimous affirmation of the gospel by all leaders in this discussion, some continued to push their beliefs and force others to participate in rituals that have no bearing on salvation. The division in the church **occurred because of false brethren secretly brought in** (v. 4). Paul points out that they **came by stealth to spy out their liberty in Christ Jesus to bring them into bondage**. In other words, they simply came to cause trouble and take the message of **the gospel** hostage so they could peddle their views. They wanted to force their beliefs on others—not preach the **truth** of God's Word. But Paul and his team **did not yield submission for an hour**; they rejected their false interpretation and continued to safeguard **the truth of the gospel** so that it might **continue** to be preached (v. 5).

We must offer two words of caution at this point because our society faces this very same issue today. First, if someone must act in "secret," whether it's the message they proclaim or what they do, this is a good indication that it's not from God and could have very destructive potential. Although many in society openly practice and advocate sin today, believers who act hypocritically still try to conceal their sin and present a different image in public than in private. Jesus even warns, "For everyone practicing evil hates the light and does not come to light, lest his deeds should be exposed" (John 3:20). Therefore, we should ask ourselves: Do I want others to know what I am doing or what I truly believe? Does it reflect Christ or my fleshly desires and personal preferences? If not, chances are we are not acting in good faith in accordance

Instruct

to God's Word.

Second, we must separate our personal opinions and preferences from what Scripture clearly says. We must speak the **truth** in love as it comes directly from God's Word—particularly when it comes to God's character, how we have salvation through Christ alone, and what constitutes sin ([Eph 4:15](#)). Like Paul, we must stand firmly on the gospel and Scripture as a whole without compromise! We cannot **yield submission for one hour** to anything that conflicts with Scripture. We must ensure what we say matches Scripture and we haven't interjected our own beliefs. For example, the Bible does not say when *exactly* Jesus will return. It could be before, after, or during the period in Revelation many call "The Great Tribulation." We can make an educated assertion based on the study of Scripture, but it's still our best guess. We shouldn't force someone to hold a particular view. We must agree not to allow our own opinions to distract us from **the gospel**. On the other hand, we know with absolute certainty two things from Scripture: 1) no one knows the hour of Jesus' return except the Father ([Matt 24:36](#)) and He will return, which could be at any moment ([John 14:1-3](#); [1 Thess 5:2](#)). Therefore, a person who predicts a date for Jesus' return is wrong and in violation of Scripture! We must lovingly correct that view and preach the truth of Scripture no matter what.

If standing on what Scripture says causes division in the church, then we must stand on what God has said. We cannot compromise **truth** for the sake of unity. Paul didn't. He opposed and sought to correct those who errantly taught the wrong doctrines! Too often, people elevate their opinions—whether on moral issues God clearly defines as sin or doctrinal and theological issues about which Scripture leaves no doubt as to the correct interpretation. Although some defiantly reject what God has said in His Word, many simply just haven't studied it enough to know what He says. However, we truly have no excuse for failing to know Scripture except our own laziness and lack of concern. Let's not elevate our own beliefs either defiantly or from a lack of understanding, but let us stand firmly on the Word of God and continue to speak the **truth** to one another in love regardless of what culture or anyone else may say.

What are major moral or doctrinal issues on which we cannot compromise no matter what culture or even the "church" may say?

Question
3

THE COMMISSION TO MINISTER:

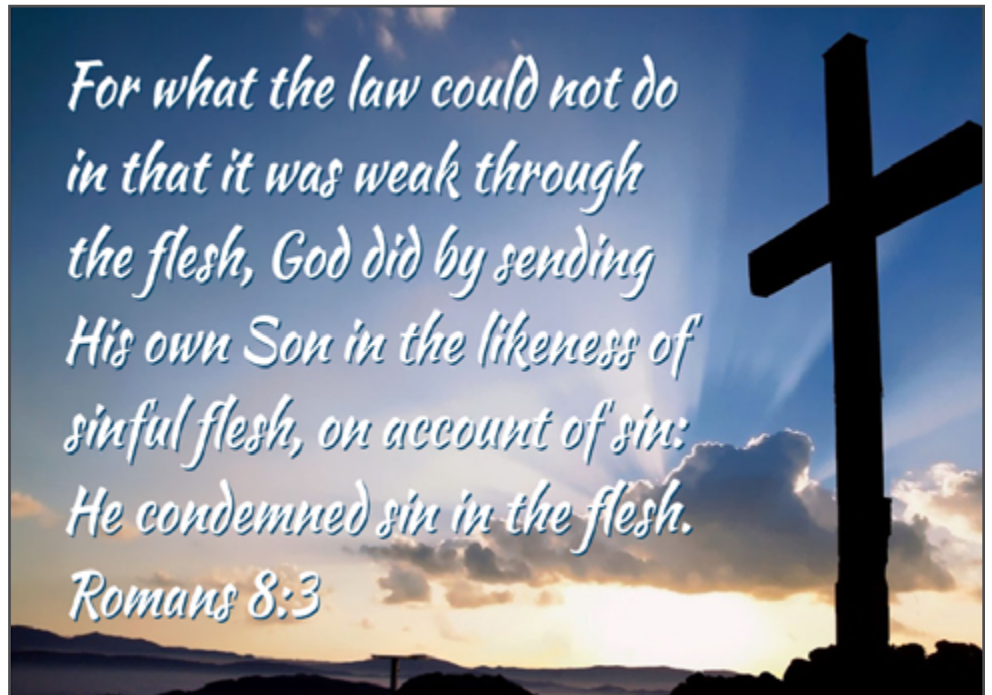
Paul commences this next section with a bit of irony and facetiousness. He addresses his remarks to **those who seemed to be something** (v. 6). In other words, he

references **those who** considered themselves leaders in the church, but didn't have true understanding of **the gospel**. In [1 Timothy 1:7](#), Paul talks about such leaders "desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm."

Here, in Galatians, it

likely refers to the Pharisees and those from Jerusalem from [Acts 15:5](#) who did not understand the true intention of the law in relation to salvation. The law points to the need for salvation; it cannot save ([Rom 7:13-25](#))! Nonetheless, this group advocated salvation through Christ plus the traditions in the law.

Paul adds **whatever they were, it makes no difference to me**; God does not show **personal favoritism to any man**. It doesn't matter about one's **personal** background, level of influence, or standing in society—including physical lineage, educational attainment, perceived positions, intelligence, or degrees earned. Paul, a Pharisee, had to learn this for himself. In fact, he now counts "all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" ([Phil 3:8](#)). When we experience disagreements in life, it's not about us proving ourselves being "right" according to our position and vindicating ourselves by whatever means necessary. Rather, it's about following the Lord obediently and trusting in what He has said. We can only be in right standing when we practice what His Word states. Let us never compromise His Word in defense of our own personal beliefs and practices. Let us appeal to the **truth** of His Word and encourage everyone involved to follow it. When we stand on His Word, we



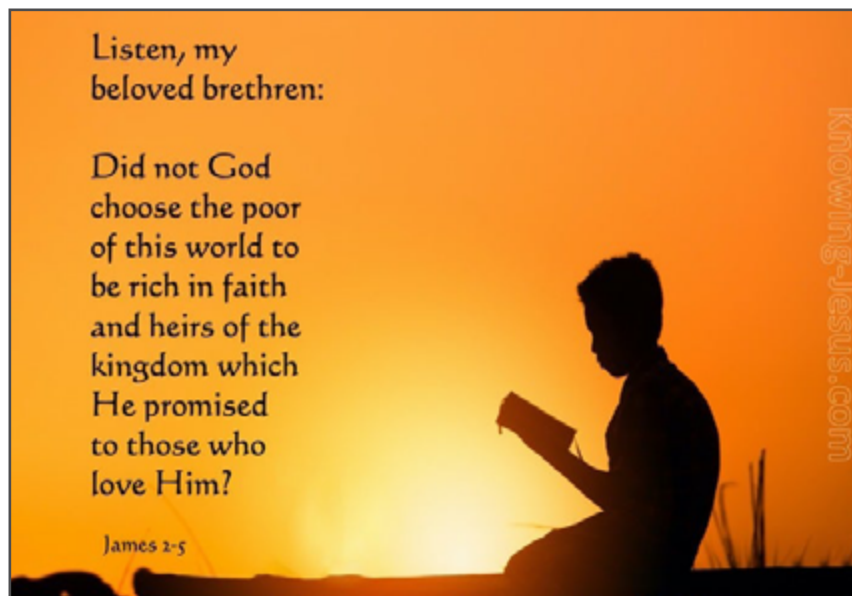
will always be in right standing no matter what happens around us.

Have you ever compromised the truth or known someone who has in an attempt to win an argument? What happened and how did you learn from that experience?

Question
4

Paul now affirms that **those who** belonged to this group **added nothing to** him. In other words, they **added nothing to the gospel** he preached because God was at work saving the people who heard and repented through his ministry. For this reason, Paul appeals to the consistency of God's work in salvation. Salvation does not depend upon man, but God. And He works in both Jew and Gentile in the same way. Paul has proof from Scripture which is confirmed by how God is working amongst both groups. **When** the Jerusalem leaders **saw** that God had called him to share **the gospel** among the **uncircumcised** (Gentiles) just as He had **Peter** to the **circumcised** (Jews), they extended **the right hand of fellowship** to continue reaching the whole world with **the gospel** (vv. 7, 9). Paul would continue his God-ordained ministry to the Gentiles and they to the Jews (v. 9).

In verse 8, Paul offers a parenthetical assertion to reinforce his main point. God is at work! **He who worked effectively in Peter** is the same **who worked effectively in him toward the Gentiles**. Titus and the other Gentiles who have been saved offer



proof of the effectiveness of God's work through **the gospel**. Through Titus and the others, one could see the change just as they could amongst the Jews whom God had also saved; they all turned from their sins to follow the Lord by accepting His Messiah as Savior. Consequently, Paul puts it this way about the Thessalonians: "For from you the word of the Lord has

sounded forth, not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place. Your faith toward God has gone out, so that we do not need to say anything. For they themselves declare concerning us what manner of entry we had to you, and how you turned to

God from idols to serve the living and true God” ([1 Thessalonians 1:8-9](#)). We can thus see Scripture confirmed in the lives of believers. We can see its truth visibly manifested through transformed lives. And God transformed these lives through Christ alone apart from following religious ritual.

If we have a relationship with Christ, God has called us to take **the gospel** into all the world unto all nations and peoples. In so doing, God has called us to reach specific people collectively so that we may reach all people as the church. Paul generally focused on the Gentiles, but he still first went to the synagogues to teach when he first entered a town. Peter took the message mainly to the Jews, but God called him to go to the Gentile Cornelius to preach the good news ([Acts 10](#)). Collectively, they worked to reach all people on the earth with **the gospel**. In the same way, God has called us to reach specific groups and people even though we ought to share **the gospel** with everyone we encounter in our lives. There will be people that God has given me the opportunity to reach because of my sphere of influence that you won't have that same opportunity. Likewise, He will call you to reach others whom I won't be able to reach. We need to work together as His people to bring **the gospel** to all people without discrimination because everyone needs the Lord!

Whom specifically has God called you to reach with the gospel?

Question
5

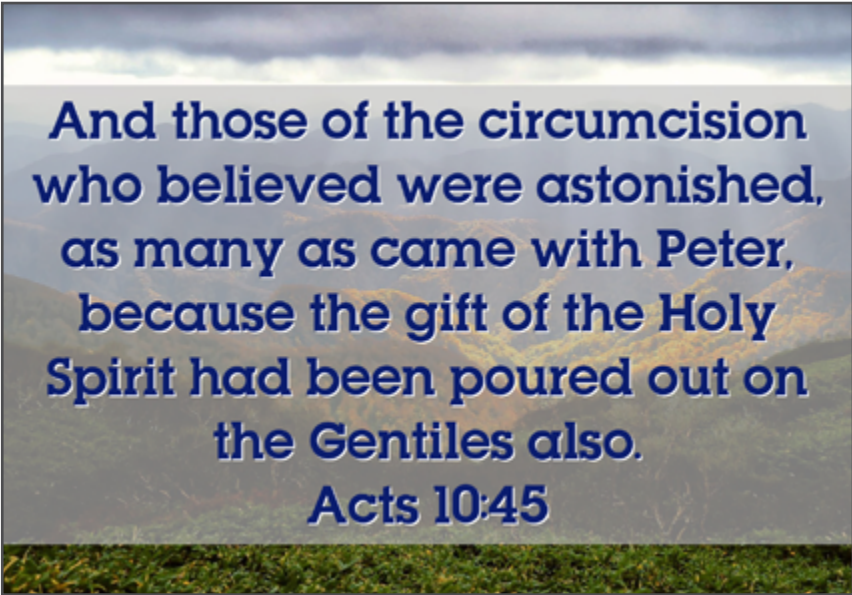
As we have seen, salvation comes through Christ alone and produces tangible transformation. A relationship with Him, therefore, influences what we do. Verse 10 demonstrates evidence of that transformation in that both Paul and the Jerusalem leaders agree **that we should remember the poor**. The larger principle behind this mandate is obedience and faithfulness to God's Word. In [Deuteronomy 15:7-8](#), God commands Israel to take care of the poor among them: "If there is among you a poor man of your brethren, within any of the gates in your land which the Lord your God is giving you, you shall not harden your heart nor shut your hand from your poor brother, but you shall open your hand wide to him and willingly lend him sufficient for his need, whatever he needs." When we have a relationship with Christ, we will be transformed to obey. We will follow the precepts in God's Word willingly which will offer tangible evidence of the transformation He has wrought within us.

Galatians 2:11-13

THE CONFRONTATION AGAINST HYPOCRISY:

Despite the affirmation by all attending this meeting that salvation comes through Christ alone, Peter allowed himself to become influenced to cease fellowshiping with Gentile believers. So, **when Peter came to Antioch**, Paul confronted **him to his face** because he **blamed** him for the division created in the church (v. 11). Peter had reverted to his previous views that place him at odds with the truth of **the gospel**. **Before certain men came from James**, Peter **would eat with the Gentiles** (v. 12). **But** now, he **separated himself** because **he feared** the ones who demanded **circumcision** as part of salvation. In so doing, people followed his example as a leader so that they too ceased fellowshiping with Gentile believers.

To make matters worse, Peter because of his position in the church led many others astray. Paul notes that **the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him** and **even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy** (v. 13). If anyone should have



And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also.
Acts 10:45

known better, it should have been Peter because the Lord had directly revealed the worth of the Gentiles and their inclusion in the church when they trust in Christ. Although initially hesitant as indicated by the dream in which Peter protested eating unclean foods ([Acts 10:9-16](#)), he went with the men whom God had directed Cornelius to send to him in Joppa

([Acts 10:17-23](#)). When meeting Cornelius for the first time, Peter asserts, "You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean" ([Acts 10:28](#)). He then preached **the gospel** and God saved the Gentiles who heard and responded just as He had the Jews (Acts 10:45).

Peter's breaking of fellowship with the Gentiles is particularly heinous because he knows better. God had clearly and directly spoken to him about this issue. And he

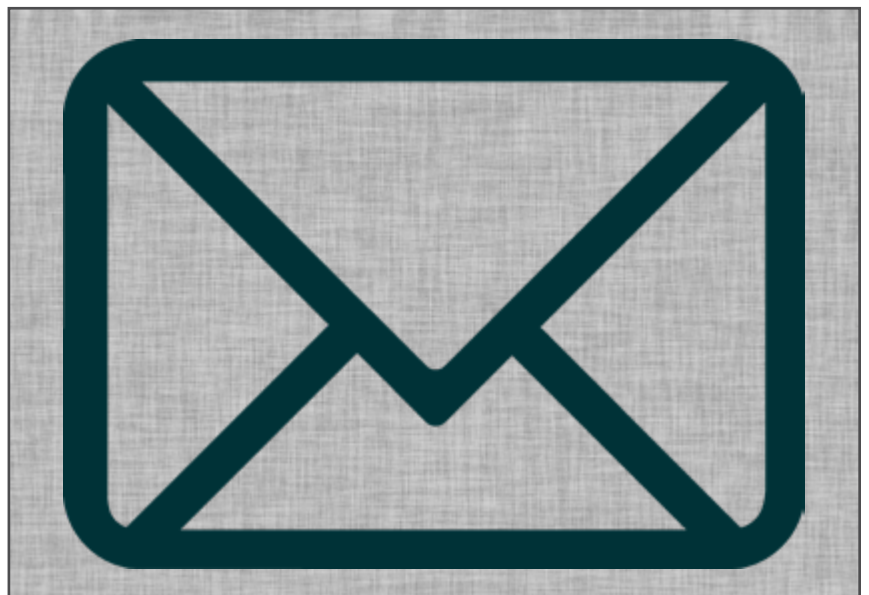
even acknowledged his understanding when he first spoke to Cornelius! Because he violated God’s Word directly, steps must be taken to help him realize his error and return to the right way of thinking. So, Paul personally confronts him **to his face**. Just as reconciliation is best handled **privately** if at all possible, it is most prudent to offer loving correction face to face—that is in person. Try to meet with the person so that you can look them in the eye and they can see the loving spirit in Christ in which you offer this correction. This allows a person to see your body language and hear your tone of voice. This can serve to reduce greatly any misunderstanding or misinterpretation that can be inherent in written language. People, unfortunately, often read between the lines what they want to hear which poses a great risk for communicating only through written means. If possible, don’t try to offer correction through texts, e-mails, or online. Do it in person.

In what ways have you seen that it’s typically better to resolve an issue face to face rather than through written means?

Question
6

It may, however, not always be possible to communicate in person. If this is the case, spend time carefully crafting your response before sending it. Read over it several times and anticipate what, if anything, can be taken out of context. We live in a society that says what’s on their mind, presses “enter,” and sends something immediately—sometimes giving very little thought to their choice of words. The way we write things can often convey a meaning other than what we intend. It can sound more harsh or critical than we think. Or it may not provide enough context for the background to be easily understood.

If we’re not very precise with our words, it can cause more harm than good because people must attempt to “figure out” what we’re saying. When writing, therefore, don’t send it immediately. Put it down and come back to it with a fresh set of eyes to make sure it’s specific and nothing can be misconstrued. Also, try having someone else you trust read it



Instruct

so he can see if anything is unclear or can be taken in the wrong way. Another set of eyes can offer insight into things that we may have clear in our minds, but haven't communicated precisely in writing. Our goal in correcting others should not be to communicate our personal preferences or opinions, but to restore them according to Scripture and the path which God Himself has mandated for us to live.

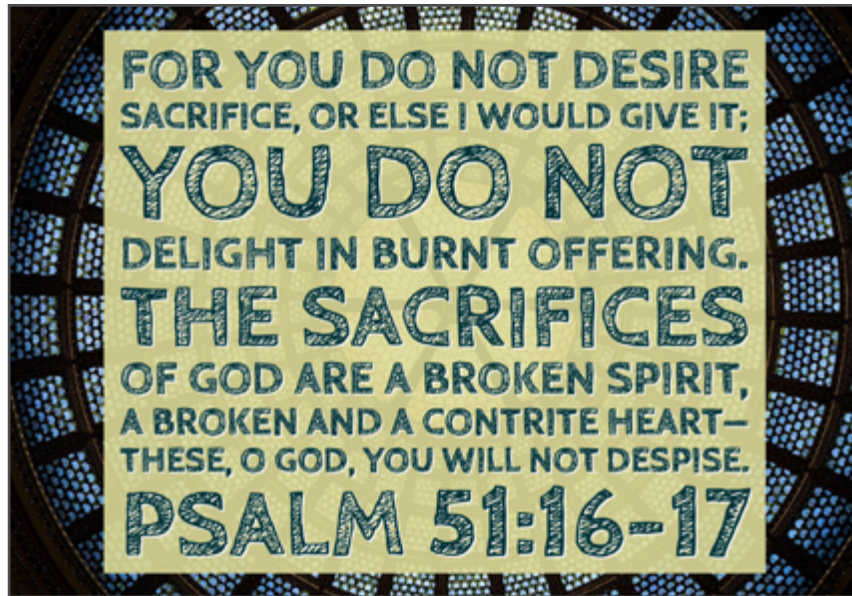
How have you seen things in written form which lacked clarity and produced misunderstanding?

Question
7

Galatians 2:14-16

THE COMMITMENT TO THE TRUTH:

Although mentioned last for the sake of being faithful to Paul's presentation of the historical event, we must actually start with Scripture when seeking to confront someone in error. We must physically show them what God's Word says about the issue in which they are engaged. To that, we can add prayer and seeking guidance from the Holy Spirit; even though not mentioned here specifically, other Scriptures



do note their importance in the process of attempting to restore an individual. Paul confronts those in error **when he saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel** (v. 14). In other words, he bases his correction on God's Word which they have ignored and violated in a very specific way. He can then point them to what God Himself

has said on the matter and not his own mere personal interpretation or opinion! This is the key to correcting someone and trying to restore fellowship.

We must not only offer concrete proof of the person's actions, but we must also offer concrete evidence from God's Word. We must specifically show them and allow them to see and hear for themselves what the Lord has said! We should never just give our opinions or feelings about the issue—even if they match Scripture. We

must relate what God has clearly said in His Word. Hopefully, Scripture carries more weight with them than our personal words. If not, they must ask themselves whether they truly have a relationship with Him because Jesus says, “If you love Me, keep My commandments” (John 14:15).

Paul asks Peter a rhetorical question as a reminder that God saves both Jew and Gentile in the same way through Christ: **“If you, being a Jew, live in a manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?”** To **live in the manner of Gentiles** doesn’t mean that Peter no longer follows Jewish customs, practices, and traditions. On the contrary, it means to have eternal life—to be made alive. Peter, like the Gentiles, has been made alive in the same way by faith through grace in Christ. Thus, to **live** means to **live** in Christ! To emphasize his point, Paul describes how we all, both Jew and Gentile, are sinners: **We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, are justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the law** (vv. 15-16). If anyone preaches anything other than salvation by faith through the grace of Christ, may we be overcomers who will speak the truth in love. May we be bold to confront error armed with the Word of God so that others may be restored in right standing with Him.

How do you or have you incorporated Scripture when attempting to restore someone?

Question
8

In the introduction, we met the fictitious John Rockford who was discriminated because of his outward appearance. Although wealthy and socially elite, circumstances and hardships in life caused him to have an unkempt and haggard outward appearance. This, however, didn't truly change who he was, but it did cause others to treat him differently based upon what they perceived they saw. God does not look at our outward appearance; He sees our hearts. It doesn't matter who we are or what we have done; Christ died for every one of us so we can have life in Him. We have all sinned and we all need a Savior. Christ saves each of us in the same way by faith through His grace.

Unfortunately, we as humans sometimes forget what God has said and need to be corrected. Even leaders, like Peter and Barnabas, sometimes stray off course and must be reminded what Scripture says. God has placed us in a church with other believers to help restore one another when we get off track. God is the one who corrects, convicts, and restores, but He uses us as His vehicles to remind those in error what He has said in His Word. So, let's be overcomers who restore fellowship by standing boldly on God's Word without compromise and confronting specific errors in a loving, Spirit-filled way when people depart from it.

Incorporate

Why should we confront doctrinal and sin issues in the church? What is the danger of remaining silent?

How have you been called upon in the past to restore fellowship? How did the method you used reflect the method found in Scripture?

When you have been in the wrong, how have others sought to restore you into right standing with the Lord?

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