

LIVING EFFECTIVELY WITH PEOPLE



DR. VICTOR GILL

Living
Effectively
With People

By Bishop Dr. Victor Gill

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LIVING EFFECTIVELY WITH PEOPLE.

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Dedication

This book is dedicated to some dear
mothers in Zion:

Sis. Lula Alexander
Sis. Ann Timothy, Sis. Lucy Bernard,
Sis. Marcia Lewis, Sis. Marva Reuben
and my dear mom Elca Gill

Introduction

Many have failed to maximize their fullest potential, because they did not know how to deal effectively with people, how to get along with people, in a meaningful and purposeful way.

As human beings, we function in communities where we must communicate and relate with people. People are involved in virtually everything we put our hands to. No one can accomplish anything significant without the involvement of people, one way or another. Because of this fact, one of our greatest assets is our ability to live effectively with people. Possessing the skills to live effectively with people must be taken seriously, if

one is going to maximize his or her purpose on this planet.

The wise man Solomon stated, that one of the primary reasons for him writing his collection of wise sayings in the book of Proverbs is, ***“to give subtilty to the simple...”*** (***Proverbs 1:4 KJV***) in their relations with people. Since that is a major reason for the writing of such a fantastic book, it should be of interest for one to find out the meaning of the words *“subtilty”* and *“simple.”*

The word ***simple***, according to the original Hebrew, has a kind of dual meaning. First of all, it means to be good-natured, pure, genuine and harmless. Secondly, it means to be open; to be open in the sense of being easily influenced, to be open

to every influence of others, to be naive and gullible.

The simple person is one who is honest and genuine in heart, but lacks the experiential knowledge of the wiles of men. The simple is a person who is not yet made cautious, by bad experiences. The Word of God says, *“The simple believes every word, but the prudent considers well his steps” (Proverbs 14:15).*

There are many well meaning people out there, with whom one can have positive and productive interrelations. But there are also many, who will not hesitate to abuse and use you. Some people do those things for the sake of their own interest, or simply because they lack the moral strength to do what is

right. People who have been abused in whatever form, if they were not properly healed tend to be abusive also. And while one should not go through life with an outlook of skepticism and suspicion, yet at the same time, one should avoid being naive and gullible. Concerning relating to people, the Word of God exhorts us to replace simplicity with subtlety.

The word *subtlety* used in the KJV comes from the Hebrew word which means, to be “smooth.” The word “smooth” metaphorically refers to the ability to live smoothly and effectively with people, to be wise and prudent. It gives the picture of one possessing such social wisdom, and *know-how* that he or she is able to skillfully navigate through life, effectively interrelating with people

and thereby rescuing oneself from the wiles of men. Our Lord fully captured this concept when, as he sent His disciples out, He said to them: “...*be wise as serpents and harmless as doves*” (*Mathew 10: 16*). Concerning the Lord Himself, the Bible furnishes us with a case in point,

²³Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.

*²⁴But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men.
(John 2:23-24)*

The Lord intermingled with people of all walks of life, but he was

selective as to whom he committed Himself to. This ought to instruct us. It is my prayer that this book will challenge you, and help to increase your skills to live effectively with people.

CHAPTER ONE

Having The Right Attitude

“Your attitude determines your altitude.”

We are dealing first of all with the issue of having a right attitude, because it is one of the most important virtues to have if one is going to live effectively with people.

What is attitude? According to Webster’s dictionary: *“Attitude is manner, disposition, feeling etc, with regards to a person or thing, tendency or orientation especially of the mind.”* In other words, attitude is

the way one thinks, feels, acts and reacts to people, or things. Attitude has to do with one's mentality, the way a person thinks and consequently acts toward people or things.

A person's attitude towards people can either be healthy or unhealthy, good or bad, positive or negative.

A person with a healthy attitude towards people, is a person who possesses some measure of interpersonal, or people skills. Such a person knows how to interrelate, interface and get along with others as much as is possible. A person with a good attitude knows how to receive praise and criticism while remaining level headed.

Why A Healthy Attitude Towards People Is Important

1. A healthy attitude is important because many times our knowledge and perception of people and situations are not one hundred percent accurate, and feelings are subjective.
2. A healthy attitude is important because no man is an island by himself. We are all a part of a society, and in the process of social maturation there are three levels: Dependence, Independence and Interdependence. The highest level is not Independence but Interdependence because we need other people to become all that we can become. Interdependence and

Independence go together because to be interdependent you must be fully independent.

3. A healthy attitude is important because we are called to live our lives in a world where no one is perfect, not even you. That is not fair, it is the truth. It has been truly said that the best of men are only men at best. There are some bad in the best of us, and some good in the worst of us; being cognizant of that will help you to keep your balance.

We need people in our lives, even though they have faults. Notwithstanding their faults and shortcomings, Jesus had twelve men around Him in preparation to continue what He started. He

understood that where there is no vision the people perish, and where there are no people the vision perishes. If we wait for perfect people to get the job done we will be forever waiting and it will never be done. We have to know how to work with what we have, until better can be done.

The Favor of Man

If you are going to maximize your productiveness on this earth, then you do not need only the favor of God in your life. You also need the favor of man. The Bible says the following about Jesus,

And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men. (Luke 2:52)

Since Jesus needed the favor of man, in order for His purpose in the earth to be fulfilled, how much more you and I? The Bible says, ***He increased in favor with God and man.***

Some might assume that because they have the favor of God, they don't need the favor of man. However, Jesus had both. Jesus did not go begging the favor of man. The fact is that His attitude attracted it, and He simply allowed it to work for Him. Jesus is our perfect example for living; and since Jesus put to eternal use the favor of man, then it would be foolish on our part not to do the same. The Bible says,

He who is devoid of wisdom despises his neighbor, but a man of

*understanding holds his
peace. (Proverbs 11:12)*

We can learn a lot by looking at the life of Jesus. He did not live in a vacuum or as a hermit. Jesus was always around people. He was very sociable. Several times in the Gospels we see Him having dinner in homes. Levi made a great feast at his home and invited Jesus as the main guest of honor (Luke 5:29-32, Mark 2:15-17). He attended a dinner at the house of Matthew a notorious tax collector (Matthew 9:9-13). He attended a dinner at the house of a certain Pharisee (Luke 7:36). He attended a dinner at the house of Zacchaeus, another notorious tax collector (Luke 19:1-7). As a matter of fact, the public ministry of Jesus commenced at a marriage feast (John 2:1-11).

There was something in the Jewish culture of the first century called “Table Fellowship.” When the Jews came together to eat, it was for much more than physical nourishment. Eating together was richly symbolic of friendship. At these formal dinners the invitees sat around a “U” shaped table called a “triclinium.” Contrary to the custom of that day, Jesus practiced a radically open table fellowship, in that He ate with all kinds of people, the rich, the poor and the outcast. Jesus reached out and ministered to people, regardless of their social status in life.

Some accused Him of eating with sinners (Matthew 11:19) but the truth is, all the people of his day were sinners (even those who made such an accusation); and for the sake

of all sinners He came into the world. He was also accused of being a friend of sinners. It is important to clarify a point here, because even some Christians ignorantly believe that Jesus was a friend of sinners.

There are two Greek words for the word friend in the New Testament. The first one is "*philos:*" meaning to treat dearly, or friendly, for example it is used for the friendship between Abraham and God. ***"And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness and he was called the friend of God" (James 2:23).*** It is used to refer to the sin of loving the world. ***"Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a***

friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God” (James 4:4).

The second word is “*hetairos*.” It is used as a kindly address and is distinguished from the one above. ***“But he answered one of them and said, ‘Friend, I am doing you no wrong. Did you not agree with me for a denarius?’ (Matthew 20:13). ‘So he said to him, ‘Friend, how did you come in here without a wedding garment?’ And he was speechless” (Matthew 22:12).*** Jesus was friendly with sinners. Being friendly and being a friend is not one and the same thing. Jesus was never a friend of the sinners in the sense in which Abraham was a friend (Philos) of God. As a matter of fact, it was His enemies who accused Him of being a friend (Philos) of

sinners, and also a glutton, and a drunkard (Matthew 11:19).

If you use Matthew 11:19, the words of His enemies, to affirm that Jesus was a friend of sinners you might as well apply the whole verse which says He was a glutton and a drunkard too. Furthermore, Jesus told His disciples, *"You are My friends if you do whatever I command you (John 15:14)*. Though Jesus reached out to sinners He certainly did not compromise with them. The Scripture says concerning Him that He was *...holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners (Hebrews 7:26)*. However, He was one who cared for the suffering and eternal destinies of the souls of men.

It must be made absolutely clear to the child of God that Jesus never compromise in any way. During His earthly sojourn He visited homes, the base of the family which was sacred in the sight of God. He went to the marriage ceremony which has been instituted by God and is regarded as honorable and holy. He went to the synagogue, the local centre of religious activities. He went to the temple, the national centre of religious activities. He also met with and ministered to people in public places, like the woman at the well. Wells were among the common meeting places of His day (John 4).

However, we have no record in Scripture of Jesus attending the places of sinful entertainment, like Herod's party, or the pagan

entertainment in the Roman coliseum. Therefore, to refer to Jesus as some do, as a friend of sinners and as an example for Christian involvement in places of secular cultural entertainment, where men compete for financial prizes and where godly values and standards are despised and mocked, is to misrepresent the Scripture.

It is not one's preconceived opinion, nor the sometimes abused phrase, "*the spirit told me so*" that matters but the Bible, which is the final measuring rod for faith and conduct. Moreover, the Spirit will not contradict the Scripture. Therefore, to venture outside of the authority of Scripture, is to venture on dangerous grounds, to say the least. History has taught us, that a seemingly small departure from the sacred confines

of scriptural authority, may appear as insignificant at the beginning, but the long-term implications can be very far reaching and disastrous.

Even though Jesus had liberty to do certain things, He chose not to, so that others might not stumble. Notice what Jesus said, “*And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified...*” (*John 17:19*). Was there anything in Jesus that needed sanctification? Of course not! There was absolutely nothing in Him that needed sanctification. Nevertheless, he publicly conducted Himself with expedience and wisdom for the sake of others. In that sense He sanctified Himself, and we ought also to follow His example.

Be Insulated But Not Isolated

Though Jesus was always in contact and communication with people of virtually every walk of life, yet He remained undefiled. Jesus' life was insulated but never isolated. There is a big difference between insulation and isolation. Isolation is withdrawal from people. Insulation on the other hand, is the ability to protect oneself from the negative and sinful influences of people, without completely isolating yourself from them. Jesus knew how to insulate Himself from certain people.

Jesus knew how to avoid the people who pursued Him with the wrong motives. He knew how to say, no! John said he refused to commit Himself to men because he knew

what was in them (John 2:23-24). There is an old adage which says, *Whatever you can see in the day, don't go looking for in the night.* Generally speaking, Jesus knew the hearts of men and therefore, He did not play Himself into their hands to be used and exploited. As He sent His disciples out to minister the Word of God He said to them,

Beware of dogs beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! (Philippians 3:2)

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. (Matthew 10:16)

Jesus did not say be as serpents, nor be as doves but he said, *be wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.* Try to imagine someone with the shrewd mind of the serpent and a pure heart like a dove and you would have an idea of the balanced life Jesus had in mind. One needs the wisdom of the serpent, tempered with the nature of the dove. Not in order to outwit, deceive and hurt people, but in order to avoid being outwitted, deceived and hurt by people.

According to Solomon, one needs to replace simplicity with subtility, one needs to be smooth (*Proverbs 1:4 KJV*), in order to avoid the wiles of men. Jesus was so smooth that at one time His enemies took stones to stone Him but He hid from them. And before they knew it, he had

already slipped right through the midst of them and passed by. The Bible says,

Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by. (John 8:59)

There are times in our lives when it is wise to hide, slip through, and pass by without a quarrel, commotion or dispute. One needs to know how and when to hide, slip through and pass by.

Dealing With Envy And Jealousy

You need to protect yourself and know where to draw the line, in order to deal effectively with people, who are controlled by spirits of envy and jealousy. The word *envy* comes from the Greek word *phthonoi*, which speaks about the pain felt, and malignity conceived, at the sight of excellence or happiness of others. It is said that envy is a passion that is the most base, and the least curable of all that disgrace or degrade the fallen soul.

The word “jealous” comes from the Greek word *zeloo* which means to burn with zeal, to be heated, to boil with hatred and anger. It also means to be zealous in pursuit, to desire

earnestly, to strive after, to busy one's self about.

A jealous person is a person who is zealous to have in kind what someone else has but an envious person is a person who is moved by the desire to have the very thing that someone else has. Envy and jealousy are realities of life that one should expect and be forearmed with the right attitude to deal with. The Bible says,

*Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?
(Proverbs 27:4 KJV)*

Who is able to stand before envy? The operative word is *stand*, which means to be able to deal effectively with an envious person without

compromising yourself and godly standards. The truth is, well meaning people can be controlled by a spirit of jealousy and envy. Therefore, one should know how to relate to such people. In the Bible, we have the case of David and Saul as an example. Saul was jealous and envious of David because of David's successes in battle. Notwithstanding Saul's envy, the Bible says that David behaved himself wisely in the presence of Saul.

So David went out wherever Saul sent him, and behaved wisely. And Saul set him over the men of war, and he was accepted in the sight of all the people and also in the sight of Saul's servants. (1 Samuel 18:5)

¹¹And Saul cast the spear, for he said, "I will pin David to the wall!" But David escaped his presence twice.

¹²Now Saul was afraid of David, because the LORD was with him, but had departed from Saul.

¹³Therefore Saul removed him from his presence, and made him his captain over a thousand; and he went out and came in before the people.

¹⁴And David behaved wisely in all his ways, and the LORD was with him.

¹⁵Therefore, when Saul saw that he behaved very wisely, he was afraid of him. (1 Samuel 18:11-15)

Dealing With Difficult People

Some time ago I heard someone say: “*People mean problems.*” Let’s face it, that statement has some truth in it, but once you recognize that, most of your problems are solved.

One needs to come to the realization that once you are dealing with people, at times you will encounter problems, sooner or later. That is a fact we cannot deny. Some people are relatively easy to get along with, while others are complex and problematic.

Notwithstanding the fact that a few people will be difficult to deal with, the important thing is the kind of attitude one adopts. One needs to adopt an attitude that allows you to

interface and interrelate with people in a meaningful and purposeful way, as much as is possible. The Word of God says,

If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men. (Romans 12:18)

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)

An effective interpersonal skill that one should practice in many cases, is to respond positively to negative situations. It is very important to understand that in many cases, a negative experience plus a negative response, equals a negative

outcome. On the other hand, a negative experience plus a positive response equals a positive outcome. It all boils down to the attitude with which we approach life. The Bible puts it this way,

Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Romans 12:21)

The following quote, from an unknown author highlights the dynamics of attitude in a very vivid way, and underscores much of what has been said so far on the topic of attitude.

“The longer I live the more I realize the impact of attitude on life. Attitude is more important than experience, than education,

than money, than circumstances, than failure, than success, than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than appearances, greatness and skill. It will make or break a company, a church or a home.

The remarkable thing is that we have a choice everyday regarding the attitude we will embrace for that day. We cannot change the past; we cannot change the fact that people will act in a certain way. We cannot change the inevitable.

The only one thing we can do is to play on the one string that we have and that is our attitude. Life is 10% what happens to me and 90% how I react to it. And so it is

with you. We are in charge of our destiny.”

The first time I read that statement the impact was immediate and profound. It has been rightly said that, *it is not our aptitude but our attitude that determines altitude.* Our attitude determines our rise or demise, our success or failure.

One of the most important things I have learned about attitude is that a person can be right about something and yet be wrong in their attitude. Such a personal blind spot can stand between you and your progress in this life. Indeed attitude is more important than facts. Attitude means so much.

Change Your Attitude and Change Your Future

Psychologist and philosopher William James said, *“The greatest discovery of my generation is that people can alter their lives by altering their attitude of mind.”*

Recently I read a story, about a gentleman who for a long time was fussy and angry every time he drove up his driveway, after a hard day’s work and commuting. Over and over, he had told his children not to leave their bicycles, tricycles and toys strewn across the driveway. He even threatened to run the car over their toys, yet they continued to leave them on the driveway.

Then one day, returning home and seeing the bicycles, tricycles and

toys across the driveway, he came out of the car like a mad man and began removing them. The more toys he removed the angrier he became. Suddenly his neighbor walked over alongside him and began helping to clear the driveway. The neighbor expressed that he missed doing this, since his children had grown up and left home, and that one should enjoy it while they have the opportunity. From that day forward he turned his angry attitude into gratitude.

Keith Harrell, one of America's most popular motivational speakers and the author of, "Attitude is Everything" said,

"Over the years, I've attended countless seminars, and read hundred of books, listened to hours

and hours of tapes, and interviewed scores of successful people on the subject of self development. I've discovered that learning to monitor, control and tap into positive attitude is the key to every self-help process. In fact the most valuable asset you can possess is a positive attitude toward your life."

Again he said,

"Your attitude should be an indication of where you want to go in life and not a reflection of where you have been. Change your attitude and you can change your future."

What profound words! How many are still following the rules of their unsavory past in order to arrive at their glorious future. But it does not work that way. It is said that a

definition for madness is to keep on doing the same thing and yet expect different results. If you want a change, it must begin with you. You must change your attitude. The important thing is to focus on and adapt to the rules, not of where you are coming from, but the rules of where you want to go.

One of the great human freedoms that we possess is the ability to choose our attitude in any given circumstance. You can change the way you view things, you can look on the positive side of people and circumstances. You don't have to dwell on the negative. Make a decision today to look on the positive side of the lives of those around you. When negative situations arise ask yourself, what positive lesson is in this for me?

You can respond to negative circumstances with a positive attitude and receive positive results.

It is also important to understand that God often guides and consoles His children, not by altering their circumstances or the things that seem to militate against them but by altering their attitude toward the things that militate against them. Therefore, if you can't change your fate, change your attitude; only then you may come to know what the Scripture means when it says,

And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose. (Romans 8:28)

*My brethren, count it all
joy when you fall into
various trials, (James 1:2)*

Your circumstances are only to prepare you for your purpose. Usually, whenever God gives a promise he establishes it upon a principle and permits a problem through which He prepares character for the possession of the promise.

Your attitude toward circumstances and more so toward people, will more often than not determine whether you have passed the test of the principle upon which the promise was established. Your attitude will determine your altitude. Therefore, approach everything with a positive and pleasant attitude.

Remember, the person that God may allow to cross your path may know somebody, who knows somebody, who knows somebody, who is ordained to set you on your next concourse. Therefore, have a positive attitude toward everybody.

Consider in a godly context these words of Keith Harrell (author and motivational speaker): *No matter what you do in life, if you have a positive attitude, you'll always be 100 percent. According to our alphabet system, if you assign a numerical value to each letter (1-26), attitude will equal 100 percent.*

A = 1

T = 20

T = 20

I = 9

T = 20

$$\begin{array}{r}
 U = 21 \\
 D = 4 \\
 E = 5 \\
 \hline
 \text{ATTITUDE} = 100 \quad (\text{Keith Harrell})
 \end{array}$$

Dare To Dream

Don't settle for less than one hundred percent success in your life. Regardless of what your circumstances are right now, dare to dream the impossible dream because that's the dream that God gives. If you can dream the impossible dream you can live the impossible life; for we are always moving in the direction of our sight.

It is rightfully said, *we will either live out our memory of the past or imagination of the future.* Many today who are living in victory are

what they are and where they are because they have first imagined it, and adapted to the necessary attitude to take them there. For example many of the poor in well to do countries are not poor because of a lack of available resource, but because of a lack of dream and the corresponding attitude. The dreams of some are so small that they lack the power to ignite their soul, and command a winner's attitude. However you can make a difference.

CHAPTER TWO

Exercising Self Control

Do not hasten in your spirit to be angry... (Ecclesiastes 7:9)

Everyone boils at different temperatures. We all lose our cool at different degrees. One of the major challenges we face and the down fall of many who possess great potential, is the tendency to boil over too quickly. The Bible intimates that in the last days the tendency to be angry will intensify and increase to such a magnitude, that even whole nations will become angry. Seeing the future through prophetic eyes the

apostle John said, *The nations were angry... (Revelation 11:18).*

Anyone who is going to experience effective relationship, whether in marriage, with friends, in ministry or any other situation, must be able to control the tendency to quickly boil over in anger. The Word of God says,

A quick-tempered man acts foolishly... (Proverbs 14: 17)

...let every man be...slow to get angry... (James 1:19 BBE)

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his

**spirit than he who takes a
city. (Proverbs 16: 32)**

While the combination of a warlike courage and a slow temper may well be found in one person, if a person were to possess only one of these virtues, the better one by far according to the Scripture would be a slow temper. The Word of God makes it abundantly clear, that he who is slow to anger manifests great self control and is better than the one who has enough courage, and wits to capture an entire city.

In Bible times, men of slow temper were not held in high esteem. However, in Proverbs 16:32, the Word of God reversed the estimate that was usually held regarding men of slow temper, over against militant warriors who had enough valor to

take an entire city. The Bible says, ***He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty;*** the man who controls his temper actually displays greater wisdom and strength.

God alone knows how much destruction would not have been wrought, how many wars would not have been fought, and how many families and sweet friendships would have continued to flourish, if more self control were exercised.

For many, it is much easier to subdue the enemy without, than to subdue the enemy within. History is littered with the records of many great men who were able to conquer nations, and vast territories, but yet, were unable to conquer their own passions.

When it comes to military genius the annals of history places Alexander the Great, in a class all by himself. At 32 years of age he had already conquered the world, and then bowed down and wept copiously, because there was nothing left for him to conquer. He died at 33 years of age. History tells us that notwithstanding his military genius, he was a slave to intemperate anger. He conquered the world but could not conquer himself. In one of his fits of rage he slew Clytus, his most intimate friend. The truth is that self conquest is nobler than conquering others.

The overall point, in sync with the revelation of Scripture, is that the man who makes peace and controls his temper, must exercise nobler and deeper thoughts, and display greater

wisdom, than the astute militant warrior.

The Misdemeanor of Moses

Anger is no respecter of persons, whether mighty or small. Everyone must guard against it. Anger led to the fall of the eminent and renowned Old Testament figure named Moses. Moses spoke with God face to face and as friend to friend. Moses conquered many formidable enemies; yet he fell to the subtle tendency of boiling over too quickly. The Bible says,

¹¹Now it came to pass in those days, when Moses was grown, that he went out to his brethren and looked at their burdens. And he saw an Egyptian

beating a Hebrew, one of his brethren.

¹²So he looked this way and that way, and when he saw no one, he killed the Egyptian and hid him in the sand.

¹³And when he went out the second day, behold, two Hebrew men were fighting, and he said to the one who did the wrong, "Why are you striking your companion?"

¹⁴Then he said, "Who made you a prince and a judge over us? Do you intend to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" So Moses feared and said, "Surely this thing is known!"

¹⁵When Pharaoh heard of this matter, he sought to kill Moses. But Moses fled from the face of Pharaoh and dwelt in the land of Midian; and he sat down by a well. (Exodus 2:11-15)

In his earlier days, in anger Moses murdered an Egyptian and consequently had to run for his life. Again, when he returned from Mt Sinai with the Ten Commandments and saw the sin of the children of Israel, his anger became so hot that he broke the two tablets of stone, upon which God Himself had written the Ten Commandments. The Bible says,

So it was, as soon as he came near the camp, that

he saw the calf and the dancing. So Moses' anger became hot, and he cast the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain. (Exodus 32:19)

The Bible says Moses anger became hot. He boiled over quickly and in the eruption of his anger he destroyed the Decalogue. When the heat cooled down, Moses sought and acquired new stone and rewrote the Decalogue. He could have spared the time and effort if he had a more temperate spirit. And what a treasure it would have been had the original copies, written by God Himself, were preserved.

Again, later in his life, because of the chiding of the children of Israel,

Moses became angry and spoke words that he should not have spoken. The Bible says,

***Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.
(Psalm 106:33)***

What was it that Moses unadvisedly said? Basically, only two words got him into serious trouble with God. The Bible says,

***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)***

In his anger Moses referred to the people of God as rebels and that was bad enough in the sight of God. Not only did he speak in anger, but worst than that, in anger (and unbelief) he smote the rock a second time. The folly of such action becomes magnified when one understands that the rock was a type of Christ. The Bible says,

And all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:4)

Since Christ must be smitten only once, yet in his anger Moses smote the rock twice, he got into double trouble with God. He got into trouble with God because he called

the people rebels and distorted a great Old Testament typology. The Scripture records God's response to Moses' action,

⁵¹This is because both of you broke faith with me in the presence of the Israelites at the waters of Meribah Kadesh in the Desert of Zin and because you did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites.

⁵²Therefore, you will see the land only from a distance; you will not enter the land I am giving to the people of Israel."

(Deuteronomy 32:51-52 NIV)

God said to Moses, *you will only see the land from a distance; but you will not enter the land because you broke faith with me, and did not uphold my holiness among the Israelites.* What a lesson for us today. The lesson for us to learn here is, that through anger one tends to make judgment and take action, that more often than not displeases God, and puts one in serious trouble.

Today, all God's people, whether in the five fold ministry or not, must guard against speaking words in anger, be it to your spouse, your children or any brother or sister in Christ. The word of God speaks repeatedly on this. Consider the following references.

Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not

thyself in any wise to do evil. (Psalm 37:8)

“But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' (empty headed) shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.” (Matthew 5:22)

¹⁹My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be ... slow to become angry

²⁰For man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires. (James 1:19-20 NIV)

***I will therefore that men
pray every where, lifting
up holy hands, without
wrath and doubting. (1
Timothy 2:8)***

Moses smote the rock a second time, when he should have spoken to it and he spoke unadvisedly to God's people. Consequently he was not permitted by God to enter the Promised Land. He was only allowed to see it from afar but not to possess it. Many fail to possess what they have seen. They fail to accomplish the vision God has given to them because of an intemperate and uncontrolled spirit. Many will fail to make it to heaven because of a lack of self control in key areas of their lives. It has been rightly said: ***No chain stronger than its weakest***

link. In order to go beyond seeing to possessing, you must exercise self control. You must be able to overcome anger.

The Folly of Anger

Anger has deceived many a mighty man of God and many people because they refuse to see it for what it truly is, a deadly vice. One moment of anger can do a whole lot of damage. How we need to learn from Moses' story! The truth is that whosoever gives in to anger quickly displays folly. The Word of God is emphatic about the folly of a hot head and an angry spirit. The Bible says,

***A quick-tempered man
acts foolishly... (Proverbs
14:17)***

*He who is slow to wrath
has great understanding,
but he who is impulsive
exalts folly. (Proverbs
14:29)*

*A fool's wrath is known at
once, But a prudent man
covers shame. (Proverbs
12:16)*

*Do you see a man hasty in
his words? There is more
hope for a fool than for
him. (Proverbs 29:20)*

*For wrath kills a foolish
man...(Job 5:2)*

*Do not hasten in your
spirit to be angry, for
anger rests in the bosom
of fools. (Ecclesiastes 7:9)*

The Bible says, *anger resides in the bosom of fools*. If you are quick to boil over the Bible explicitly and unequivocally calls you a fool. The truth is, if you are prone to blow up, you won't grow up. Your anger will limit your progress. Anger is folly, because for the most part the consequence of anger is greater than the cause.

Moreover, it is said that to be soon angry is to be in the habit of revenging the faults of others on oneself. Some call anger momentary madness. As a matter of fact the word "*mad*" is commonly used as a synonym for anger. People usually describe their anger in this way, "*I lost my mind,*" "*I went crazy*" or "*I became mad.*" Often enough that is exactly what happens, and there is no telling what mad people would

do to themselves and others at any given point in time.

We live in an age where there is a proliferation of unconfined mad men and women. There are many suicide bombers out there, wrapped in the ultimate explosive of anger. It is probably not by chance that anger is only one letter short of danger.

How To Overcome Anger

But how can one overcome this besetting and nagging problem of anger. I am convinced that one of the most effective ways to deal with anger is for one to wake up and see it for what it is, see it as God sees it. See it as the Bible reveals, as a debilitating and destructive characteristic.

Search the Word of God and see what it predominantly says about anger. Realize that anger is the blight that hinders your blessing. Only when you accurately see it for what it truly is would you come to yourself like the prodigal son, and realize you are too important to live on such a low plain. You would come to the place where the only thing you would want to be angry with is your own anger. Too many are in love with their anger; they don't want to give it up because they love it. They enjoy it when they blow-up ever so often. They are addicted to getting vex. It may sound strange but it is true.

It does not surprise me that Daniel Webster was a successful man and his name a household name. For it

was he who said, “*Keep cool; anger is not an argument.*”

Many have forfeited their progress through anger. Indeed the tendency to be soon angry is a foolish temperament and a self defeating inclination. Those who are quick to fly into rage, usually find it difficult to land, without doing damage to themselves and others.

Yes, it is true that the Bible says, ***be angry and sin not (Ephesians 4: 26)***. However, the kind of anger the Bible is advocating, is the anger that is like a fire extinguisher in a building. It is designed to put out fire and not to make fire. It is used infrequently, only in times when it is absolutely necessary. It is used in times of emergency, and then

returned to its position, and may not be used again in a very long time.

If you are always giving somebody a piece of your mind it is only self evident that you don't have much. To be sure, we all do boil at different temperatures; however, it is truly said: "*the emptier the pot the sooner it boils.*"

Before you say to yourself, "I don't have a problem with anger." Wait! Anger can also be silent. Some people blow-up whereas others pent-up. To pent-up is to blow-up on the inside, as opposed to the outside. In other words, it is silent rage, or to become bitter, which is even more deadly, and will be treated separately in this book.

CHAPTER THREE

The Challenge of Offense

*For offenses must come, but woe to
that man by whom the offense
comes!*

(Matthew 18:7)

One of the challenges of the end time that Jesus warned His disciples about is the challenge of offense. Jesus said,

*And then many will be
offended, will betray one
another, and will hate one
another. (Matthew 24: 10*

In Luke 17:1 Jesus said, “*It is impossible that no offenses should come...*” The word offense is an interesting word which comes from the Greek word *scandalon*, which means the trigger of a trap, or a trap stick. The trap-stick is a very small device that is cunningly used by hunters to trap animals. When an animal in search for food barely touches the trap stick, the trap flies and the animal is caught.

It is very revealing that Jesus used the Greek word for trap-stick, in referring to offenses between Christian brethren. Offense is the *trap-stick*, the primary device that Satan subtly uses in these closing days of time, to trap and ensnare many believers. Offenses are the calculated and fabricated plan of Satan to cause division, bitterness

and resentment among God's people.

Only once did the disciples of Jesus ask Him to increase their faith, and it was not for the purpose of raising the dead, healing the sick or casting out devils, but in order to overcome offenses. That should say a lot to us. Observe the following reference,

³"Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him."

⁴"And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

⁵And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” (Luke 17:3-5)

Furthermore Jesus said,

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. (Matthew 24:12)

In the above quoted verse (Matthew 24:12), the word used for love is *agape* which means the self sacrificing love of God; it is generally used in reference to believers. Therefore, when Jesus said the love of many shall grow cold, He described the condition not necessarily of the world only, but also of the church in these last days. The love of many professing Christians will grow cold because

many will be offended for various reasons.

Again in Luke 17:1, when Jesus said, ***“It is impossible that no offenses should come...”***He inferred that it is impossible to go through life without experiencing offence. Once you are alive you will be offended, one way or another, even by those that you may least suspect, which would make it even more painful to bear. Statistics prove that the closer the relationship, the greater the pain caused by offence. Some of the bitterest people on the planet are those who were the closest. For example, a divorced couple, a brother, or a very close friend. The closer the relationship, the more difficult the offence is to bear. David said,

Even my own familiar friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. (Psalm 41:9)

¹²For it is not an enemy who reproaches me; then I could bear it. Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me; then I could hide from him.

¹³But it was you, a man my equal, my companion and my acquaintance.

¹⁴We took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in the throng. (Psalm 55:12-14)

The pain caused by a breach in relationship with someone very

close, was so unbearable for David that he lamented,

⁶Oh, that I had wings like a dove! I would fly away and be at rest.

⁷Indeed, I would wander far off, and remain in the wilderness. Selah

⁸I would hasten my escape from the windy storm and tempest."
(Psalm 55:6-8)

Solomon said, *A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city, and contentions are like the bars of a castle. (Proverbs 18:19)* Indeed the greater the relationship the greater the offense, the greater the pain, and the greater the possibility for bitterness to develop and grow. A biblical case in point is Ishmael

and Isaac. Even to this day the offense and bitterness continue among their descendants which are the Jews and Arabs. We also have the case of Jacob and Esau, David and Saul, David and Absalom. However, notwithstanding the cause and the pain, as Christians we are clearly commanded to forgive. The way to overcome the challenge of offense is by resolving to forgive.

The Biblical Command To Forgive

²⁵And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

²⁶But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses. (Mark 11:25-26)

²³"Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

²⁴"And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

²⁵"But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

26''The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

27''Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

28''But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'

29''So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

30" And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

31" So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

32" Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

3' Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'

34" And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he

should pay all that was due to him.

*³⁵"So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."
(Matthew 18:23-35)*

During his time on earth, most of Jesus' teachings were communicated through parables. A parable is simply a parallel. It is a natural truth that parallels a heavenly or spiritual truth. In the above passage (Matthew 18:23-35), Jesus spoke a parable about a man who was forgiven by his master but in return refused to forgive someone else as he had been forgiven. Consequently, when the master heard of his unforgiving attitude, he became

furious, threw him into prison and handed him over to the tormentors.

Notice, in the beginning of this parable Jesus said, ***“Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants” (Matthew 18:23).*** The expression *“the kingdom of heaven is like.”* clearly indicates a parallel between the story of the parable and the kingdom of God. The point is, an offended and unforgiving attitude, and the punishment it invited in the parable would be a reality in the kingdom of God (in the body of Christ) during the end times. Moreover, if Christians don’t settle accounts among themselves, God will settle them slowly but surely, in his own way.

In the above parable the Word of God says,

³²Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:

³³Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

³⁴And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.

³⁵So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their

*trespasses. (Mathew 18:
32-35 KJV)*

The word “tormentors” in the King James Version indicate more than keepers of a prison. It refers to the torment inflicted on prisoners by stretching their limbs, pinching their flesh, putting out their eyes, and taking off the skin while alive. To withhold forgiveness is to open the door for the tormenters to come in.

Satan and his emissaries (devils) seek for every opportunity to hinder your spiritual growth, your health and finance. He seeks to oppress the child of God with negative thoughts. Satan seeks to keep the children of God going around in circles like Israel in the wilderness, by getting their minds focused on offenses, on what others have said and done.

Satan is pleased when a child of God focuses on problems instead of solutions, when one is reactive instead of proactive. His fundamental purpose is to torment lives both now and in eternity. Be warned, an offended and unforgiving spirit is a warm welcome to him.

Don't Give Satan The Advantage

The body of Christ will not be perfected until Christ returns. Therefore, until that happens we need wisdom and courage to get along with each other. The Word of God says,

***⁷Husbands, likewise, dwell
with them with
understanding, giving***

honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.

⁸Finally, all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers, be tenderhearted, be courteous;

⁹not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing. (1 Peter 2:7-9)

Notice in verse seven Peter said husbands must know how to dwell with their wives, that their prayers

may not be hindered. In verse eight and nine Peter extends his exhortation beyond the boundary of marriage to the brotherhood of believers. He said, *all of you be of one mind, having compassion for one another; love as brothers...*The point is, the way we deal with each other determines whether or not our prayers will be heard or hindered. If our prayers are hindered, Satan will have an advantage over us. When one holds on to offense and refuses to forgive, Satan gets the advantage. The Word of God makes this plain,

⁷So that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.

⁸Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

⁹For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.

¹⁰Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ,

¹¹Lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices. (2 Corinthians 2:7-11)

It is important for you to know how Satan works. If you don't know how he works, he will seize the advantage over you. In 2

Corinthians 2:11, the apostle Paul gave us some consoling words. He said, “...***for we are not ignorant of his devices.***” The implication is that contrary to the belief of many, Satan does not possess many schemes. He possesses only a few. However, what he cleverly does is play a kind of mind game by using these same schemes (or methods), over and over again. He only dresses the same old schemes in new clothes, therefore they can be learned. One translation puts it this way, “***To avoid being outwitted by Satan, whose scheming we know only too well***” (2 Corinthians 2:11 NJB).

Very often however, it is not ignorance, but ignoring Satan’s devices, which causes many to get into trouble and to be taken advantage of. Once you discover the

devices of Satan and avoid giving in to them, he cannot have any advantage over you. And you don't have to be a rocket scientist to know his devices, for the Bible reveals what they are; for example Satan uses: pride, an unforgiving spirit, unbelief, division, lust, greed, falsehood etc. As long as you walk according to the principles of God's Word you are safe. The Word of God declares,

***He that walketh uprightly
walketh surely: but he that
perverteth his ways shall
be known. (Proverbs 10:9
KJV)***

Dealing With Roots of Bitterness

You cannot stop offense from coming. Jesus said *“...it is impossible that no offense should come...”* Since you cannot stop it from coming, the crucial issue is how one deals with it when it comes. Praise God! Jesus also told us how to deal with it, and avoid being bitter. The solution is simple; one must pursue reconciliation and forgive unconditionally. The Word of God says,

²¹Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

²²Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven

times, but up to seventy times seven.” (Matthew 18: 21-22)

³Take heed to yourselves: If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

⁴And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him. (Luke 17: 3-4)

But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses. (Mark 11: 26)

²¹"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and

whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.'

²²"But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

²³"Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

²⁴"leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

²⁵"Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison (Matthew 5:21-25)

Notice that Jesus clearly says, *if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you (is offended with you), leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift (Vs 23-24)*. There is something important that one needs to see here. In Matthew 18:23-35 (*quoted above*) the issue is about one seeking forgiveness, the Bible

says, *So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all' (V.29).*

However, in Matthew 5:21-25 (*now in discussion*) it is a different situation. There is no one seeking forgiveness. Jesus simply says, *if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.*

In other words, if you are conscious that there is unfinished business between yourself and another person you must settle business before you approach God in prayer. You may not be the offended one

nevertheless, if you are conscious of someone who is offended with you, then before you present your gift to God, you need to go to that person and seek to resolve things in a peaceful and amicable manner. Whatever one takes to the altar of God would not be accepted, until you have done all in your power to make reconciliation with your brother. For God must accept you, before he accepts your gift. Therefore, as much as is possible you must seek reconciliation with your brother before God accepts you. Again Jesus said,

And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also

forgive you your trespasses
(Mark 11:25).

This verse (Mark 11:25) describes a different situation than those dealt with above. It is not about someone seeking your forgiveness, neither is it about you being conscious of someone offended with you. In this situation, the emphasis is on you being offended with someone. Probably, the person had done you something that caused you great pain; whether or not the person is conscious of what they have done, and whether or not the person repents; the clear counsel of Jesus is that you must forgive. In this context, Jesus did not give any condition on the part of the person who caused the offence, He simply said, *if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your*

Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses.

Therefore, when we add up all the above passages on forgiveness (Matt. 18:23-35, Matt. 5:22-25, Mk. 11:25) the revelation that surfaces is that *at the end of the day* we should forgive unconditionally.

Pursuing Peace

Some may ask, what about a case in which someone is offended with me, and I go to the person to seek reconciliation, but that person remains offended and indifferent to my expressions of love, what do I do then? The answer is simple. You cannot be held accountable for another person's decision and behavior. However, going to the person for the sake of reconciliation,

should not be viewed as a one time act. Right there is where many miss it. Some say, “I went to such and such a person already, now I leave that one in the hands of God.” However we are commanded to pursue peace.

There are many things in this life we go after, and pursue continuously until we succeed, how much more peace with our brothers and sisters which is very precious in the sight of God. Psalms 34:14 says, ***Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.*** The word “pursue” comes from the Hebrew word *radaph* meaning: To follow after, to pursue ardently, to run after, to chase, to dog, to attend closely upon.

The force of the Hebrew word is, *you must not casually seek peace*

and inoffensiveness toward the brethren. You must seek it diligently, as something of value in God's sight, so that if it seems to flee from you, you ought to pursue it, press eagerly after it, not giving up the pursuit, through impatience or resentment. It is said that consistency is the proof of sincerity. If our love for the brethren is sincere it must be persistent. In God sight peace is precious, The Word of God makes this plain,

¹Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

²It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running

down on the edge of his garments.

**³It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the LORD commanded the blessing -
- Life forevermore.
(Psalm 133)**

Truly the Word of God says, *A brother offended is harder to win than a strong city... (Proverbs 18:19)*. However, it did not say it is impossible. Sometimes the only way to pacify offence is by yielding and giving up your own rights. The Word of God says,

If the spirit of the ruler rise up against thee, leave not thy place; for yielding

pacifieth great offences.
(Ecclesiastes 10:4 KJV)

The New International Version puts it this way,

If a ruler's anger rises against you, do not leave your post; calmness can lay great errors to rest.
(Ecclesiastes 10:4 NIV)

Satan knows that he cannot get many to commit the obvious and conspicuous sins. Therefore, his strategy is to cause many to be ensnared and to fall through the trap-stick of offense. He seeks to turn pastors against pastors, pastors against members, members against pastors, brothers and sisters against each other, husbands and wives against each other, children against

parents etc. Therefore, we must arm ourselves with the attitude to pursue peace. The Bible says,

¹⁰For "He who would love life and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil, and his lips from speaking deceit. .

¹¹Let him turn away from evil and do good; let him seek peace and pursue it. (1Peter 3:10-11)

Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord. (Hebrews 12:14)

Go after peace, chase it, pursue it seek it, run it down. We are

accountable to God for our actions and also our reactions.

Take Heed Lest You Fall Short

The Bible solemnly exhorts us to take heed and be on the lookout against bitterness of heart which can cause you to miss the mark. The Bible says,

*Looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled.
(Hebrews 12: 15)*

Sometimes it may not be great hurts and wounds that cause offense, and expose one to the temptation to

grow bitter. Sometimes all it takes is a little issue, a little offense that Satan magnifies in your eyes. Or, it may be a little problem not properly dealt with. Consequently, a deadly root of bitterness can spring up and grow, until it sends forth many roots into many hearts, and becomes a stronghold.

Notice that the Bible says, ***Looking carefully...lest a root of bitterness springing up cause trouble.*** You need to look carefully because deadly bitterness usually begins with just a little root; a little bad root can spoil a whole lot of your good fruits. The Bible says, it is ***the little foxes that spoil the vines (Song of Solomon 2:15)*** and the little ***dead flies*** that spoil a whole lot of good. Solomon said,

Dead flies putrefy the perfumer's ointment, and cause it to give off a foul odor; so does a little folly to one respected for wisdom and honor. (Ecclesiastes 10:1)

The little things we take for granted, the things that we refuse to confront and deal with on the principles of God's Word, can turn out to be very problematic. Moreover, when many are offended, instead of properly dealing with the offense by going to the person who offended them, and seeking reconciliation, they tend to adopt a victim mentality. They play into the hands of the devil, by seeking for others to sympathize and side with their point of view on the matter. Very soon, not only one but

many are carrying roots of bitterness in their hearts and Satan is rejoicing.

The Bible says, *Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled (Hebrews 12:15KJV)*. None of us are beyond the temptation to become offended and bitter, therefore we all need to *look carefully lest we fail the grace of God*. The word “fail” comes from the Greek word *hustereo*, which means *to be left behind*, and therefore fail to reach the goal. When Jesus comes, that is exactly what will happen to some. If they fail to deal properly with offense, they would be left behind, because of bitterness in their hearts.

However, there is good news. You don't have to succumb to the devil's trap-stick through offense. The Word of God says,

No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

You Can Uproot Bitter Roots

Jesus clearly tells us how to deal with every root of bitterness. The disciples of Jesus were typical men

like us today. Therefore, when Jesus spoke to them about unconditional forgiveness some of them no doubt would have had unresolved issues to settle in their own lives. For this reason the reason they responded: *Lord increase our faith (Luke 17:5)*. But what was the response of Jesus, to such a plea? Jesus said,

If you have faith as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be pulled up by the roots and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. (Luke 17:6)

Like bitterness, the mulberry tree grew almost everywhere in Palestine. Just like bitterness it was easily planted and it grew very quickly, its roots went very deep

into the ground, and it is said that not even a tornado could pluck it up. Jesus used this tree, as an analogy to the roots of bitterness, and offense caused by hurts and wounds that seem impossible to overcome.

However, when Jesus said a little faith can cause the mulberry tree to be plucked up by the roots, and thrown into the sea, the inference was obvious. He was saying to His disciples, that a little faith can take care of any problem, even the deep roots of bitterness. Through faith in God, by trusting Him, and obediently acting upon the Word regarding the principles of love and forgiveness, one can be victorious over every attack of the devil, including offence.

Don't allow yourself to be given over to the tormentors, nor be left behind when Christ comes, due to unresolved offenses, deal with them now. Take the Word of God as your weapon, and be on the offensive against offenses and destroy them. Show no mercy to your carnal nature. Remember, the Word of God says, *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (Romans 12:21).*

CHAPTER FOUR

Walking In The Spirit

*For to be carnally minded is death,
but to be spiritually minded is life and
peace. (Romans 8:6)*

To be able to live effectively with people, you must know how to control your own life. As Christians, the Word of God commands us to walk in the Spirit instead of the flesh. One will walk in either of the two, the Spirit or the flesh, for there is no middle path. Galatians 5:19-21 reveals that many of the works of the flesh are works that produce poor relations with others. Therefore, one of the ways to live

effectively with people is by knowing what it means to walk in the Spirit, and doing so. The Word of God says,

*I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh.
(Galatians 5:16)*

Some are confused about what it means to walk in the Spirit, but there is no need to be confused. Since you are a child of God you are already in the Spirit. All you need now is to conduct your life according to the principles of the Spirit. The Word of God makes known to us what those principles are. To walk in the Spirit is simply a personal intelligent decision, and not a super-spiritual act for a select few. It is basically making the intelligent choice to

allow the Word of God to govern your thoughts, words and actions. You walk in the Spirit to the degree that you choose to align your thoughts, words and actions with the Word of God. It is a choice you make; an intelligent choice, based on your knowledge of the Scripture.

On the other hand, to walk in the flesh is to walk in ignorance of the Word of God, or to walk in rebellion to the Word of God that you know. It is to think wrongly, to accommodate and carryout thoughts that contradict and deny the council of God's Word. It is to walk according to one's own conceited imagination.

It is important to understand that when the Bible talks about the flesh, it fundamentally talks about a way

of thinking. The flesh is basically a way of thinking that is contrary to God's Word. The flesh is not the physical desires, they are legitimate. It is not some kind of a mystical influence, which unwittingly captures and controls a person's action. The flesh is simply a way of thinking. It is a way of thinking that is opposing to God's Word. Therefore, because it is a way of thinking, it is something that every child of God can be victorious over. The believers in Christ have the ability to think and act on a higher level than the world. The child of God has been given the mind of Christ and His Spirit. The Bible says,

For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But

*we have the mind of Christ.
(1 Corinthians 2:16)*

*Do you not know that you
are the temple of God and
that the spirit of God dwells
in you? (1 Corinthians
3:16)*

The Flesh and Its Works

For clarity of understanding, one should bear in mind that there is a difference between the flesh and the works of the flesh. The flesh is the wrong thinking and mindset. The works of the flesh is the consequence of the wrong thinking and mindset. In Galatians 5:19-21 we have a basic list of the works of the flesh, which are the fruits of wrong thinking. The Word of God says,

*¹⁹Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness,
²⁰idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies,
²¹envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)*

If you are going to have a healthy lifestyle, and relate effectively with others, you must understand the reality and dynamics of the flesh. It

is critical for you to understand that your prevailing thoughts will eventually bear fruits. The Bible says,

Hear, O earth! Behold, I will certainly bring calamity on this people, the fruit of their thoughts... (Jeremiah 6:19)

For as he thinks in his heart, so is he... (Proverbs 23:7)

The root problem with Noah's generation was their thought life. Everything sprang from their deep inner thoughts. The Word of God says,

Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was

great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.
(Genesis 6:5)

The fruits of men's thoughts will more often than not be brought upon them. As long as men's thoughts and pattern of thinking are contrary to the Word of God, their lifestyle will also be the same. Consequently, their experiences will be negative and calamitous. This is why God pleads through the prophet Isaiah and the apostle Paul.

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts....
(Isaiah 55:7)

***And do not be conformed
to this world, but be
transformed by the
renewing of your mind.
(Romans 12:2)***

Our thoughts will always bear the corresponding fruits in our actions and experiences. Therefore, thoughts are crucial. Many an adulterous act, though it might have taken place in the night, did not come about overnight. It was first conceived in the womb of the mind, nurtured and allowed to grow there until its manifestation became inevitable. The Bible says,

***Now the works of the flesh
are evident, which are:
adultery...(Galatians
5:19)***

You will eventually manifest the things you continuously feed your mind with. The Bible says,

*For those who are living in the way of the flesh give their minds to the things of the flesh, but those who go in the way of the Spirit, to the things of the Spirit.
(Romans 8:5 BBE)*

The adulteration of many things and relationships began in an adulterated mind. The apostle Paul understood how the flesh works, therefore he said to the saints at Philippi, and to all believers,

*Finally, brethren,
whatever things are true,
whatever things are noble,
whatever things are just,*

*whatever things are pure,
whatever things are lovely,
whatever things are of
good report, if there is any
virtue and if there is
anything praiseworthy,
meditate on these things.
Philippians 4:8)*

The Way of Fools

A wise person is a person who allows the Word of God to be the benchmark for his/her thoughts and conduct. Such a person gives his/her mind over to the principles of the Scripture and is considered *...to be spiritually minded... (Romans 8:6)*, and thus walking in the Spirit. On the other hand, the Bible describes those who walk in the flesh as fools.

The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise. (Proverbs 12:15)

He who trusts in his own heart is a fool, but whoever walks wisely will be delivered. (Proverbs 28:26)

Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him. (Proverbs 26:12)

The flesh Is Not Limited to Carnal Lust

One should not think of the flesh only as carnal lusts, as many usually do. The truth is: it is any thought that contradicts the council of God's Word. For example if a believer fell

into sin and confessed and asked God for forgiveness, yet goes on entertaining and agreeing with thoughts of unworthiness (not forgiving himself/herself), that person is walking in the flesh. For the Bible clearly states: ***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).***

Again, if a child of God feels mistreated by a fellow Christian brother or sister and consequently holds on to an unforgiving spirit, resentment, coldness, and avoidance, that offended child of God is walking in the flesh. For again the Bible clearly says to forgive one another.

²¹Then Peter came to Him and said, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

²²Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven." (Matthew 18:21-22)

³Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

⁴And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him. (Luke 17:3-4)

And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)

Bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Christ forgave you, so you also must do. (Colossians 3:13)

The apostle James said,

¹⁴But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth.

¹⁵This wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic.

¹⁶For where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and every evil thing are there.

¹⁷But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. (James 3:14-17)

The truth is that offence, bitterness and resentment among God's people are the works of the flesh. For various reasons some believe that they have a right to resent and be cold with certain of their fellow brethren in Christ. Yet they can never find a single Bible reference to authorize such an attitude. One needs to understand that offense

does or legitimize indifference and resentment. On the contrary the Word of God exhorts us to, *consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works (Hebrews 10:24)*. As a matter of fact Jesus said, *love your enemies*. Your enemy is anyone one who opposes you.

Feed Your Mind With Positive Words

You are commanded to love your neighbor as yourself. The Word of God says,

You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am

*the LORD. (Leviticus
19:18)*

*If you really fulfill the
royal law according to the
Scripture, "You shall love
your neighbor as
yourself," you do well.
(James 2:8)*

*For all the law is fulfilled
in one word, even in this:
"You shall love your
neighbor as yourself.
(Galatians 5:14)*

It stands to reason, that since you are commanded to love our neighbors as ourselves, if you entertain negative thoughts about yourself and pass negative judgments on yourself, you would do the same to others. The fact that we are commanded to love

our neighbors as ourselves indicates that we are expected to have healthy and positive concepts about ourselves, based on the Word of God.

Some say I feel stupid, or I feel defeated. However the truth is you cannot feel stupidity, neither can one feel defeat, because stupidity and defeat are not emotions. They are judgments that some pass on themselves because of the wrong thoughts they entertain and feed on. This is why it is very important to feed your mind with the word of God. Practice thinking about the good and positive things God has declared in His word concerning you. Here are a few of them,

***I will praise You, for I am
fearfully and wonderfully***

made; marvelous are Your works, and that my soul knows very well. (Psalm 139:14)

The LORD has appeared of old to me, saying: "Yes, I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with loving-kindness I have drawn you. (Jeremiah 31:3)

As the Father loved me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. (John 15:9)

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God!... (1 John 3:1)

But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:57)

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ (Philippians 1:6)

Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place. (2 Corinthians 2:14)

Your Most Important Life

It is said that we all live basically three lives.

1. Our public and visible life, that everyone sees.
2. Our private life, only known by close family and friends.
3. Our hidden and unseen life, of deep inner thoughts.

The hidden and unseen life of deep inner thoughts is the most important life you live, because it is from there everything springs forth. Your decisions and ultimately your destiny will be determined by the deep inner thoughts that you embrace today. We all are the products of the thoughts we consistently think.

The Bible says, *as a man thinks so is he (Proverbs 23:7)*. It is of uttermost importance to understand this truth. It is aptly said, *sow a thought, reap an act; sow an act, reap a practice; sow a practice, reap a habit; sow a habit, reap a character; sow a character, reap a destiny*. It all begins with the thoughts one embraces.

No one can rise above the thoughts he or she embraces. Your thought life is your most important life, it is the fountain of your future. The Bible explicitly says, *“Above all else, guard your heart (mind), for it is the well spring of life.” (Proverbs 4:23 NIV)*. The life you are living now has a lot to do with the thoughts you have allowed to take root in your mind in time past, whether good or bad.

If you think inferior you will act inferior. If you think defeat you will act defeat. If you allow fear to govern your thoughts, you will act in fear, attempt nothing great and make wrong decisions. If you accommodate in your thinking, thoughts of malice, resentment, ill will and offense, then those things would define your character, your life and ultimately your destiny.

A good way to guard your thoughts is by setting up a Scriptural security check point in your mind. Before you accept any thought, it should pass a simple test. It should have an authorized identification name and number (a Scripture reference). If it cannot pass the test of God's Word you should reject it immediately. Tell the devil no! Shake it off as Paul shook off the viper in the fire,

and let the devil take it back. Do like Jesus, respond by saying, “*it is written...*”

Casting Down Imaginations

The Word of God tells us,

⁴(For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;)

⁵Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ (2 Corinthians 10:4-5 KJV)

There are some wrong ways of thinking, that many have become accustomed to and set in, they are called strongholds. The problem that some Christians have is not so much a demon that needs to be cast out, but mindset that needs to be cast down. Whether or not a Christian can be demon possessed is a controversial issue the author is not going to address here. However, the point that needs to be made is, if a Christian could be possessed and the demon were cast out, but the mindset was not changed, it would not make much of a difference. The demon would walk right back in. As a matter of fact, the demon will return with reinforcement. The Bible says,

43''When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes

*through dry places,
seeking rest, and finds
none.*

*⁴⁴"Then he says, 'I will
return to my house from
which I came.' And when
he comes, he finds it
empty, swept, and put in
order.*

*⁴⁵"Then he goes and takes
with him seven other
spirits more wicked than
himself, and they enter
and dwell there; and the
last state of that man is
worse than the first. So
shall it also be with this
wicked generation."
(Matthew 12:43-45)*

The point is that the most important thing we need to do when we come into this wonderful born again

experience in Christ, is to change our minds. There is no real change without a change of mind. This is the reason why the Bible commands men to repent. To repent simply means to change your mind, to change your way of thinking. For any significant change to take place in a person's life, they must first change their way of thinking.

Though you cannot stop a bird from flying over your head, any more than you can stop a thought from entering your mind; yet, one can stop the bird from making a nest and reproducing on one's head. Even so, you don't have to accommodate and carry out thoughts that enter your mind, thoughts that contradict the Word of God. You ought to take responsibility for your thought life. Think about what you think about.

Think or sink. Draw close to God through fervent prayer and meditation in His Word and your thoughts will be established in God. By all means, put off the swaddling clothes of wrong thinking. As the apostle Paul said,

When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. (1Corinthians 13:11)

...be renewed in the spirit of your mind. (Ephesians 4:23)

There are some ways of thinking that one must grow out of. Paul said when I was a child I thought as a

child, but when I became a man, I put away childish thinking.

The Ultimate Consequence of Walking In The Flesh

The Bible makes it very apparent, that the ultimate consequence for walking in the flesh is to eternally forfeit the kingdom of God. The Bible says,

*...For the mind of the
flesh is death...(Romans
8:6 BBE)*

*...those who practice such
things will not inherit the
kingdom of God.
(Galatians 5:21)*

Control your mind, by walking in the Spirit, and you will live

effectively with people and control
your destiny.

CHAPTER FIVE

Living Effectively Through Love

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal (1 Corinthians 13:1).

Truly the most effective way to live with people is to love them. Love is the greatest principle for living. To love is to operate in the wisdom and power of God. Love is of God and God is love (1 John 4:7-8). It is the greatest of all virtues. Love is powerful, love is excellent, love is lovely, love is liberating, It is liberating to both the one giving it

and the one receiving it. Love is light, it is the very wisdom of heaven.

Love Acts Properly

Love never acts in an unbecoming manner. Love observes good behavior and good manners; is never rude, vulgar, offensive, or unmannerly. Love is always willing to become all things to all people, that it may please them for their good to edification.

The word of God says love is longsuffering which means it can endure evil, injury, and provocation, without being overcome with resentment, fury, or reprisal. Love gives the soul power over irate passions, and supplies it with a persevering patience. Love will put

up with many negatives from the person it loves, and wait long to see the fruits of such patience.

Love is the opposite of hatred. Hatred produces harshness, severity, unkindness of expression. But love is kind, love is courteous, it is polite, it is gentle, it is desirous of doing good. Love desires the happiness of others.

Love Seeks Not Her Own

In 1 Corinthians 13:5 the word of God says, *love does not seek its own*. Perhaps there is not a more remarkable expression in the New Testament than this; that expresses the character and power of love which is the supreme virtue of true Christianity.

It's evident meaning is that love is not selfish, because it does not seek its own happiness exclusively or mainly. It does not seek its own happiness to the injury of others.

This expression is not meant to teach that a man should not regard his own welfare at all, or have no respect for his property, business and his happiness. Every man should pursue such a course. But you should not mainly seek those things that you may be happy, but that you may through these things glorify God your Maker and Sustainer, and accomplish the great design which He has for your life. If your happiness is the main and principal thing that you seek, then it proves that you are selfish; and selfishness is not true Christianity.

Some Quotations On Love Worth Considering

There is no wealth but love (Marie Corelli).

To love someone means to see him as God intended him.

Love is love's reward (John Dryden).

Where there is love there is life; hatred leads to destruction (Mahatma Gandhi).

When you truly love your happiness is contingent on the happiness of the one loved.

The love we give away is one of the few things in life we keep.

The only thing we get out of life is the love we give away.

God's goodness makes the world go round but our love one for another makes the ride worthwhile.

No one lives until they love. To know life is to know love.

The secret of love is that it finds pleasure in the happiness and welfare of the one who is loved.

The supreme business of your life should be to love people.

There is only one law in life, to love. There is only one happiness in life: to love and be loved.

Love is the door to eternal happiness.

Love is the door to heaven.

My personal mission statement for my life is very simple: *To know God and to love people.*

Loving In Tough Situations

A member of the church where I pastor after reading the manuscript of this book, expressed being blessed by the material and suggested some questions and answers regarding practical and perplexing life situations. I thought it was a good idea and responded positively by answering a few questions. The following questions were not made up. They arose from real life situations that people are faced with and are seeking answers for. They no doubt might reflect in some ways similar situations that

countless people are going through. Therefore the answers should give a measure of clarity in grappling with some tough situations.

However, before I attempt to answer these questions, I must tell you that in order to do justice and properly treat some of them it would necessitate another book. I have taken a concise and general approach in my response. Before you make any critical decision seek professional help from your pastor or others in the field of counseling.

Here are the questions.

1. How do you interact with a fellow Christian who dislikes you and has spread rumors about you?

2. As a 20 year old how should I respond to young men in my community who make vulgar remarks every time I walk by?
3. How do you deal with someone that never admits that they are wrong?
4. How do you deal with an in-law that does not respect your privacy?
5. I have forgiven someone that has hurt me but has since kept my distance. Is this the right attitude to adopt?
6. I was unable to be at a friend's side when she experienced a painful situation. In spite of my efforts to apologize and explain, my Christian sister has rejected me. How should I deal with this person?

7. How should I deal with my best friend who has betrayed my trust without acting unforgiving?
8. How do I deal with a thirty-two year old son who refuses to leave home, help with chores, is disrespectful and has a problem with gluttony and hygiene?
9. How do you deal with a backslidden, sexually active 17 year old daughter as a Christian mother?
10. How do I deal with 28 year old son that has confessed he is a homosexual?
11. How do I deal with a boss that is making sexual advances to me without risking my job or being disrespectful?

12. How do I relate to my father that has sexually abused me without feeling uncomfortable?

As was said in the introduction of the book, in order to live effectively with people one needs to be wise as a serpent and harmless as a dove. We have seen that one of the primary reasons that the wise sayings of Solomon in the book of Proverbs were written is *to give subtlety to the simple...*in their relations with people (*Proverbs 1:4 KJV*). The word *simple*, the Hebrew word translated simple means first of all to be good-natured, pure, genuine and harmless. Secondly, it means to be open; to be open in the sense of being easily influenced, to be open to every influence of others, to be naive and gullible.

To be *simple* is to be honest and genuine in heart, yet lacking in experiential knowledge of the wiles of men. The simple is yet to be made cautious by bad experiences. With regards to relating to people, the Word of God exhorts us to replace simplicity with subtlety.

The word *subtlety* means, to be “smooth.” The word “smooth” means to be wise and prudent. It gives the picture of one possessing the wisdom to navigate through life, effectively interrelating with people, and thereby rescuing oneself from the wiles of men.

In this life there are some people you would simply need ignore, pay no attention to them. There are some people whose company you would have to avoid because they are no

good example, support, influence or encouragement to you. If your relationship with someone promises more pain than joy then you should consider limiting that relationship. Trust the Lord to give you the wisdom to extricate yourself from the company of that person without hating them. Some decisions would be tough and sacrificial. However, if doing so would be better for that person and for you in the long run, then it is the way to go.

For example in the case of question # 8 *How do I deal with a thirty-two year old son who refuses to leave home, help with chores, is disrespectful and has a problem with gluttony and hygiene?* It is difficult to give a definitive answer not knowing all the details surrounding the situation. The first approach

should be to have a candid talk with the person concerning the problems. In some cases like these it might be wise to assure the person of your love and availability, and that it is with their best interests in mind you ask them to leave. Put him out. You might even want to assist in getting a place for him.

In general being overly confrontational is not good; however, at times it is necessary and wise to do so. Some things need to be dealt with on a one on one basis. If you do so in the right attitude you might be surprised at the ways things work out. Many times resentment and bitterness grow in the hearts of Christians because they refuse to humbly confront and deal with situations in the attitude of love. The Bible says,

*Open rebuke is better than
love carefully concealed.
(Proverbs 27:5)*

*He who rebukes a man
will find more favor
afterward than he who
flatters with the tongue.
(Proverbs 28:23)*

*Faithful are the wounds of
a friend, but the kisses of
an enemy are deceitful.
(Proverbs 27:6)*

*³Let not mercy and truth
forsake you; bind them
around your neck, write
them on the tablet of your
heart,
⁴And so find favor and
high esteem in the sight of*

***God and man. (Proverbs
3:3-4)***

To walk in love does not mean that you have to put up with the inconsistencies of others. Neither does it mean you must be in close association with certain folks. It is always wise to love, but it is not always wise to get close or to remain close to some people. Jesus came as God in the flesh with love all. He came to die for everybody. However, He was not a friend to everybody. He remained holy, harmless, undefiled and separated from sinners (Hebrews 7:26).

The important thing for you to understand is that you are commanded to love people regardless of who they are or what they have done. Love is more than

an emotion, love is a spirit. Love is the operation of the Spirit of God in your heart. Love is of God and God is love. Love is the law of the kingdom of heaven.

When we truly love people we do so in spite of their faults. We love them not because they are lovely, not because they are good, but because they were made in God's image, and also because He loves them. We also love them because of what they ought to be and what they can become through the mercy and grace of Jesus Christ. To love somebody is not the same as loving the things they do. You should consider that there is a big difference between what people do and what they are in terms of God's creation.

With regards to question # 12. *How do I relate to my father who has sexually abused me without feeling uncomfortable?* It is recommended that people who have been sexually abused seek counseling. If a person has been sexually abused in early childhood and for an extended period, in some of these cases the victims commit suicide. Some go through life with what is called post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This disorder manifests itself in a number of ways, for example: distorted emotions, feeling of guilt and shame, also physical ailments such as migraine headaches and other sicknesses.

If you have been abused and you are moving on with your life you need to realize a few things.

1. You are a survivor.
2. You are not alone. You would be surprised to know how many around you have been through the same thing and even worse, but they are moving on with their lives.
3. It was not your fault. People who have been abused tend to feel a number of negative emotions and hold to wrong concepts about themselves. Among them is that they are to be blame for the abusive experience they had in the past. The truth is whether or not you enjoyed it after a period of time, you were intruded and violated, you were a child. Therefore it is not your fault.
4. Recognize that you are a normal person who has been

violated like many in today's world but you are a survivor.

5. Reclaim your voice and freedom of expression. Sexual abuse tends to silence, limit the self esteem and the self expression of those who have been victimized. Break the spell of silence that the abuse has caused, especially regarding the one that has done it to you. Let that person know that you have come to realize the serious crime they have committed against you but you have forgiven them. It is important for you to break the silence and speak. It is important for you to confront this situation and name it for what it is. It is evil. People who have been abused tend to become abusive themselves, or

they put up with it. However, when you speak up, and name it for what it is, you free yourself from the tendency of repeating it, and you also feel better about yourself.

6. Seek counseling by someone who is trained to do so. You need to be assured within yourself that the information you share would be held in strict confidence. As you open up and talk about the abuse, it will help to release you from a lot of pent up anxieties. Talking about the problem is a therapy in itself and the first step in the process of healing.

TEXT: 1 Peter 3:13 *And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?*

SUB: Taking control of your life

INTRO: who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?

God wants us to take a proactive approach to life and not a passive or reactive.

You should not remain passive while you leave the outcome of your life to good fortune. Neither should wait until the worst happens to wake up and react.

You should take charge of your life. You can take charge of your life and God expects you to.

There is no reason why as a Christian your earthly life should go down in defeat.

It is true James said in **James 1:2** *My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials. I know some good Christians who are face with severe trials.* But let us face it, there are some Christian who are not living a successful life, and it is not because God is trying them and not because of the devil.

But because of their own mindset and attitude. Some Christians need to quit blaming others and take responsibility for their ways.

Before you were a Christian things happened to you.

Now that you are a child of God, now that you know the truth, things ought to be happening for you and not just to you.

You ask how is that?

Romans 8:28 And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.

However, the outcome of any situation has to do with your response.

Some believers are worried because nothing seems to be working out for them.

I spoke to someone recently and those were their exact words. Nothing seems to be working out for me.

As great as God is you play a significant part in determining what the ultimate outcome of your life will be.

What you do determines whether things happen to you or for you. You have a significant part to play.

I am not assuming that negative things would not happen to you, but that even when negative things happen they will turn out for your good. When negative things happen they will just be the beginning of a process that is destined for your ultimate good. They will happen not just to you but for you.

You should be able to say like the psalmist:

Psalm 27:3 Though a host (an army) may encamp against me, my heart shall not fear; though war should rise against me, in this I will be confident.

Psalm 3:6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people who have set themselves against me all around.

For the word of God declares: ...*who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?*

Notice... if you become followers of what is good?

This is a conditional clause.

The lesson here is that you can determine to a large extent the course of your life by responding properly (not bitterly) to whatever comes your way.

Whatsoever comes your way will turn out for your good when you respond properly to it.

Even when evil is done to you, you must have the wisdom and the courage to do good.

Don't do good only when good is done to you, but do good even when you have been mistreated.

Do good even when you don't feel like it.

And ...who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?

Who is he?

There are only four kinds of responses you can give to all of life circumstances.

(1) Evil for evil (2) Good for good
(3) Evil for good (4) Good for evil

1. **EVIL FOR EVIL** **Romans 12:17** - *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everybody.* **Romans 12:19** - *Beloved, do not avenge yourselves (don't retaliate, get even, take revenge, get back) but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is*

Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. Proverbs 20:22 - Do not say, "I will recompense (repay) evil"; Wait for the LORD, and He will save you. 1 Thessalonians 5:15 - See that no one renders (returns) evil for evil to anyone, but always pursue what is good both for yourselves and for all.

2. **GOOD FOR GOOD**
Matthew 5:46-48 – ⁴⁶*For if you love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?*
⁴⁷*And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?* ⁴⁸*Be you therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect. Luke 6:32-34* –

³²For if you love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. ³³And if you do good to them which do good to you, what thank have you? for sinners also do even the same.

³⁴And if you lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. The bible is saying when you return good for good, you are operating on the level of a common person. You are operating like a sinner. You should good for good but if that is as far as it goes you are operating like a “good sinner”.

3. **EVIL FOR GOOD Psalm 109:5** - *Thus they have rewarded me evil for good, and*

hatred for my love. Psalm 35:12 - They reward me evil for good, to the sorrow of my soul. Proverbs 17:13 - Whoever rewards evil for good, evil will not depart from his house. Those who reward evil for good bring a curse on themselves. ILL: (Judas) Matthew 27:5 - Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself. Proverbs 26:2 - As the bird by wandering, as the swallow by flying, so the curse causeless shall not come (it will fly by but it will not stay). As a matter of fact the Hebrew construction suggest, not will a curse causeless shall not come but it will return to the one who sent it (the bird

will return to its place the, chicken will return home to roost). **Curses are a reality** **Joshua 6:26,** 550 years after **1 Kings 16:34,** **UN-FORGIVENESS BRINGS A CURSE: 2 Corinthians 2:10-11** - ¹⁰*Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Christ.* ¹¹*lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.* **REBELLION BRINGS A CURSE: Luke 15:16** - *"And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him*

anything. Rewarding evil for good brings a curse

4. **GOOD FOR EVIL 1 Samuel**

24:17-20 - ¹⁷Then he said to David: "You are more righteous than I; for you have rewarded me with good, whereas I have rewarded you with evil. ¹⁸"And you have shown this day how you have dealt well with me; for when the LORD delivered me into your hand, you did not kill me. ¹⁹"For if a man finds his enemy, will he let him get away safely? Therefore may the LORD reward you with good for what you have done to me this day. ²⁰"And now I know indeed that you shall surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in your hand. **1 Corinthians**

4:12-13 - ¹²....*Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; ¹³being defamed, we entreat.....* **Matthew 5:44** - *But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;* **APP: 1 Peter 3:9** - *Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing.* In other words negative experiences are disguised opportunity for you to inherit the blessing. That is the way God works. But it all depends on your response. **Romans 12:21** - *Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with*

good. 1 Peter 3:13 - And who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?

So there a four way you can respond to life circumstances:

1. **EVIL FOR EVIL**
2. **GOOD FOR GOOD**
3. **EVIL FOR GOOD**
4. **GOOD FOR EVIL**

And ...who is he who will harm you if you become followers of what is good?

WHO IS HE

Man, Satan, demons, (it is God who ask the question).

APP: Nothing and no one can harm you if you keep on doing good.