

REPENTANCE A STUDY IN REORIENTATION

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2 Corinthians 7:10-11

STUDY THEME

As Christians, we are freed from our past sin through trusting who Jesus is and what He accomplished on the cross. Allowing the Holy Spirit to empower every area of our life makes us victorious over the enemy, his servants, and their works and affects in our life. We are reconciled with the Father through His forgiveness and our repentance.

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SERIES PREFACE

You know those negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, or habits that are seemingly impossible to overcome? Or, how about those relationships and circumstances where you feel completely trapped, powerless, or out-of-control?

For me, this was a deep-rooted bitterness toward my dad, an inability to share my feelings, and a 20-year addiction to pornography. My wife, Lacey, struggled with fear that fed an explosive anger producing a need to control people and circumstances.

If our heart and mind are poisoned with feelings of being unloved or unsafe, we hurt.

We are all created in the image of God. This identity is intrinsic. However, our perception of this identity can be distorted and devalued. When we feel loved and safe in our relationships, our heart and mind feel at peace. If our heart and mind are poisoned with feelings of being unloved or unsafe, we hurt. This pain affects how we see ourselves and others. As a result, we hurt others while continuing to hurt ourselves. This devalued and distorted perception of our identity is what led Lacey and I into our negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. It wasn't until we were set free from our perceived identities that we were able to truly live a joy-filled life.

We are all created in the image of God. This identity is intrinsic.

We truly believe that every person has the potential to live a life of freedom and overflowing joy like Jesus. That is why our vision is to see Christians live free, joy-filled lives. The power of one person's story of freedom and victory is life-changing. It is the best evangelistic tool a Christian has. Our mission is to encourage and equip Christians to live free of those negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits and empower them to live joy-filled in every relationship and circumstance. Our hope is that Christians — through their story of Jesus' redemption in their lives — would be the best testimony the world has of God's transforming love, grace, mercy, and truth. This is the prayer behind the *Christian Living Study Series*.

On behalf of my wife, Lacey, and me, it is an honor to be able to share these studies with you. They are the result of our combined heartache, healing, education, and transformation. To get the most out of this series, we recommend that you participate in each study in the following two ways:

First, choose a partner. Due to the nature of the questions, we recommend, if married, your partner be your spouse. If you're not married, choose a partner of the same gender. You and your partner will independently begin each study with prayer. Then, work through the study — reading the main Scriptures (*indicated by* \clubsuit) and text. Finally, together prayerfully discuss the Response Questions (*indicated by* \clubsuit) and implement the Next Steps.

Second, journal. Personal journaling through the lessons will help solidify what the Holy Spirit is doing in your heart and mind. Write out a summary of your answers and discussions to the *Response Questions*; your experience with the *Next Steps*; and your own thoughts, objections, and struggles with the studies. This journal will be a record of God's grace and transformation in your life, mind, and heart.

While each study booklet may stand-alone, the *Christian Living Study Series* is a process — a linear progression of theology and application. With this in mind, we recommend going through the booklets in order. A full list of studies is available in the back of each booklet.

Our prayer is that you would be vulnerable — challenging yourself to openly discuss and answer the questions with your partner. Also, that you would allow the Holy Spirit to convict, comfort, and encourage you — empowering you to accomplish Jesus' mission for God's glory, other's good, and for your joy.



NATHANAEL P. STEEL

PARDONED

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

~Romans 8:1~

INTRODUCTION



Romans 8:1-8 & John 3:16-211

God has forgiven everyone through Jesus (John 3:16-17²). However, only those who receive Jesus' sacrifice benefit from this forgiveness; that is, they are reconciled to Him (Romans 5:11³). Reconciliation with the Father consists of both receiving His forgiveness and repenting of our sin. When we trust Jesus, we are no longer condemned for our self-righteousness and unrighteousness (Romans 8:1). True repentance, therefore, begins by receiving His forgiveness and sacrifice. Receiving the Father's forgiveness and responding with repentance frees us from real guilt, real shame, and real condemnation of our sin. While we may be tempted with regret and shame, true Christfocused repentance to us living free, joy-filled lives without regret or shame (2 Corinthians 7:10).



What sin is it most difficult for you to receive God's forgiveness and mercy?

¹ See also Proverbs 18:3; 1 John 4:13-18; Romans 8:12-17

² See also 1 John 2:2; Romans 5:8, 18

³ See also 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

OUR FALSE VIEWS OF THE GOSPEL

Because of our experiences and influences in our growing up years, we have learned and developed false views of forgiveness, redemption, love, and acceptance. Scripture refers to this process as hardening or the enslavement of our heart and mind (see also walking after the flesh).⁴ The following beliefs come out of our hardened and enslaved heart:

Condition-based Forgiveness & Redemption

This is the belief that we are only forgiven and redeemed if our actions and effort earn or merit it. The lie in this belief is that our mistakes, failures, and sins will they be canceled only when we purposefully suffer for them or work hard enough to redeem them. This is often a by-product of wrongly defined forgiveness and redemption being demonstrated toward us. This lie opposes the truth of the Gospel in that forgiveness has already been extended through Jesus' death on the cross (Matthew 26:27; Ephesians 4:32); all we simply do is choose to receive and trust Him (Acts 10:43). Furthermore, our redemption is not based upon our ability to live morally. Rather, it is only through receiving and trusting Jesus' death on our behalf that we are redeemed from our unrighteous and self-righteous (Romans 3:24; Ephesians 1:7).⁵



In your opinion, what sin is less acceptable (more evil or disgusting) than your sin? Why? Who do you believe to be more difficult to redeem? What about their sin makes it more difficult to redeem?

Performance-based Love & Value

This is the belief that we are only loveable and valued based upon what we do or how we act. The lie in this belief is that our worthiness to be loved and valued is synonymous with or dependent upon how good we are. This is often a by-product of excessive unhelpful criticism or inflexible adherence to a set of family or religious rules and regulations being demonstrated toward us. This lie opposes the truth of the Gospel in that God loves humans not based upon their actions but rather because of

⁴ "Harden" – Deuteronomy 15:7; Proverbs 28:14; 2 Corinthians 3:14; Hebrews 3:8, 13; "Slavery" – John 8:34; Romans 8:16; 2 Peter 2:19; "Walking after the flesh" – Romans 8:4; Colossians 3:7; Galatians 5:16-26: Ephesians 2:1-2; 4:17. It

should be noted that the same Greek word for "flesh", *sarx*, used in Galatians 5 is also used in reference to Jesus in John 1:14.

⁵ Colossians 1:14

His character.⁶ Additionally, our value is based not on our merit but rather on our Creator (Genesis 1:27⁷).



In your opinion, what sin is of yours is less acceptable (more evil or disgusting) than other's sin? Why? What actions or thoughts of yours do you believe to be more difficult to redeem? What about these actions or thoughts make them more difficult to redeem?

CONDEMNATION

Because of our growing up experiences and relationships, we develop "filters" that we view, interpret, and live life through. These filters affect our view of ourselves, others, and God.

Ourselves

Our distorted and devalued perspective of our identity is developed through what is said and done to us in our developmental and early growing up years. We also take how people respond to our mistakes, failures, and sin developing beliefs about forgiveness and love, and live out of these beliefs. We reinforce this false perspective through performance-based self-reliant habits. We believe, through these lifestyles, we can either earn or prove our worth. This, however, only leads to the hopeless thoughts and attitudes of fear, shame, and disgrace. We strengthen this hopeless perspective by ignoring, denying, or rejecting God's love, mercy, forgiveness, and grace; we live opposed to God and in condemnation. These hopeless attitudes become inseparable from our identity (who we believe we are) and become a catalyst for our activity (what we do and say).



When was the last time you felt someone was disappointed in you? What were your thoughts and actions to these feelings?

Others

Because of our own distorted and devalued perspective of our identity, we focus on others' mistakes, failures, and sins (Romans 12:3). This filter not only affects our view of them but also how we interpret their actions and words toward us. We begin to

⁶ Psalm 107:1; John 3:16; Ephesians 3:14-19; Romans 5:8; 8:38-39; 1 John 4:7-16

⁷ See also Genesis 9:6; James 3:9; Ephesians 3:14-15

develop condemning assumptions toward them rather than gracious assumptions. When we do not forgive other's mistakes, failures, and sins (whether real or perceived), we affirm their own distorted and devalued perspective of their identity. Our condemning assumptions perpetuate their feelings of fear, shame, and disgrace. Through our unforgiveness and hopeless perspective of others, we negate how the Holy Spirit may be working in their heart, mind, and life⁸. We deny them the peace and freedom that experiencing God's mercy and grace brings.



Who have you had condemning assumptions or hopeless thoughts toward? What have you said or done — out of these assumptions or thoughts — that has denied them God's mercy and grace?

God

Because we have developed a distorted and devalued perspective of our identity, we assume that God is someone to hide from (Genesis 3:8-10). We believe Him to be distant and withdrawn. We wrongly conclude that God's forgiveness and redemption is based upon our ability to earn or prove our worth. We develop performance-based self-reliant habits that reveal our belief in God's demands for payback. We believe that our Heavenly Father focuses on our mistakes, failures, and sin. This negative perspective leads to our relationship with God being marked by fear, shame, and disgrace. We live void of God's hope and peace because we don't believe He loves and forgives us unconditionally. By believing a lie about His character, we reject His love and forgiveness. We believe, as with other people, that our love and acceptance is based upon what we can do.



When is it most difficult for you to believe God unconditionally loves and forgives you? How have you tried to hide your mistakes, failures, and sins from Him? How did you do this? How did it make you feel?

PARDONED FROM CONDEMNATION

God, through Jesus, has forgiven us of our sins. When we repent and trust in Jesus, we are freed from the shame, condemnation, and judgment that our sin results in (Psalm 32:1-

⁸ Colossians 3:12-15; Ephesians 4:25-32

5). There is nothing we need to do or achieve to be forgiven.⁹ This freedom only comes through trusting Him and receiving His Spirit. God is always pursuing relationship with us (Isaiah 65:2; John 12:32). In this pursuit, He will convict us of living unrighteous or self-righteous lifestyles. These habits include attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, actions, and words that we live out of that are not founded in God's character or how God designed us to live. Trusting Jesus means that we allow Him access into the dark areas of our heart (John 3:19-21). We do this by exposing and confessing what we've done or said (Acts 19:18; 1 John 1:9).



What past or present attitude, thought, belief, action, or words would you be afraid, embarrassed, angry, ashamed, humiliated, or uncomfortable of other people knowing? Why?

FROM CONVICTION TO GODLY SORROW

The enemy will always lie to us by reminding us of our failures, mistakes, and sin (Revelation 12:10-11). Regardless of whether or not we are pursuing freedom and restoration, the enemy's plan is to steal, kill, and destroy our lives, minds, souls, and hearts (John 10:10). God's kindness leads to a conviction that is always specific, hope-filled, and life bringing (Romans 2:4; John 16:7-15). This conviction, if allowed to have its full affect, leads to freedom and restoration through Godly sorrow and repentance (2 Corinthians 7:10). Real guilt comes from the conviction of a real grace-filled God who desires us to live free of real sin. God's desire is that this conviction-based guilt would lead us to real sorrow over our sin. This godly sorrow leads to real hope-filled repentance. Repentance goes beyond simply trusting Jesus' sacrifice for our unrighteous and self-righteous attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. It is allowing the Holy Spirit to empower us to develop righteous, life-giving attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. This is what Scripture refers to as walking after the Spirit rather than the flesh; that is, the unnatural desires we've developed (John 8:34; Romans 6:6, 13; 8:16-20; 2 Peter 2:18; Colossians 3:1-10; Ephesians 4:22, 24; Galatians 5:1, 16-17). We are continually encouraged to repent; that is, kill, put off, or no longer walk after our flesh. We no longer give into the unnatural desires in which we have enslaved

⁹ Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8; 2 Corinthians 5:16-21; Romans 2:1-5; 5:12-21; 10:5-13; 1 Peter 2:6; 1 John 1:7-10; 2:1-2

ourselves (habitually inclined ourselves). Our repentance reconciles us with our Heavenly Father. This reconciliation frees us from guilt, condemnation, and shame. When we thoroughly repent of our sins and receive God's forgiveness, we are able to overcome the false condemnation, false guilt, and false shame that the enemy tempts us with.

CONCLUSION

Our definition of love and value is based upon acceptable cultural and traditional behaviors with which we grew up. Therefore, our perceived lovability and value then can only come from our effort or achievements. Unconditional standards of love and value therefore must come from a God who is outside of every tradition and culture. The Gospel is the good news that God unconditionally loves and has extended unconditional forgiveness toward everyone. God gave everything for us because He loves us and believes we are worth of His sacrifice. God has always extended this love toward us. However, we may not have been able to recognize and receive this love because of our own self-righteousness and unrighteousness. We cannot love like Jesus until we recognize and receive His love. We are reconciled with the Father's love when we repent. This repentance begins with the Father's mercy and conviction. We respond to this conviction by acknowledging and accepting Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. We submit our lives to the Holv Spirit and allow Him to empower us. Through His empowerment, we build new, life-giving attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits that are inline with how God originally designed us.

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above \P questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

How can you encourage a Christian you know to confess and repent of his or her unrepentant sins? How can you partner with this person to help them be free of fault or shame-based perspective of their identity?

CONVICTION

Nevertheless, I tell you that truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you.

~John 16:7~

INTRODUCTION



Spirit-led conviction will always be specific, thorough, life-giving, and hope-filled. Our good Father will always reveal areas of our heart, mind, and life that are not inline with how He designed us to live. The enemy's accusations and condemnation is generally vague, incomplete, destructive, and hopeless. We rest in God's mercy and conviction when we repent of our unrighteousness and self-righteousness. This produces a joy without regret (2 Corinthians 7:10¹). This joy does not come because of our sin but rather in knowing Jesus has covered our sin by His death on the cross. We do not have shame-based regret because we know that our sin has been taken away. Beyond that, we believe God is bigger than any negative consequences of our sin. We release our sin and the people we have hurt or negatively affected to God, entrusting our sin and the victims of our sin to Him.



How have you defined repentance in the past?

¹ See also Nehemiah 8:1-18; 2 Samuel 12:1-23

Conviction is the Holy Spirit's way of revealing to us areas in our heart, mind, and life that are not free and joy-filled and in line with His original design. Part of this design is trusting in and being in relationship with Him. This trusting — or love — is greater or pre-eminent above those we love.² The Holy Spirit will also convict us whenever we've broken relationship with someone through willful sin or unintentional mistakes and failures. Additionally, He will convict us of wrong motivations despite being justified or right in our actions or words. While the Holy Spirit may lead people to convict us, not all people will so perfectly. Therefore, it is important that we trust the Holy Spirit to affirm revealed offenses. The Holy Spirit will convict us in three primary categories:

Sin

Sin is our lack of trust or faith in God or our unwillingness to bring Him glory (Romans 14:23; Hebrews 11:6; 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:17, 23³). Scripture explains sin as ungodliness (Romans 1:18). Ungodliness can be defined as selfrighteousness, self-reliance, or self-determination.⁴ Ultimately, **sin** is simply our unwillingness to acknowledge, seek after, submit to, or thank God in every area of our life. The Holy Spirit will convict us when we choose to ignore God's sovereign hand in our life and trust ourselves above Him. This includes our unwillingness to trust who Jesus is and what He has done on our behalf.

Righteousness

Righteousness is any attitude, thought, belief, or habit that trusts God and is inline with His design and plan for our lives. Therefore, there are two ways that we do not righteously live. The first is through unrighteousness. **Unrighteousness** is any attitude, thought, belief, or habit that is in opposition to God's design and plan for our life. The second is through selfrighteousness. **Self-righteousness** is any attitude, thought, belief, or habit that does not acknowledge, seek after, submit to, or thank God. The Holy Spirit's conviction of righteousness is two-fold. First, He will convict us when we do not trust that Jesus is the only way through which we can be righteous. Second, the Holy Spirit will convict us when we try to live righteously without His power.

² See Romans 1:18-32

³ See also Romans 1:17; Galatians 3:11

⁴ See also Deuteronomy 8:5-20

Judgment

Jesus, when He died on the cross, judged, disarmed, and condemned Satan (Colossians 2:15; Hebrews 2:14; 1 John 3:8). The only weapon the enemy has is his ability to lie (John 8:44; Revelation 12:9). 1 Peter 5:8 describes the enemy as prowling around like a roaring lion. Prowling lions do not roar. His only weapon is his ability to lie. However, we can empower the enemy through believing his lies. Therefore, it is imperative that we are empowered by the Holy Spirit to discern and be aware of the enemy's schemes. The Holy Spirit will convict us of disagreeing with God's judgment of the enemy when we listen to him (2 Corinthians 11:3).



Through what attitudes, thoughts, beliefs or habits have you empowered the enemy? What has this produced in your life or relationships? Specifically, in what ways have you ignored or rejected the Holy Spirit's conviction in your life?

There are several ways that we demonstrate our lack of faith in God, live unrighteous or self-righteous, or fail to agree with Jesus' judgment of the enemy. The following are the basic four ways we do this.

Thoughts – Thoughts are anything we think, believe, or meditate on that is not submitted to the Holy Spirit, does not take into consideration who Jesus is or what He has done, or that misrepresents God's character.



What beliefs about yourself, others, and God are you unwilling to submit to the Holy Spirit?

Words – Our words include anything we've said, how we've said something, or what we've spoken over someone that is not based in truth, is not encouraging, and does not come from the Holy Spirit. This includes both spoken and written words or words we should have spoken and written.



What have you said, written, or spoken over (or about) someone that is not grace-filled, true, hopeful, or loving? What have you failed to say, write, or speak over (or about) someone that would be grace-filled, true, hopeful, or loving? Actions – Actions are anything we've willfully done, participated in, looked at, or listened to that is not empowered by the Holy Spirit or does not take into consideration how God designed us to fulfill our needs and desires. This includes things we've done that we shouldn't have or things we should have done that we did not do.



What have you done, participated in, looked at, or listened to that was not led by the Holy Spirit or did not take into consideration how God designed you to fulfill your needs or desires? What is one thing you should have done or participated in that you did not?

Motive – Our motives are the reason behind anything we think, say, or do that does not acknowledge, trust in, submit to, or thank God. If our heart or motivation behind what we are doing is self-focused, self-reliant, or self-seeking then regardless of our words or actions, we are either unrighteous or more accurately, self-righteous.



What "good" or normal activities throughout the day (e.g., work, school, chores, hobbies, health care, etc.) do you rarely, or if ever, acknowledge, trust in, submit to, or thank God?

GODLY SORROW & WORLDLY SORROW

When confronted with and convicted of our sin, we have two options:

Worldly Sorrow

Worldly sorrow — false or self-focused grieving over sin — perpetuates a stagnate lifestyle. This lifestyle (unchanged habits) continues to entrap the mind producing regret, discontentment, and shame. Ultimately, this leads to emotional, relational, and even physical death along with continued separation from God (2 Corinthians 7:10).⁵ Worldly sorrow feels bad or is regretful when caught or found out. Although we may be apologetic, our lifestyle change is either momentary or non-existent. This is because worldly sorrow is rooted in a fear of man (Proverbs

⁵ See Romans 5:8-11; 12:2; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Ephesians 2:12

29:25; Luke 12:4-7). This fear is focused on what people will think, say, or do to us if our sin was found out. Additionally, it is a fear of what will happen to us through natural consequences or justifiable punishment. We fear because we view ourselves in light of our sin rather than in light of what Jesus has done for our sin. Worldly sorrow seeks out self-preservation, manipulation, and justification. This results in shame, grief, condemnation, guilt, hopelessness, and regret. These consequences bring about emotional, mental, and relational death along with perpetuating our separation from God.

Godly Sorrow

Godly sorrow - genuine, Christ-focused grieving over sin leads to a changed lifestyle (repentance). This lifestyle (or new habits) renews our mind and produces hope, peace, and joy in Godly sorrow willfully acknowledges sins and our heart. offenses committed against others and God - showing genuine remorse. It willingly exposes and confesses sin with the goal of freedom, restoration, and victory. Godly sorrow is rooted in a fear of God (Proverbs 1:7). This fear is focused on who God is and what He can do (Luke 12:4-7). It acknowledges our position and status before God and submits to His sovereignty and justice. However, because God is holy and perfectly loving, we can be confident that God loves us and helps us (1 John 4:18; Hebrews 4:16). We are comforted by the Holy Spirit and empowered to repent (Acts 9:31). Godly sorrow views ourselves in light of what Jesus has done rather than what we have done and entrusts our sin and the negative affects of our sin to the Godly sorrow, through repentance, makes a Holy Spirit. genuine effort toward reconciliation restoration, and redemption. It is a process, proven over time, which reveals a transformed heart and renewed mind by way of new habits. Our repentance to God does not earn us the Father's forgiveness. Rather, our repentance is a response to the Father's forgiveness extended toward us through Jesus' death. This results in hope, freedom, and joy. These consequences bring about emotional, mental, and relational life.



What has the Holy Spirit convicted you of that you have not repented for yet? How did you do this? What is usually produced in your repentance, regret or joy? When it comes to God's forgiveness, do you generally try to earn it or simply receive it? How? or what sin are you still feeling shame, condemnation, guilt, hopeless, or regret?

CONCLUSION

Repentance resulting from conviction is not simply the avoidance of sin. Rather, it is an intentional pursuit of reconciliation with both God and others. Repentance reveals a change in our heart that is proven over time in our attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. This Holy Spirit-empowered lifestyle change is what renews, strengthens, and guards our minds. Repentance, rooted in Godly sorrow, will produce fruit in-line with the Holy Spirit. It will always be life-giving, hopefilled, and have it's result in our joy (Galatians 5:11; Luke 15:3-7). The qualities of godly sorrow include6 an earnest, diligent, wholehearted effort toward repentance; an eagerness or deep desire to be restored; an indignation or anger toward the sin and it's negative affects; a fear and keen awareness of our position before God; a longing and hope and desire for reconciliation; a zeal or commitment to make restitution and passion for right living; and finally, a *punishment* of thoughts that do not confidence in God's punishment for sin through Jesus.⁷ The byproduct of our repentance is our innocence. This innocence is based upon our trust in the fact that Jesus exchanged His righteousness for our sin. This exchange leads us to be joy-filled in spite of our sin because of what Jesus has done on our behalf. Repentance that does not end in hope and joy is a Christ-less self-focused regret.

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above \P questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

Is there a Christian in your life that demonstrated genuine repentance of sin but is still struggling with feelings of shame, regret, guilt, or condemnation? How can you purposefully encourage them to trust Jesus with those destructive feelings?

⁶ These qualities come from 2 Corinthians 7:11.

⁷ See 2 Corinthians 10:5-6

REDEMPTION

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace....

~Ephesians 1:7~

INTRODUCTION



Our redemption happened at the cross. When we trust Jesus' death and resurrection, we are redeemed. However, renewing our attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits takes time. It is a process, empowered by the Holy Spirit, of building new habits. These new habits aren't simply good words and actions — that is self-focused, self-reliant morality. These new habits are purposefully Jesus-focused and motivated by others' good and God's glory. The Holy Spirit empowers us to live free from our past habitual sins. Therefore, our ability to experience hope, joy, peace, and freedom — in line with our redemption — we need to trust Him to replace our old attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits with new life-giving, beneficial ones.



What negative or destructive attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, or habits have you been giving yourself to? With what attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, or habits do you feel are hopeless impossible to be free of?

¹ See also Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:17-24; Colossians 3:9-10

THE COST OF FREEDOM

Our freedom cost Jesus His life. Additionally, our freedom will cost us our habitually inclined flesh; that is, the destructive attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits that we are so comfortable with. Our flesh (our brains and bodies) is the part of us that we've habitually inclined toward unnatural desires and passions (Romans 1:21-32²). When we choose to fulfill our natural passions in unnatural ways, we develop a proclivity toward unrighteousness and self-righteousness that leads to disappointment and dissatisfaction. When we are redeemed, the Holy Spirit transforms our destructive passions and desires into life-giving, beneficial ones. However, this transformation takes time and effort (Romans 12:1-2; Colossians 3:9-10). Removing these destructive passions and desires may be painful; but, it leads to a freedom and peace that no relationship, possession, or achievement could ever bring. It is a messy holistic process that cannot happen through compartmentalizing our lives or being entered into with the mindset of it being a quick fix. Living empowered by the Holy Spirit and fighting against our old attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits may feel uncomfortable or inconvenient because we are putting to death what we view as normal (Romans 8:13).3 However, it renews our God-given natural passions and desires as well as producing life-giving attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits (Colossians 3:10; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Ephesians 4:23; Romans 8:29). Despite how unnatural it may feel, trusting the Holy Spirit is the most effective way to live a life of hope, peace, freedom, and joy in line with our redemptions. Our transformation and freedom lead to our holiness rather than our comfort or happiness. We can discover destructive attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, or habits by evaluating three areas in our life as outlined in 1 John 2:15-17.



What comfort, security, possession, relationship, "right", or "lifestyle" are you unwilling to change or part with for the sake of your freedom and victory?

 $^{^2}$ See also Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3; Colossians 3:5; James 3:14-15; Matthew 15:18-20

³ Jesus, in Luke 14:25-33, 16:13, and Mark 10:17-22, outlines several ways that killing our flesh will feel unnatural, self-destructive, or even disloyal to those we love. This is why He stresses the point of acknowledging and accepting the sacrifice (Luke 14:28-32) of what following Him will cost us. *Hate* in Luke 14:26 simply means a lesser love or priority in light of the Jesus' command to love our neighbor in Mark 12:31.

The Desire of the Flesh

The desire of the flesh is the temptation to fulfill our needs and desires outside of our Heavenly Father's design and provision. It seeks after physical, mental, or social peace from circumstances and people. Jesus was tempted with this desire when He was faced with the opportunity to fulfill His hunger pains by turning rocks into bread.⁴ This temptation can often be revealed through the people, circumstances, or things we go to that make us feel safe without actually having to acknowledge, seek after, or trust God.



Who or what brings security and comfort to your life when you feel out of control or uncared for?

The Desire of the Eyes

The desire of the eyes is the temptation to selfishly misuse or over indulge in our Heavenly Father's design and provision. It focuses on physical, mental, or social pleasure from circumstances and people. Jesus was tempted with this desire when He was faced with the opportunity to receive worship without having to suffer.⁵ This temptation can often be revealed through the people, circumstances, or things fill our schedules with, spend money on, or perpetually think about for our gain alone rather than both God's glory and our good.



Who or what occupies your time, takes your finances, or fills your minds?

The Pride of Life

The pride of life is the temptation to focus on achieving worth or value outside of our Heavenly Father's design and provision. It seeks after and earns physical, mental, or social prominence from circumstances and people. Jesus was tempted with this desire when He was faced with the opportunity to prove His God-given identity His actions.⁶ This temptation can often be revealed through the significance we find in people, circumstances, or things rather than in God.



Who or what do you measure success by?

⁴ Luke 4:3

⁵ Luke 4:5-7

⁶ Luke 4:9-11

THE PROCESS OF REPENTANCE

Repentance is a process of reorienting our hearts, minds, and lives back toward how our Heavenly Father designed us. It requires us to recognize and realign any attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits that don't agree with Him. Repentance isn't simply the words we say to those we've offended; it is a change in our heart, mind, and life. It is a process of proving over time a changed heart through a transformed life. This transformed life, over time, renews our mind. The process of Godly sorrow begins with God's kindness and our fear of Him. The process leads to God empowering us and us experiencing His love.

1. God's Kindness

God's kindness, patience, and love are the catalyst to our repentance. His desire in pursuing us is that we experience His love and live free, joy-filled lives empowered by the Holy Spirit.⁷ However, our ability to respond to His kindness begins with us recognizing our position and fearing Him. If fearing Him is the beginning of our maturity as a Christian, feeling loved by Him and extending that love is the goal of our maturity.⁸



What is your view of God when confronted with your sin? Do you trust and obey God because you have to or because you want to? If you have to, why do you have to? If you want to, why do you want to?

2. Holy Spirit's Conviction

Because of the Father's kindness, He will send His Spirit to convict us of unrighteous or self-righteous attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. Conviction goes beyond issues of morality; He will reveal circumstances, relationships, and conversations where we have misplaced our trust and dependence on Him.⁹



What methods has God used in the past to convict you? How have you generally responded to His conviction?

⁷ Romans 2:4-5; John 12:32

⁸ Proverbs 1:7 (see also 9:10; 15:33; Job 28:28); Matthew 10:28; 1 John 4:18 ⁹ John 16:7-11

3. Trust Jesus' Sacrifice & Receive the Father's forgiveness

Jesus took our unrighteousness and self-righteousness upon Himself when He died on the cross. Trusting His sacrifice for our sin frees us from the shame, guilt, condemnation, and punishment that our sin deservers. The Father, through Jesus, forgave our sin fully and completely; there is nothing we need to do to earn it. Forgiveness has already been extended to us. All we need to do is simply receive and walk in His forgiveness. This will empower us to live free from the lies of the enemy and the distorted or devalued perspectives of our identity that we may believe.¹⁰



When you've sinned, what have your thoughts been regarding yourself in light of your sin? How do you respond to these thoughts?

4. Confession to God & Others

Confessing to God our sins acknowledges that we have broken relationship with Him or others. Confessing our mistakes, failures, or sins to those we've offended or sinned against acknowledges we've broken relationship with them. Confessing our temptations and sins to a trusted Godly Christian friend invites encouragement and accountability.¹¹



Specifically who will your sin negatively affect if you confessed it to them? Specifically who prays, encourages, and partners with you to see you free from negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits? If you answered no one to either of these questions, who will you ask to be some who will hold you accountable?

5. Empowered by the Spirit & Paying Restitution

Living empowered by the Holy Spirit is what breaks the power of the negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits in our heart, mind, and life. Trusting and seeking after Him will enable us to capture and replace thoughts that are not God honoring and develop new lifestyles.¹² This empowerment may begin by paying restitution to those we've offended. Making amends (restitution), as far as it is

¹⁰ Matthew 20:28; Romans 4:25; 5:10; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:11-12; Ephesians 1:7-10; 2:13-22; 4:32; Colossians 1:19-23; Hebrews 9:26; 10:12

¹¹ Acts 19:18; Mark 1:5; James 5:16; 1 John 1:9

¹² Galatians 5:16-26; Luke 22:31-32 (especially 22:32b); Philippians 4:8

possible, is our responsibility as the offender to those we've offended. Restitution is not penance (self-inflicted punishment or payment) for sin. It's also not a way of earning forgiveness. That is the offended-person's responsibility. It is simply our way, as the offender, to do our part in pursuing full reconciliation and restoration of a broken relationship.¹³



What methods has God used in the past to convict you? How have you generally responded to His conviction?

CONCLUSION

We are redeemed at the cross of Jesus. Placing our trust in His death on our behalf is the first step toward walking in that redemption. Being restored to our original design will cost us our time, energy, and even some perceived freedoms we may enjoy. Living in true freedom and victory necessitates us purposefully building new attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. We do this through actively participating with the Holy Spirit in our regeneration. God's goal in our repentance and regeneration is not for our happiness or comfort. His goal is that we accurately reflect Jesus and truly live a free, joy-filled life.¹⁴

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above \P questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

If possible, what restitution needs to be made toward someone you've sinned against or offended? To the best of your ability, how will you go about making this sin or offense right? Who will you ask to be available to confess your sins to and to pray and encourage you when you sin?

¹³ Exodus 22:1-15; Numbers 5:5-7; 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

¹⁴ Romans 8:29; Colossians 3:10; Galatians 5:1; John 10:10; 15:11

VICTORY

God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

~1 Corinthians 10:13~

INTRODUCTION



Once we've received the Heavenly Father's forgiveness, building new habits will lead to our minds being renewed. When we acknowledge our common temptations and recognize our habitual reactions to temptations, we can begin to identify our areas of weakness. Then, we can predetermine our next response, and choose to live free and victorious amidst temptation. Most importantly, our attitudes and what we think and believe about ourselves and the Holy Spirit will greatly affect our success at overcoming negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. We are more than conquerors in Jesus¹ and are empowered by the same Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead² to live free and victorious amidst temptation.³



When you are tempted, how do you purposefully and actively look for an escape?

¹ Romans 8:37

² Romans 8:11

³ Galatians 1:1; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 1 John 5:4

DESIRES AND TEMPTATION

Temptation is an attempt to persuade, induce, entice, or rouse desire from within — to be inviting or attractive. It is the suggestion to satisfy a God-given desire, need, or appetite outside of God's design or plan.

Control to the temperature of all temptation is the invitation to live independent of God and fulfill legitimate needs in the world, the flesh, or the devil instead of in Christ. 33 4

~Neil T. Anderson

Desire is neither good nor bad — it is simply a craving, longing, or need that we have.⁵ The object of or method in which we fulfill our desire is what matters. We were created with natural, God-given desires, needs, and appetites. Temptations generally begin in our early developmental and growing up years generally through our parent's example. As we develop and continually submit to these temptations, they become destructive attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. These become "normal" thoughts and lifestyles. Out of these "normal" thoughts and lifestyles, we develop unnatural desires, needs, and attitudes. The following is the progression in which our desire takes based upon James 1:12-15.

1. Desire

Desires are strong passionate feelings of wanting to have something or wishing something to happen. These desires start out simply a signal of an unfulfilled need (e.g., hunger, thirst, love and connection, etc.).

2. Temptation

Temptation begins as an external influence (either human or demonic).⁶ It is the invitation or suggestion to fulfill a natural desire outside of God's design (e.g., hunger turns to gluttony or starvation; drinking turns to drunkenness; love and connection turns to pornography, adultery, or fornication, etc.). Ultimately, temptation is the opportunity to reject God as the source of our joy and safety.

⁴ Neil T. Anderson, *Victory over the Darkness: Realizing the Power of Your Identity in Christ.* (Regal Books, 1990), pg. 162

⁵ The Greek words for "earnestly desired" in Luke 22:15 is "epithymia epithymeo". "Epithymia" is the same word used in James 1:15 for "desire". ⁶ Genesis 4:6-7; Matthew 18:6; Mark 9:42; Luke 17:2; Galatians 6:12

3. Sin

This is the most pivotal point in the downward spiral toward depravity. At this point destructive attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits are formed. Once we have given into temptation, we sin. Sin is the generic term the Bible uses for all unrighteousness and self-righteousness.⁷

4. Death

As a consequence of Adam and Eve's rebellion in the Garden of Eden, we die physically.⁸ However, because of our own choices to sin, we may cause premature physical death of others or ourselves (e.g., disease, overdose, etc.). Additionally, we may cause emotional or mental death⁹ in others or ourselves (e.g., emotionally: numbing out or demonstrate explosive anger; mentally: believe lives or be tormented by unhealthy or destructive thoughts). Relational death may happens through any form of broken relationship (e.g., divorce, conflict, offense, unforgiveness, etc.). Ultimately, we die spiritually — that is, we separate ourselves from God. Our destruction (i.e., stealing from, killing, and destroying God's image) along with our separation from God is the ultimate plan of the enemy.¹⁰



Think of a few desires that you have and ask yourself these questions: Is this desire God-given? Is this desire encouraging and beneficial for all involved? Do you feel enslaved by this desire? Do you feel enslaved by how you meet this desire?

THE PROCESS OF FREEDOM & VICTORY

Freedom and victory over the enemy,¹¹ his servants, and their works and affects in our lives comes through building new lifegiving, God-designed attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. We build these habits by actively participating with the Holy Spirit in our regeneration. Freedom from our past and victory over sin

⁷ Romans 3:23; John 8:34; Romans 6:16-20; 2 Peter 2:19

⁸ Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22

⁹ i.e., **Emotional death** is developing unhealthy and destructive attitudes and emotions that are not inline with God's design and plan for us. **Mental death** is developing thoughts and beliefs that are not inline with God's original design and plan for us.

¹⁰ Genesis 3:1-24 (especially verse 24)

¹¹ Matthew 13:39; Galatians 6:12

are cognitive decisions not emotional reactions. Being mentally free of past sin and victorious over current and future temptations are daily decisions to trust Jesus and live empowered by the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit equips us to be victorious amidst temptation. The following are steps in gaining freedom and victory in our life:¹²

1. <u>Acknowledge</u> the Temptation¹³

Vocally acknowledging that we are being tempted in the moment will help validate in our mind the fact that we are being tempted. It will no longer be just another thought. We are affirming a real lie, which will help us respond and destroy ("punish") it accordingly.

2. Identify Your Bait¹⁴

Being able to identify specifically when, where, and how we are usually tempted will enable us to be on guard. Accessing our sleep patterns, eating habits, emotional status, or stress level during a temptation will help us make a preemptive plan. We will be aware of the people or circumstances that often lead to temptation and avoid or appropriately respond.

3. <u>Recognize</u> Habitual Practices¹⁵

We've trained our brain and body to react to specific thoughts, people, and circumstances in particular ways. This training began by believing lies about our identity early in our growing up years. Recognizing the specific lies that are common to us personally ("old self") and our specific habitual reactions ("practices") will enable us to intentionally seek the Holy Spirit to change both the lies and reactions. This includes evaluating previous attempts to overcome temptation and why they failed.

4. <u>Determine</u> Your Next Response¹⁶

Temptations can come as a surprise. Knowing how we are usually tempted can help us create a predetermined response for the future. These responses should include vulnerability with others (confessing temptations) and

¹² Galatians 5:1, 16-25; James 1:12-15; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 5:8;

Nehemiah 4:1-14; Colossians 2:15; Romans 6:1-14; 12:2; Ephesians 3:14-21;

Galatians 2:20; Revelation 12:10-11; Philippians 4:8; James 4:7

^{13 2} Corinthians 10:5-6

^{14 1} Corinthians 10:13

¹⁵ Colossians 3:9

¹⁶ Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 4:24

genuinely seeking the Holy Spirit to speak truth into where and why we are being tempted. Doing so will help in overcoming the temptation. This response may include calling someone or changing our circumstance.

5. <u>Confess</u> Your Temptation¹⁷

Being tempted is NOT a sin. However, intentionally confessing temptations to the Lord AND to a trusted Godly Christian friend invites their grace and support. This grace and support empowers us to overcome the temptation and live victorious. Our Christian friend can partner with us to develop a practical plan for our victory.

6. <u>Agree</u> With Who You Are In Jesus¹⁸

Regardless of whether or not we feel it, we need to agree with our God-given identity. We are more than conquerors who have overcome the enemy through what Jesus has done on the cross for us. We are dead to sin. The fullness of God lives within us. We have the same mind as Jesus. We agree with God by verbally agreeing with our identity. We also agree with what God has done by telling others what Jesus has specifically freed us from.

7. <u>Renew</u> Your Mind¹⁹

Renewing our mind is a process that takes place through tests, trials, and temptations. This includes proactively putting in our mind life-giving Christ-focused content. We must also make an active effort in submitting all our thoughts to Jesus — meditating only on things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, commendable, excellent, or praise-worthy.

8. <u>Resist</u> the Enemy²⁰

Submitting to the Holy Spirit will empower us to withstand any attack of the enemy. Allow the Holy Spirit full access to search our heart and mind and reveal any unrepentant sin or unforgiven offenses will empower us to live free from our past and victorious in our.



What offense do you still need to forgive? What sin do you still need to repent for?

^{17 1} Thessalonians 2:12; 5:14; Hebrews 10:25

¹⁸ Romans 6:11; 8:11, 37; Ephesians 2:10; 4:24; 1 Corinthians 2:16

¹⁹ Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:23; Philippians 4:8; Psalm 1:1-2; 77:12; 119:15

²⁰ James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:9;

CONCLUSION

We are victorious over Satan, sin, and death through Jesus. By trusting Him, we no longer need to be overcome by sin and temptation. Our freedom and victory is both a Spiritual and practical work. It is spiritual in that we need to trust our past sin to Jesus and rely upon our true God-given identity. The Holy Spirit will guide us through the process of freedom with lifegiving thoughts and beliefs. However, it is our responsibility to fill our mind with godly, life-giving Scripture, relationships, and influences. Additionally, the Holy Spirit will give us practical weapons that we must use to fight against temptation, negative thoughts, lies, and false beliefs. As Christian, we no longer have to sin. We have been empowered with God Himself to overcome sin. Therefore, as we make practical changes in our lifestyles and build new habits, we will find our attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs changing - they become encouraging, motivating, and fulfilling.

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above \P questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

With whom can you specifically partner to help them overcome sin and build new habits in their life? How will you graciously but confidently lead them to new attitudes, thoughts, and beliefs that will positively encourage their new habits?

FINAL JOURNAL THOUGHTS

- 1. In **Repentance** (*Pardoned, Conviction, Redemption, Victory*), what passage of Scripture has been the most convicting or challenging for you? Explain. What passage of Scripture has been the most encouraging or empowering for you? Explain.
- 2. What content or discussions regarding **Repentance** (*Pardoned, Conviction, Redemption, Victory*) have you disagreed with? Or, have difficulty accepting or understanding? Or, find most difficult to apply? Explain.
- 3. What content or discussions regarding **Repentance** (*Pardoned, Conviction, Redemption, Victory*) have you agreed with? Or, find easy to accept and understand? Or, find easy to apply? Explain.
- 4. From study one, Pardoned, what false views of the Gospel (pg. 9) do you find yourself living out of? Explain. From study two, Conviction, what do you find yourself demonstrating, worldly sorrow or Godly sorrow (pg. 17)? Explain. Have you pursued forgiving yourself or repenting when faced with your own sin? Explain.
- 5. Since beginning the study on **Repentance**, what area in your <u>life</u> (actions & words), <u>mind</u> (thoughts & beliefs), and <u>heart</u> (motivations & passions) have you noticed the most significant change positive or negative? Explain. Or, in light of this study, what do you desire to change? Explain.
- 6. What was your favorite discussion with your partner? Why? What was your least favorite or most difficult discussion with your partner? Why? Who could you encourage with what you've learned from this unit? How will you do this?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Respectable Sins: Confronting the Sins We Tolerate Jerry Bridges NavPress, ©2007

Idol Lies Dee Brestin Worthy Publishing, ©2012

CHRISTIAN LIVING STUDY SERIES

The power of one person's story of freedom and victory is lifechanging. It is the best evangelistic tool a Christian has. Our mission is to encourage and equip Christians to live free of those negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits and empower them to live joy-filled in every relationship and circumstance. Our hope is that Christians — through their life and story would be the best testimony the world has of God's transforming love, grace, mercy, and truth. This is the goal behind the *Christian Living Study Series*.

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- 10. PRAYER // A Study in Divine Relationship
- 11. EXPERIENCE // A Study in Rejoicing
- 12. SCRIPTURE // A Study in God's Revelation

INFORMATION

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Contributions The *Christian Living Study Series* are provided free of charge. If you would like to contribute to the development and distribution of them or to NLS Ministries in general, please visit their website at www.NathanLaceySteel.com.

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NATHAN & LACEY STEEL were married in 2004. They met at Alaska Bible Institute. located in Homer, Alaska. Nathan graduated from ABI's Biblical Study Program in 2004 and Christian Ministry Program in 2006. Nathan was born with a genetic disease called Cystic Fibrosis. This disease led the Steels to adopting their

two girls, Lydia and Arianna. Through God's grace and provision, the Steels have shared Jesus' love, grace, mercy, and truth all over the world. Nathan and Lacey's vision is to See Christians Live Free, Joy-Filled Lives. They designed the Christian Living Study Series as a catalyst for one-on-one discipleship, a curriculum for church small groups, and a course for discipleship schools. They developed and teach the Christian Living Course at Alaska Bible Institute (ABI). ABI exists to Train and Equip Christians for Life & Ministry. You can find out more at www.AlaskaBible.org. For more information about the Steels, visit their website at www.NathanLaceySteel.com. They currently reside with their two girls in Homer, Alaska.

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