

True Intimacy...

"Building healthy relationships that will stand in a fallen world"

Session 1

"We are taught to think as pagans but live as Christians"
(Oswald Chambers)

I. Problem with our thinking

Our minds are unreliable in personal areas. We have achieved marvelous things in science, technology, and industry. However, we are plagued with highly unreliable thinking when it comes to three major areas:

<u>OURSELVES</u>	We don't know who we are or why we're here
<u>GOD</u>	Our view of God is distorted and unreliable.
<u>LIFE</u>	Life doesn't make sense to the carnal, pagan mind.

II. The futility of human thinking demonstrated in Scripture

Romans 1:21-32:

For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things rather than the Creator--who is forever praised. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. [depraved actions]

They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents;

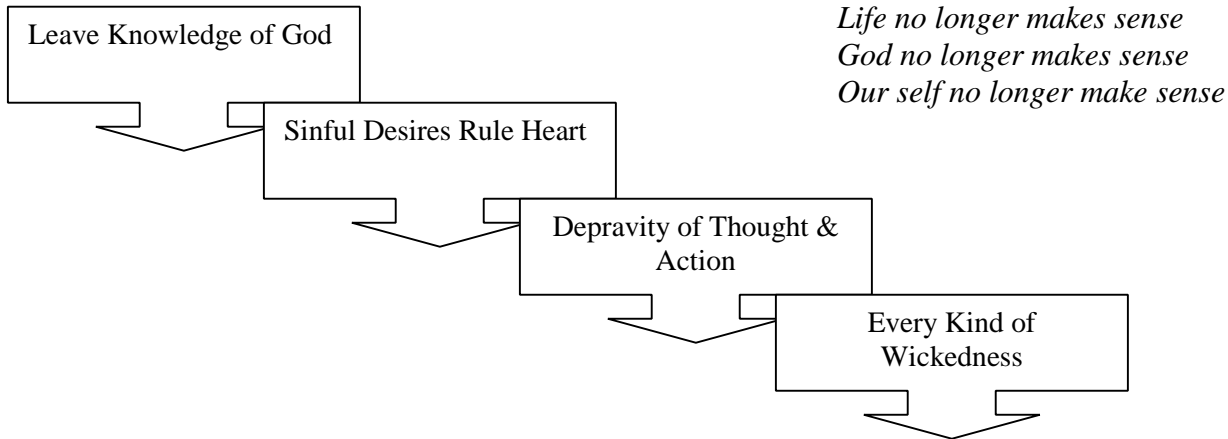
they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

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III. The pagan staircase to destruction:

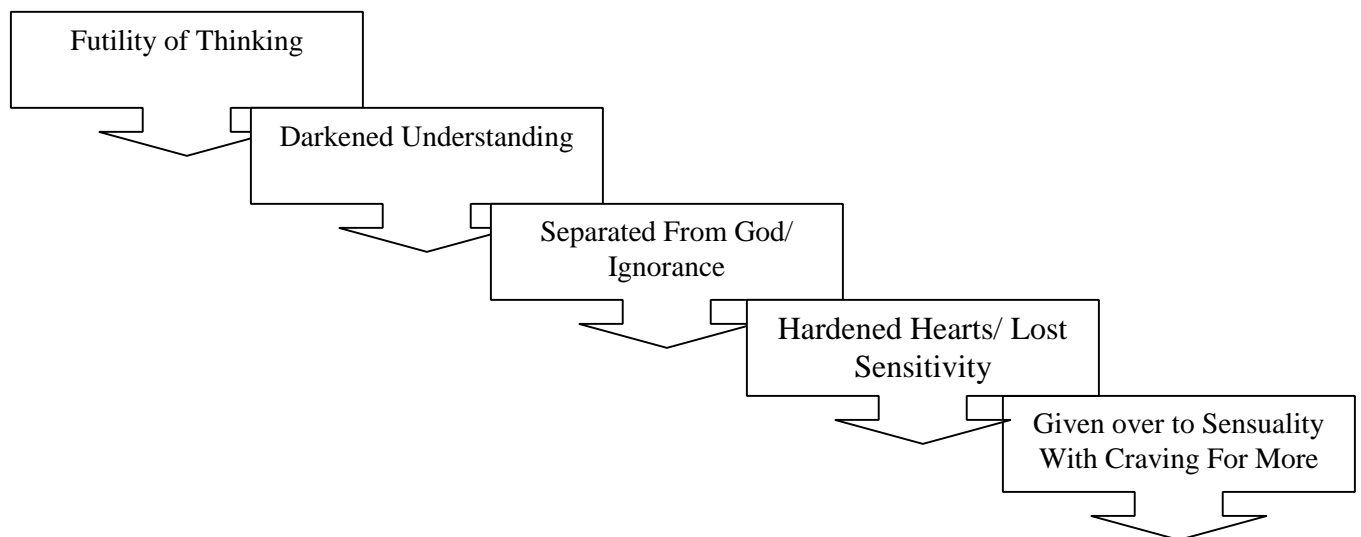


Ephesians 4:17-19

17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.

18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts.

19 Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.



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IV. KEY TO ALL OUR PROBLEMS: OUR HEARTS ARE NOT RIGHT

If life is not completely surrendered to God, life is FRUSTRATING and FUTILE.

Psychiatry is BANKRUPT because its thinking is vain & empty.

Psychiatry doesn't deal with the real issue of the human heart. It attempts to deal with the problems of life from a humanistic approach and treats addictions and phobias as DISEASE rather than as SIN.

V. What is the heart?

It is the seat of all emotion, desire, will & decision making.

"The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it? I the Lord search the heart and examine the mind, to reward a man according to his conduct, according to what his deeds deserve" (Jeremiah 17:9-10).

"Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life" (Proverbs 4:23).

"But the things that come out of the mouth come from the heart, and these make a man 'unclean.' For out of the heart come evil thoughts, murder, adultery, sexual immorality, theft, false testimony, slander. These are what make a man 'unclean'" (Matthew 15:18-20).

When the heart is corrupt, our entire life is corrupt (emotions, desires, will, and decision making). We will make bad decisions. Without revelation and proper recognition of God, the whole center of our being is in extreme trouble. We are wandering in darkness with no direction, standing helplessly on the edge of life wavering on the brink of destruction in two areas:

1. Relationship with God
2. Relationship with Others

Relational pain is always the result of a corrupt heart. Since we live in a fallen world, our hearts are always corrupt to some degree, therefore relational pain will always be a part of living in this world.

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VI. Goal of this course:

1. Increase desperation.

This course is not to give false hope based on unrealistic expectations and the Cinderella Syndrome. We need to get rid of pagan terminology and thought processes. Terms like "Co-dependency" and "Dysfunctional background" are pagan concepts and foreign to God's solution for relational pain.

2. Achieve brokenness verses hostility and resentment toward truth.

God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5).

3. Encourage an openness to self examination.

"Who Am I?" In the first portion of this course we will examine the root cause of sin and corruption of the human heart. YOU are the only one you can change.

4. Willingness to move toward a decision of your will.

The truth of God leads you to have a willingness to be molded to his will. But, you must make the decision to surrender every area of your heart to his will.

5. Surrender of your own will for His purposes.

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Session 2

Understanding Self

I. There are two different beginning points when one attempts to discover himself:

1. Begin With yourself . This is the most common beginning point and is where psychology always begins. If I figure out who I am, then perhaps I can explain God *after* I understand myself.

2. Begin with God When we begin with God, then we can begin to understand ourselves. Since we are created in the image of God (Genesis 1:26), God is the logical and best place to begin if I really want to understand myself.

II. Who is God?

God is an Infinite and personal being.

Infinite in that God is everywhere at all times, is all powerful, and all knowing. He has no beginning and no end and is Supreme, the Almighty.

Personal in that he knows the very hairs of my head. God knows me personally far better than I can ever know myself.

We are finite yet like God, we're very personal.

We're made in the image of God in the personal sense, not in his infinite attributes.

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III. What is a personal being?

Where do you have to look to see the glory of God?

The creation? *"The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands" (Psalm 19:1).*

"You see more of the glory of God when you look into the mirror than when you look at anything else that God has created" (Dan Allender)

IV. Understanding the personal image of God

We have an intuitive sense of value of human beings. Whenever there is a wreck, even in the ocean, we will go to great lengths to retrieve the remains and bury them with respect. Why?

All cultures honor the dead, because we know intuitively the value of human life and mourn its loss.

A. There are two meanings of the phrase "Image of God"

1. God is personal and relational (like we are in his image)

2. "Exact likeness of the king"

"The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being" (Hebrews 1:3).

It can mean "The same as the king." In ancient civilization, an image of the king was placed in the town square. One would not do anything in the presence of the image that he would not do in the presence of the king. It was his image (same as the king).

Humans are made in the image of God. This is the basis of the 10 commandments. You're treating a human "the same as the image of God Himself". Whatever you do to me, you do to God because I'm in his image.

"Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight" (Psalm 51:4, David speaking of his adultery and murder).

"The King will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.'

Whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me." (Matthew 25:40, 45).

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B. What does it mean to be personal and relational?

1. It means we have Desires, longings and wants . No other creature has these level of emotional desires.
2. We can desire into the future and hope. Animals can't.
3. We have the capacity of desiring satisfaction at the deepest level of our being, unlike animals. (Therefore capacity for deep dissatisfaction (pain, worry, fear, emotional distress, etc.)

Vital idea to comprehend.

Selfishness, self centeredness and self indulgence are not rooted in our desires, rather are rooted in our arrogant determination to pursue fulfillment of those desires independent of God . This is what the Bible calls evil desires .

Evil Desire is when we attempt to control the outcome or the disappointment if the outcome is not met the way we want

Evil Desire (also called lust) is the wrong desire to have what I want NOW, regardless of the consequences. The key element of evil desire is that it is an attempt or desire that is *independent of God*.

V. Three levels of desires (longings)

Crabb separates the idea of desires into three levels. This concept is important to capture and remember for future reference throughout this course!

Crucial (Relationship with God)

Critical (Relationship with People)

Casual (Relationship with real life stuff)

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1. Crucial (as essential as this is, we don't typically sense it as absolutely essential!)

Deep thirst or hunger that only God can fulfill. If this is not met, it leads to total destruction of the person ultimately. (This is the Romans 1:21-32 cycle).

"As the deer pants for streams of water, so my soul pants for you, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When can I go and meet with God?" (Psalm 42:1-2)

"

"O God, you are my God, earnestly I seek you; my soul thirsts for you, my body longs for you, in a dry and weary land where there is no water" (Psalm 63:1).

2. Critical

Human relationships. This is the relationship level we feel. God said "It is not good for man to be alone" (Genesis). He was dealing with the critical level, even though man had a perfect "crucial" relationship in the garden.

This level of relationship is measurable in premature infants. When they get relational attention (touching, love, emotion), they grow faster, bigger and are healthier (~20%-30%)

This is the level where we have the desire to be loved, accepted, admired and NOT be personally hurt, abused, ignored, or abandoned. NOTE: the closer you are to God (Crucial), the more pain you feel in relationship (ranging from mild pain to wrenching pain) because you understand the value of relationship)

3. Casual

The desire for anything not in the first two levels (comfort, food, health, job, etc.)

POINT: focus only on providing Casual to your spouse, and ignore the Critical and Crucial desires, the person will feel very empty.

The same desires pull us into a living hell in relationships and in life. ***ALL the potential for pain reside in our God-given desires! Our problems occur when we get the three levels of desire mixed up and out of order! (See Matthew 6:25-33).***

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VI. Desire for the REAL VS.. ACTUAL . (Objects of our desire)

1. Actual *Temporary*

What we can experience via our five senses in this 3 dimensional world. Therefore, God is not "actual" except when embodied in Christ (John 1:14-15; Colossians 2:9; John 14:16-19).

2. Real *Eternal*

Experience NOT based on the five senses.

*"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what
_____ we do not see _____" (Hebrews 11:1)*

"So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen . For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18).

The only reason we believe is that faith has been revealed (Romans 10:17). We see God's presence in creation, in scripture and our lives, plus he has placed eternity in our hearts.

Dilemma: God is *Crucial*, yet we can't prove he exists.

In the context of very painful experience in 2 Corinthians 4:18, Paul says look at what is unseen (REAL), not on the seen (ACTUAL). Our focus needs to be on the crucial and the real . When our lives in the critical and casual fall apart, our focus as believers must be anchored firmly in seeing HIM who is invisible.

Our problem: We focus on the critical, casual and actual and ignore the crucial.

When you focus only on the REAL, you produce a fanatic
When you focus only on the ACTUAL, you become a materialist
Human relationships are always in the ACTUAL

"By faith he left Egypt, not fearing the king's anger; he persevered because he saw him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27).

"We live by faith, not by sight." (2 Corinthians 5:7)

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Session 3 Relationships

Our problem: Relationships always happen in a fallen world

I. The first relationship problems

Genesis 3:6-13, 16-19

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they realized they were naked; so they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

8 Then the man and his wife heard the sound of the Lord God as he was walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and they hid from the Lord God among the trees of the garden.

9 But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?"

10 He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid."

11 And he said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree that I commanded you not to eat from?"

12 The man said, "The woman you put here with me--she gave me some fruit from the tree, and I ate it."

13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

16 To the woman he said, "I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you."

17 To Adam he said, "Because you listened to your wife and ate from the tree about which I commanded you, 'You must not eat of it,' "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life.

18 It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field.

19 By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground, since from it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you will return."

Notice how sin produced immediate relationship problems

With God..... they hid themselves from God, Adam blamed God for the woman's presence

With each other..... They blamed somebody else (denial).

Result: pain, curses, and death

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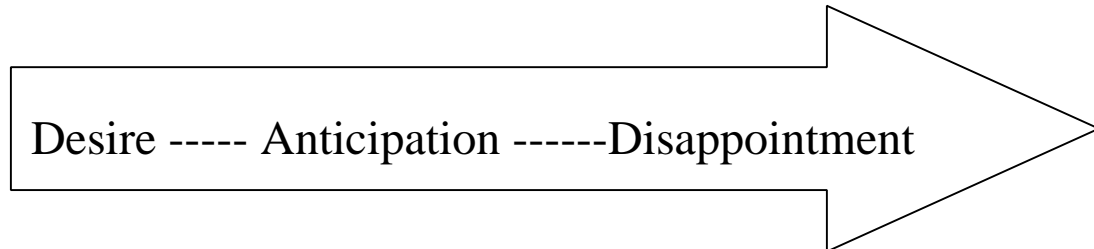
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II. In relationships nothing works as it should in a fallen world.

Perfect world: no hassles, no pain in relationship

Present world: Lots of hassles and pain in relationship

Desire for love and acceptance builds anticipation that our desires will be met, BUT they ALWAYS end in disappointment in a fallen world.



III. In relationships I cannot trust as I long to trust.

Honeymoon Period: Period of insane euphoric naivety.

We were created to trust completely, but sin destroyed trust. Our desire to trust requires another person's cooperation for it to be fulfilled.

IV. In relationship, no one is as caring as they should be.

My desire (which leads to anticipation and ultimately disappointment) leads to a sense of loneliness.

V. In relationships, I can't do what I want to do

Relationships make me dependent on other imperfect people.

All disappointment leads to greater desire which leads to greater disappointment which leads to greater desire etc.

The Biblical solution to deal with our disappointment (Ephesians 4:20-32)

The human solution for disappointment - change relationships

The problem with the human solution: hell is portable

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VI. Two primary human desires:

A. To be loved & accepted

B. To not be hurt

Be Realistic!

A. I can't adequately get the love and acceptance I want (in this fallen world)

B. I *WILL* be hurt.

Problem:

When you reduce your desire for love and the desire to avoid pain, you increase your loneliness !

VII. What are the indicators that we are living in a fallen world?

ANSWER: Two emotions - anger and dread . I can't control my life situation and it makes me angry. I realize that everything in life is very uncertain, and I constantly feel a sense of dread because of the uncertainty.

Romans 8:18-24 "The groan of the fallen"

I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed.

For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time.

Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved.

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Session 4

Renewed Thinking

Our problem is "Stinkin Thinkin" and we need a "Check-up from the neck up"

I. God's Desires

We are created with desires for love & acceptance and to not be hurt.

We live in a fallen world, so our desires will always lead to some level of anticipation, and eventually disappointment.

The question is this: "Since we're created in the image of God, does he have the same desires as we have (love, acceptance and to not be hurt)? If so, how does he handle it? How should we?"

God also feels desire and hurt. How does HE handle it? _____

God has desire and emotion. He feels pain, jealousy, compassion, anger, joy.

"I will bring upon you the blood vengeance of my wrath and jealous anger" (Ezekiel 16:38).

"Our God is full of compassion" (Psalms 116:5).

God also feels disappointment. *"The Lord was grieved that he had made man on the earth, and his heart was filled with pain" (Genesis 6:6).*

NOTE: It is vital to understand the nature of God at this point. He feels desire and emotion and yet can experience great disappointment. He handles disappointment differently than we do. We need to ask the question as we progress through this course:

"If I'm to be like God, how should I handle disappointment and pain in my life?"

II. Two questions we ask when we feel pain

Am I going to make it through this!? If so, how!? (feeling of despair)

Where is God when I'm hurting? (feeling of abandonment)

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III. Pagan Thinking

God is infinite, but not detached from the pain in our life. He's personal. If this is true, Where is God when we hurt?

After his wife's death, C.S. Lewis wrote a *Grief Observed*, in which he described God as the Great Vivisector. A vivisector is a person who operates on a patient without anesthesia for the pleasure of watching the patient suffer. Lewis also called God the Great Cosmic Sadist. Is God sitting idly by watching our pain and enjoying it?

Meanwhile, where is God? This is one of the most disquieting symptoms. When you are happy, so happy that you have no sense of needing him; if you turn to him then with praise, you are welcomed with open arms. But go to him when your need is desperate, while other hope is vain. What do you find? A door slammed in your face and the sound of bolting and double bolting from the inside. And after that - silence! You may as well turn away! Meanwhile, where is God!?

Desire leads to disappointment. Meanwhile where is God?

IV. The mindset of pagan thinking

MY situations, relationships, and desires are of central importance

I will worship God as long as I get what I want and need, or as long as I'm not inconvenienced.

God: the genie in the bottle..... simply rub earnestly with prayer

The pagan mindset sees the resources of Christianity as taught in the Bible useful only as they relate in changing my situations, my relationships, and my desires.

The Gospel has changed from repentance to "How can I get my life in order."

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V. Biblical Thinking

Christ is central, not my situation!

Christianity is a call to surrender our will to his purpose .

Living a fulfilling life is not the purpose of redemption

The Gospel gives us what we need, not what we want or demand in having our desires met.

Without the Gospel, we remain in darkness.

VI. Modern Thinking VS. Christian Thinking

Modern thinking:

Life will get better. It's very materialistic and based on the casual, critical and actual.

This sets us up with desires that can never be fulfilled in this life.

Christian thinking:

Objective Christian thinking is realistic thinking, which *can* lead to pessimism .

In the end, things will not turn out well. This order is terminal, and headed for destruction.

"Meaningless! Meaningless!" says the Teacher. "Utterly meaningless! Everything is meaningless." I have seen all the things that are done under the sun [in this life]; all of them are meaningless, a chasing after the wind" (Ecclesiastes 1: 2,14).

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Here's the point.

"If I find in myself a desire in which no satisfaction can be found, I must conclude that I'm created for another world!" (C.S. Lewis)

"All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive the things promised; they only saw them and welcomed them from a distance. And they admitted that they were aliens and strangers on earth. People who say such things show that they are looking for a country of their own" (Hebrews 11:13-14).

"Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul" (1 Peter 2:11).

Desire, that leads to disappointment should show us that we are made for somewhere else.

Our aim should not be to plead with God to change our world. Our focus should be to know God (John 17:3)

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Session 5

Understanding Sin

"We know that the law is spiritual, but I am unspiritual, sold as a slave to sin. I do not understand what I do" (Romans 7:14-15)

I. What is temptation and sin all about?

Sin is subtle, and appears imminently reasonable.

We're trying to construct our own reality, our own god and our actuality in life.

"I've got to survive!"

"I've got to quench my pain"

"I've got to take care of myself."

The Problem: These concepts leave God out, regardless of how they manifest themselves.

II. Understanding desires

Question: "What causes relationship breakdown?"

Answer : *"What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight" (James 4:1-2).*

When desires battle within, relationships battle without.

KEY: The external conflict is the product of an internal conflict.

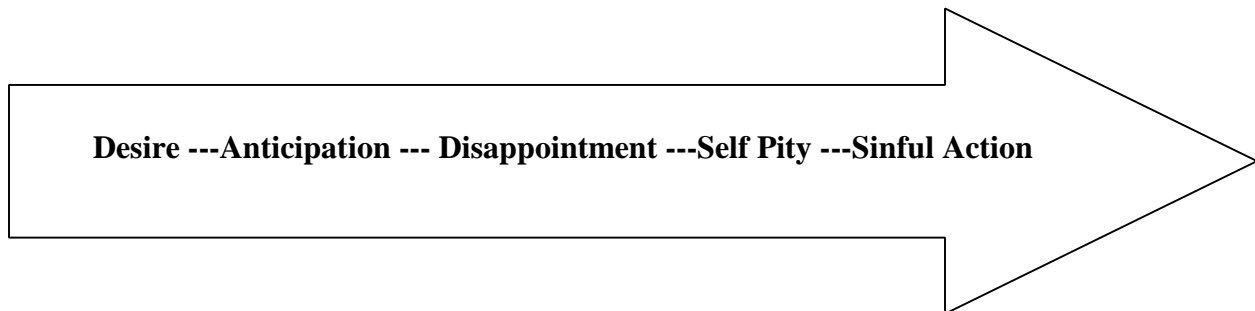
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III. What is the internal conflict?

Desire, leads to anticipation, which leaves us disappointed.

When we feel disappointed, we feed self pity.
Result of disappointment - killing and coveting.



What is killing and murder? withholding what a person needs to sustain life . The determination to destroy what stands in my way of fulfilling my desires .

Covet: perpetually craving & desiring that which I do not have. A future desire with anxiety and worry for acquisition.

III. Desires that control the flesh:

"You do not have, because you do not ask God. When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures. You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?" (James 4:2-4).

What goes on with our desires determines our spiritual condition.

"Do not love [desire] the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever." (1 John 2:15-17).

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*"As obedient children, do not conform to the evil desires you had when you lived in ignorance. But just as he who called you is holy, so be holy in all you do; for it is written: "Be holy, because I am holy."
(1 Peter 1:14-16).*

*"Dear friends, I urge you, **as aliens** and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul" (1 Peter 2:11)*

"Arm yourselves also with the same attitude, because he who has suffered in his body is done with sin. As a result, he does not live the rest of his earthly life for evil human desires, but rather for the will of God" (1 Peter 4:1-2).

"You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds" (Ephesians 4:22).

"But since they have no root, they last only a short time. When trouble or persecution comes because of the word, they quickly fall away. Still others, like seed sown among thorns, hear the word; but the worries of this life, the deceitfulness of wealth and the desires for other things come in and choke the word, making it unfruitful" (Mark 4:17-19).

IV. The word of God exposes our real desires so we can identify them and correct them according to God's purpose.

"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account" (Hebrews 4:11-12).

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V. How do we try to manage our internal pain?

Three options available:

Lower Our Desire: "Don't set yourself up for disappointment."

Numb Our Desire: "I'm not going to allow myself to feel that way"

Explain Our Desires: We can attempt to explain our desire or disappointment when the desire fails.

POINT: The Bible doesn't really explain very much about our sinful nature. It contrasts us with the nature of God.

VI. Where does temptation originate?

"When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death" (James 1:13-15).

NOTE:

God doesn't tempt anyone

Each one is tempted by his own evil desire.

My own evil desire allows me to be dragged away and enticed

When desire is conceived [a conception by unwilling force] it gives birth to sin

When the illegitimate child grows, it kills me!

Evil Desire: a legitimate desire that has been disappointed.

Legitimate desire (desire to be loved, fed, nurtured, sexually satisfied, admired, and not be hurt).

If we don't get our desires met, we create SELF PITY. We then begin to attempt to control the pain and meet the desire ourselves independent of God. This is Evil Desire!

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V. Self Pity is THE issue!

Notice how Satan attempted to tempt Jesus with self pity... "Oh, you poor thing, you don't deserve this, you deserve better!"

Matthew 4:1-10

4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. [legitimate desire]

3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." [you poor thing, you deserve a good meal]

4 Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" [refused to meet the desire independent of God]

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" [you poor thing, God really doesn't care for you... I'll show you!]

7 Jesus answered him, "It is also written: 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" [refused to meet the desire independent of God]

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me." [you poor thing, you're so mistreated, you're a king! I'll give you all this that you deserve!]

10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! For it is written: 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'" [refused to be dragged away and enticed by evil desire independent of God's will]

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Matthew 16:21-23

21 From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

22 Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" [you don't deserve to be treated that way you poor thing!]

23 Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men."

Peter was a stumbling block because he offered sympathy to Jesus which was the temptation for self pity and acting independently of God's will

Key Idea: Sympathy is a temptation which feeds self pity !

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Session 6

Trust vs. Mistrust

"In a fallen world we cannot trust as we would like to trust"

GODLINESS is paradoxical and seems absurdly impractical.

I. Mistrust is the barrier in relationship

If I enter into relationship, mistrust is naturally there.

Important question: What is the opposite of mistrust? Is it trust?
NO!

Mistrust: Uncertainty with the emotion of fear

Trust is a human attempt to create certainty.

II. Understanding how mistrust works

Step One: Unfaithfulness in relationship leads to a feeling of betrayal

Step Two: Betrayal leads to the depths of uncertainty and fear.

Step Three: The relationship suffers because we can't trust our emotions to the other person.

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III. Key Truth: Life is never predictable. It's always uncertain.

Reality about life:

We are constantly living with a sense of dread looming over us about life and its uncertainty. Our response: We seek money, accomplishment, insurance, security, and study books in an attempt to remove some of life's uncertainty and reduce our dread. Life is *never* predictable and is *always* uncertain.

IV. Jesus on the unpredictability of life:

Matthew 6:25-34

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

John 16:33

"I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble [life is uncertain and always unpredictable] But take heart! I have overcome the world."

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V. Understanding Uncertainty:

All uncertainty is a call to surrender our will . If we truly don't know what is going to happen, God is saying in essence, "*Don't you understand! You can't add a cubit to your life, so submit to me!*"

Uncertainty is a blessing in disguise. It forces to seek true security . The only true security we can ever have is a relationship with God .

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure" (Hebrews 6:19).

*"The greatest crisis we'll ever face is the surrender of our will"
Oswald Chambers*

Uncertainty is actually a call to your will . If you want to be a disciple, you must give up your rights . You're a slave. It's none of your business what the future holds!

All of life's events are relatively insignificant . And yet, God is aware of every hair on our head.

VI. The decision of the will.

Sacrifice is at the heart of our will and decision.

How can you really find your life? Look what Jesus said:

"Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matthew 10:39)

Jesus felt anxiety about what was about to happen in his life. Look how he responded:

"Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done." And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground" (Luke 22:42,44).

"The reason my Father loves me is that I lay down my life--only to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord" (John 10:17-18).

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What's the point? Godliness is paradoxical. It's absurdly impractical!

VII. Trust is not the basis of relationship.

Jesus did not trust man, yet he made a decision of his will to have a relationship with man.

"But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men" (John 2:24).

KEY POINT: If trust is not the basis for relationship, then relationships must be based on more than trust.

An enemy is one whose intention it is to hurt you.

In relationships, we're not usually not dealing with enemies, that's why we can feel so betrayed and hurt in relationships. Enemies usually cannot hurt us as deeply as a person with whom we have a relationship.

VIII. The opposite of mistrust is not trust, but caring.

When a relationship is betrayed, a person usually says something like, "I just don't care anymore.." This is a statement of mistrust.

Love (care) will never settle for anything less than seeing its worst enemy transformed into an even more formidable ally.

Caring draws us into a relationship with a purpose

When we stop caring, we cease to be godly

"This is how we know who the children of God are and who the children of the devil are: Anyone who does not do what is right is not a child of God; nor is anyone who does not love [care for] his brother" (1 John 3:10).

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To care about a person who has hurt you is paradoxical. In order to truly care about a person who has hurt you, or who has the potential of hurting you is not natural. It requires you to lose your life

Matthew 5:44-48

But I tell you: Love [care for] your enemies and pray for those who persecute you,

45 that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.

46 If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?

47 And if you greet only your brothers, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?

48 Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Points to consider from Jesus:

To be godly requires that we care for those we consider enemies, and to pray for those whom we mistrust

The reason we do this is that we are God's children..... that's how he cares, even for those who don't love him.

It requires no character or integrity or sacrifice to care for those who care for you. Even unbelievers do that naturally.

To be perfect & mature like God demands that we willingly lay our life down and care for those who don't care for us, even when we've been hurt.

Godliness is paradoxical & impractical!

We are to pursue relationship, even when we know that pain is the likely outcome.

How does this concept apply to your marriage relationship?

IX. Trust is still an element in relationship

We must learn that the only thing we can depend on is what God *has done and can do* in the other person's life.

When dealing with relationships and pain in relationships, we must face this vital question: *"Is this person beyond help from God?"*

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If the person is not beyond God's help, then you must care
Fallen relationships lead to pain if we aren't confident in what God
is doing in that person's life.

The will of God for your life is: How much to I care [love]?

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Session 7

Goals, Desires, & Forgiveness

The desire for a good relationship is a good desire, but not a good goal.

I. Goals or desires?

What's the difference between a goal and a desire, especially as it relates to relationships.

Goals:

GOOD Goal: is a goal that you can reach without the other persons cooperation

BAD Goal : is a goal that you cannot reach without the other person's cooperation.

A goal is bad when it requires the other person's cooperation.

Desires

A desire for a good relationship is a good desire, but not a good goal. Why? Because it requires the other person's cooperation. As a goal, it is unreasonable because you can't do it on your own.

NOTE: The only good goal you can pursue that doesn't require the other person's cooperation is to love well. You can achieve this goal in any relationship, even your enemy.

Key idea:

When two people have this same goal (to love well) then the desire is fulfilled in real intimacy.

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II. Forgiveness

What happens when our desires are not met? In a fallen world, desires lead to anticipation, which lead to disappointment. When disappointment occurs, how do we deal with the emotional let down which we feel. The key is forgiveness

Forgiveness is emotionally releasing an offense or disappointment so that the relationship can remain in tact

III. Why is forgiveness so difficult to extend?

A. Because the other person disappointed our desire.

B. Because we feel that if we forgive, we've given the person permission to hurt us again . (self protection)

IV. What God expects from us in forgiveness

Matthew 18:21-35

21 Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" [Peter's asking, "Shouldn't there be a reasonable limit to the times I'm expected to forgive, especially a chronic repeat offense?"]

22 Jesus answered, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times.

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

24 As he began the settlement, a man who owed him ten thousand talents was brought to him.

25 Since he was not able to pay, the master ordered that he and his wife and his children and all that he had be sold to repay the debt.

26 "The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'

27 The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go.

28 "But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded.

29 "His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.'

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30 "But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison until he could pay the debt.

31 When the other servants saw what had happened, they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened.

32 "Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you begged me to.

33 Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?'

34 In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.

35 "This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."

Points to observe:

There is no limit to the amount of God's forgiveness of us if we repent.

There should be no limit to the amount of forgiveness we extend to another person when they repent. (even though they may offend us again repeatedly)

Our willingness to forgive another person establishes how willing God will be to forgive us.

Our forgiveness must be extended at our deepest emotional level - "From the heart"

Matthew 6:12-15

Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors.

13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.'

14 For if you forgive men when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive men their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.

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Ephesians 4:30- 5:1

And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.

31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

5:1 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children

Points to observe:

We can grieve the Holy Spirit if we refuse to forgive.

How do you know if you haven't forgiven? You harbor bitterness, rage, anger, brawling, slander and different kinds of malice in your heart.

We forgive, because we want God to forgive us

Forgiveness is truly imitating the love of God

"You're never more like God than when you forgive from your heart .

1 Corinthians 13:4-5

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

5 It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

V. Application

Desire leads to anticipation ___ which sets us up for disappointment

Disappointment makes us feel Hurt , angry and resentful

The key to dealing with our own relational pain is love demonstrated as we offer forgiveness ___ from our hearts

You know you've really forgiven a disappointment or offense when you can think about the offense and it doesn't hurt or make you angry

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Session 8

Change

Only when you appreciate how difficult it is to change yourself will you realize how impossible it is to change somebody else!

I. What is change?

Change is not simply renewing your efforts to do what is right.

Matthew 21:28-31

"What do you think? There was a man who had two sons. He went to the first and said, 'Son, go and work today in the vineyard.'

29 "I will not,' he answered, but later he changed his mind and went.

30 "Then the father went to the other son and said the same thing. He answered, 'I will, sir,' but he did not go.

31 "Which of the two did what his father wanted?" "The first," they answered. Jesus said to them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the kingdom of God ahead of you.

Conformity is: being compliant externally . This is not change.

Matthew 15:8

"These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me.

Phariseeism: conforming to external rules long enough so my religion makes sense

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Matthew 15:1-3

Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked,

2 "Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!"

3 Jesus replied, "And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition?"

Pharisees had conformed to external rules so long, that *their* religion made sense to them. The problem is that it didn't make sense to God. They were externally religious, but they were unchanged internally.

One can conform to external religious forms, and still not have a changed heart

2 Timothy 3:1-5

3:1 But mark this: There will be terrible times in the last days.

2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy,

3 without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of the good,

4 treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God--

5 having a form of godliness but denying its power.

Real change is: a renewal of the mind and heart that produces the fruit of willing and godly behavior and attitudes.

II. What needs to change?

A. We as humans focus on superficial areas that need to change. We focus on the Critical, Casual, and Actual. We are deceived if we think that lasting change can ever occur by simply focusing on these areas. Real change occurs only as we view change from God's Perspective.

III. God's Perspective In Change

A. What's really wrong?

Something more important than worship is required.

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Romans 12:1-2

12:1 Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship. 2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. **Then** you will be able to test and approve what God's will is--his good, pleasing and perfect will.

NOTE:

Understanding God's mercy is the motivation *for* change

When we understand God's mercy, we will offer our bodies as living [not dead] sacrifices.

We will be holy and pleasing to God as we do this.

THIS [offering your bodies as living sacrifices] is your spiritual act of worship.

B. Worship is:

Offering my body as a living sacrifice

A surrender of my will.

Losing my life in service to others, with my spouse being the first in priority next to God.

C. My interest in MYSELF needs to change!

IV. What is the evidence that these things need to change?

A. My life is unstable, and easily falls apart.

B. The ADULTEROUS Look.

Hosea 2:2

2 "Rebuke your mother, rebuke her, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband. Let her remove the adulterous look from her face and the unfaithfulness from between her breasts.

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Proverbs 7:10-18

10 Then out came a woman to meet him, dressed like a prostitute and with crafty intent.

11 (She is loud and defiant, her feet never stay at home;

12 now in the street, now in the squares, at every corner she lurks.)

13 She took hold of him and kissed him and with a brazen face she said:

14 "I have fellowship offerings at home; today I fulfilled my vows.

15 So I came out to meet you; I looked for you and have found you!

16 I have covered my bed with colored linens from Egypt.

17 I have perfumed my bed with myrrh, aloes and cinnamon.

Jeremiah 3:1-5

3:1 "If a man divorces his wife and she leaves him and marries another man, should he return to her again? Would not the land be completely defiled? But you have lived as a prostitute with many lovers-- would you now return to me?" declares the Lord

2 "Look up to the barren heights and see. Is there any place where you have not been ravished? By the roadside you sat waiting for lovers, sat like a nomad in the desert. You have defiled the land with your prostitution and wickedness.

3 Therefore the showers have been withheld, and no spring rains have fallen. Yet you have the brazen look of a prostitute; you refuse to blush with shame.

4 Have you not just called to me: 'My Father, my friend from my youth,

5 will you always be angry? Will your wrath continue forever?' This is how you talk, but you do all the evil you can."

James 4: 4-10

4 You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God.

5 Or do you think Scripture says without reason that the spirit he caused to live in us envies intensely?

6 But he gives us more grace. That is why Scripture says: "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble."

7 Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.

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8 Come near to God and he will come near to you. Wash your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

9 Grieve, mourn and wail. Change your laughter to mourning and your joy to gloom.

10 Humble yourselves before the Lord, and he will lift you up.

What is the adulterous look?

A desire to be friends with the world and think like the world

A refusal to blush because of our own personal pride and sin.

Turning to other gods with no shame

1 John 2:15-17

15 Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.

16 For everything in the world--the cravings of sinful man, the lust of his eyes and the boasting of what he has and does--comes not from the Father but from the world.

17 The world and its desires pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever.

Jeremiah 2:27-28

27 They say to wood, 'You are my father,' and to stone, 'You gave me birth.' They have turned their backs to me and not their faces; yet when they are in trouble, they say, 'Come and save us!'

28 Where then are the gods you made for yourselves? Let them come if they can save you when you are in trouble! For you have as many gods as you have towns, O Judah.

We treat God as the key to our treasure, the great Genie in the sky just rub with prayer and he'll grant our every wish.

We honor other gods, including ourselves, and don't even blush.

Jeremiah 6:15

15 Are they ashamed of their loathsome conduct? No, they have no shame at all; they do not even know how to blush. So they will fall among the fallen; they will be brought down when I punish them," says the Lord.

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Modern Christianity is interested in glorifying and gratifying self, rather than gratitude and glorifying God.

V. Motives for change

- A. PAIN (in the casual & critical area), which is a valid, though self centered motivation.
- B. A Deep sense of gratitude for forgiveness, rather than relief of our own pain.
- C. The Gospel gives us the good news that change can occur! God can change ME.

VI. Methods of Change

- A. A Deep Encounter with God.
We must see God, his pure love, his holiness and our unworthiness and uncleanness in his presence.
- B. Allowing God to allure and seduce us.
- C. How does God allure us?

Hosea 2:13-14

13 I will punish her for the days she burned incense to the Baals; she decked herself with rings and jewelry, and went after her lovers, but me she forgot," declares the Lord.

14 "Therefore I am now going to allure her; I will lead her into the desert and speak tenderly to her.

Even after our spiritual adultery and unfaithfulness, God still loves and wants to allure and seduce us.

- A. He will lead us into the desert. What is the desert?

He is going to leave us with unmet desires.

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What are those desires? the desire to be loved, accepted, admired, have relationships, and to not be hurt

B. God provides us with no way of escape. Our desires can't be fulfilled apart from Him, and regardless of how much we search, we'll never have those desires met anywhere else.

C. He makes us aware that we don't deserve fulfillment of those desires, but that he wants to fulfill them.

Hosea 2:3

3 Otherwise I will strip her naked and make her as bare as on the day she was born; I will make her like a desert, turn her into a parched land, and slay her with thirst.

Even in the midst of a parched desert of unfulfilled desires, God still speaks tenderly to us (Hosea 2:14).

VII. The Valley of Achor or the Door of Hope?

Hosea 2:15

15 There I will give her back her vineyards, and will make the Valley of Achor a door of hope. There she will sing as in the days of her youth, as in the day she came up out of Egypt.

God will make the Valley of Achor (*the valley of Trouble*) the door of hope.

Only when we understand and acknowledge the trouble that we're really in personally, relationally, and spiritually can we begin to walk through the door of hope.

*"We cannot be profoundly moved by thought (insight), but only by a personal crisis
with God"
(Oswald Chambers)*

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Session 9

Our Part In Change

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted

(Jesus)

What is our part in the change process? We've seen that change is more than simply renewing our efforts to do better. Real change occurs only as our relationship with God becomes intimate. It can be a disturbing picture as we look at what God requires of us in order to change.

Ezekiel 24:15-25

15 The word of the Lord came to me:

16 "Son of man, with one blow I am about to take away from you the delight of your eyes. Yet do not lament or weep or shed any tears.

17 Groan quietly; do not mourn for the dead. Keep your turban fastened and your sandals on your feet; do not cover the lower part of your face or eat the customary food of mourners."

18 So I spoke to the people in the morning, and in the evening my wife died. The next morning I did as I had been commanded.

19 Then the people asked me, "Won't you tell us what these things have to do with us?"

20 So I said to them, "The word of the Lord came to me:

21 Say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I am about to desecrate my sanctuary--the stronghold in which you take pride, the delight of your eyes, the object of your affection.

24 Ezekiel will be a sign to you; you will do just as he has done. When this happens, you will know that I am the Sovereign Lord.'

25 "And you, son of man, on the day I take away their stronghold, their joy and glory, the delight of their eyes, their heart's desire,

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NOTE:

Israel had been unfaithful to God and he was going to intervene.

God's intervention is not always pleasant.

In order to change, deep grief was going to have to be a part of the process. God was going to have to take away their joy, their glory, their delight, and their heart's desire!

Ezekiel was to groan quietly, not publicly. He'd lost the one thing in his life that was the delight of his eyes, and not show outward mourning.

Does God allow people to undergo things that we think we can't handle? How much does he think we can handle?

Hosea 3:1-5

1 "The Lord said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the Lord loves the Israelites, though they turn to other gods and love the sacred raisin cakes."

2 So I bought her for fifteen shekels of silver and about a homer and a lethek of barley.

Hosea was the preacher, his wife was a prostitute of the worst kind. He buys her back, for half the fine for a wounded slave (Exodus 21:32) or half the value of a female being dedicated to the Lord (Leviticus 27:1-4).

3 Then I told her, "You are to live with me many days; you must not be a prostitute or be intimate with any man, and I will live with you."

Gomer received some sense of value, some sense of being wanted or loved from being a prostitute. It fulfilled her false intimacy need in some fashion. Before she can experience a genuine relationship, she must first be stripped of her false intimacy.

There are false intimacies that we live with that, before we can experience a genuine relationship with God, or our spouse, must first be stripped away.

God is stripping her of what worked for her in her life.

Live with & wait for (Hebrew word) in :3. God instructs Hosea to allure his wife, just as he was doing with Israel. (2:14).

4 For the Israelites will live many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred stones, without ephod or idol.

God will deprive them of the things *they* thought worked. They were not to have a king, the things that gave them a false sense of security. 5 Afterward the Israelites will return and seek the Lord their God and David their king. They will come trembling to the

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Lord and to his blessings in the last days.

NOTE:

Hosea's wife, Gomer, got a sense of being wanted, loved, and desired.

God made her wait.

The thirst for intimacy can be found only as the false solutions are removed and a real thirst is created.

I. Trembling Before God

Notice that Hosea says *AFTERWARD... they will come trembling* (3:5).

What does it feel like to tremble emotionally?

KEY: Our part in change is come trembling before the Lord

Before we can come with this attitude, God must first strip us of our illusions of security & intimacy.

Life doesn't work. It's empty. It's all smoke and mirrors a terrible deceptive illusion. Only when we realize this can we really come trembling before the Lord.

We don't live in Eden, we live in a fallen world. The clearer we get this concept in our minds, the more intimate we can become with God, and the more intimate we can become with our mate.

Hosea 12:2

2 The Lord has a charge to bring against Judah; he will punish Jacob according to his ways and repay him according to his deeds.

3 In the womb he grasped his brother's heel; as a man he struggled with God.

4 He struggled with the angel and overcame him; he wept and begged for his favor

Jacob was always a rival, wanting to get ahead for selfish reasons.

His were the ways of deceit, selfish ambition, manipulation,

He wrestled with God and trembled as he cried out to the Lord

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*We cannot be profoundly moved by thought, only by a personal crisis with God in which our equilibrium is disturbed.
(Chambers)*

We need an encounter with God that snaps us into reality so severely that our own sense of identity is shaken. We need to come the point that, *"I can't do this anymore by myself. God I need you. I need your help. Where are you!?"* Before we can change, we must first tremble.

"Tremble before him, all the earth! The world is firmly established; it cannot be moved. Let the heavens rejoice, let the earth be glad; let them say among the nations, 'The Lord reigns!'" (1 Chronicles 16:30-31).

"Tremble, you complacent women; shudder, you daughters who feel secure! Strip off your clothes, put sackcloth around your waists" (Isaiah 32:11)

"This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word" (Isaiah 66:2)

"Should you not fear me?" declares the Lord. "Should you not tremble in my presence?" (Jeremiah 5:22).

II. Trembling in the New Testament

2 Corinthians 1:8-9

8 We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life.

9 Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. **But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead.**

NOTE: Paul didn't want these Christians to be uninformed about the reality of things in life.

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Life had become unbearable, far beyond his ability to humanly bear it.

He despaired even for life! He felt the sentence of death emotionally.

A. Paul saw the benefit of the despair in which he found himself.

It happened so he wouldn't rely on himself, but on God who raises the dead.

B. This is the philosophical answer to the question "Why." Why is this happening to me?!

Why does God allow bad things to happen to good people? Answer: so that we can learn not to rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.

Why do bad things happen in our lives and in our relationships?

Answer: so we can learn not to rely on ourselves, but on God who raises the dead.

Philippians 3:8-11

8 I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ

9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.

10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

11 and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.

When life falls apart, we are forced to look for something that is real, something that really makes sense.

Turmoil forces us to rely on God.

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2 Corinthians 12:7-10

7 To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me.

8 Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me.

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

10 That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Psalm 107:

4 **Some** wandered in desert wastelands, finding no way to a city where they could settle.

5 They were hungry and thirsty, and their lives ebbed away.

6 **Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble**, [notice how they cried out to the Lord, only when all else was stripped away]

10 **Some** sat in darkness and the deepest gloom, prisoners suffering in iron chains,

11 for they had rebelled against the words of God and despised the counsel of the Most High.

12 So he subjected them to bitter labor; they stumbled, and there was no one to help.

13 **Then** they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.

17 **Some** became fools through their rebellious ways and suffered affliction because of their iniquities.

18 They loathed all food and drew near the gates of death.

19 **Then** they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them from their distress.

23 **Others** went out on the sea in ships; they were merchants on the mighty waters.

24 They saw the works of the LORD, his wonderful deeds in the deep.

25 For he spoke and stirred up a tempest that lifted high the waves.

26 They mounted up to the heavens and went down to the depths; in their peril their courage melted away.

27 They reeled and staggered like drunken men; they were at their wits' end.

28 **Then** they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and he brought them out of their distress.

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NOTE: notice in this chapter the categories of "Some", and "Then" The whole point of this chapter is that God allows our false intimacy and security to be stripped away. It is at this point that we turn to the Lord and cry out in our trouble. THIS is the basis of change.

Luke 15:

- 11 Jesus continued: "There was a man who had two sons.
12 The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them.
13 "Not long after that, the younger son got together all he had, set off for a distant country and there squandered his wealth in wild living.
14 After he had spent everything, there was a severe famine in that whole country, and he began to be in need.
15 So he went and hired himself out to a citizen of that country, who sent him to his fields to feed pigs.
16 He longed to fill his stomach with the pods that the pigs were eating, but no one gave him anything.
17 "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have food to spare, and here I am starving to death!
18 I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you.
19 I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.'
20 So he got up and went to his father.

The young man began to be in need. His false security was stripped away.

His desire to escape his pain increased.

He came to his senses, and made a decision and came back to the Father, and trembled.

Isaiah 57:10

- 10 You were wearied by all your ways, but you would not say, 'It is hopeless.' You found renewal of your strength, and so you did not faint.

This passage is a condemnation of those who continue to rely on their own strength. You should have fainted and admitted that it's hopeless.

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III. Is there hope?

Christian hope is the answer, but it is unique, impractical, and is met with resistance and confusion.

Hope is the only emotion that truly encourages us. It's not positive thinking. It's not deceiving yourself with delusions of grandeur and fantasizing about how good things will get.

Hope is: **Being forced to trust in God when all else is hopeless**.

It is wiser, however, to simply trust in God, because you admit and realize that all else is hopeless. We don't have to be forced into this decision, but God in his love sometimes forces us to do that which we otherwise refuse to do because it seems impractical and is met with resistance and confusion.

Biblical Truth:

Will God ever allow us to handle more than we can bear? Answer: YES. Why? So we will learn to trust in him.

2 Corinthians 4:

8 We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair;

9 persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed.

10 We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

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Session 10

Why We Fail

There is no future in the past!

*"But my righteous one will live by faith. And if he shrinks back, I will not be pleased with him."
But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who believe and are saved" (Hebrews 10:38-39)*

I. Temptation we face

We fail, because we _____ look back _____, or attempt to escape our situation _____ independent of God's will _____.

A. Jesus faced temptation as a man. Let's see what we can learn from his encounter.

Matthew 3:16 - 4:11

As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him.

17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

4:1 Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil.

2 After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."

4 **Jesus answered, "It is written:** 'Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

5 Then the devil took him to the holy city and had him stand on the highest point of the temple.

6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone."

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7 Jesus answered him, "**It is also written:** 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor.

9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me."

10 Jesus said to him, "Away from me, Satan! **For it is written:** 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.'"

11 Then the devil left him, and angels came and attended him.

B. Notice the nature of the temptations Jesus faced and overcame:

Make bread..... after all, you're hungry, aren't you?

Hunger was a totally legitimate desire, so what's wrong with making bread at this point?

Answer: Jesus would be doing something on his own and not relying on the Father

God will provide bread for Jesus when He's ready. This is a temptation of self sufficiency, lust of the flesh.

Remember, godliness is paradoxical and seems absurdly impractical.

Sin, however, is subtle, and appears imminently reasonable!

OK Jesus, don't be self sufficient. Throw yourself down and make God take care of you!

This is a temptation based on uncertainty, pride of life.

Uncertainty in any situation is a call to surrender our will.

Jesus was probably tempted with the feeling of, "Meanwhile, where is God?" He never yielded to Satan's trick.

Third Temptation: OK Jesus. You've come from heaven, you *were* a king, and now you're nobody! Let me show you what you can have right now if you'll worship me instead of God. I can give you instant gratification!

This is temptation based on power & control, lust of the eye.

Jesus knew that groaning and feeling deprived were part of living in a fallen world.

He never allowed himself to experience self pity, instead he continued to entrust himself to his Father's will rather than his own.

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II. What is godly living?

Colossians 3:1-17

Since, then, you have been raised with Christ, set your hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.

2 Set your minds on things above, not on earthly things.

3 For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God.

4 When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory.

5 Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry.

6 Because of these, the wrath of God is coming.

7 You used to walk in these ways, in the life you once lived.

8 But now you must rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

9 Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices

10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge in the image of its Creator.

11 Here there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all, and is in all.

12 Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.

13 Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

14 And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.

15 Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.

16 Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.

17 And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

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Place a check mark beside the area(s) you are presently having the most difficulty obeying. Then write these words "It is written!"

Let's look closer at God's list of what it means to be godly:

You've been raised with Christ (motivation for godliness)

Set your hearts on things above (on things that are crucial)

Set your minds on things above (think about what is real)

Put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature (whatever is controlled by the flesh & self centeredness)

- sexual immorality
- impurity
- lust
- evil desire
- greed

Rid yourself of these things:

- anger
- rage
- malice
- slander
- filthy language

Put on the new self which is being renewed in knowledge of its Creator

Clothe yourself with these things:

- compassion
- kindness
- humility
- gentleness
- patience

Bear with one another (tolerate)

Forgive whatever grievances (plural) you may have against one another.

Above all, put on love. It binds all the above things together.

Let (allow) the peace of Christ rule your hearts.

Let (allow) the word of Christ dwell in you richly

Be thankful

II. What is circumcision of the heart?

"Circumcision symbolized the nearness God desires with his people. God put a knife to our self sufficiency. He wants to be part of our identity, our intimacy, and even our potency. Circumcision proclaimed that there is no part of our life too private or too personal for God."

Max Lucado, "In the Grip of Grace"

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A. Most people don't deal with the reality of their own sin. Circumcision of the heart is required. We must cut off our emotional self sufficiency, and allow God to really be part of our identity and our potency. There is no part of our life too private or too personal for God.

Circumcision of the heart means:

Wholly devoted , totally committed to God
Removing every hint of sin and indifference from our hearts

How do you know if your heart is circumcised?

Psalm 37:7-8

7 Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for him; do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

8 Refrain from anger and turn from wrath; do not fret--it leads only to evil.

NOTE: Here are the keys to identifying your heart's condition:

fretting (worry), anxiety, and anger

Why? Because they lead only to evil!

B. We justify worry as caution or caring

A worry free heart is a circumcised heart.

C. Worry is an issue of our will, a determination to get what we want

D. Worry is a deception, thinking I can control my life, even if it's out of control.

*"Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God ; trust also in me"
(John 14;1).*

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III. How do you not worry?

"The place we have the most worry and anxiety is in relationships"
(Chambers)

"But Jesus would not entrust himself to them, for he knew all men"
(John 2:24)

A. To reduce worry and anxiety, we need to see people as they really are, without cynicism or bitterness.

B. Most relational pain stems from the fact that we suffer from illusions.

IV. Facing a difficult day.

Matthew 6:25-33

25 "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink; or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more important than food, and the body more important than clothes?"

26 Look at the birds of the air; they do not sow or reap or store away in barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much more valuable than they?"

27 Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to his life?"

28 "And why do you worry about clothes? See how the lilies of the field grow. They do not labor or spin.

29 Yet I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was dressed like one of these.

30 If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and tomorrow is thrown into the fire, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?"

31 So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

32 For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them.

33 But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

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KEYS from Jesus:

1. Don't worry about the casual, and critical, and actual areas of life. They are all temporary (:25)
2. Trust in God, not your circumstances. God knows what you need.
3. Realize that worry has NO VALUE AT ALL!
4. Pagan unbelievers worry about life. If you worry and are anxious, you are living just like a pagan unbeliever!
5. HERE's the real key to peaceful living and a pure heart: Seek FIRST the kingdom of God and his righteousness
6. The conclusion: Don't worry about tomorrow (And that's not very far away!) Focus on living each day to its fullest as you seek first God's kingdom and his righteousness.
Don't make tomorrow the ruling factor in today

"Faith is the look of dumb eloquence "

A man loved his family's Irish Setter very much, however because of an untreatable ailment, the dog had to be put to sleep. He took the dog to the vet and the dog obediently and humbly sat on the table awaiting his fate while sheepishly looking into his master's eyes. He had trusted his master all these years, why should he question him now. Faith is being as trusting as this dog to his master. Faith is the look of dumb eloquence.