

MISSING ARROWS
A BIBLE STUDY ABOUT
LOST FATHERHOOD

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DEFINING FATHERHOOD LOST

A man's man. A King. A mighty man. Who could approach him? Who would dare or even hope to bring him challenge? What a Résumé: Defeated Goliath the giant. His victory – a metaphor for the ages even to this day, describing impossible wins in the face of insurmountable odds. He conquered armies, big ones, strong ones. Made who's who of the most widely publicized best seller of all time – The Bible. Who was he? King David. He was and is as many a sport hero today, larger than life. He was a shepherd, become warrior, become fugitive, become king. Described as a tender man. A man after the very heart of God. An awesome king and statesman . . . Though mighty man he was a very compassionate and often times an emotional man as well. Many of the Psalms reflect his tender side.

King David had another side. A frail side. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, wife of Uriah the Hittite. For fear of being found he ordered Joab his general to place Uriah at the front of the battle so he would be killed. Uriah was killed along with eighteen other soldiers. Nineteen souls were taken in a scheme to conceal the pregnancy of Bathsheba. David took Bathsheba, now a foreign widow as his wife. God was displeased so a short while after the birth of their son, He sent Nathan the Prophet to confront David. Under Jewish Law David would die. However, God showed mercy upon him with an alternate sentence. His child with Bathsheba would die and his household would be troubled. Bitter it must have been to hear the words of the Prophet Nathan as he pronounced this disaster. It came to pass, his nameless boy died and went into heaven. (See Appendix 1.)

David's daughter Tamar was raped by Amnon his son. Another son, Absalom wanted to murder Amnon for this undisciplined deed. Later Absalom formed an army against David but was killed in an uprising. David's cry of grief for Absalom was so great that those supporting David in the battle where Absalom was killed became virtually demoralized. The Psalms reflect a troubled but contrite man– a man after God's own heart.

Many of you can identify with him having lost children and your own fatherhood. Nothing can compare with the agony you feel. The loss of your child and your fatherhood means no interaction with him or her. Your deep desires go unfulfilled. The pain is very deep for lost fatherhood. Here is what Robert Frost,– great poet and pros writer wrote in a piece called Home Burial. Line 74 ". . . A man can't speak of his own child that's dead." Could he have been writing from his own personal experience? There is such great sorrow. It can scar a man's life.

But God has given us a way to overcome. He wants us to process our grief. Jesus spoke of a promise in Matthew 5:4 (KJV) he writes – Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. He grants permission, promise, blessing and hope. The bible gives evidence of David and other grieving fathers as well. Men such as Adam, Job, Jacob, Aaron all lost children and were profoundly effected.

Some time back, I was with a man who had lost his fatherhood by an abortion. His experience had left him hollow. He wanted so to grieve but felt he could not because his loss was from an abortion. He felt he should bear the pain because of his actions to end the life of his child. Others could grieve but not he. In search for comfort for this man I began a quest to find a way to bring hope and comfort to them. God put no conditions upon his promise to bring

comfort to those who mourn, only that by doing so they would find blessing, the blessing of comfort. Partly, he was confused because abortion is OK in our culture and yet he was feeling guilty. I understand. It is confusing to us all. Lost fatherhood does include fatherhood lost by abortion. Even when the Law of the land loses sensibility we have God as a compass to keep our thinking straight. A child lost by abortion is no less a child than any other. A father is a father whether his mate aborts or carries his baby to term. Loss is loss and when loss occurs we have permission from Almighty God to grieve and be comforted! This bible study is designed to help you grieve and recover.

The study is called:

“Missing Arrows”

The authority, strength, and confidence of a man, a father is a blessing. Erosion of these and other manhood blessings can be weakening to a man, a family, even a nation.

The Psalm writer catches a metaphor of the strength of the warrior side of a man by describing him as such with a quiver full of arrows. Psalm 127:4 -5 (MsgB) “Like a warrior's fistful of arrows are the children of a vigorous youth. 5 Oh, how blessed are you parents, with your quivers full of children! Your enemies don't stand a chance against you; you'll sweep them right off your doorstep.” God intends to bring the restoration blessings a father needs and one way is through this study.

The study is intentionally acknowledge the permission God has given all of us, especially grieving fathers to reconcile the loss of their children who have died in thier childhood and for those who have died in the womb as well. It is named in honor of a father who found healing through its development process on our journey to find ways fathers could grieve and find closure for the loss of their children and rebuild restored lives. His statement after reading the great Psalm 127 was:

“I'm blessed got all my arrows back. Some are in God's quiver, some in mine. None are missing as I thought.”

How do you think Adam felt after the fall? How did God feel? Could it be this kind of exchange went on between them in the sweet fellowship they enjoyed? Could it be God can restore this same sweet fellowship with You?

The story of Two Trees

As God and Adam strolled the grassy knolls they came upon two trees.

God stopped their tread and simply said: That one's good but let that other one be.

It's full of knowledge about good and bad, of things you need not know.

I'd like to say more about this tree but its enough for now.

I'd even let you have it but it's what tripped up Satan, your foe.

He was bright, was my delight until he thought he'd be like me!

So, don't touch that one or you'll be done, your innocence will flee.

You'd begin to think my son much differently than now,

You'd think about comparisons, You'd rationalize, relativize

and often be filled with fear. You'd make pretense,

you'll take offence and think your right when wrong.

You'd work all day but it won't pay as sweat drips from your brow.

You and your mate which I will make, will of that tree partake.

You'll stand right there, realize your bare— and red you face will be.

You'll both be scared, and run in fear to stay away from me.

I'll call your name, you'll make your claim, then blame it all on me.

I'll remember this day eternally I'll always love you so.

I know that you can stop this train, but you'll just make it go.

This innocence of which I speak it ever flows from me,

I'll buy you back on down the track, It is my Son who'll set you free.

He'll take that tree upon his back, and — plant it on Calvary.

The cost is clear, near more than I can bear but it's not about that — tree

It's the other Tree, not talked about, nations healed by its leaves,

The tree of life, of innocence, where you'll return to me.

FORWARD

Healing after the loss of Fatherhood.

Emotions are so powerfully overwhelming that one can find themselves dominated by them for a considerable period of time. The effect of emotions upon our behavior is no less than that of the will, imagination, or the intellect. It adds a profound dimension to the way we think, speak, develop attitudes and world view, and the way we act out. When we are stuck in one dimension or another in the control of an emotion we may find ourselves behaving in ways less desirable, in fact, even, maybe, downright unacceptable. This is why we must process the loss – all loss in stages.

Initially we may act as King David. We react. We want justice. We also want mercy. We are likely frustrated and somewhat humiliated. We wanted it to be different but it wasn't. Frustration generally leads us to act for justice at the expense of mercy. As much as we didn't want the past to look like it does, in fact we may hate the way it happened. It may be so detestable we don't even want to believe it happened. We have the mental capacity and ability to "stuff it" into a comfortable compartment. This is called denial.

The Prophet Nathan was a brave Prophet when he proclaimed to the King: "... you are that man. ..." (2 Sam. 12:5) That statement broke David out of denial. Eventually you can be assured that reality will not be denied. Someone or something will break through. The process of healing is a natural process. We call it grieving. It happens in stages. The first two stages of grief are reactionary. When the first stage, denial is broken we must admit what happened really happened.. It is most unpleasant to have to give up denial because there is a degree of comfort in staying in denial. In denial we don't think we have to deal with it. But, denial can not be hidden. When we are in denial, we act differently than at other times. We avoid certain people, places, or things which we know would challenge it. There are a host of other reactions as well. When we are forced to break it we move into another stage. It isn't pretty.

The stage is called ANGER. Just admitting that it happened coupled with the fact that we can not do anything about it makes us even more frustrated and we begin to feel helpless. This challenges our self view of being able to handle situations. And, we are angry and we don't want to admit we are angry. We don't even know (because of the emotional cloud which comes with anger) why.

We may not be visited by a Prophet, our denial may have been pierced some other way. And so we don't know why we are so _____ mad about it! But we are. In order to explore some of the reasons and the process, let's look at the stages of grief King David processed.

- Although he knew the inevitable, he wanted to **deny** it would happen,
- The next stage is **anger**. David's anger was for the sin he had done – and for it he repented. This is the correct approach. I didn't say easy, I said correct. May we all be granted the grace to use this approach.
- Next David began **bargaining** with God by crying out in prayer, fasting, and sobriety. He began to intercede for his baby while he was still alive. He wanted to make a deal for his situation. He wanted to make it the way he thought it should be. That is why we all bargain. We are desiring a better deal.

- It was not to be. David **accepted** the reality of the loss. He accepted his responsibility and his own limitations. He knew what had happened, assessed his part, repented, and began to let go.
- He had **closure**. God revealed: “. . . I shall go to be with him, but he will not return to me. . . .”

Comfort is not a stage of grief it is the blessed result at each stage.

When grief is complete it brings a sense of closure. David had comfort, and from his comfort he was able to comfort his wife Bathsheba in her own grief. He was able to accomplish what the Apostle Paul describes in 2 Cor. 1:3-4 (MsgB) “All praise to the God and Father of our Master, Jesus the Messiah! Father of all mercy! God of all healing counsel! 4. He comes alongside us when we go through hard times, and before you know it, he brings us alongside someone else who is going through hard times so that we can be there for that person just as God was there for us.”

Our aim is to give each father who has lost a child space to experience the stages of his grief and find comfort. **This journey from pain to comfort is not all inclusive so do not expect total relief.** Expect that in this journey we will find comfort and strength for today, bright hope for tomorrow, and the tools to keep it that way!

Here’s some examples of some men caught in the throes of bargaining. While they are likely not bargaining with God, they are bargaining with their own imaginations. Eventually this may pass. I hope so, if not it represents a tragic example of incomplete comfort being stuck in incomplete grief at the bargaining stage.

A friend of mine knows a man who once lived in Nederland Colorado. The man’s Grandfather passed away. Soon after his death, the man had the body of his Grandfather packed in dry ice and frozen. Why? He wanted comfort as he mentally bargained with hope that some day a scientific break through could restore his Grandfather. Once again he could imagine life as it used to be. This would define comfort for him. Now this may, even to the most optimistic post-modernist relative thinker, be a stretch. But he could rely upon the strength of his own imagination, that someday Science would find a way to restore his Grandfather. Some will put faith in dry ice and science imagining a time in the future where they will and can be restored.

After Ted Williams’ the great baseball legend died his Grandson had him cryogenically frozen for the same imagined hope. He wants to be comforted by the idea that Ted Williams will one day be restored. He is bargaining that it could happen. The danger of getting stuck in this stage of grief is that your solution may fail.

The Bible teaches that eternity is in the heart of men. As a result there is hope in a man’s heart that resurrection of some sort can and will happen. How this will happen is not clear, but that it will happen gives hope. The Bible teaches that there will be comfort ultimately in Heaven where God will wipe away all our tears. There is comfort in believing that death ushers one into Heaven. With this truth in our heart we can hope for tomorrow and we can find strength for today. A father can hope to see his child in heaven and that hope is real—one day to be realized. Some would say that relying upon the Bible for comfort is the same as relying upon Science, but none would argue that the desire for comfort is a very powerful motivator.

As we look for comfort we will focus on a section of scripture in particular – the Beatitudes found in Matthew

5:3-10. The beatitudes offer a path to comfort and to restore healing and innocence. The path followed will challenge the reader to find comfort in his thinking, feeling, determination, and imagination. Our prayer is that comfort promised by God will be realized by each of you.

FORMAT

This study offers Ten times to meet – We'll discuss many feelings and facts, process together, pray together, cry together, and heal together. Many may be able to grieve and heal alone but, as Solomon (a very wise man once stated: Eccles. 4:12 (KJV) And if one prevail against him, two shall withstand him; and a threefold cord is not quickly broken.) I have found it better to have healing fellowship with two or more friends. God models the sweet fellowship of a small team within the Trinity. Transforming takes place as a group results in a team of men who help each other find healing in the presence of God. Matthew 18:19-20 (KJV) . . . if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.

The study offers this small team study as a spring board for discussion, prayer and healing as follows:

- Each chapter begins with a story which has ties to the particular beatitude in that chapter. (For example, the first meeting we identify the pain and areas of needed healing from lost fatherhood. The biblical story of Jacob and his perceived loss of Joseph is valuable in identifying the hurt and need for healing.)
- Each time we will have a short instructive commentary about the topic and associated scripture verses for reflection.
- Questions for discussion will follow.
- Next: Kingdom Keys and a wrap up are included. An example of a Kingdom Key would be Humility v. Pride: 1Pet.5:5(NIV) "God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble." Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.
- Journal. A journal will be provided to each team member along with the bible study for your personal use. This will become your testimony and perhaps a part of your Christian legacy.

May your journey be with God and may it be fruitful unto the healing of your soul.

Sincerely,

Warren Williams

Author

CHAPTER 1. LESSONS IN HUMILITY AND GRIEF

Jacob was a great man. Several Bible chapters in the book of Genesis are dedicated to his life and the life of his family. He had been promised by God that each of his sons would be the father of a great tribe of Israel.

You can imagine how grieved Jacob was to believe his son Joseph was dead. This was doubly devastating because it was an attack on what he knew to be a promise from God which he believed in and counted upon. You may remember, Joseph was next to youngest of the sons of Jacob and a son of Rachel. Joseph was a cocky young lad full of himself, and his brothers grew to despise him. So much so, that they sold him to a caravan of Ishmaelites (slave traders) in route to Egypt. One of the smarter brothers figured their Father would likely notice that Joseph is gone! So they planned a ruse – a cover up. Sound familiar? They kept his coat (Nice guys. It is cold sometime in the dessert) and soaked it in the blood of a goat. After they returned with a fantastic story of finding the coat blood soaked they gave it to Jacob.

We pick up on part of his grief found in Gen. 37:32 ". . . They took the ornamented robe back to their father and said, "We found this. Examine it to see whether it is your son's robe." He recognized it and said, "It is my son's robe! Some ferocious animal has devoured him. Joseph has surely been torn to pieces." Then Jacob tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and mourned for his son for many days. All his sons and daughters came to comfort him, but he refused to be comforted. "No," he said, "in mourning will I go down to the grave to my son." So his father wept for him.

In analyzing the story, we can see that Jacob grieved, but we also see that he was humbled as he believed his child to be dead. Jacob knew of the mortality of us all. As men we are immortal in spirit living in a mortal body. The fact we live in a mortal body is humbling. We are destined for eternity not mere mortality so when death occurs we want to fix it. But we can not fix it because death is a state of physical being not spiritual. From Heaven's vantage point there is nothing to fix. From our vantage death to our mortal bodies represents a huge loss. Since we can not fix death even though we want to, we find ourselves humbled and intimidated by it.

Jacob grieved bitterly for his son . He vowed to never get over it, refusing all comfort.

He was not the first to grieve over a lost child. Adam, was humbled by the death of Able. When Seth was born Adam proclaimed that Seth was a *replacement child* (a syndrome often exhibited by grieving parents as they refer to a subsequent child as a replacement child.) for Abel, whom Cain killed. God expects that we will grieve and he has given us the mechanism within our souls to do so. Cain was stuck in his guilt. He was guilty of killing Able and he could not grieve. God confronted him, still he would not come clean. So because of his inability to repent and grieve he began to walk in false pride fueled by his guilt and shame. God proclaimed him to be a fugitive. Soloman later wrote of the plight of men such as Cain in Prov. 28:17(NIV) "A man tormented by the guilt of murder will be a fugitive till death; . . ."

Although God commissions a blessing and gives us permission is to grieve, it can be hindered by our own guilt and pride. It can be hidden. Denied. It can fester in denial within a man's soul for years before he will deal with it.

Still the blessing and the permission for it is ever available – Matt. 5:3,4(NIV) "Blessed are the humble in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. . Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted." Is there any question that by the experience of losing a loved one that we are humbled? A companion scripture to this gives us hope that we will be blessed. God says he has the power to give grace to the humble (1 Peter 5:5 (KJV). . . God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble.) or the strength to overcome what we are otherwise powerless to do. These terms: Kingdom of Heaven, Grace, what do they mean?

Scripture gives us the answer.

A metaphor of Jesus found in Matt. 18:4 (KJV)(Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven) gives us a glimpse of the innocence and power of humility at once. As a child. When children get hurt by loss, they'll tell you. They will grieve openly because they are humble and innocent. No layers of cover, no pretense, just open, honest and sincere tears looking for comfort. The power of compassion comes in quickly to a response like that. It is irresistible. And that power of compassion is sometimes referred to as Grace. In innocence and humility compassionate power (grace) brings comfort.

Grieving, than, can occur when pain is there and permission to grieve is granted. It happens in stages. Denial is the first. Anger is the second. Bargaining and depression is the third. Each is fueled by one of three sources of pride. Each must be defeated by the grace of innocent humility.

Humility then is the first step. When we fathers meet together in confidence there is every reason to believe that in a spirit of humility, all denial can be broken. Once denial is broken a correct response to anger can be expected to follow.

But what about when we have no permission, carry guilt, or are intimidated by the culture we live in such that grief is forbidden or at best marginalized? When we are guilty or intimidated we tend to delay the process until the very last minute. With these first two elements (denial and anger) of responding to loss being critical for the long run, it is important to know that the full force and effect of the kingdom of heaven is willing and ready to help the humble man. Becoming angry or remaining in denial will frustrate the process of healing where humility will foster it. Both denial and anger are functions of pride which can slow the healing process. Humility brings Grace which can help it work to speed up the healing process.

Jesus tells us to expect loss and set backs. He calls it tribulation. Many events occur for which we have no control and we certainly have no fix. Death can not be fixed by any man. Although we are made in the image of God, we lack the power of God to fix many things. We are humbled, and we need the kingdom of Heaven. When He sees us humbled He offers a very powerful antidote to anger and blame. He offers Grace. Every father who has lost a child has permission from God to grieve the loss of that child and the loss of his fatherhood. God wants us comforted so we can comfort others with the same comfort we have received from Him.

GRIEF

Matthew writes in verse five: Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Comfort comes from

God by way of His Love through the power of His Grace. If we don't grieve and look for comfort we will develop a false comfort. Blame. Comfort is better than blame, but it is every bit as balancing to our emotional need for answering the Why question because it carries no scars, and it releases anger and neutralizes it. Notice the Father's heart toward us written of by the Apostle Paul in 2 Cor. 1:3 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God. For just as the sufferings of Christ flow over into our lives, so also through Christ our comfort overflows. If we are distressed, it is for your comfort and salvation; if we are comforted, it is for your comfort, which produces in you patient endurance of the same sufferings we suffer. And our hope for you is firm, because we know that just as you share in our sufferings, so also you share in our comfort.'

Further, the Apostle writes of the attributes of the Father's love found in 1Cor. 13 beginning in v 4. "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. . ."

In all this He explains that Love working through comfort is the better way because it leaves no scars and helps heal those scars which may exist from anger and blame. Think about these issues which could be directly related to the anger/blame trap:

Write down some memories you may have surrounding the circumstances of your lost fatherhood. What hurts the most about the loss?

How can today's lesson in a person's human limitations and humility help you heal?

We know that grief comes in stages. Circle the one you have had the most trouble with. Maybe you will want to circle more than one, maybe all.

Denial

Anger

Bargaining

Accountability
and acceptance

Closure

Try to focus on that one thing you believe you would like to see happen which could bring you comfort?

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to discover that losses humble us. Jesus' words are recorded in Matthew 5:3 that we are blessed (Notice we don't have to do anything to be blessed). When we are "Poor in Spirit" (humiliated by our utter and irreconcilable humanness and failures).

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Take some time to talk about your fatherhood lost experience.
2. What was the most disturbing about the loss for you?
3. What does it mean "We are blessed when we are humbled"?
4. What does Grace mean to you?
5. Why do the Humble receive Grace?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

TOOL KIT: I purpose to worship God in times of humility.

Job 1:20-22 (MsgB) Job got to his feet, ripped his robe, shaved his head, then fell to the ground and worshiped: Naked I came from my mother's womb, naked I'll return to the womb of the earth. God gives, God takes. God's name be ever blessed. Not once through all this did Job sin; not once did he blame God.

MAJOR HINDRANCE: PRIDE

IN GALATIANS 5:22-23 (KJV) BUT THE FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT IS LOVE, JOY, PEACE, LONGSUFFERING, GENTLENESS, GOODNESS, FAITH, MEEKNESS, TEMPERANCE: AGAINST SUCH THERE IS NO LAW

FEATURED FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT FOR THIS CHAPTER IS: FAITH

CHAPTER 2. PROCESSING GRIEF

Blessing means to have the favor of God and know it. Matthew 5:4 (KJV) Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. As we do grief work, the expected and promised blessing can mean that His favor will overflow to you through comfort. One of the patriarchs of Israel was Jacob. After learning that Joseph was killed he was taken in overwhelming grief. In study of this man's sorrow we can notice that all of Jacobs sons and daughters came and tried to comfort him, but he would (by his own decision because he was stuck) not be comforted. God was bringing comfort to Jacob through his own children. It may seem ironic because it was the very children who caused the grief. God can even use anyone He chooses to bring comfort to a grieving father. Can you imagine their guilt? God is not hindered in bringing Grace to us when he notices our humility, and he sometimes can use the most unlikely people to do it. In Heb. 12:15 we are instructed to see to it that no one misses the grace of God and that no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many. We can see that Jacob, as others in refusing the grace of God, was showing rejection to those who wanted to help him most. He was ultimately rejecting God's Grace. When we lose our fatherhood we have to make a choice. Just as Jacob we can get bitter, or we can get better. Since bitterness comes from resisting the grace of God, we want to be aware of our own attitudes which may be as Jacob's. We are in danger when we refuse the help of those around us. Sometimes we are afraid God will not really fulfill his promise so we push back.

Here is a story about Randy, Elaine and denial. It had been several years since the abortion. Randy had been having trouble sleeping again, and he and Elaine were getting locked into battle more and more lately. Elaine did not know of his abortion experience and Randy hoped she never would. He was going to tell her once when they were having another argument over not having children. Randy just couldn't bear the thought of having children. He did not feel worthy to be a father after what happened on that fateful day years ago. He felt awful just thinking about it.

Sometimes he would take a detour from work just so he wouldn't have to drive by the playground near the school. Even though he was on the Board of Directors at the Church, he was always afraid that somehow someone would eventually find out about the abortion. All of these fears and incongruent behaviors left Randy feeling very guilty, and now he could not sleep very well. He was afraid to ever tell anyone. Even his parents didn't know.

If he told the pastor he would likely be removed from the Church board, then he'd have all that explaining to do with Elaine. Still he was miserable and he knew it was just a matter of time before he was going to have to do something. His lack of sleep and irritable nature were beginning to make it hard to do his work, and straining the weary relationship with his wife. He was getting desperate. Who could he trust? He had to talk to someone. Then he remembered his old College buddy Jerry. That's it He'd call Jerry. Jerry was always on his side. He'd listen. But where would they talk, and how would he justify going out of town for a couple of days to see him? But what if Jerry rejected him? Feeling really trapped, and almost panicked, Randy decided to make the call. From the pay phone he dialed the number, half hoping no one would answer. Jerry was there. They talked, but Randy did not bring it up. Now what will he do? Randy is like others who feel it is very unsafe to disclose their lost fatherhood to anyone.

However Randy like many others has found that Christ can restore Him in fellowship by His Grace.

When guilt and blame are present there is a vacuum of inaction and paralysis. This vacuum when filled with Grace is given forgiveness and hope, when Grace is missing often the vacuum is filled with condemning judgment.

GIVE YOURSELF PERMISSION TO GRIEVE

Would you be surprised to find that your World view can hinder grieving. With some losses/failures we don't feel we have the right of the permission to grieve. Grieving for the loss of certain things or persons may be perceived as unacceptable. (i.e. the loss of money in illegal activities; Loss of a partner in an adulterous relationship, the loss of a child to an abortion or homicidal experience etc.) Usually this occurs when guilt is large, actions unexplainable.

However, rejection of the right to grieve may result in further loss. Randy for instance was afraid he would jeopardise his own support system on the church board. He feared that grief may make things worse with Elaine too. As we reflect on the lives of Jacob and Randy :

Try to remember if there were those around you who wanted to offer condolences. How did that go? Maybe you didn't even want anyone else to know. If so have you ever felt an internal pressure to just talk to someone about it? Maybe you want to write down a few thoughts about this now.

We know that grief comes in stages. Remember, the permission to grieve means you have permission to be real about the past. The events and people associated with your loss of your child and fatherhood experience are real. Think about how it happened. What parts do you not wish to remember? It is helpful to be honest with yourself in journaling your memories. It is at least a first step. Not wanting to remember, or consciously shutting out the reality of it is sometime called denial.

John 8:32 invites us to break denial. The key is truth. Denial is a form of secrecy. It is a hiding place for all sorts of unwanted memories. In the process of grief we may need to revisit the issue of denial at every grief stage. Answer the following questions as honestly as you can.

Am I denying that the loss of my child and the reality of my fatherhood ?, How?

Am I denying that I may have had something to do with losing him/her? How?

Do I feel guilt and/or shame over the loss of my child? Explain.

Am I blaming others for the loss of my child?, Who, What?

Am I seeking retribution or restitution from others for the losses?, Who, What?

Knowing the truth about what you feel about the things which have happened is the beginning. There is a reason though that these and other things have been denied. It often has to do with fear, embarrassment,

avoidance, anger, etc. Think about whether denial as a life style is a part of your way of dealing with certain other things. It is not uncommon for denial to become a kind of lifestyle. For a time it is protective but if it is not dealt with over a prolonged period of time it can become very inhibiting to you and those around you. If this is the case in some measure do some journaling about it.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to find comfort through the promise of mourning. We have explored the idea that Jesus genuinely wants to give us permission to grieve. When we feel broken in sorrow, and become transparent with our Lord, about losses, failures, and past hurts. We can grieve and are able to have blessed comfort. Comfort comes during all stages of grief. This week we have tackled the first stage of grief: DENIAL.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does grieving have meaning to you?
2. Were you surprised to find that God welcomes grief?
3. When Soloman reveals that there is wisdom in the house of mourning what do you think he means?
4. How does denial work against you?
5. How can you break denial?
6. Identify some things you were denying..
7. When denial is broken sometime lifestyle is challenged. A new found confidence might come in. Explain.
8. Truth as a tool might be a new concept. How can this strengthen you in everyday life?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

TOOL KIT: I purpose to let Peace and Truth work together: Jn.8:32 To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, "If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free."

MAJOR HINDERANCE: FEAR OF CONDEMNATION AND JUDGMENT

FEATURED FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: PEACE

CHAPTER 3: THE ANGER TRAP

THE TRANSFER FROM MINISTRY TO SELFISHNESS

"There we were face to face and we were both angry. He went for the gun and I took the knife and stabbed him. He was my only child, my son. I'll never get over this." The story of a man in prison lamenting the death of his sixteen year old son during an angry exchange.

Anger is an emotional response to unexpected events with which there is some personal ownership. The issue is about Why I must own it. Reasons vary. It could be that I am somewhat responsible for the unexpected event. It could be I think someone, or thing is being treated badly (taking up a cause). It could be that what ever happend brought much damage to me and I am or at least perceive that I am forever injured as a result. It could be that I expected an event to transpire as I imagined it would and it did not happen that way at all, thus embarrassing me or making me sad with the comparison. It could be almost anything which happens that does not please me.

But, that is only half the equation. These kinds of things happen all the time. The fact is things happen every day which I don't expect, don't like or don't want to have happen. The key is the degree of ownership or association in responsibility, accountability, or accepting this within yourself. If it effects me personally I can really get upset.

Anger resides in the heart. It is at once an emotion and a spiritual condition. It evokes a motive which can only be bested by one other: Love. It trumps all other emotions and it is so strong that it can consume a person and render him useless and even worse: Dangerous, reckless, or perhaps even lethal.

Grief work demands we confront and defeat anger. It is not only the most difficult part of grief work, it is the most important part. If we do not resolve anger in our grief work we can not complete our grief work!

So how can we live with it, control it, or get rid of it? When we grieve it is because we recognize we have suffered loss. Loss is inevitable. Jesus explains in John 16:33, "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." The word trouble in the text means-- loss even unthinkable loss. Fatherhood Lost is that kind of loss. Nothing can change the loss of a child. He/she can not be retrieved from death, nor can we undo the action, or circumstance which took him/her from us. Death is absolutely final.

Blame often accompanies and enables anger. Since no one can fix the loss then someone must be blamed for it. Someone must pay for it, or be released from it. Anger demands a balance in our psyche so that we can live with ourselves. That balance in many cases is accomplished by blame. Blame therefore can be as useful in detecting dormant anger as it is in justifying an angry condition to continue. We can blame and justify our angry position, and presto we achieve balance. We don't have to deal with it or even deal with the one we've blamed.

RESOLVE TO RESOLVE IT

In anger we discover our utter humility in our temporal state of being. God can repair damage from the past even if He doesn't remove it. It is what it is. What Jesus says is that he has overcome it. Paul writes in Eph. 4:26 "In your anger do not sin." Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Anger can be overcome. In the battle ground of our Souls the Angry emotion can be overcome by our will. Our will is strong enough to overcome an emotion. Notice how Jesus and Paul implore us to Overcome—“Let” this or that happen. In this way they are instructing us to employ the power of our own Will as a vehicle to overcome circumstances!

As we try to identify what event caused the loss which has resulted in anger we ask questions.

On a scale of 1-10 how much loss did I suffer? Who beside me if anyone is to blame? Who can fix it and if so how and when? Once it is resolved who will I need to stop blaming? How will I go about stopping that blame?

If I'm made whole how will I relate to the loss? Who can I thank, and how?

In the stages of grief we find that denial and bargaining are on each side of anger. They are accomplices which enable anger to remain in control. Watch this unfold. We can deny our own involvement, blame another in anger, and bargain with ourselves and/or God that the one we've blamed had more to do with it than we.

Solving anger is a process. Let's follow it closely

1. First, identify from where it came. (Some examples of where it may have come from are: Expectation unmet; territory invaded; discounting and invalidation; loss without remedy; taking up a cause?) Other.
2. Second, identifying who, what, or where or how it is connected to me or the event.
3. Third, deciding whether to keep it, transfer it, or resolve it. The cost may seem to be higher in your estimation to resolve it than to keep it. (That will work for a short time. But it is a temporary solution.)
4. Fourth, identifying how much of it I should/do own. In other words, if there is fault (and there probably is we live in a fallen world) how much of it is mine. Go ahead blame yourself. Some if it is your fault isn't it? Don't own someone else's part in the loss, only own your own. (Watch out that your anger doesn't turn to rage: Matt. 5:21,22 "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.") No one wants that! As a caution don't overreact and decide to take all the blame because not all of the event was or could have been caused by you alone. Only take what is yours, it is the only part for which you will or can receive the Grace of God to resolve. You can not receive someone else's Grace!
5. Fifth, decide whether there is anything you can ever do now or forever to fix it.
6. Sixth, repent in Godly sorrow for the part you played in it, whatever portion it is.
7. Seventh, ask forgiveness from God, and offer forgiveness to everyone else including God, for your part in the event.

Nathan the Prophet cleverly captivated David with a heartrending story about a rich man who had abused his power. He offered the case to David, the highest judge in Israel. David knew exactly how to judge such a case: the man deserved death! When he said so, Nathan turned David's own judgment around: "You are the man!" In this dramatic scene David's greatness showed itself. He could easily have had Nathan killed. Or he could have laughed and shown him out of the palace. Instead, David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the LORD' (12:13). David was humbled.

He recognized that God was the true king of Israel. David became willing to own his own part in the events of his own life, and he had the correct response. He repented, received grace and was set free.

Lets follow the drama: First, David committed the sin of adultery. Loss of character and credibility was predictable and unavoidable (Proverbs 6:26 (NIV) 'for the prostitute reduces you to a loaf of bread, and the adulteress preys upon your very life.')

Second, he knew he had sinned. When he learned of Bathsheba's pregnancy he could have done a lot of things, but the loss was beginning to play out. Second, He was ashamed, embarrassed and he wanted to hide it, just as we want to hide our past.

Third, To hide it he committed another sin. He had Uriah killed in a very clever way, by putting him into the front lines of battle. Do you see how his behavior had changed due to how he handled his loss? What was David's loss really? Integrity, leadership, honesty, in short he had lost his character. He could have gone on for years like that but God knows how destructive a man in power without character can become to himself and everyone under his charge. Once he had killed a man just to cover up his actions, he could kill anyone he wanted for any reason. David the tender warrior's behavior was so changed, that the motive of his heart was completely altered from taking care of the people, to caring only for himself. This is the ANGER TRAP! Making everything secondary to selfishness. With King David God noticed David's life was becoming more and more self centered. He wants leaders who are other-centered. Selfish leaders are dangerous to themselves and others. God wants all of us to exhibit his image. He is not self centered but other centered. He wants us to get back on track so he begins a process by confronting us in our selfishness.

Fourth: This is the intervention step by God. He was confronted by God via Nathan. The anger David had was not from the event, but because he had lost his integrity for the cause. Worse yet, he was angry because he was the king but he was not right.

(Let me explain the power of having to be RIGHT. People have a drive to survive which will carry us through when we are physically threatened. We have the power to reason, and conceptualize. With this power we can fulfill the charge from Gen. 1:28, to be fruitful. This power gives us authority to create and to be right. When our right to be right is threatened we by default, go into protective mode. We suspect harm or even death could occur if we are not right. Our drive to be right is as strong emotionally as the drive to survive physically.)

Not being right, and being confronted about it will engage us to do one of three things. We will deny, fight, or submit. David chose the third avenue. Submission to the fact that he was wrong. He acknowledged being wrong. This acknowledgement allowed him to be humbled, therefore becoming a candidate to receive the kingdom of God (Grace).

Fifth, he repented. He acknowledged being wrong and he admitted it as sin against God.

Sixth, he received forgiveness, and

Seventh, he received freedom. It does not mean he was not punished, and did not receive consequence from his actions, he did, but he received it in acceptance and forgiveness from God.

The resolve then involves: **Confronting** oneself with the wrong-ness of their own actions, and measuring the level of wrong-ness of others involved as well. This confrontation may come from self or from another. Either way there is a three pronged fork in the road. The choice to deny, fight, or submit to being wrong and humble yourself thereby receiving God's grace (His mighty power to forgive and restore).

I want to take just a minute here to discuss the result of choosing the other two avenues. If we choose to deny, we will isolate ourselves. If we choose to fight we will establish a war resolve of vengeance and it will lead to bitterness. There can be no grace in isolation nor in fighting. Both are rooted in the pride of being right. Both give a foothold to the devil! Both require us to re-define our own behavior as good and the other bad.

There is no death sentence in repentance before God. **I think repentance** leads to reprieve, and reprieve to **forgiveness** and the opportunity for restoration of full fellowship with God. It is the liberty and freedom to live as a living sacrifice with a changed, forgiven and renewed mind.

Here are some thoughts for focus while preparing for this week's meeting. Make a covenant with yourself to confront yourself and find resolve from the affects of anger as I complete these questions:

With whom/what if anything am I angry as a result of the loss of my child and my fatherhood?

How do I sometime take out the anger on myself? On others? Did I blame others? Was/am I vengeful?

Why does God say do not let the sun go down upon your anger? Do not let the Devil have a foothold?

How does anger turn into bitterness, and how can it be turned around into grace?

Reflect upon the what you have read and journal your thoughts as you think and pray.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter segment is to learn how to control and deal with anger. Dealing with anger is the center piece of our griefwork both literally and figuratively. Anger is the controlling factor of whether we can find closure on several issues and thereby change our life style or continue to be stuck in life with issues and behavior we don't like. As eluded to in the last segment comfort comes during all stages of grief. This week we have learned of the cause and way out of anger controlling our lives,

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does anger have such a powerful hold on us?
2. Anger is hidden between denial and bargaining. How does that protect its stronghold?
3. What or who was I most angry with?

4. How are anger and unforgiveness related?
5. What have I learned to help me deal with anger?
6. What does it mean to be angry and sin not?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

TOOL KIT : I purpose to not let the sun go down on my anger: I purpose not to give the Devil a foothold

MAJOR HINDERANCE: PRIDE

FEATURED FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: MEEKNESS AND SELF CONTROL

CHAPTER 4. LETS MAKE A DEAL

"BARGAINING"

In 1 Sam. 1 we find a compelling story about what it means to be sorrowful for a condition of life, and how the desire to find comfort can lead to unbelievable bargaining. Hanna was one of two wives of Elkanah. She felt the pressure of society. She had no children and she was distraught. One day before God she made a vow. She would dedicate her baby to God and His service if she could only conceive and bear a child. God agreed. He doesn't always. Hanna's son was the prophet Samuel. Her son was the one who anointed both Saul and David Kings over Israel. Could it be Hanna was grieving over her barrenness and was in the bargaining stage where she got serious with God? I think so. A vow is a statement before God in full promise to keep the word of what ever it is. Some are so desperate they will even offer to die as a penalty for a breach in their vow.

God usually doesn't make deals, he usually closes them. Bargaining is all about vows. Some are positive and God honoring, they may work for awhile, but the emotional stage of bargaining has a larger purpose. Bargaining ushers us to the threshold of accountability. Here are some paraphrases from former group members.

"The secret is too important to let out, too embarrassing, too much shame will be exposed if anyone ever finds out." This is a quote from a man who just like you, felt like he could never get over the loss of his child, his fatherhood, and yes he even felt like less of a man because of an abortion. He knew full well if abortion had been around and as easy to do when his father was a young man, he would never have been born. How could he ever tell his dad, and worse yet, his mother. Then if his wife ever knew he would really be in bad shape, because she would surely leave him. She is very, very pro-life. She even says women should be jailed for "murdering" the little babies. But then there is the pastor. What if he knew, he'd probably want me to resign from the board. No, I can never let the secret out.

Then perhaps there is that pesky little problem you have about hanging out by the playground, daydreaming about what might have been. Oh, and when pastor asked you to pray for that woman last week that she'd have a healthy pregnancy, and no pain in her delivery, you thought you'd die. How could you pray with her. God will not hear your prayer will he?, because you've got the secret.

"How long will the pain go on? forever? Who can I ever talk to, and why would they listen to a man? This is a woman's issue. Is it even right for me to think about it? I'm just a whimp. Real men don't go around like this about a lost child who was aborted ten years ago. It didn't work, nothing works."

"It was all her fault. If only she had protected herself. Neither of us wanted a pregnancy. We were too young, too imature. I can tell when I talk to the teens about abstinence they don't really believe that I believe it. I know they can tell I'm not meaning it. I just can't muster the sincerity needed for that. I'm glad Bill is doing it now. At least God got me out of that one."

If this or any part of it sounds like you, you are just about to burst! You'd do almost anything to keep the little secret. You've built a very detailed and carefully crafted group of people around you. The relationships are good but

you can never go deep with them. This kind of lifestyle is called bargaining. It ranges from a life of fear/anxiety to a duty/justice existence. Day to day depression seems to keep you from doing all the things you'd like. Sadness often becomes the fare and when asked about it, you just come up with an excuse, like I'm just tired, or I'd rather be alone!

Bargaining is a lifestyle. It is a kind of fugitive existence. One becomes a fugitive from his own soul. It is even tough to live in your skin sometimes. You are constantly running, defending your secret, or ignoring it. You have built a lifestyle of hiding and it gets down right depressing at times. Bargaining is best described as "let's make a deal." You have these little conversations with yourself or with God. They usually start with: Woulda-- coulda-- shoulda, or if only I'd, If I do . . . will you . . ., or some other kind of bargain.

The reason you are using it is because it allows the secret to remain, a secret. It also keeps you from ever having to own up to your real responsibility as a man, a father, and a husband or mate for what went wrong, and why. You can believe that it is going to be forgotten someday, and that someday God will let you off the hook, scott free. NOT!

But what if you didn't have an abortion in the past? What if it was a miscarriage, or an accidental death of your child? Do you get to skip this part about bargaining? No, in a word. Fathers who lose a child and their fatherhood of that child by any circumstance bargain too. Just ask yourself, have I ever thought a woulda, coulda, shoulda thought or said a woulda, coulda, shoulda, sentence about the way it happened or why it coulda been different? That's what goes on in the imagination about it, and the imagination is a stronghold for bargaining. Most of the time the imagination is working overtime and it is convincing us that what it is making up is probably real, but most of the time it is wrong! Most imagined thoughts are not real and they are usually a hinderance in healing.

On the one side of bargaining is denial and anger, on the other accountability. Neither anger or accountability seem very desirable, but of the two denial and anger seem better because they still keep the secret, secret. God has (as you know) given you permission to grieve, and you are on the track. Denial has been broken. Anger identified and somewhat taken care of. At least you now have tools to deal with it. But when you are asked to own up to the accountability of an abortion or the realities of the death of your child it makes you look at anger in a whole other light doesn't it. You might have to even tell someone outside the group about it someday. . . Maybe not. Still bargaining? The fact is, once the cat is out of the bag so to speak, you will be free to not only talk of it but to allow it to become as open as it needs to. That's the best thing about accountability. It makes what was the secret powerless! It can start and once it does, the fears of secrecy kind of melt away like the snows of winter. You identify what your responsibility is and repent of it. You give a name and a place to your child in your family tree. You find out that he/she is in heaven, and because they are there, they have no sin, therefore we can reasonably believe that they have forgiven you. You begin to understand that the secret was the bondage, not the event or even it's aftermath. Sound good? It is. Breaking the cycle of bargaining is an act of the will.

Once you make up your mind the secret is not painful but it is behavior which has become quite limiting in your capacity you have reached step one in a three step process.

1. You forsake the secret.
2. You take accountability for fatherhood and husband-hood which was for a time when you and your mate were together, and
3. You believe God to give you freedom from shame, guilt, blame, anger, vengeance, embarrassment, you name it and commit it unto him with the same strength and measure with which you have protected your secret, and he will forgive it.

Discussion: Bargaining is the next phase in grieving. It is the act of trying to make a deal with God so I will feel better without having to deal with my part in the event over which I am grieving. Lets look at the way bargaining works? or Not.

What kind of bargaining if any did I try with God? With others?

What kinds of vows did I make because of the loss of my child? (... I'll never...)

To whom/what did I transfer the cause of losses so I could avoid facing the issue myself?

WHAT ABOUT DEPRESSION?

In the quandary of uncertainty after the realization that death took my child and my fatherhood did I get depressed? Explain:

Bargaining is sometime accompanied by depression. Why is this do you think?

David used psalms and music to overcome his depressing times? How do you feel about this way of approaching depression?

As you read this phase of the chapter, did you see how bargaining can keep you from healing? Explain.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to identify where you might be stuck in the grief process. Since anger is a stronghold and it resides between denial and bargaining, bargaining may be being used as a way to enable anger to continue almost unnoticed. An angry lifestyle is no fun for you or others in your life. By bargaining, you can remain content to stay where you are without answering any questions about your own responsibilities regarding the loss of your child or your own fatherhood. Blame can remain a staple in your arsenal of resistance to closure and you can isolate yourself from any or all things which have or were associated with the loss of your child. In any case death took your child and your fatherhood. This is unchangeable. You can only hold those accountable who were in some way responsible. Ask, for what am I responsible? For what is God responsible? Read Rev. 1:18 I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades. While your child is in fact dead he or she is also in fact alive and in the hands of God. It is He who is ultimately responsible for you and your child. His mercy and grace are so vast there is no room to bargain. In His economy nothing is truly lost because He holds all the keys even the keys to your own accountability and His as well. Will you open the door with His keys?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you think repentance is a part of bargaining with God? Explain
2. What do you think of this sentence? "God does not make deals, he closes them."
3. Why does bargaining often lead to depression?
4. How does one break the cycle of denial, anger, bargaining?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

TOOL KIT:

As a conscious choice of my will, I determine to find accountability better than secrecy or contempt.

MAJOR HINDERANCE: FEAR

FEATURED FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: LOVE

CHAPTER 5: LEARNING DISCIPLINED TRUST

Acceptance and Forgiving. The Fourth Stage of Grieving

Someone once said: "When you are up to your knickers in alligators it is not easy to remember the objective was draining the swamp." So, here we are. Up to our ____ in alligators. Capitalizing upon their metaphor I continue the thought to make a point. There is every reason to believe these alligators will do damage to me -- they have before. Still, most of the time they do not bother and after a time I get used to them being around. I learn how they behave, and adapt to their presence. In other words I learn to live with them even though I know they could and probably will destroy me whenever they want. Let's name the alligators. Guilt, shame, anger, unforgiveness, and blame, to name a few. They all look a bit different but act the same way. Each of them makes me move through the swamp more cautiously. I know some day I should get rid of them, so I won't need worry about their presence or their potential destruction to me. But how? How can I tackle the alligators and remove them so I can continue draining the swamp?

Let's realize that we have brought our own alligators into the swamp, they didn't just show up to torment us. When we lost our fatherhood in the abortion experience we adopted those alligators. Now we wish we hadn't. We just spent last chapter trying to bargain them away, but that didn't work. So how do we get rid of them?

Now we enter a new phase. This phase of grief is where we go nose to nose with the alligators. We not only identify them all, we determine to see which ones are ours and learn how to remove them. But first we have to learn how the game is played. How does God work in us to get these things out of our lives? Matthew 5:5 (MSG) says: "You're blessed when you're content with just who you are—no more, no less. That's the moment you find yourselves proud owners of everything that can't be bought." He takes us as we are. The phrase ". . . just who you are. . ." is key. The alligators are with you, but they are not you. They are only hanging around because you let them by not knowing just "who you are." Before the loss of your fatherhood the relationships, which now may seem long ago and far away, were different. Each, was, and still is important. But, because they are negatively connected to the indescribable loss of your fatherhood, and to an extent your manhood, you have issues with and about them.

So, here is the game. In each relationship, you must define how much of what happened is your doing. How much is the doing of someone else. Nothing in relationship is 100% the doing of you, or someone else. We each own a part. Your job in this chapter is to figure out how much is yours, how much is theirs, and what to do with it. You may not think it is obvious that alligators are hanging out with you, but they are, and yes, it is obvious. Just a couple of paragraphs ago we named the alligators. We know who they are because we can identify them by their behavior. They are hanging around you with you and your behavior looks and acts just like they look and act. No one can disguise guilt, shame, anger, unforgiveness, blame for long. Why go through this? Getting rid of the alligators will free up hours a day, and allow you to focus on the more important things God has for your life.

In grieving the level of comfort increases as trust increases. When God gives permission to every father to grieve He makes it safe for every father to trust Him at His word. Matthew referred to this increasing trust by using a

dated word: Meekness. He writes in 5:5 KJV Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. A meek person is one who has a deferent trust in what God can and is doing in his life. As I paraphrase the idea of "inheriting the earth," I would like to ask you to consider this concept. It could be defined as the gaining of authority by an unearned action, visited upon you through a third party. In other words, as I grow in deferent trust to God, He will grant me more authority to trust Him even more.

May I use a another metaphor? If trusting God by deferring unto His will is like the valve on a fire hydrant, and I like the fire hose, then, God could meter the water flow by adjusting the valve. I, the hose have no idea what my capacity to carry His water is, nor should I. I must allow myself to be connected to Him, know that at any time He can turn the valve, and that I will become the vessel for His water to flow through me. In other words I defer to Him and trust that whatever amount of water He chooses to send through me will be OK. Each time He uses me to send water, I become more and more used to when and how he does it. After a time, there is a disciplined trust.

Using this disciplined trust, let's tackle the gators.

Exercise One:

Reflect upon the relationship with your mate. When she became pregnant how much of her becoming pregnant are you accountable for? How much is she accountable for?

How much of the pregnancy are you blaming her for? How much are you blaming yourself for?

How much of the decision to abort was hers? Yours?

What about Her mother, father, doctor, pastor, etc. Complete the drill with each one. Assign a value to each in determining whose gators are whose.

Exercise Two:

Reflect upon the Cross of Christ.

How much of what you are accountable for did Christ forgive as he was nailed to the Cross on your behalf?

How much are what each of the others have done, or are accountable for, did Christ forgive?

Read: John 20:22-23 (MsgB) . . . Then he took a deep breath and breathed into them. "Receive the Holy Spirit," he said. "If you forgive someone's sins, they're gone for good. If you don't forgive sins, what are you going to do with them?"

In light of this think about sins, yours and thier's. Envision that not forgiving them is the equivalent of keeping them around, like the gators. (One meaning of unforgiveness is "tied to, or attached.") Forgiving is un-tying or loosing the things which bind you to them. In large measure letting there be no reason for them to hang around

anymore. Just as a sporting event ends, the crowd leaves, and, so will the gators, the fire hose be untied, the bonds of sin broken -- as you forgive. Forgive yourself, then one by one forgive each of the others involved. Untie them, let them go. Just as some of you are now in a deep contemplative state. Let Jesus massage the area of your souls where the old knots in the hose have left deep wrinkles and grooves. Imagine him now turning on the valve and allowing water to flow through. It could be the first time for some of you that this has happened in years. Don't tense up. Let it keep happening. Gain that disciplined trust, that God has untied you, you can then, choose to untie yourself and others, and let the river flow! By the way, it is OK for a man, a father, to cry. . . .

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to reinforce the resolve to overcome anger, break out of denial and bargaining, and to forgive God and everyone else involved in the loss of your fatherhood. No one but you has the ability to do it and only you can appropriate the grace (power of and intervention of God) to see it accomplished. As long as there is blame, and unforgiveness there is a negative bond between you and the object of the blame and or unforgiveness. Breaking that bond is only possible by being willing to be humble in your circumstance, figure out who, what, where, and how forgiveness can be accomplished and taking that very painful and often terrifying step of just doing it. There is an undescrivable freedom which comes with the act of untying those knots which may have existed for a long time.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. The hardest part to accept was
2. The hardest person to forgive was
3. I find that I can now go . . . without anxiety overwhelming me.
4. Now that I have freed myself from some of those . . . I purpose to stay free by. . . .
5. I can say that my Peace level has gone up/down ____ notches since I have taken the challenge of this chapter.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

TOOL KIT:

As a conscious choice of my will, I determine to untie myself and others from the bondage of unforgiveness.

MAJOR HINDERANCE: VENGEANCE

FEATURED FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: PEACE

CHAPTER 6:
CLOSURE: THE COMFORT AND THE QUESTIONS.

Chuck and Linda had decided it would be good to have a memorial service for their baby. A memorial service can be helpful in the healing process, and it can be as simple as a prayer said in an open field or a formal service held in a church. After they sat quietly listening to the soft music and reflecting on the poem just read. The service moved toward the eulogy. This was really hard for both of them. Coming to a memorial service like this was almost more than they could bear. Everyone would now know about the abortion now. White knuckles, dry mouth, heart rate up. You know the feelings. The Pastor opened with a question.

You may ask: Has this baby forgiven me? How can I know for sure? Many can't imagine never seeing their baby. Then again many may of you could be hoping never to meet because of the worry you carry deep within. You are worried that your little baby is angry with you, or blaming you. I must tell you I had that same worry myself. Chuck and Linda both looked up with a surprise. To imagine that the Pastor could have lost a child by abortion gave them a start.

Let me tell you a story he continued, which will be of great comfort to you. It involves a man and a woman just like you a child, lost, just like you have lost a child, grieving parents, just like you, and hope and comfort which is what we all need, especially now. I know I found much comfort in this story myself.

He continues on to explain the dilemma King David must have felt during his grief over his baby which he and Bathsheba had lost in sickness. One scripture reference with particular meaning is found in 2 Samuel 12. He read starting in verse 12:18 in the Message. "On the seventh day the child died. David's servants were afraid to tell him. They said, "What do we do now? While the child was living he wouldn't listen to a word we said. Now, with the child dead, if we speak to him there's no telling what he'll do." 19 David noticed that the servants were whispering behind his back, and realized that the boy must have died. He asked the servants, "Is the boy dead?" "Yes," they answered. "He's dead." 20 David got up from the floor, washed his face and combed his hair, put on a fresh change of clothes, then went into the sanctuary and worshiped. Then he came home and asked for something to eat. They set it before him and he ate. 21 His servants asked him, "What's going on with you? While the child was alive you fasted and wept and stayed up all night. Now that he's dead, you get up and eat." "While the child was alive," he said, "I fasted and wept, thinking God might have mercy on me and the child would live. But now that he's dead, why fast? Can I bring him back now? I can go to him, but he can't come to me."

No one knows for sure, but I think from this scripture that we can know the baby went to be with God in Heaven. I think, his baby, my baby, and your babies are in Heaven. Although I do not want to develop the theology here, I think I can make the case that God is in Heaven and that there is no sin in Heaven, nor can sin be in the presence of God. Go with me on this, he paused . . . God asks us to forgive others just as He has forgiven our sin and wiped our sin away. Could it be that when the babies are come into heaven they bring unforgiveness with them? I don't think so. If I had to guess, I'd say they have forgiven all of us for anything we've done to them. We read in Matthew 18:18 (KJV)

Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. In the language of the day when this was written people were familiar with the comparison of forgiveness and untying someone. When we loose something we untie it from its place and let it go. We forgive in the same way. There is Love in Heaven, forgiveness in heaven, freedom. I believe that your baby has forgiven you. In the metaphor of untying, try to think of yourselves as being untied and set free. Jesus said that whosoever you forgive is forgiven. Jn. 20:22.

This thought was so overwhelming, so freeing, to both Chuck and Linda that they scarcely heard another word of the eulogy. Both seemed to return to listening just as the Pastor was bringing words of hope and assurance to everyone. Christ could not be contained by any sin, even death was overcome. The Holy Spirit raised Him from the dead and brought Him out of Hell. He says you will rise up as well, in the end. You will see your child again, for Jesus proclaims in John 11:25 (MsgB) "You don't have to wait for the End. I am, right now, Resurrection and Life. The one who believes in me, even though he or she dies, will live.

Then he concluded: "His resurrection power now present in your life can be the comfort and connection you will for ever have with your baby.

Chuck and Linda, and the other couples were invited to come close to the stream where the outdoor memorial was held. The Pastor directed that each who had crafted a small paper boat now approach the water and release them on the surface. They watched it float out of sight. "All of the unforgiveness, and devastation of the past floated along with that boat." Chuck said, Linda agreed. . . .

PURPOSE

The Purpose of this Chapter is to give you hope in closure. Closure is not an end but a time of new beginning.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Describe how you think Chuck felt at the memorial service.
2. What kind of a memorial do you have planned for your baby.
3. In preparation for the memorial God may be speaking to you. Describe the emotions, thoughts, attitudes, and past actions or reactions you would like to see closed. Perhaps it will happen at the memorial service.

Jesus is ever interceding for you before the Throne of Grace. How would you like Him to pray for you?

Write a prayer you would like Him to say on your behalf.

4. Many feel writing a farewell letter to their baby helps them close. If you choose to do this, perhaps you can share it with the .

CLOSE IN PRAYER

TOOL KIT:

Just knowing that I will see my baby in Heaven is a closure in and of itself. The future is not what it used to be.

MAJOR HINDERANCE: UNBELIEF

FEATURED FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: FAITH

CHAPTER 7

STRENGTH FOR TODAY GREAT HOPE FOR TOMORROW

Chuck was feeling alone and rather direction-less. Reflecting back he had been miserable for months before the group started and it had gotten much worse during the early going. At times he regretted ever coming to the group because of the pain he was going through. Now he began to re-experience some of those earlier thoughts. At the memorial service where he had let the paper boat float down the river ever fading from sight was very meaningful. He had at least symbolically let go of his lost baby and his lost fatherhood. There was definitely some comfort. Still, he felt as though there must be something else. What was the future going to be like. There was a fragile peace about it now along with a clear uncertainty. The pastor at the service talked about the memorial service bringing closure. It had done that but, now what? Is grieving all there is to letting go. Shouldn't there be another step. He thought, now I need to rebuild. But where to start?

A better question might be: Where can I finish? Many choose ways to mark the finish line. Each father had crafted a small paper boat named for their lost son or daughter which they placed in the stream. Each Dad had said good bye in his own way to his baby. Each could say it's over to his anger, pain, blame, fear of hurt, anguish, bad dreams, and the crushing guilt this kind of loss brings. Closure is found in a moment of release, but remembered for ever. A father once put it like this. "I created a new memory which trumps all the other ones I had and no one can erase it." "You can forget but you can not erase it. I remember the real estate closing on the purchase of a new home. I can also remember all the life we shared when we think of the old home." But he is right. The closing lets another own the place where the old memories occurred. In this case that other is none other than God All Mighty. As the Apostle Paul wrote: Philip. 3:13 (KJV). . . but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. . . . Forgetting when used in the context of a verb is instructive. It tells us that it is a continuous process. Each forgetting moment can be remembered as just that -- a closure. A time and place marks it, stores it, makes it's own place in our lives.

God often connects a process with a blessing. This we know, because we have comfort from grieving just as Christ has said: A blessing comes when we grieve-- comfort. Matt. 5:3. Now comes the need to rebuild. It is not (I think) without coincidence then that God places the next blessing after grief. God will allow us to be tested. Tests define our limits, give us confidence, challenge us to aspire, and make us tough. An old "King James" term called "meekness" describes the next phase of our journey. Jesus connects a blessing of great inheritance to it. Curiously it means almost the opposite from what culture would think it to mean now-a-days. Meekness may be thought of as a weak, passive, even cowering way to be. Not so!

Meekness is a term used in time past to describe power under the Master's control. I will use another metaphor here. It is a story about twin horses born on the farm of a small rancher. Not long after they were born the barn burned to the ground. The owner was underinsured and could not afford to rebuild the barn. The disaster left him in poverty. He tried for weeks to catch one of the horses which had escaped into the countryside but without success. He

was able to sell the remaining horse to a great horseman who trained the young colt to be of great use to him and to the community as well. He was a handsome steed, and fetched a good sum for stud. The fugitive colt was just as handsome, but he was running wild and had become a menace to everyone. Meekness describes the first horse. His power under the control of the Master gave him an inheritance of great value, the other a fugitive dodging bullets.

Here is one father's prayer, which I believe captures the essence of the next part of our journey: I cry out to you Oh God, to heal the erosion of my manhood -- all the questions about my abilities, my authority, and my worth are laying on the table for you now God. Oh, please, God, for the sake of my family, please restore me. Give me back my strength. Help me hold my head up again in honor to you dear God."

The prayer we just read, is the prayer of a meek man. A father who wants more than ever to become putty in the hands of the potter. That man is now a pastor of a growing church in California. God has not only rebuilt him but has blessed him with an inheritance of men just like him. Men broken by life and being mended by God. When God rebuilds us he rebuilds our manhood, fatherhood, and restores our core. Meekness restores relationship with God rekindling worship for Him. He takes us on and mentors us in godly ways, helps us build healthy support structures and deep abiding friendships, defines the place where He can best use our time and talent and casts a large vision for our future. I'd call that Blessed. Just as he restored Job, he will and is restoring each of us with strength for today and bright hope for tomorrow.

PURPOSE:

The purpose for this chapter is to get in touch with what needs restoration in my life and turning that job over to God for his expertise in rebuilding me as a shining star for His glory in this world.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Do you find approaching God comes more easily now? Is your confidence increasing?
2. Do you feel His deep abiding Love helping you want to get to know Him better?
3. I have begun to ask God to increase my vision for _____.
4. I can be a blessing in my home by _____.
5. What about church and community. I think he wants me to be a good fit in _____.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

TOOL KIT: I'm being restored in His service.

MAJOR HINDERANCE: SELF

FEATRUED FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: PATIENCE

CHAPTER 8

GIVING UP THE RIGHT TO BE WRONG

Deep in the battle for us all at the turning point of history, Jesus began to sweat blood. This promise that God had made --(Psalm 16:10 (KJV) "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.") -- was now upon Him. This choice, this man the Son of God, this "second Adam" was making was at the balance point of eternity for us all. He knew it. But, in order to live in this promise he would have to -- D I E and he would have to go into H E L L! He pleaded with the Father saying: . . . "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me. . . ." Jesus in that moment could have decided to cut and run -- He didn't, he gave up His right to do something wrong. He continued in his anguish: ". . . nevertheless not as I will, but as thou will."

Did you see Mel Gibsons' 'The Passion of The Christ'? From the moment Jesus said no to self and yes to God all hell broke lose. The next twelve hours of his life were spent in complete and utter carnage ending by the horrific death on the Cross. Then, in the last scene, the resurrection. It happened. The promise happened.

I think it took both the promise and His choice to receive the promise for it to have the history of mankind change. It is so with each of us. Christ promises blessing but we must choose to receive it, costly as it may be.

Our journey takes a turn deep within at this point. On the cusp of every promise which will be costly to self we must assess the willingness to continue. When cornered and facing severe physical harm, even death our biology takes over. We don't want to die so adrenal glands secrete large doses of adrenalin into our system preparing us for battle. We could die and we must defend against that at all costs, because we value life, our own life above all else. Then he draws an equation. Being wrong, is the psychological equivalent of being physically cornered, damaged or even killed. The same defenses go into play when we are challenged in our position, belief, or stand on one or more fronts. We must be right or we suffer a great loss at the psychological self level. We must be and remain self-- right. We will defend it to the death!

Sin can occur when we are wrong-- or when we are right. Why? Its that tree of Genesis 2 again. Its the Tree of The Knowledge of Good and Evil, right and wrong are defined as being what we think they are. And if we think they are, then they are and that's that, by gum. . .! Both being right and being wrong require mercy when positioned in the pride of life. We must acquire mercy and be forgiven even if we are right, because, someone else may not think we are right, be offended, so we need his mercy and his forgiveness. Jesus knew this in His Passion.

Let me muse for a moment. Let's suppose the Tree of the knowledge of Good and Evil represents the horizontal bar of the Cross where Jesus' hands were nailed. Relationships with others are often described as being horizontal relationships. We develop them in the comfort of where we live on the horizontal plane of life. Now let us further, suppose the far reach of his hands outstretched represents the full distance of measurement between good and evil. Choose one end as good and one as evil. His blood flows on both ends, to cleanse, forgive and offer mercy to all. Suppose further that the verticle post of the Cross represents the relationship with God in His righteousness, goodness, glory, and mercy. The post of the Cross and the bar meet at His heart. There he offers mercy and forgiveness to all,

and he restores innocence and life.

He allows us to direct our prayer up to and through Him. It is our hope that He will effect another on the same horizontal plane. We want Him to apply His truth and righteous position on the vertical plane. We want Him to give us the power to receive mercy from Him, then in turn to give it to others as well. In every case where right and wrong are definable, He is there to give us the power of mercy for one another, and that is truly a holy blessing. So in seeking His right ways we are filled with them. Many do, many don't. They must forgive us, we them. So in all we seek mercy.

As we plan for restoring relationships, friendships and building or rebuilding our manhood and fatherhood God lets us gain justice through His mercy. Just as he gave us all mercy in lieu of judgment by being our friend, our Lord and our savior he grants us power to carry out His mission in our own rebuilt lives to do the same for others. It is the application of the golden rule, doing unto others as we would be done unto. When we, define our horizontal position as different from that of another, we can both choose to direct that difference to the vertical position of mercy and that is a powerful blessing in deed!

Blessed are we when we hunger and thirst for His righteousness, we will be filled. Blessed are we when we grant mercy for we will receive mercy then. The two concepts meet together at the center of the Cross empowered by the promise of resurrection.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to rebuild under the authority of mercy so that we don't have to be right, we just have to be forgiven.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. We live in a fallen world where being right is of utmost importance and being wrong is devastating. Jesus promises that can live in such a way to Love our Neighbor. How can we do this if he/she is wrong?
2. Read Micah 6:8 (KJV): He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God? Discuss how this restores innocence. What does humility have to do with justice or mercy?
3. Jesus lives in you. He has a number of promises for you which he will lead you into and through. What is the most difficult promise for you to walk into with Jesus?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

TOOL BOX: Innocence is found in the moment of truth and meekness. Matt. 5:6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy.

MAJOR HINDERENCE: PRIDE

FEATURED FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: LOVE

CHAPTER 9

FATHERS WITH PURE HEARTS, PEACEFUL PURPOSES, AND BOLD CONFIDENCE FOR EVERY BATTLE

Once there was a frog, a handsome sort, full of energy and quite able to hop with great distance and accuracy. A clever old man lived in the woods near the frog pond. The old man had caught many frogs from the pond and eaten them. He had been enjoying a contest with this one particular frog for some time that he was trying to capture and eat. However, because the frog was so athletic the old man could never get him. He decided upon a plot. 'I know this frog can jump with great accuracy' he thought, 'I'll challenge him. I'll make a bet with him that he can't jump into this kettle on my stove'. The frog being very proud of himself as an excellent jumper, and with a history of being able to outwit the old man, accepted the bet. He was so confident he even invited his friends to watch his jump.

On the appointed morning, a rather chilly morning, the frog and his friends showed up for the jump. As it happened the clever old man was not there but he had left a large water filled kettle upon the stove top, being heated by a gentle flame. The frog took a wild leap hitting the target on the first jump. His friends cheered loudly. Soon they became envious. The water was warm and nice on the cold morning. The frog explained how they could easily jump in and be warm as well. One by one they each jumped and joined him in the kettle. They were having a some much fun, and as the water temperature increased they all became sleepy. Each frog dosed off-- for what would be his last nap. The water reached a boil and cooked the frogs. Presently, the old man arrived to find-- lunch.

Both the frog and the man succeeded. However, in their success each gave up something as well. The frog-- his life, the old man-- his game with the frog, Then there was a third group who also gave up something. The friends, they gave up their innocence and their lives as well. Sometimes I am as the frog, at other times as the old man and at still other times as one who just came along to watch. I suppose we can all identify. We all have curiosity. In most all ways a contest is tempting to establish, participate in, or watch. To the old man, the frog and each of his friends it was about success. Besting another is appealing, so much so, the friends of the frog gave their life to watch the contest. Millions of us in our culture can identify. Sunday sports have become a national pastime. As we watch the best athletes compete we can imagine being as good and doing as well as they. In a way we succeed when they do, we lose when they lose. We have emotional and imaginary success through our champions.

It is in our imaginations where temptation is often introduced. It was so with Adam and Eve in Genesis and it remains so with our ancestors and us as well. Jesus was aware that in our hearts we imagine many selfish achievements all of which are not good. King David imagined Bathsheba lying next to him in embrace so he arranged to have sex with her. He was told of her pregnancy afterward. He was the father and he knew it. He imagined Uriah, her husband who was gone to war and away from her for many months, would not like the news, nor would the nation of Israel. He imagined himself being shamed if others found out. Highly motivated by his imagination it became the motivating source of his behavior. We are familiar with the story and its ending. In the end Uriah, Bathsheba's husband the baby born from David's tryst with her both died. David was successful but he was not blessed in his success. The

same was true for Adam and Eve. They were successful but not blessed. In each case their success resulted in a large down side for others, and each resulted in death. Solomon reflects: Proverbs 14:12 (KJV) There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death.

God records events in the lives of people as example for us to see the power we have in winning, losing, and watching. We can get it by learning about their lives-- Adam, Eve, David and others. Here is what the Apostle James says happen as the motive each pursued to become successful in their goals: James 1:12 (KJV) Blessed is the man that endures temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempts he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust has conceived, it brings forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, brings forth death. It appears that our imaginations are more prone to success than blessing. Succeeding in the challenge becomes more important than the blessing of enduring the temptation. The enemy seems to find a powerful selfish motivating force residing in our imagination. Lust! The key moment for blessing seems to be at that time when we are challenged to imagine goals of self fulfillment no matter what the cost. Often when we are tempted don't think it through we just act from our selfish emotional desires. When this happens we may succeed but we get into hot water, and perhaps get others in there too.

Jesus talked of the blessing of a pure heart which has its outcome in "seeing God." He speaks of our being peacemakers being a blessing because we will be called "the children of God" when we are making peace. Moreover He speaks of blessing coming from standing tall when we are persecuted for taking a stand to be pure and be at peace with Him. Here is how I perceive it to work.

When we find we are being tempted and tested God wants us to seek Him, see life from His longrange perspective. He gives us good and perfect gifts, good pure advice from which we can live in purity and at peace with Him. The level of confidence which comes from knowing He and we are at peace gives us power to stand tall in the face of challenge. We can go against the grain. In that kind of event even if we appear to lose we win. We are blessed even if it appears we have not been successful to the world.

I think we get more instruction on this from James 4:1-12 (MsgB) Where do you think all these appalling wars and quarrels come from? Do you think they just happen? Think again. They come about because you want your own way, and fight for it deep inside yourselves. You lust for what you don't have and are willing to kill to get it. You want what isn't yours and will risk violence to get your hands on it. You wouldn't think of just asking God for it, would you? And why not? Because you know you'd be asking for what you have no right to. You're spoiled children, each wanting your own way. You're cheating on God. If all you want is your own way, flirting with the world every chance you get, you end up enemies of God and his way. And do you suppose God doesn't care? The proverb has it that "he's a fiercely jealous lover." And what he gives in love is far better than anything else you'll find. It's common knowledge that "God goes against the willful proud; God gives grace to the willing humble." So let God work his will in you. Yell a loud no to the Devil and watch him scamper. Say a quiet yes to God and he'll be there in no time. Quit dabbling in sin. Purify

your inner life. Quit playing the field. Hit bottom, and cry your eyes out. The fun and games are over. Get serious, really serious. Get down on your knees before the Master; it's the only way you'll get on your feet. Don't bad-mouth each other, friends. It's God's Word, his Message, his Royal Rule, that takes a beating in that kind of talk. You're supposed to be honoring the Message, not writing graffiti all over it. God is in charge of deciding human destiny. Who do you think you are to meddle in the destiny of others?

When the Prophet Jeremiah was down and out, struggling, living life from a pure heart, and standing up to all kinds of persecution, God said this to him: Jer. 29:11 "For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you," declares the LORD'...

PURPOSE

The purpose of this chapter is to find God's blessing in finding and keeping a pure heart and being at peace with Him and others by submitting our imagination to Him so that He may grant us wisdom in all our actions, attitudes, thoughts, speech.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

Read 1 Tim. 1:5 The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.

1. How does our imagination get us into trouble?
2. How can we keep lust under control?
3. Looking back, can you define a time when self was the hardest to challenge?
Can you describe which was the strongest for you to resist. The lust of the eyes, flesh, or pride of Life?
4. What do you see as the difference between success and blessing.
5. What does it mean to be a peacemaker? How did Jesus make peace for and with us?
6. What specific battle has God Called you enter in your bold adventure to be an ambassador for Him in this world?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

TOOL BOX: Purity is a state of being free from self and free to be who God has called you to be. Making Peace is your sacrifice in the adventure of life. Expecting persecution goes with the territory of a Bold and Passionate man.

MAJOR HINDERENCE: SELF FULFILLMENT

FEATURED FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: FAITH

CHAPTER 10

RESTITUTION-- LIVING THE BLESSING

It was early dawn on the Sixth Day. The Trinity had agreed this part of creation would be the best of all. They had a plan. Create Man. Create him in our image. They did it. The Bible says that God created man, male and female he created them. Then he blessed them. What was this blessing? Blessing in large part is the commission to succeed in humility. Adam had done nothing to get a blessing except to be submissive to God as creator. The Prophet Jeremiah was asked to go to the Potter's house and observe the Potter creating a jar. It was a metaphor. The jar had nothing to do with its creation, as it is created to be to the pleasure and glory of its creator. The Potter blesses the jar by its use. He can take it from the shelf and use it a lot or a little. He may not use it at all. It may be his pleasure to just look at its beauty. He can even break it into shards, grind them up, and re-create it or make an entirely different vessel from the same clay. This is how it is with us. We have been broken ground to powder, and re-created in a new image. The old man (old pot) and all his trappings can not use us anymore. He may try to take us off the shelf from time to time and use us, but it is not the same. He may even use us successfully, but it gives us no pleasure. It is when the master, the potter uses us that we are fulfilled, and blessed. We are empowered by Him to be used as a vessel to bless others and that gives us pleasure as it does Him.

It is with us as it was with Adam. We need not do anything to be blessed, except to be the vessel God created us to be in His use. God has a purpose for your life, for each of our lives. In our old form we were like jars who were mis-shapen. We could do nothing right in large part because we either acted as animated jars who believed we were our own creators doing our own thing, or we assumed what we were doing was by God given directive, yet still acting on our own strength and at our own direction. The Bible says we were worse than useless, we were harmful.

Not anymore. We are new creatures now. We have been broken, ground into dust and re-formed into a vessel committed to Him and determined to be useful to Him. As the Apostle Paul proclaims we are living sacrifices. Dead men on furlough, having no life of ourselves but having the life of Christ living in us. We are ambassadors for Him. What we do becomes worship unto Him because He is using us and is directing our use. As Christ said: I only do what I see the Father doing, He gives us grace to do the same.

Living in the blessing was modeled by Christ. His passion was to fulfill the mission for which He came. He indicates several places in the gospels that those following Him will be called to do the same thing. He promises to teach us how by filling us with His Holy Spirit so we can know what to do in the Church, in the community and in the world. The great commission given by Christ teaches (Matthew 28:19-20 (MsgB)) us to go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age." We are vessels on a mission with a commission and a future full of promise

As our future moves toward us, we commissioned vessels have a mission to represent, honor, and give special place to the children we have lost to abortion. We will not be concerned by what others may say or think. We will be

passionate vessels on a quest to fulfill what we were made to do and fulfill who we were made to be. We are instructed in how this will all take place, even in the face of persucution. Even when we choose to perseucte our own selves. Rev. 12:11 (MsgB) They defeated him (the old man and the enemy Satan) through the blood of the Lamb and the bold word of their witness. They weren't in love with themselves; they were willing to die for Christ. Just as the pot rebuilt and restored by the potter, we are useful to God in His work to rebuild and restore others. We are living agents of restitution. There is a great cloud of witnesses looking on from Heaven in our support no matter what happens in our quest as instruments of abundant life to others. Their only dissapointment would be if we decided to leave the game.

PURPOSE

The purpose for this chapter is to challenge you to let your light shine in communion with the Father in Heaven. Both you and He are accustom to Fatherhood Lost. He has restored honor and meaning to your life. You can do no less for your lost son or daughter. Your life is now commissioned be an example of redemptive Fatherhood Lost.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. How can I use the time treasure and talent God has given me to help others redeem fatherhood lost?
2. If I meat with resistance even from myself, how should I handle it?
3. What must I do to accomplish such a plan as a redeeming agent-- today?
4. Am I in it for the long haul? If so, you are a cherished pot in the good hands of the everlasting potter-- Never forget that!

Bless you and all those with whom you may ome in contact.

CLOSE IN PRAYER

TOOL KIT: I know I was created for His pleasure and I purpose to live by the Spirit so that I can fulfill that blessing.

MAJOR HINDERENCE: THE CARES AND PERSECUTION OF THIS LIFE

FEATURED FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT: GOODNESS AND PATIENCE

THE BEGINNING

