



Freedom

focus

“To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God...” (Acts 26:18)



April—May 2006

How Hurts Can Bring Divine Blessing

Relationships play an integral role in our lives. Some of these relationships are close and others are very distant. Within relationships we look for affirmation, acceptance, and encouragement.

Many factors make these relationships meaningful to us. We look for a facial expression that communicates to us, “I am glad to be with you.” Encouraging words, a warm tone of voice, and a loving embrace add meaning to these relationships. We are automatically drawn closer to people who make us feel accepted for who we are. Relationships that encourage spiritual and emotional intimacy especially create a great magnetic effect. All of these factors play an important part in the type of relationships we all imagine and desire.

For most of us, however, our dream for meaningful relationships are dashed by the reality of hurts, whether caused intentionally or unintentionally. This pain is especially great when the wounds are caused by those we care about the most.

One of life’s most difficult challenges is understanding how to respond to these hurts. The natural response is to protect ourselves from further hurt by isolating ourselves and/or avenging ourselves. As the hurts begin to mount, we build a figurative “brick wall” around our hearts to serve as our guard and defense against further wounding.



First Peter 3:8-9 challenges us with a better approach to addressing these hurts. We read, *“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: Not rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrariwise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that ye should inherit*

a blessing.” Here we find five key points to bring reconciliation in any relationship.

1. Be of one mind—Encourage harmony and unity by taking the initiative in reconciliation. We should agree with our offender in our point of failure or misconduct.

2. Have compassion one of another—The Greek word for this concept is *sumpathes*, which literally means “to feel together with.” True sympathy is allowing ourselves to feel what that other person is feeling.

3. Love as brethren—We are to love others as we would family members—affectionately and sacrificially.

4. Be pitiful—We are to have compassion toward others. Compassion desires to take action to do whatever is necessary to make things right.

5. Be courteous—Demonstrate a humble attitude. Humility is preferring others above ourselves and showing them respect.

Choosing to return good for the evil we have received frees us from the bondage of bitterness and frees God to supernaturally compensate our pain for His divine blessing. In fact, 1 Peter 3:10-12 gives us four rewards that will be ours by virtue of properly responding to the hurts:

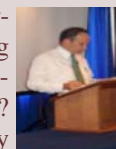
- **We will enjoy life.**
- **We will see good days.**
- **God will watch over our lives.**
- **God will answer our prayers.**

Let us not miss the blessings God wants to bestow as we reconcile with offenders.

By Rev. Jeff Pokone

Helping Hurting People Seminar

Do you have an interest in helping hurting people, yet feel unequipped for the job? If so, this one-day seminar is for you.



Rev. Jeff Pokone will give some practical training on the following topics:

- *Understanding Hurting People*
- *Resolving Strongholds*
- *Restoration & Healing from Abuse*
- *Overcoming Bitterness & Resentment*

Date:

May 20, 2006

Time:

8:30 am-4:30 pm

Location:

Alexandria Church of the Nazarene in Alexandria, IN

Cost:

- \$30/person until May 3rd
- \$35/person after May 3rd
(Lunch included)

Register by calling Steve Freeman @

765.724.4675.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Conquerors or Casualties

Over the past nine months, I have had the opportunity to intern with Rev. Jeff Pokone here at ICBC. The experience has significantly challenged my own spiritual growth. A specific area in which God has particularly illuminated my spiritual understanding is the reality of God's provision for daily victory available to every believer.

In Ephesians 6:10-12, Paul paints a very graphic portrait of the setting in which every believer finds himself—a fierce, spiritual battle. It is certainly not the scene of ease and passivity, free from the attacks and threats of a deadly foe. Rather, it is an intense and aggressive battle against the devil and his demonic hosts who are set on using trickery to seduce us to accept his paralyzing lies. The enemy's goal is to render us as ineffective and defeated victims—even spiritual casualties!



Satan's goal is to magnify the reality and fierceness of this battle and minimize any hope for lasting victory. In the face of defeat, it is easy to question, "What then is the purpose of salvation? Does a genuine profession of faith in Jesus Christ for salvation have no more significance than providing 'life insurance' for heaven? Is spiritual victory in the battle against the devil only an illusion that no one can ever consistently attain? Or is spiritual victory only for an elect few?"

In the face of defeat, perhaps we console ourselves that at least we tried. And besides, we are not perfect anyway; we are nothing more than sinners saved by grace.

In my own search to understand whether God really expects us to live victorious Christian lives, I was reminded of two Scriptures.

2 Corinthians 2:14 tells us, "Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us diffuses the fragrance of His knowledge in every place." According to Romans 8:37, the Apostle Paul describes all believers as being "more than conquerors." These Scriptures and many others confirm the reality that God intends every believer to be a winner in the battle against the enemy.

Is God then, expecting the impossible from us? How does God's intent become reality in our lives? I believe that God has made a two-fold provision for our spiritual victory. His first provision is a positional provision.

As a believer, I have been quick to recognize the redemptive purpose and eternal significance of Christ's death in our behalf. Yet, I have often lived as though Christ's death, burial, and resurrection had only futuristic value with no present significance.

Romans 6 and 8 and Ephesians 1-3 especially reveal

the present significance of our new birth. It does not just change our eternal destiny. It changes our present identity. The Apostle Paul describes our new identity by virtue of our faith in Christ. We are chosen ones, saints, heirs, sons, and conquerors. We have been accepted by the Father, forgiven of sin, redeemed from Satan's control, infused with the enabling Holy Spirit, and seated with Christ in heavenly places! We are not merely sinners saved by grace. This new identity has no connection to our performance or our feelings. Our identity in Christ is a non-negotiable reality. It is our birthright position by virtue of salvation!

Because we can never live beyond our understanding of who we are, it is no wonder why we wallow in defeat! Living a consistent, victorious walk as a winner in the battle against the enemy begins with understanding and affirming our identity in Christ.

God's second provision for daily victory is an experiential provision. It is *appropriation*. We can know all the right facts of who we already are by virtue of our position in Christ, and yet live in defeat if we fail to appropriate the Divine power. Appropriation is taking what we know to be true in our minds (our position), and making it ours in our hearts and lives (our experience) through our daily dependence upon the Holy Spirit to live His life through ours.

Paul understood this when he said in Galatians 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me."

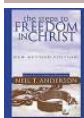
A key reason for defeat in my own personal walk with God has been dependence upon my own self-effort and will-power to do right. Jesus warned in John 15:4, "...for without Me ye can do nothing." How foolish it is to recognize our absolute dependence on Divine Providence for forgiveness of sin and spiritual redemption, only to think that we can somehow live this new life "in Christ" by ourselves (Galatians 3:3)!

In my personal walk with God, I seek to appropriate Christ's Divine strength and power by daily acknowledging to the Lord my own finiteness (John 15:4), affirming my dependence upon Christ's sufficiency for the challenges of that day (Philippians 4:13), and acting in faith and obedience to the Spirit's promptings (Romans 6:16, 19).

It is freeing to realize the Divine possibility to live in consistent spiritual victory. Since the provisions for such victory are freely available in Christ, we have no excuse for wallowing in the mire of defeat. Be a conqueror!

By Ronald Visser

Resource Review



Are you looking for a discipleship resource designed to help fellow believers in their personal walk with God? *The Steps to Freedom in Christ* by Dr. Neil Anderson may be just the resource for you.

This 24-page resource is a very practical, user-friendly guide for leading fellow believers to freedom from such areas

as cult or occult involvement, deception, bitterness, rebellion, pride, sexual bondage, fear, and curses. This guide is complete with Biblical explanations and model prayers of renunciation and surrender that will help you in helping others. This resource is especially useful in one-on-one discipleship. (*Cost is \$4.00 plus shipping and tax.*)