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# Becoming Single-Minded - Contentment -

*As long as we struggle for our rights, we will wrestle with disappointment, anger, and bitterness. We worry over things that we have not yet yielded to God. As we give our "rights" to God, we are set free from anger and bitterness.*

### **THE BURNT OFFERING**

**T**he Lord, God Almighty, spoke to Abram while he lived in Ur of the Chaldees (lower Mesopotamia). This occurred before his aging father, Terah, moved to Haran (upper Mesopotamia) (Acts 7:1-8). Terah died at Haran at the age of 205. "Now the LORD had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:1-3). We don't know exactly how old Abram was when he left Ur, nor how long it took the family to travel from Ur to Haran; however, Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran. We do know that he was married to Sarai when he left Ur and that she was barren (Genesis 11:30). Therefore, quite probably Abram and Sarai were of child bearing ages when God first spoke to him. This is significant because, hidden in God's words to Abram is a promise of a son.

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We see the promise more elaborately described in Genesis, chapter fifteen, when God enters into a covenant with Abram. God told Abram to prepare some animals and fowls for sacrifice and to divide them in half. The word "covenant" means "to cut an agreement". God spoke to Abram giving him certain promises concerning his seed. Then the presence of the LORD, in the form of *a smoking furnace and a burning lamp*, passed between the divided pieces of the sacrifices. I believe that God was saying that He would be divided like those sacrifices if He did not keep His promise to Abram.

However, as time passed and Abram and Sarai grow old, well beyond the years of the child-bearing, they began to try to figure out how they could fulfill God's promise. They decided that Abram must have a child by Sarai's maid, Hagar. It was the only thing that made sense to them at the time. However, man's efforts to accomplish God's purposes always end up in disaster. Hagar gave birth to Ishmael, but Ishmael was not God's promise to Abram.

God, being faithful to His word, re-instituted His promise to Abram (Genesis 17:1-15). God announced that He is "El-Shaddi", the "God-Almighty". He told Abram to change his name from **Abram**, meaning "father", to **Abraham**, meaning "father of a multitude". He was also to change Sarai's name to **Sarah** (mother of many). Then God specifically announced that Sarah was to have a son. Abraham was to call his son's name Isaac (Genesis 17:19).

Later, God appeared to Abraham again and encouraged him that Sarah would bear a son. When Sarah overheard the conversation, she laughed within herself because she and Abraham were quite old (Genesis 18:10-15). Sure enough, when Abraham was one hundred years old, the LORD kept His word and visited Sarah and she had the son, Isaac. You can just imagine the pride of a hundred year old man having a baby son. First, in that culture, a son, much more than a daughter, would be the pride of the man. Second, Isaac was a promise of God. Third, the son was born of Sarah, Abraham's aged wife. You can just see Abraham walking with his son by his side. Abraham would stand as tall and straight as he could, with his head erect and his chest stuck out in pride.

As the days and years passed, Abraham's love and attachment to his son grew. Then God again spoke to Abraham that he might test the personal devotion of Abraham (Genesis 22:1-24). Had Isaac become an idol to Abraham? Would Abraham be willing to give up Isaac if God required that of him? *"And he God said, Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of"* (Genesis 22:2). Isaac was not just Abraham's son, he was his only legitimate son by Sarah. He was the son that Abraham treasured the most. Now, God asked him to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering. Abraham, in obedience, took Isaac to the place where God directed.

Please note what Abraham told his servants at the foot of the mountain. *"And Abraham said unto his young men, Abide ye here with the ass; and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again unto you"* (Genesis 22:15). How could he say this when he was about to sacrifice his son? The author of the book of Hebrews records that Abraham believed that even if he sacrificed his son, that God would have to resurrect his son to keep His promises to him (Hebrews 11:17-19). Therefore, Abraham built an altar, put wood upon it, tied up his son, laid him upon the altar, and raised his knife to kill his son. Then the angel of the LORD spoke to Abraham. *"And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing to him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou has not withheld thy son, thine only son from me"* (Genesis 22:12). When Abraham looked, he saw a ram that had his horns caught in a thicket. Therefore, he took Isaac from off the altar and put the ram on the altar. Abraham knew that God had provided the sacrifice. Therefore, he called the place **Jehovah-Jireh** meaning that God will provide. God then reestablished His covenant with Abraham and with his seed.

The Bible records the lives of the people of the Old Testament (Covenant) that they may serve as examples to us. This story of Abraham beautifully illustrates an important principle in Biblical counseling. It demonstrates how to avoid anger and find contentment through becoming single-minded. Jesus made a profound statement by saying, *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon"* (Matthew 6:24). Whenever we try to straddle the fence, we get hung up on some barbed wire bringing sharp pain to us.

## The Story Of Two Dogs

Some years ago as I was studying about **anger**, God gave me a little story to communicate some counseling principles about it. There was this little old lady who had two dogs. One was a great big ugly, ferocious Pitbull dog that she named Anger. She kept Anger penned up in her back yard. Actually, she was afraid to let him out of the yard. People would be afraid of him, and someone just might get bit by him. The second dog was a small, friendly sheep dog which she had named Peace. She allowed Peace to come into her house and even took Peace with her when she walked to a nearby market. She had a small cart and a harness made for Peace so that he could pull the cart to and from market. There was just one problem. Since Peace was such a small dog, he was not able to pull the cart fully loaded. Usually when this little old lady did her shopping, she would only partially load the cart and end up carrying a couple of bags of groceries in her arms.

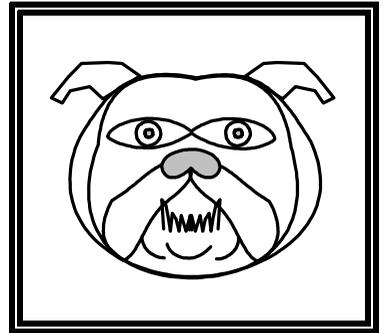
One day she got the harness, put it on Peace, hooked him up to the cart, and started off to market. On the way there some teenage bullies stopped her and began to make fun of her and her little dog pulling the little cart. The more they teased her, the more she got

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upset. Finally, one of boys pulled a switchblade knife out of his pants pocket and cut the harness that attached Peace to the cart. Another boy rushed and grabbed Peace, running off with him with the other boys following. The little old lady just helplessly stood there in shock.

Not knowing what to do, the little old lady picked up the tongue of the cart and dragged it back home. She was hurt. She was devastated. She wandered out into her back yard. She was so upset that Anger, her big Pitbull dog, sensed her emotional hurts. Then Anger began to pace back and forth in the yard. He began to snarl and show his teeth. The lady became almost terrified. What if Anger jumped the fence and went and bit someone? What if Anger turned and even bit her? In desperation, she dropped to her knees and began to pray. "Lord, some bullies have stolen my Peace and Anger is almost out of control! Help me!" In a few moments, God spoke to her and she got up from off her knees and went back into her house. She went into a storage room and dug through the closet. She found it! It was a larger harness that she had made to fit Anger. She also found a leash. However, she had always been afraid to put harness and leash on him. Again, Anger was so big, ugly, and ferocious that she knew that people would be afraid of him.



She returned to her back yard and called Anger. He seemed to know what was about to happen and didn't resist when she put the harness on him. She attached the leash to the harness and wrapped the leash tightly about her right hand. She opened the gate and said, "Anger, let's go and find Peace." With Anger being the dog that he was, he quickly picked up the scent of Peace and led the little old lady to the home of the bullies. She found a nearby phone booth and called the police. The police came, found Peace, and returned him to the lady. She returned home with her two dogs.

When she got home and finished repairing Peace's harness, she suddenly realized that she still had not been to market. Then she got an idea. She attached Anger directly in front of the cart. Then she attached Peace out in front of Anger. Since Anger was such a big, strong dog, he could help carry the heavy load of the cart. Also, with Anger being such a ferocious dog, he would keep the bullies away. With Peace leading the way, other people would not be so afraid. The end.

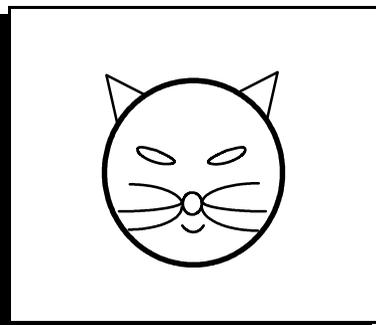
We can see several truths in this story. First, everyone has the capacity of having the emotions of both **anger** and **peace**. In fact, anger is a God-given emotional capacity. God, Himself, gets angry. Yes, even Christians get angry (Ephesians 4:26). Second, rather than opening the gate and saying, "Sic-em, Anger", we are to be slow to anger. "A

*wrathful man stirreth up strife: but he that is slow to anger appeaseth strife"* (Proverbs 15:18). God is slow to anger (Psalm 108:3). Third, a sense of loss often stirs up anger. Fourth, anger is a strong, energy charged, emotion. Fifth, the energy of the emotions of anger can be re-channeled to help resolve difficult situations.

This brings us to see specifically, one of the ways to deal with anger. On one occasion, Jesus went to Jerusalem to the temple and found the merchandising of animals for sacrifice (John 2:13-17, Mark 11:15-18). When people came to the temple, they brought with them animals to be sacrificed as a part of Hebraic worship. However, the priests examined the animals to see if they were fit for sacrifice. Of course, they would usually find something wrong with the animals, especially if Gentiles had brought them. However, they just happened to have animals inside that they had already approved. Of course, the prices for the approved animals were exorbitant.

Jesus surveyed the situation, became extremely angry, but took the time to pick up some cords off the temple floor and braided a whip. He drove the money changers out of the temple, let out the animals from their cages, poured out their money, and overturned their tables. Then Jesus declared the Word, *"Is it not written, My house shall be called of all nations the house of prayer? but ye have made it a den of thieves"* (Mark 11:17). When the disciples observed the assertive actions of Jesus, they remembered the scripture, *"The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up"* (John 2:17). Yes, Jesus got very angry! On another occasion when the Pharisees watched to see if Jesus would heal a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath, he also became very angry. *"And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he saith unto the man, Stretch fourth thine hand"* (Mark 3:5).

However, Jesus was slow to anger. He took the time to pick up the cords from off the temple floor in our original passage. He converted the energy of anger into a zeal to resolve the problem. He picked up the cords, braided them into a whip, drove out the money changers, overturned the tables, poured out the money, opened the cages letting out the animals, and assertively declared the truth. He changed the emotionally charged energy of anger into energy to resolve the situation, at least on a temporal basis.



## Pepper's Litter Box

One day my wife and I got into a hot argument over who was going to clean up a mess that her cat made around the litter box that was in my garage. Please note the use of possessive expressions. Pepper, the cat, had previously gotten into a fight with another cat and had gotten bit. The result was that she had developed an

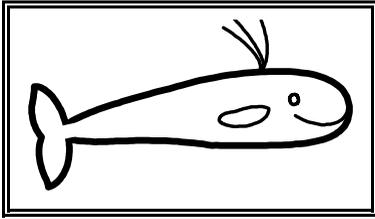
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arthritic problem in one of her back legs. When Pepper needed to use the litter box and lifted her back leg to step into the box, she would lose control of her bladder, leaving a strong, stinking mess around the litter box. Therefore, the discussion between my wife and me arose over who was going to clean up the mess. "It is your cat; therefore, you clean it up!" "Well, it is your garage; therefore, you clean it up!" I felt the mercury in the thermometer of the emotion of anger rise near the explosion mark within me. Then I remembered what God had been teaching me about anger. I dropped the topic like a hot potato, backed out of the situation for a few minutes and prayed. "God, if you want me to change the energy of the emotion of anger into a zeal to resolve the problem, show me what to do." Almost, immediately, God gave me an idea. I was to build a step around the litter box so that Pepper could make a couple of smaller steps to get into the litter box. Hopefully, she would not have the previous problem when she made the smaller steps. For the next hour, I used the energy of anger to build (sawing and hammering nails) the little step around the litter box. Of course in the process, I yielded up the right "not to have to clean up the mess" in my garage. My wife, finally did come back out to the garage to help with the mess. When it was over, I no longer felt angry. I was calm and actually felt good about the fact that by God's grace I had re-channeled that emotional energy into something constructive. Yes, the steps did help Pepper for at least some months.

### Jonah's Anger

The story of Jonah is a story of anger that is turned inward because of a failure to yield one's rights and to become single-minded. The story begins with God speaking to the prophet Jonah and telling him to go to preach to the wicked city of Nineveh (Jonah 1:1-2). Jonah was an Israelite who despised the pagan Ninevites. Therefore, he caught a ship sailing in the opposite of Nineveh that was going toward Tarshish. However, the LORD sent a great wind to cause the ship almost to be broken into pieces. The mariners were afraid, each one calling upon his god for help. They even cast their goods into the sea to lighten the ship's load. Meanwhile, Jonah had found a hiding place in the ship and had gone to sleep. The captain of the ship found Jonah and asked him why he had not called upon his God for help. The crew also cast lots to determine who had caused this storm to fall upon them. It was Jonah! They interrogated him. They asked him what they must do to him to calm the storm. Jonah responded that they must throw him over the side of the ship into the sea. They reluctantly threw him into the sea and cried unto God for mercy. *"So they took Jonah, and cast him forth into the sea: and the sea ceased from her raging"* (Jonah 1:15). This made the men exceedingly afraid of God and they worshipped him with sacrifices and vows.



*"Now the LORD had prepared a great fish to swallow up Jonah. And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights"* (Jonah 1:17). Could you just imagine being inside of the fish's stomach for three whole days? There would be no light. Could you imagine the smell? When Jonah fully realized his predicament, he prayed and told God that he was thankful for His mercy and that he would do what he had promised to God. Evidently, Jonah had previously made a commitment to God to speak for God. He concludes by declaring, *"Salvation is of the LORD"* (Jonah 2:9).

God spoke to the great fish, causing it to vomit Jonah out on dry ground. Then the LORD spoke to Jonah again and told him to tell the city of Nineveh exactly what He would tell him to say. Jonah obeyed up to a point. He ran to Nineveh, making a three day's journey into a one day journey. Look at what he preached, *"Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown"* (Jonah 3:4). It was short and to the point. God would destroy the city in forty days. The people responded by believing in God. They proclaimed a fast and repented, hoping that God would also repent. God did repent of the evil that He said that He would do unto them.

However, look at Jonah's response, *"But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry"* (Jonah 4:1). Furthermore, Jonah prayed and said to God, "I knew this would happen! This is just what I said would happen when I was still in my own country." ". . . For I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of evil" (Jonah 4:2b). If Jonah knew these things about God, why didn't he preach them to Nineveh? Why did he just say, "God is going to destroy you in forty days?"

From the beginning, Jonah took up the offense of God! Nineveh was a wicked city, and the people deserved God's wrath! From Jonah's perspective, Nineveh didn't deserve even to be warned. Therefore, he should have the right not to warn or tell the pagan city of God's grace and mercy. He was holding on to God's right of judgment. Then, once he preached to the Ninevites saying that God would destroy them, his own reputation as a prophet was at stake. When he saw himself losing these two "rights", he became very angry. Then he turned the anger inward. When anger is turned inward, one begins to entertain thoughts of suicide. He said, *"Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me: for it better for me to die than to live"* (Jonah 4:3). God simply asked him "Is it good for you to be angry?"

Next, Jonah withdrew himself to a place outside the city and made himself a shade, possibly from some brush. Anger often causes us to withdraw. Jonah sat stewing over

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the situation, waiting to see what God would do with the city. God prepared a gourd to grow up over Jonah's head to give him shade from the hot sun. Jonah was happy about that. *"But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd that it withered"* (Jonah 4:7). There were four things that God specifically prepared for Jonah: a great fish, a gourd, a worm, and a very hot east wind. I believe that this demonstrates God's personal interest in the life of Jonah and in our lives.

When the gourd dried up, it allowed the hot sun to bear down upon Jonah. Then God sent the "vehement" east wind. Jonah became so hot that he became faint and ". . . wished in himself to die, and said, 'It is better for me to die than to live'" (Jonah 4:8). God didn't throw up His hands and say, "Oh, poor Jonah is having such a hard time that he has become suicidal. I just don't know what I am going to do." Instead, God addressed Jonah's anger. *"And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he [Jonah] said, I do well to be angry, even unto death"* (Jonah 4:9). Suicidal people are **angry** people. They feel that life is unfair! They are holding on to what they feel are their rights. Jonah felt that he had the right to have a gourd to shade his head. He had allowed anger to become his friend.

God confronted the issue by pointing out to Jonah that he did not plant the gourd, nor did he labor, or cause it to grow. It was a gift from God. God had the right to destroy the plant if He desired. He then asked Jonah, "Which is more important, a plant or a city of 60,000 people who have no knowledge of God and their many heads of cattle?" The story ends with this question. Jonah had his priorities mixed up! However, the story leaves us with another question, "**Are we angry because we have our priorities out of order?**"

Whenever, we find ourselves getting angry as Jonah did, we should stop right where we are and ask ourselves, "What priorities do we have out of order?" **Whatever we worry over becomes our priority**. It doesn't have to be something that we might consider being bad. It can be something good. We can worry over the loss of a job, a friend, or a ministry. Jesus said, *"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof"* (Matthew 6:33-34). Literally, Jesus said, "Don't make things a priority." We are not to **think** on the minor things. We are to **think** on the kingdom of God and the righteousness that we have in Jesus. If Jonah had been thinking on God's kingdom, he would never had gotten angry about preaching the grace of God to Nineveh. In one sense, anger is a result of being self-centered rather than being God-centered. When we are self-centered, we must hold on to the things that God has given to us. However, when we are God-centered, we see that God becomes responsible for what we have.

## Jonah's Anger

I. Jonah got angry when God told him to go to Nineveh and cry against the city.

A. CAUSE = Jonah knew that God was gracious and merciful, and slow to anger, and of great kindness; therefore, if Nineveh repented, God would not destroy it.

1. Jonah took up offense for God's righteousness.
2. Nineveh didn't deserve to be warned.
3. Jonah felt he had the right not to preach to Nineveh.

B. RESULTS

1. Jonah ran from God.
2. Jonah ran from the Word of God.

II. Jonah got angry when Nineveh repented and God did not destroy the city.

A. CAUSE = Jonah preached only a message of destruction without preaching anything about the grace, mercy, or forgiveness of God.

1. This time Jonah's reputation is at stake.
2. Jonah's pride was on the line.

B. RESULTS

1. Jonah was exceedingly displeased.
2. Jonah was very angry.
3. He wished that he was dead.
4. He isolated himself from everyone.

III. Jonah was exceeding glad for the gourd, but became angry when the worm ate the gourd.

A. CAUSE = He felt like the gourd had become his possession.

1. He had lost his protection.
2. He felt that he had a right to have a shade.

B. RESULTS

1. Anger had become his friend.
2. He felt he had a right to be angry.
3. He allowed more thoughts of suicide to enter his mind ("unto death").

## God's Answer

**Jonah needed to get his priorities straight.**

1. Jonah needed to yield to God the right of fairness (righteous indignation).
2. Jonah needed to yield to God the right of having a perfect reputation.
3. Jonah needed to yield to God the right of having personal possessions.

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Anger is a result of us holding on to some right that we believe that we have that has been, is being, or we feel like, may be taken away from us. I used to become just furious over my cars. I would buy a new car or one that was "new" to me and go to the Mall, park it, and do some shopping. Then I would come back to find that someone had opened their car door up against my car door and left a dent in my car door. I would feel like exploding! How could the other person do such a thing? I would tell my wife that I was going to buy a German tank and find a narrow parking space with a car on each side and get both of them at the same time. I felt that I should have the right to have a car without dents from some other person's car door. Then one day, I came to realize that I should give my "rights" to God. Therefore, I started giving my cars to God. Then when my oldest daughter totaled our newest car and it was her fault, I didn't get mad. The car belonged to God. If God allowed it to be totaled, that was His business.

Let me express this another way. If I have a hundred dollar bill in my pocket and someone picked my pocket and took the hundred dollar bill, then I might get upset. However, if I gave the hundred dollar bill to you and someone steals it from you, I wouldn't be near as upset. There is a very simple reason for the difference in the second case. I no longer owned the hundred dollar bill. When we give our lives and possession to God, we no longer own them either.

## Worry

Worry is dwelling upon thoughts of fear of loss that you have allowed the enemy to plant in your mind. Moreover, our attitudes about worry are that we either justify it or we excuse it. We may justify it by saying, "If I don't worry about it, no one else will." You have heard people say, "I just can't keep from worrying about it." Others say, "You just don't know what I am going through." We may also excuse it by saying, "Well, everyone worries." Others may say, "I am not really worried, just concerned." Still others say, "You just need to worry about some things."

What is God's attitude toward worry? To God it is a **sin**. Why? First, it demonstrates a lack of faith in God. Second, it demonstrates that we are looking at our inability, rather than God's ability. Third, it is acting in direct contradiction to God's Word that tells us not to worry. Please read Matthew 6:24-34. Jesus tells us what the root causes of worry are. We are holding on to the world, that is, our rights. We may feel that we have a right to be clothed, a right to be fed, or a right to have a certain stature or appearance. We may also hold on to many other rights: a right to be appreciated, a right to be loved, a right to be accepted, a right to be successful, and a right to be respected. Jesus says that we worry by "taking thought" about these rights. We hold them in the forefront of our attention. Focusing on them tends to magnify them.

### *Symptoms of Worry*

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Nightmares</li> <li>2. Sleeplessness</li> <li>3. Overindulgence in sleep</li> <li>4. Headaches and backaches</li> <li>5. Exhaustion</li> <li>6. Nervousness</li> <li>7. Confusion</li> <li>8. Isolation from others</li> <li>9. Inability to concentrate</li> <li>10. A upset stomach</li> <li>11. Susceptibility to colds and allergies</li> <li>12. Bitterness</li> <li>13. Frequency of need to use the bathroom</li> <li>14. Critical attitude toward life and others</li> <li>15. Coldness toward others</li> <li>16. Inability to do skilled or complicated tasks</li> <li>17. Weight loss or weight gain</li> </ol> | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>18. Dependence upon medications               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Sleeping pills</li> <li>b. Antidepressants</li> <li>c. Stimulants</li> </ol> </li> <li>19. Daydreaming</li> <li>20. Restlessness</li> <li>21. Excessiveness - addictions - compulsions               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Food</li> <li>b. Play</li> <li>d. Work</li> <li>e. Alcohol</li> <li>f. Drugs (prescription)</li> <li>g. Smoking</li> </ol> </li> <li>22. Difficult or uncontrolled thoughts               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Thoughts of hopelessness</li> <li>b. Thoughts of being victimized</li> <li>c. Thoughts of unfairness</li> <li>d. Thoughts of suicide</li> </ol> </li> </ol> |
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Jesus does not simply tell us **the problem** as do so many psychologists. He also tells us how to **overcome** worry. He says, "Take no thought" in verses 25, 28, and 34. Paul also in II Corinthians 10:4-5 says that we are to cast down imaginations and bring every thought captive to the obedience of Jesus. Now, have you ever tried **not** to think of something? The more that you try not to think of it, the more you end up thinking of it. Therefore, there must be a **positive** as well as a negative side. Rather than focusing our attention on the things of the world, we are **to do** something else. We are to focus our attention on **God's kingdom**. There is no worry in God's kingdom. It would be even difficult to imagine God scratching His head, worrying over something that happens in our lives. The Kingdom of God and worry are mutually exclusive. In God's kingdom, God is the king. For us to live daily in His kingdom, we are to allow Him to be **our** king daily. We are to make doing right a priority. Finally, God will add all those things mentioned to our lives. He will care for our basic needs.

Paul gives us a solution for worry. *"Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand. Be careful*

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*for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus"* (Philippians 4:4-7). Paul begins by telling us about our part of the equation. First, he tells us that we are to **rejoice c-o-n-t-i-n-u-a-l-l-y**. We are to rejoice "always" in every situation. Then Paul repeats the words for emphasis. How can we do this? We must yield control to God, believe that He has control, and believe that He will work all things together for our good. Second, we are to restrain from excesses. When we can't face situations, we have the tendency to indulge ourselves in something to cover our failure or pain. Indulgences may take the form of use of alcohol, sexual relations, use of drugs (for pleasure or sedation), and overwork. Some may get their highs from sports or recreation. Other may focus their attention on and idolize another person (a spouse, parents, children, or a movie star). Third, we must let go of our cares. We must yield our rights to God. We are to cast our burdens upon the Lord. Fourth, we are to pray about everything. We are to pray about our needs, and we are to pray in the midst of emergencies. We are to pray with thanksgiving. How can we pray with **thanksgiving**, especially when things are not going our way? Again, we must believe that God is in control and that He will answer the prayer with our good in mind.

Paul also tells us God's part of the equation. First, He will bring peace to the storms in our life, even when we or others can't understand why we would have peace in that situation. Second, He will keep our hearts. Yes, when we yield our rights unto God, He will keep our emotions in check. He will keep our anger from taking control. He will keep sorrow from overtaking us. He will keep fear at a distance. He will keep us out of the pits of depression. He will hold anxiety back. Third, He will keep our minds. Our mind is made up of memories, reasoning thoughts, and imaginations. The Greek word for *keep* is "φρουρησεν", a military term. It means to guard: either to prevent hostile invasion or to keep the inhabitants of a besieged city from flight. God will also guard our minds from hostile invasion of wrong thoughts, memories or imaginations. He will also guard our thoughts from taking flight as with the case of Attention Deficit Disorder. Another shade of the meaning of the word is *to preserve one for the attainment of something*. We might say that He will keep us thinking straight.

## *Don't Fear!*

Worry is a type of fear. God tells us over and over in His Word that we are **not to fear**. Faith opens the door for God to work, while fear opens the door for the powers of the Devil to work in our lives. Some years ago, I had my first opportunity to travel by airplane. When I was confronted with the decision to fly back home or take a bus, I came

to realize that I was afraid to ride in an airplane. The night before I was to get the ticket, I wrestled with fear for several hours. I had to pray, rebuke fear, quote Scripture, and put my life in God's hands trusting Him to take care of me. The following exercise may be of extreme value to the person who finds himself dealing with worry or fear.

**Instructions:**

1. Write each Scripture on a 3 X 5 card.
2. Read each verse aloud.
3. Meditate on each Scripture (visualize by turning it over in your mind).
4. Make it a personal confession using personal pronouns ("I", "me", etc.).
5. Pray it unto God ("I am ask you Heavenly Father to honor your Word . . .").
6. Expect God to respond.

### OVERCOMING FEAR

Deuteronomy 1:21	Proverbs 29:25	II Kings 6:16	Luke 12:7
Joshua 8:1	Psalms 23:4	Psalms 34:4	Psalms 34:7
Luke 1:13	I Chronicles 28:20	Romans 8:15	Deuteronomy 3:22
Psalms 27:3	Genesis 15:1	Genesis 21:17	Joshua 10:25
II Chronicles 20:15	Luke 5:10	I John 4:18	Luke 12:32
Hebrews 13:6	Exodus 14:13	Psalms 27:1	Revelation 1:17
Proverbs 1:33	Deuteronomy 31:8	Luke 8:50	I Kings 17:13
Luke 2:10	Proverbs 10:24	Isaiah 41:9-10	Isaiah 41:13
Judges 6:23	II Timothy 1:7	Deuteronomy 31:6	Acts 27:24

*"For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, love, and a sound mind."*

## How To Conquer Fear

- 1. One should begin with prayer.**
  - a. Ask God what the source of fear is.
  - b. Ask God to take away the fear.
- 2. Get a clear conscience.**
  - a. Forgive those who have offended you.
  - b. Ask forgiveness of others that you have offended.
  - c. Make restitution if needed.
- 3. Reclaim any ground that you have yielded to the enemy.**
  - a. Confess all sin to God.
  - b. Ask for His forgiveness and cleansing.
  - c. Ask God to restore your soul.
  - d. Be assertive and kick "fear" out.
- 4. Submit yourself unto God.**
  - a. Yield all rights that you have assumed.
  - b. Put your trust in God hands.
- 5. Resist the Devil.**
  - a. Proclaim who you are in Christ.
  - b. Make a stand.
- 6. Apply the Word to the situation.**
  - a. Use the authority of the Word.
  - b. Use it as a powerful offensive weapon, as a sword.
- 7. Act in faith.**
  - a. Acknowledge your victory in Christ.
  - b. Confess that you are an overcomer.
  - c. Now act like an overcomer.

## Moses' Story

The children of Israel had multiplied in the land of Egypt. Although, the previous king of Egypt had given them the right to occupy the land, the new king, Pharaoh, became fearful of their number and brought them under slavery. The Pharaoh ordered the Hebrew midwives to kill all the male Hebrew babies. However, the midwives feared God more than the king of Egypt. They allowed the male babies to live. Moses happened to

be such a child. His mother made a little boat out of a basket, had his sister to put him in the basket, and set it in the flags at the edge of the Nile river. The daughter of Pharaoh came to the river to bathe and saw the basket and had a maid to bring it to her. When she opened the basket, baby Moses cried. Moses' sister, who had been watching, offered the assistance of Moses' mother to care for the child. The daughter of Pharaoh accepted the care of Moses' mother and took both into her household.

From that miraculous beginning, Moses must have known that he had a call of God upon his life. He grew up disciplined in the way of the Egyptians as an adopted grandson of Pharaoh. However, his mother, a Hebrew, cared for him. He would someday possibly be in line to take the place of Pharaoh, but his heart was with his people, the Hebrews. As a forty year old man, he saw an Egyptian beating upon a Hebrew. It was more than he could take. He looked to see if anyone was watching, then he killed the Egyptian. The next day, he saw two Hebrew men fighting. He tried to break it up, but they resented his interference. One reported that Moses was the one who had killed the Egyptian. The word got back to Pharaoh and he ordered that Moses should be executed. Moses fled for his life to the land of Midian. There, Moses helped the seven daughters of a priest of Midian water their flock of sheep and drove off some overbearing shepherds. The priest invited Moses into his household and gave Zipporah, a daughter, to Moses for his wife. For the next forty years Moses lived the life of a simple shepherd. He most likely lived in a dugout or a tent rather than the palace he had lived in as a youth.

One day as Moses was watching over his father-in-law's sheep, he led them to Mount Horeb. *"And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a flame of fire out of the midst of a bush: and he looked, and, behold, the bush burned with fire, and the bush was not consumed"* (Exodus 3:2). As soon as Moses' attention was upon the burning bush, God called him by name. God told him to take off his shoes. Then God told Moses that He had heard the cries of His people under the cruel Egyptian slavery. Next, God told Moses that He was sending him to Pharaoh that he might lead the people out of Egypt.

*"And Moses said unto God, Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?"* (Exodus 3:11). We should keep in mind that Moses was still on the **Wanted Posters** back in Egypt. Pharaoh had commanded that he be killed for killing an Egyptian forty years earlier. Furthermore, how was he going to lead the Israelites when he had been rejected as their leader once before? God told Moses that he needed to get his attention off his own inability and turn it to God's ability. God said that **HE** would be with Moses. When Moses asked God who should he say that sent him, God said, "Tell them that **I AM**' has sent you." Moses protests and declares, "They will not believe me and will say that the LORD has not appeared unto me." God asked him what he had in his hand, and he said, "A rod." *"And he [God] said, Cast it on the ground. And he cast it on the ground, and it became a*

*serpent; and Moses fled from before it. And the LORD said unto Moses, Put forth thine hand, and take it by the tail. And he put forth his hand, and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand: That they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath appeared unto thee" (Exodus 4:3-5).*

### The Rod Of Moses

We need to take a closer look at the picture. When God asked Moses what he had in his hand and Moses answered, "A rod", it was more than just a rod. It was Moses' rod.



He had found a tree limb, just the right size and shape, and cut it for a rod. He probably had carved it further to fit perfectly into his hands. He may have carved his name upon it. He used it every day as he tended his father-in-law's the sheep. The rod had become a symbol of his occupation and his life. When God told him to throw his rod down, it was as throwing down all that was left of his life. He had already lost his position as an heir of Pharaoh. He had lost his standing with the Israelites. He had lost his eloquence of manners and speech. All that was left of his own identity was in the rod, and God told him to throw it down. When Moses threw it down, it became a poisonous serpent.

If you listen closely in your imagination, you might hear the hissing of the snake, "Ssss." You may notice that in the rod is sss-self. Self is like a poisonous snake that strikes and brings pain and death.

Moses knew the danger of the serpent. He was keenly aware of its deadly poison. Therefore, Moses *ran* from it! However, God called him back and told him to pick it up by the tail. Now, any informed snake handler would know that this is not the way to handle a poisonous snake. It leaves the head active for striking. For Moses to pick it up by the tail would mean that Moses would have to put his trust totally in God. This he did. The serpent became a rod again in his hands. However, it was no longer just "a rod" or "Moses' rod", but it was the "**rod of God**". It was the authority and power of God in the hands of Moses.

When Moses and Aaron went before Pharaoh, Aaron threw the rod down and it became a serpent. Then Pharaoh also had the magicians of Egypt to throw down their rods and they too, became serpents. However, the rod of God ate up the magicians' rods, showing the authority and power of God (Exodus 7:9-12). When Moses, at God's command, called for the various plagues, Moses used the rod (Exodus 7:19-10:29). When the Israelites left Egypt and came to the Red Sea, God had Moses to raise the rod.

The sea parted! (Exodus 14:16). Later God had Moses to strike the rock in Horeb with the rod that water might come out for the people (Exodus 17:5-6). When Amalek came up to fight against Israel, God had Moses to raise the rod. As long as Moses held up the rod, Israel gained victory, but when he lowered it, Israel began to lose. Finally, Aaron and Hur helped Moses hold up the rod so that Israel could win the war (Exodus 17:7-16).

Some time later, Korah and two hundred and fifty princes came to rebel against Moses and Aaron. God had the earth to open and to swallow up all those who rebelled (Numbers 16:1-30). However, the people still questioned the authority of Moses and Aaron. God had Moses to command each tribe's prince to bring his rod. Aaron was to write his name upon the rod of the tribe of Levi. They put the rods out overnight. The next morning, all the rods except Aaron's rod were still dead wood. However, the rod of Aaron *"was budded, and brought forth buds, bloomed blossoms, and yielded almonds"* (Numbers 17:9-10). This again showed the authority and power that God had invested in Moses and Aaron. The writer of the book of Hebrews states that this rod was also placed in the Ark of the Covenant as a memorial (Hebrews 9:4).

## What's In Your Hand?

What do you have in your hand? What are you holding on to? Is it someone, a job, a position, a ministry, wealth, personal esteem, reputation, or a dream? If it has anything to do with self, it is dangerous, harmful, and potentially deadly. You may say, "But God gave me all these abilities . . . ." Yes, but God wants you to throw them down before Him. If we are not willing to lay them down, they have become an idol before God, and God is a jealous god. He will not tolerate idolatry!

Picture the following illustration in your mind. God is up in Heaven holding His hands down filled with His **GRACE**. Grace is the will and the power to do anything that God asks us to do. For us to receive God's grace, we must reach upward with empty hands and by faith accept the grace of God. However, if we have "something" that we are desperately holding on to in our hands, we are then **unable** to receive God's grace. What we have in our hands is a hindrance to receiving God's grace and a hindrance in doing God's will. Therefore, from God's perspective, whatsoever we have in our hands has become an idol, standing between us and God. Therefore, God will say, "Sic hem, Satan." That is, God will allow Satan to attack us and come against the very thing to which we are holding. Satan will rip, tear, or destroy whatever we have in our hands. As we sense that we are losing our possession, we may become angry, bitter, sad, or depressed. This produces mental, emotional, and physical problems in our lives.

## Throw It Down!

There is only one solution! We are to cast down at the feet of Jesus whatever we have in our hands. I recall one lady that said that she needed a week's worth of counseling. It so happened that I had been praying about doing some test counseling. The test was to do intensive counseling with someone for at least five hours a day, every day, for a week rather than scattering the counseling over an extensive period. Therefore, I welcomed the test. We started on Monday and worked through the week. Although, on Monday, I sensed the basic stronghold, we were unable to deal with it until Friday afternoon. The stronghold was of idolatry. The lady had come to idolize a beloved grandparent. When the lady came to cast this area before God and ask God's forgiveness, she gained a glorious victory over the enemy. I have seen this type of scenario duplicated over and over in my counseling experience. I have seen parents who have idolized their children with the results of Satan taking away the children. However, when the parents let go of the children, putting them in God's hands, then the parents get freedom, and also God often returns the children to them.

### Some Areas To Yield

*"... nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt" (Mark 14 36)*

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|--|---|
| 1. Self = Luke 9:23-24                               | 7. Music = II Corinthians 10:5, Ephesians 5:19    |
| 2. Dating = Psalm 37:24, 73:25                       | 8. Future = Matthew 6:34                          |
| 3. Clothes = I Peter 3:3-4, Matthew 6:31-32          | 9. Health = II Corinthians 12:9                   |
| 4. Money = Colossians 3:2, Proverbs 23:4             | 10. Reputation = Galatians 2:20, Philippians 1:21 |
| 5. Knowledge = I Corinthians 3:18-19, Colossians 2:8 | 11. Schedule = James 4:13-15                      |
| 6. Friends = Proverbs 29:25, 24:1-2                  | 12. Activities = I Corinthians 10:31              |

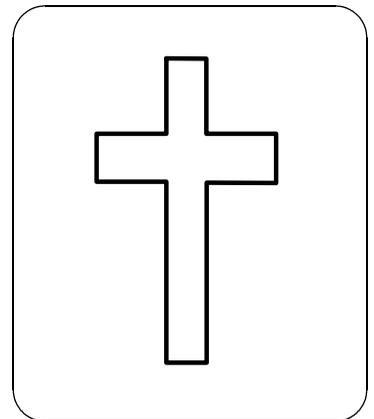
Some years ago, my family and I lived in a rather small house in the Ft. Worth, Texas, area. We had been renting the house at a very reasonable rate. However, we had outgrown the size of the house. We seem to be bumping into each other every time we turned around. I began to pray for a larger house. God provided a new house for us about twice the size. It was literally a gift from God. It was better than anything we had ever dreamed of. Then after we lived in the new house for several years and had become really attached to the house, God led my wife and me through a test. I looked into working with the West Texas Boys' Ranch. It seemed to be where God was directing.

The only thing was that if I took the position, we would have to move. We would be moving back into a house, even smaller and older than the house that we had been renting previously. We would have to sell our big new house. As my wife and I prayed about the move, we both came to the conclusion, that if God wanted us to go into the ministry at the boys' ranch, that we would be willing to give up our new house. Almost immediately, God shut the door on the boys' ranch ministry. We are still blessed with the house and use it for church home group ministry.

We should heed a warning found in Scripture. *"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour"* (I Peter 5:6-8). I have heard some ministers say that the devil is now harmless because of the victory that Jesus had over him. I have heard some say that it is the old toothless lions that roar. Don't believe it! The Word says otherwise. It is the young lions that roar as they rip apart their prey (Isaiah 5:29). I once saw a documentary on a couple of lions hunting some zebras. The lions were crouched in the bush near a water hole where the zebras came to quench their thirst. Almost before I could realize what was happening, the two lions sprung to their feet and went after a zebra. In less than ten seconds, they had downed the zebra. I will never forget the last scene of one lion dragging the skin and bones of the devoured zebra out of the mudhole. God says that unless we cast all our cares upon Him, we may become like the zebra. We become subject to being devoured by the devil. We should remember the story of God's judgment upon Sodom. God instructed Lot to take his wife and his two daughters and to leave the city. They were not even to look back upon the city as they left it behind. However, Lot's wife turned back to look and she became a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26). When we yield our rights to God, we should not look back upon them.

## Death And Resurrection

A friend called me today and asked if I knew anything about being "broken". My response was, "How many times does one need to be broken to know something about it?" We both laughed understanding that we each experience brokenness more than once in our lives. David wrote, *"The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise"* (Psalm 51:17). As long as we are not broken, we have a self-will. We are like a horse that has not been saddle broken. We have not yet experienced the discipline of the sensitive tug upon the reins. When we are broken in an area of our lives, we come to the end of ourselves. We realize



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that we can't fix our problems ourselves. Jesus declared, *"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for their's is the kingdom of heaven"* (Matthew 5:3). We may see three "d's" in this verse. The first "d" is for destitution. Everything has fallen apart around us. The second "d" is for detachment from self. This is when we come to the end of our rope and can't hold on any longer. The third "d" is for dependence upon God. Although we can not handle the situation ourselves, we come to trust that God can. When we come to walk through the experience of these three "d's", we experience kingdom living. We enter into the supernatural and see the miraculous work of God in our lives.

We should see that brokenness means a dying to self. Paul, the major author of the New Testament, had to come to a place of brokenness. He was a well educated man under the discipline of the teacher Gamaliel. He was proficient in the languages of Hebrew, Greek, Latin, and Aramaic. However, he states that although he was born of the tribe of Benjamin, a Pharisee, and zealous to obey God's law, that all of this was a pile of manure compared to knowing Jesus and the power of his resurrection (Philippians 3:3-10).

*"Come, and let us return unto the LORD: for he hath torn, and he will heal us; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us: in the third day he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight"* (Hosea 6:1-2). Some people emphasize the *crucified* life while others emphasize the *resurrected* life. The truth is that we are to experience both. Death must come first, then the resurrection is to follow. This is true with the seed (John 12:24-25), it was true with Jesus, and it must also be true with us. In counseling, it is important to lead the individual through a death experience. Each person should come to die to self and the things of the world. However, it is also important to lead someone to the resurrection experience. After leading one individual to this death experience, I asked an associate how the individual was doing. The associate to the individual responded, "He is walking around like a zombie." He was physically alive, but seemed dead otherwise. During the next counseling session, I shared with the individual the resurrected life, went into the church auditorium, and led him into worship and praise. Immediately, there was new life about the individual.

Since the major part of this chapter has addressed the death side, it is now appropriate to address the resurrection side. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, exalted himself by declaring that he had built his kingdom without giving God the credit (Daniel 4:30). Immediately, God took everything away from him. *"The same hour was the thing fulfilled upon Nebuchadnezzar: and he was driven from men, and did eat grass as oxen, and his body was wet with the dew of heaven, till his hairs were grown like eagles' feathers, and his nails like birds' claws"* (Daniel 4:33). In effect, he lost his kingdom and went insane for seven years, living as an animal in the wild. However, at the end of the seven years he regained his sanity. *"And at the end of the days I Nebuchadnezzar lifted up mine*

*eyes unto heaven, and mine understanding returned unto me, and I blessed the most High, and I praised and honoured him that liveth for ever, whose dominion is an everlasting dominion, and his kingdom is from generation to generation: And all the inhabitants of the earth are reputed as nothing: and he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth: and none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou? At the same time my reason returned unto me; and for the glory of my kingdom, mine honour and brightness returned unto me; and my counsellors and my lords sought unto me; and I was established in my kingdom, and excellent majesty was added unto me. Now I Nebuchadnezzar praise and extol and honour the King of heaven, all whose works are truth, and his ways judgment: and those that walk in pride he is able to abase"* (Daniel 4:34-37). We should see that his sanity returned to him when he looked **up** to God and began to **praise** and **bless** God. There is new life in God! We receive new life as we praise and bless God.

We find another example of this resurrection principle in the story of Jonah. Jonah was in the belly of the great fish. For all practical purposes he was a **goner**. It was at this point that he turned to God and received life. *"But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the LORD"* (Jonah 2:9). When he came to praise God, God caused the fish to vomit Jonah out on dry ground. He got a new lease on life.

### **Factors That Initiate Life**

1. We should acknowledge God's work in the midst of our affliction (Psalm 119:171).
2. We should understand that God continues to work in us (Philippians 1:6).
3. We should believe that God is working all things together for our good (Romans 8:28).
4. We should learn to give thanks for all things (Ephesians 5:20).
5. We should be able to offer a sacrifice of praise (Hebrews 13:15).
6. We should learn to give thanks in every situation (I Thessalonians 5:18).
7. We should bless the Lord and remember His benefits (Psalm 103:1-3).
8. We should acknowledge the chastening of the Lord, yield to righteousness, praise Him (lift up our hands), begin to walk in righteousness, and be healed (Hebrews 12:6-13).
9. We should put our hope in God and understand that praise brings health to our countenance (Psalm 42:5, 11, 43:5).
10. We should learn to walk by His grace (Galatians 2:20).

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In the story of the prodigal son, the young man found himself about to starve to death eating the leftovers from feeding the pigs. *"And when he came to himself, he said, How many hired servants of my father's house have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!"* (Luke 15:17). This is a picture of our turning to God who will supply all our needs. When he returned home, the father (God in the picture) prepares a celebration. *"And bring hither the fatted calf, and kill it: and let us eat, and be merry: For this my son was dead, and is alive again; he was lost, and is found. And they began to be merry"* (Luke 15:23-24).

### Contentment

Contentment does not come with an abundance of possessions, but in being a good steward of God's possessions, knowing that He is in control. Solomon wrote, *"Better is little with the fear of the LORD than great treasure and trouble therewith"* (Proverbs 15:16). Double-mindedness comes when we try to serve God and the world at the same time. Jesus said, *"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye can not serve God and mammon"* (Matthew 6:24). Therefore, we are to put our rights for possessions back into God's hands. After all, everything really belongs to God anyway. *"The earth is the LORD's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein"* (Psalm 24:1).

Contentment is not in "having", but rather a chosen state of mind in doing God's will. Paul wrote, *"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me"* (Philippians 4:11-13). Paul came to realize that he could do God's will no matter what the circumstances were. Paul also instructed the young minister, Timothy, with these words, *"But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content . . . and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness"* (I Timothy 6:6-7, 11b). Many of the wars within us come from not being content with what God has given us.

Contentment does not come by fussing or complaining about what we do not have, but it comes from knowing that God is with us and that He is our helper. *"Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me"* (Hebrews 13:5-6). If we know that Jesus is with us and that He is our helper, then there is **nothing** about which to worry.

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## Control Versus Love Relationships

To understand how to change a "control" relationship into a "love" relationship, you must understand the nature of a "control" relationship. A "control" relationship may take on many different characteristics. The person may disallow the feelings and thoughts of other people. The person usually becomes very defensive and expresses a lot of anger. He will often make a vicious counter-attack. He may use rejection or withdraw love and affection to his advantage. The person often clings to a position of authority because that gives him power over others. When the authority is not available, then he uses wit or intimidation to belittle the other person. He will try to attack the character of the other person. He is usually dishonest in his assessment of others.

To understand the solutions to a "control" relationship, we must first see beyond the surface problems. Three basic root problems are pride, selfishness, and fear. Although we can relate all three problems, it would be good to review each. Pride has to do with how we see ourselves. Pride says, "I am better than what you are." Pride is the main sin that God hates. God will bring low the proud. Pride keeps us from depending upon God and upon others as God works through them. Pride says, "I do not need anyone." Selfishness is a type of idolatry. Selfishness gets in our way of serving God and others. Selfishness says, "I want you to serve me." It also says, "What is mine is mine and you can not have it." Selfishness is also generally greedy. It may say, "I have the right to have what you have." Fear causes the individual to cling to people and to personal possessions. Fear says, "If I lose my self-esteem, then I am nothing." Fear cries out, "If I lose my possessions, then I lose my security." Fear of loss pushes the individual to hold on to "control" just that much tighter.

We can see **ten basic steps** to changing a "control" relationship into a "love" relationship. These are some of the essential steps that I follow in my personal counseling.

1. One must lead the individual to understand the Biblical principle concerning "control" relationship. Jesus said, *"He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal"* (John 12:25). In whatever relationship we try to control ourselves, we end up losing control.

2. One must lead the individual to understand that God desires the very best for his or her life. Romans 8:28 reads, *"And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to his purpose."* People need to know that God is **for** them and not against them.

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3. One must lead the individual to understand that Satan will take advantage of his or her "control" situation. Peter writes, "*Casting all your care upon him, for he careth for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour*" (I Peter 5:7-8). If we don't cast our cares (the things we hold to) upon God, then those cares become idols to us. Those cares will stand in the way of our relationship with God. God is a jealous God! God will allow Satan to attack us at the point of the things that we are trying to control. Satan will devour those relationships to which we cling.

4. One must lead the individual to ask God for forgiveness of the sins of pride, selfishness, and fear. I John 1:9 states, "*If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*" Those who attempt to control others are in bondage themselves. They need freedom from that bondage of sin.

5. One must lead the person to forgive other people for rejecting them. Jesus stated in the model prayer, "*And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors*" (Matthew 6:12). As we give release to others, God gives release to us.

6. One must lead the individual to receive healing for the hurts that he has received. Jesus said, "He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted" (Luke 4:18). Unless emotional healing takes place, the person will be afraid to let go of control.

7. One must lead the person to yield all personal rights to God. Jesus prayed, ". . . *nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt*" (Matthew 26:39). We must yield our pride and possessions to the Lord. This also means that we have to yield relationships, such as marriage, to the Lord.

8. One must lead the person to die to self. In Matthew 16:24, Jesus said unto his disciples, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.*" For one to be totally free from personal control, he must die to that control over his own life.

9. One must lead the person into the resurrected life. Paul states, "*Likewise reckon ye also yourselves to be dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God through Jesus Christ our Lord*" (Romans 6:11). The resurrected life in Christ is to follow our death with him.

10. One must lead the person to understand the Biblical principle of love. Jesus said, "*For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life*" (John 3:16). God gave Jesus that he might obtain many sons. Loving is the principle of sowing. One sows love and he receives love in return.

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## *The Inner Of Suicide*

Suicide is another control issue. As we have already seen, Jonah became quite suicidal because he held on to certain rights that he felt that he should have. However, it is the enemy that brings thoughts of suicide to us when we hold on to our rights. Remember that Peter described the devil as a roaring lion walking about seeking whomsoever he can devour (I Peter 5:8). When the thoughts of anger turn inward toward self, then the stage is set for the enemy to devour us.

We should note that the devil does not come to us and announce, "I am the devil, and I want you to commit suicide." If the devil took that approach, we would either run for our lives in fear or boldly rebuke him in the name of Jesus. However, the devil is a bit more deceptive than that. After all, he is the deceiver! He takes a more sly approach by disguising himself as *self* to us. In fact, he will speak in the first person "I" to make us believe that the suggestions of suicide are really our own thoughts. For example, he may come to us and suggest, "Everyone is really against me." Our next thought may be, "Yea, everyone is against me." Then the devil may say, "I don't see a solution, and I am just tired of trying." Then our thoughts may be, "There is not solution. I feel like giving up." Next, the devil may press, "There is only one way out and that is suicide." Our response in thought may be, "I don't want to commit suicide, but I don't see a way out." The devil answers with, "It would be quick and easy, and then it would be all over." **WAIT!** Do you see what is happening? We are having a dialogue with the devil when we are thinking that it is a monologue with self.

Of course, he catches us right after we have had a major failure in our lives or when we have lost hope for solutions to our situation. He catches us when we are physically and emotionally exhausted as was Elijah (I Kings 19:4). Judas hanged himself after he betrayed Jesus (Matthew 27:1-5). Job, because of his agony, may have entertained thoughts of suicide when he cursed the day that he was born (Job 3:1-26)

We should consider at least twelve steps in counseling a person having thoughts of suicide. First, if the counselor suspects that the counselee is suicidal, he should ask, "Are you having any thoughts about taking your own life?" This calls for an honest response. Second, the counselor should inquire about the intensity of the thoughts. He may ask, "How often do you wrestle with thoughts about suicide?" Third, the counselor should inquire if the counselee has made any plans as to how he would kill himself. The counselor should find out specifically what steps of action the counselee has already made. For example, the counselor might ask, "Have you purchased a gun?" Fourth, the counselor should in sincerity request a commitment of contact from the counselee. The commitment should be that the counselee will contact the counselor any time he

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experiences any major battles in the area before acting upon those thoughts. The counselor may feel that the counselee should even sign a written agreement. This lets the counselee know that the counselor does, in fact, care about his life.

Fifth, the counselor should lead the counselee to understand the source of suicidal thoughts. Jesus said that the devil is the one that is come to steal, **kill**, and destroy (John 10:10). Sixth, the counselor should help enable the counselee to recognize the deception in the thoughts about suicide. One way to do this is to attach the phrase, "In the name of Jesus" to the thought. For example, the statement, "I will blow my brains out in the name of Jesus", makes for a glaring contradiction of thoughts. Seventh, the counselor may need to help the counselee cast down a whole series of lies. I use the outline "Steps To Commit Suicide" as a guide, answering each statement with the Word of God. I have seen the countenance of individuals change dramatically in about thirty minutes by doing this. Eighth, the counselor will need to lead the counselee to yield up all his rights to God. Remember, anger is a result of unyielded rights. Anger turned inward leads to thoughts of suicide.

Ninth, the counselor should lead the counselee through a death to self. There is no reason to try to kill someone who is already dead. The counselee should come to identify self with the crucifixion of Jesus (Romans 6:6-11). Tenth, the counselor also should lead the counselee to identify with the resurrection of Jesus (Galatians 2:20). Eleventh, the counselor should encourage the counselee to learn to be thankful and praise God for all things. David took seven praise breaks every day (Psalm 119:164-165)! No one can truly praise God and entertain thoughts of suicide at the same time. Twelfth, in some cases generational curses are involved. Along with generational curses (inherited tendencies toward suicide), there may also be familiar spirits involved. In such cases, one also may need to declare the curses to be broken through Jesus, bind, and cast out the evil spirits in the name of Jesus.

Finally, the counselor should remember that no one has to commit suicide. Although there are spiritual, psychological, and social factors involved, whoever commits suicide, does it through his own personal choice. Furthermore, an attempt at suicide or even a success of suicide is not the unpardonable sin. Jesus died for all our sins: past, present, and future sins. The only unpardonable sin is refusing to accept Jesus as one's Lord and Savior.

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## Appendix

### Some Ways To Respond To An Angry Person



1. Speak calmly, softly and slowly.
2. Ask sincere questions. ("Why do you feel that way? Can you help me to understand what you are saying?")
3. Listen closely to the individual to hear what he is really saying beyond the words he is speaking.
4. Have a servant attitude. ("What can I do to help solve the problem?")
5. Have a forgiving attitude. (Purpose before God in prayer to forgive by God's grace.)
6. Rebuke Satan. ("In the name of Jesus, I bind the spirit of *anger* {and etc.} and command *anger* to leave.")
7. Compliment the angry person. ("You are the best husband for me in the whole world.")
8. Confess any personal offense (wrongs done toward the other person) and ask for his forgiveness.
9. Speak the truth in love. ("I do care about how you feel and believe you are angry because ....")
10. Make gentle physical contact with the angry person. (Example: place your hand upon his hand or upon his shoulder.)
11. Yield any personal rights and expectations that the person has violated unto the Lord. (Example: "Lord Jesus, I yield to you the right for others to appreciate me.")
12. Pray and ask the Lord to open the door of opportunity for you to do something good for the individual that he or she might appreciate.
13. Pray for the person who is angry. ("Lord, I ask that you heal and set *that person* free from anger.")
14. Receive healing for hurts. (Jesus was sent to heal the broken hearted.)
15. Ask God to fill you with His grace of LOVE that you may show God's love to the individual.

## Anger Scriptures

Job 5:2 "For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one."

Psalms 18:48 "He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man."

Psalms 37:8 "Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil."

Proverbs 14:17 "He that is soon angry dealeth foolishly: and a man of wicked devices is hated."

Proverbs 16:32 "He that is slow to anger is better than the mighty; and he that ruleth his spirit than he that taketh a city."

Proverbs 19:11 "The discretion of a man deferreth his anger; and it is his glory to pass over a transgression."

Proverbs 21:19 "It is better to dwell in the wilderness, than with a contentious and an angry woman."

Proverbs 22:24 "Make no friendship with an angry man; and with a furious man thou shalt not go."

Proverbs 25:28 "He that hath no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls."

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

Proverbs 29:22-23 "An angry man stirreth up strife, and a furious man aboundeth in transgression. A man's pride shall bring him low: but honour shall uphold the humble in spirit."

Ecclesiastes 7:8-9 "Better is the end of a thing than the beginning thereof: and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit. Be not hasty in thy spirit to be angry: for anger resteth in the bosom of fools."

Matthew 5:22 "But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire."

Ephesians 4:26-27 "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath: Neither give place to the devil."

Ephesians 4:31-32 "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

Colossians 3:8 "But now ye also put off all these; anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy communication out of your mouth."

Titus 1:7 "For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not selfwilled, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre."

James 1:19-20 "Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God."

### Anger Record

(Date, briefly describe, and work through each event that God brings to you mind.)

**EVENT** ( \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Your Response: (verbal, physical, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

How did you use your anger? \_\_\_\_\_

What right(s) were involved? \_\_\_\_\_

Circle what you have done to resolve the event: Forgive your offender, Yield rights, Confess wrongs, Ask forgiveness, Agree to make restitution, and Pray for the offender.

**EVENT** ( \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Your Response: (verbal, physical, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

How did you use your anger? \_\_\_\_\_

What right(s) were involved? \_\_\_\_\_

Circle what you have done to resolve the event: Forgive your offender, Yield rights, Confess wrongs, Ask forgiveness, Agree to make restitution, and Pray for the offender.

**EVENT** ( \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Your Response: (verbal, physical, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

How did you use your anger? \_\_\_\_\_

What right(s) were involved? \_\_\_\_\_

Circle what you have done to resolve the event: Forgive your offender, Yield rights, Confess wrongs, Ask forgiveness, Agree to make restitution, and Pray for the offender.

**EVENT** ( \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ / \_\_\_ ) \_\_\_\_\_

Your Response: (verbal, physical, etc.) \_\_\_\_\_

How did you use your anger? \_\_\_\_\_

What right(s) were involved? \_\_\_\_\_

Circle what you have done to resolve the event: Forgive your offender, Yield rights, Confess wrongs, Ask forgiveness, Agree to make restitution, and Pray for the offender.



### **Some Factors In Overcoming Anger**

1. Engraft God's Word into your soul (James 1:21).
2. Recognize that "anger" is a God-given emotional ability (Mark 3:5).
3. Be slow to anger (Proverbs 16:32).
4. Don't allow anger to stay more than one day (Ephesians 4:26).
5. Learn to forgive others and self (Matthew 6:12).
6. Yield all personal, assumed, "rights" to God (Luke 22:42).
7. Cast all your cares upon God (I Peter 5:6-8).
8. Die to self and follow Jesus (Luke 8:34-35).
9. Change the emotional energy of anger into a zeal to resolve the issue (John 2:13-17).
10. Submit yourself unto God and resist the enemy (James 4:7).
11. Ask God to restore ground that you have yielded to the enemy (Psalm 23:3).
12. Thank and praise God for your circumstances (I Thessalonians 5:18).

### **Scriptures On Anger & Jealousy**

(Since jealousy and envy also come from unyielded rights, the following Scriptures are given to confront jealousy and envy.)

**Numbers 5:14** "And the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be defiled: or if the spirit of jealousy come upon him, and he be jealous of his wife, and she be not defiled."

**Numbers 5:30** "Or when the spirit of jealousy cometh upon him, and he be jealous over his wife, and shall set the woman before the LORD, and the priest shall execute upon her all this law."

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**Job 5:2** "For wrath killeth the foolish man, and envy slayeth the silly one. "

**Proverbs 6:34** "For jealousy is the rage of a man: therefore he will not spare in the day of vengeance."

**Proverbs 14:30** "A sound heart is the life of the flesh: but envy the rottenness of the bones. "

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

**Song of Solomon 8:6** "Set me as a seal upon thine heart, as a seal upon thine arm: for love is strong as death; jealousy is cruel as the grave: the coals thereof are coals of fire, which hath a most vehement flame."

**Matthew 27:18** "For he knew that for envy they had delivered him."

**Romans 1:29** "Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers."

**Romans 13:13** "Let us walk honestly, as in the day; not in rioting and drunkenness, not in chambering and wantonness, not in strife and envying."

**I Corinthians 13:4** "Charity suffereth long, and is kind; charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up."

**Galatians 5:19-26** "Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, Envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another."

**I Timothy 6:4** "He is proud, knowing nothing, but doting about questions and strifes of words, whereof cometh envy, strife, railings, evil surmisings."

**Titus 3:3** "For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another."

**James 3:14** "But if ye have bitter envying and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the truth."

**James 3:16** "For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work."

### *Lies That May Lead To Suicide*

Thesis: The devil tries to deceive us by lying to us, but God answers the lies with His Word. The enemy may use some of the following lies on us to deceive us into attempting suicide.

1. Ignore the hurts that others have brought into your life. Time will heal them. These are lies! Time does not heal hurts. You should not ignore the hurts, but receive healing for them. (Proverbs 18:8, 14, Luke 4:18).
2. Stay out of church. The people there would not understand what you are going through anyway. These are lies! You should go to church. Almost everyone wrestles with thoughts of suicide at some time. The church is the best support group. (Hebrews 10:25, I Corinthians 10:13, Romans 15:1).
3. Forget the things that you have done wrong to hurt others. That was a long time ago, and they did not seem too hurt. These are lies! You are to make things right and get a clear conscience. (Matthew 5:23-24, I Timothy 1:19).
4. Hold on to and fight for your rights. After all, they are your rights, and you deserve to keep them. These are lies! Instead of holding onto your rights, you are to give them to God that you may be free from anger. (Luke 17:33, 22:42, I Peter 5:7).
5. Do not read your Bible. It does not have anything to say to you about your situation. These are lies! The Bible is the very place to find the answer to your situation. (II Timothy 3:16-17, James 1:21).
6. Get angry as often as you desire. You are to let go and vent your problems. These are lies! You are to withhold your anger and lay it aside. (Ecclesiastes 7:9, Ephesians 4:26-27).
7. Avoid getting Christian counseling. Religion has nothing to do with your problems. These are lies! There is always a cause for problems. The spiritual realm has much influence on the natural realm. Biblical counsel can provide lasting solutions. (Proverbs 26:2, 11:14, II Timothy 2:25-26).
8. Get away with as much as possible. The authority over you does not know what he is doing anyway. These are lies! God works through authority and you need to submit to that authority as unto the Lord. (Romans 13:1-5, Hebrews 13:17).
9. Always compare yourself with other people: what they look like, what they have, what they can do, where they go, what position they hold, what friends they have, and how much money they make. After all, you should be better than they are. These are lies! Comparison usually ends with self-condemnation. (Romans 12:3, Philippians 2:3).
10. Do not talk with God about your problems. After all, He is to be blamed for all this happening to you. These are lies! God is the person to talk to about your problems. He wants to work everything together for your good. (Philippians 4:6-7, Romans 8:28).
11. Express your bitterness often to others around you. People need to know exactly how you feel. These are lies! You are not to allow bitterness into your life. You are to put it away. (Hebrew 12:15, Ephesians 4:31).

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12. Hold all the anger and bitterness inside of you. Christians do not get angry. These are lies! Christians do get angry. It is what you do with the anger that is important. Jesus turned anger into a zeal to resolve the situation. (Ephesians 4:26, John 2:17).
  13. Get really mad at the devil and command that he leave you alone. He is the enemy, and it is all his fault. These are lies! First, you are to submit yourself unto God, then you may resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Usually, we have done something to leave the door open for the devil to attack us. (James 4:7-8, I Peter 5:7-9).
  14. Be perfect in everything that you do, because if you do not, God will send you to hell. These are lies! You are not saved by your good works, but by faith in the work of God in Jesus. Having a relationship with Jesus brings eternal life. You can only do good works as God gives you grace to do them. (Ephesians 2:8-9, John 10:28-29, Philippians 2:13).
  15. Never cry. Never show any emotions because someone might think that you are weak. These are lies! David, the king, cried. Jesus, the Son of God, cried over the city of Jerusalem. God made you in such a way as to express yourself through emotions. (Psalm 6:6, Luke 19:41, Matthew 5:4).
  16. Always condemn yourself. This makes people really accept you. These are lies! You are not condemned in Christ. You are fully accepted in Christ. (Romans 8:1, Ephesians 1:6, Galatians 4:6).
  17. If you make a counseling appointment, do not keep it. You are too hurt and too angry to talk to anyone. These are lies! This is the very time that you really need to keep the appointment. You need to share your weakness with a trusted counselor. (Proverbs 15:22, James 5:16).
  18. Isolate yourself from your friends. They just do not understand your needs. These are lies! You should take the initiative in friendship. If your friends are Believers, they probably understand much more than you can imagine. (Proverbs 18:24, Ecclesiastes 4:9-10).
  19. Do not forgive the person who hurt you. He does not deserve to be forgiven (implying that you should not have to forgive him). These are lies! You are to forgive to get the freedom you desire. Forgiveness is never deserved! Therefore, you are to give a gift of forgiveness. (Matthew 6:12, 14-15, II Corinthians 2:10-11).
  20. Invite anger, bitterness, hate, revenge into your life. They will help you to control other people. These are lies! These things keep you from having close relationships with others. You are to have a servant spirit. (Philippians 2: 5-8, Matthew 23:11-12).
  21. Do not ask God to forgive you for the terrible sins that you have committed. God would not forgive you anyway. These are lies! You are to seek God's forgiveness. He will forgive you and cleanse you of all sins. (Isaiah 1:18, I John 1:9).
  22. Make plans for how you would commit suicide. If things get too bad for you to handle, you may need to use them. These are lies! Even if you have failed, God will lift you up. God will not allow you to be tempted beyond the grace that He gives you to overcome the temptation. (Psalm 37:23-24, I Corinthians 10:13).

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23. Tell everyone that you are going to commit suicide. This might help you gain their sympathy. These are lies! You should be discrete in sharing with others. (Proverbs 18:21, Ephesians 4:29).
24. Go ahead and kill yourself. You have the right to do whatever you want to do with your life. These are lies! Your life and your body have been purchased by the blood of Jesus. (I Corinthians 3:16, 6:19-20, II Corinthians 10:4-5).

*"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*