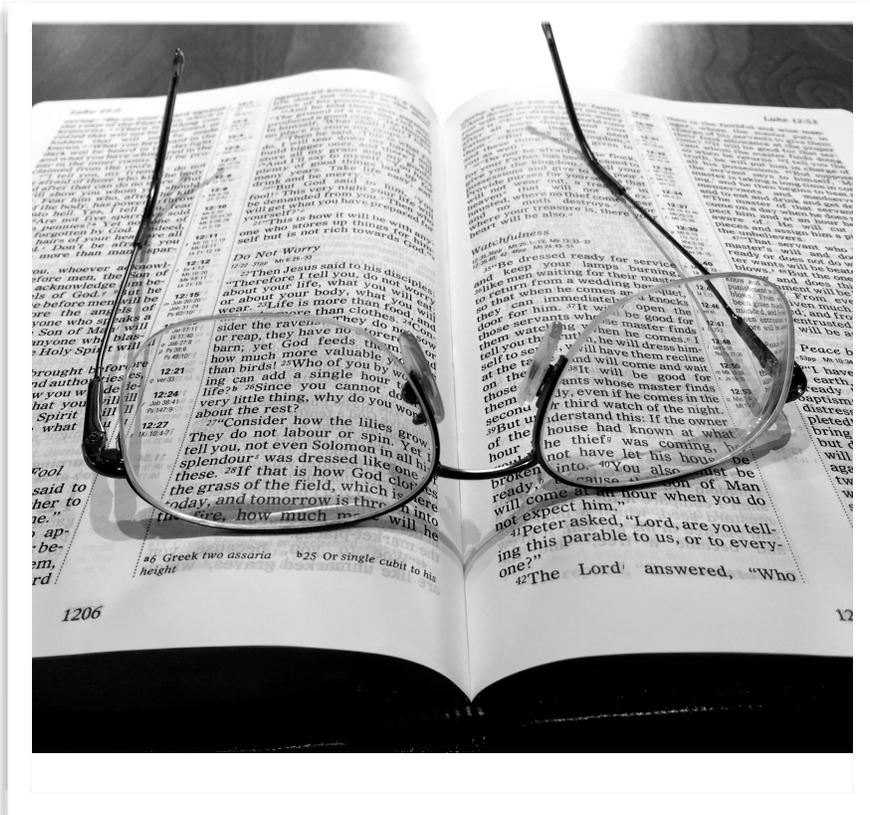


Biblical Therapy Workbook

Your Personal Journal

Learn to Take Your Thoughts Captive



From Depression to Joy
From Anxiety/Panic to Peace
From Anger to Patience
From Damaged Self Esteem to Purpose
From Life Dominating Problems to Freedom
From Conflict to Forgiveness

Introduction

I do not believe that it is a coincidence or by chance that you have picked up, opened, and are reading this book. I believe that we have encountered a spiritual appointment and that our worlds have now connected. It is my desire to help you overcome the obstacles that have blocked you from finding meaning, purpose, and direction for your life. Information alone however, does not automatically result in transformation. Many read self-help books, visit mental health websites, read the Bible, and retain only head knowledge. This book however, requires a personal response. It is my prayer that you choose to respond. When you have finished this book, I would also appreciate you contacting me at my e-mail biblicalthrapyseth@gmail.com to let me know what impact this book has had on your life.

I am writing this self-help workbook for three major purposes. The first purpose is to introduce individuals who are experiencing severe emotional pain, such as depression, anxiety, anger, and unwanted intrusive thoughts, to the wisdom, hope, and healing power of the Bible. Over the past 45 years I have served in the capacity as a mental health therapist, chemical dependency therapist, clinical supervisor, director of hospital-based inpatient and outpatient psychiatric services, director of residential and outpatient chemical dependency services, owner and therapists of an outpatient mental health group practice, and therapist in private practice. When I was director of the Lakeland Institute, one of the 100 best treatment centers in the United States for alcohol/drug rehab, I contracted with an outside firm to do research on what differentiated individuals who had ongoing successful recovery, with total absence from alcohol and drugs, from individuals who continued to struggle unsuccessfully with repeated relapses. At the time I was not very spiritual, and considered myself to be agnostic. The research results indicated that those who were the most successful in their recovery from alcoholism and chemical dependency were active participants in Alcoholics Anonymous and had an active spiritual life. Active in Alcoholics Anonymous meant that they attended leads and/or discussion groups, were involved in a 12 step group and actively worked the 12 steps of Alcoholics Anonymous, volunteered to assist with meetings, had a relationship with their higher power, and also had sponsors who exemplified long-term positive recovery. Those that had active spiritual lives were active in the church, volunteered to serve the church in some capacity, read their Bibles, had an active prayer life, participated in small life groups, and had an accountability partner. In other words, there was a combination of a strong spiritual life involving a relationship with God, as well as a self-help support group. These two factors taken together were even more important than the role of professional therapy.

I was a mental health therapist long before I became a Christian. I have been a Catholic, a Presbyterian, a Methodist, and a non-denominational Christian. I was a churchgoer but failed to recognize that I needed a relationship with God. When I became a "believer", I did not know what I believed, so I attended the Northeast Ohio extension program of Moody Bible College for seven years. I attended for personal rather than professional reasons. However, my journey took me to a place where I realized that the Bible provided excellent direction, hope, and power for healing depression, anxiety, anger, marital, family, and relational issues. Much of the best of psychology has its origins in the Bible.

I was able to see many of my patients make dramatic and powerful positive changes in their lives through the application of Biblical precepts. Beyond that I found great joy and abundant living in my own life, following and being obedient to the instruction of the Bible.

My second purpose for writing Biblical Therapy is to alert Protestant, Catholic, and nondenominational Christians to the wisdom of the Bible, which is the foundation of their own belief systems. Most religious people seem to think that when they have emotional and relational problems, that the secular experts in psychiatry, psychology, clinical social work, and mental health counseling, are their best source of help. Unfortunately, in my professional roles over the past 45 years, I have found that many mental health and chemical dependency professionals are either unaware of and/or reject the Bible as a source of direction, hope, power, and health for healing. Often they reject what they have not studied or even read.

My third purpose in writing Biblical Therapy, Your Personal Journal, is to help those who feel lost, without purpose or direction. It is my belief that God created each of us, unique as a thumb print, unique as our DNA. He gave us our physical appearance, our emotions, our intellect, our capacity for relationship, and caused or allowed us to go through certain life experiences, all for his purpose. I believe that it is our mission to discover our purpose, and to line up our lives with his purpose for creating us. Once we do this, we can live in alignment and harmony with God and experience what the Bible refers to as the abundant life.

Anxiety, damaged self-esteem, depression, anger, marital, sexual, family, parenting, relational, and life dominating problems can be effectively resolved from a clear understanding and obedience to Biblical precepts. Most individuals get lost in their search for answers to their problems. They look everywhere including sociology, psychology, medicine, literature, friends, following their own feelings, basing decisions on their personal experiences, turning to fortunetellers, or relying on the most current professional therapeutic treatment fads, but ignore the wisdom of the Bible. Perhaps you will be surprised that the Bible contains prescriptive treatment plans for anxiety, damaged self-esteem, depression, anger, marital difficulties, sexual problems, family problems, parenting issues, relational conflicts, as well as pathological gambling, overspending, overeating, alcohol/drug dependence, and other life dominating problems. Biblical precepts, if precisely followed, provide hope, health, and the power to dramatically and effectively heal our emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and health problems.

This message is not my own, but that contained in the Bible, only reorganized in a format to help individuals have a positive resolution with their life dominating problems of depression, anxiety, damaged self-esteem; marital, family, and relational conflicts; anger, resentment and lack of forgiveness, sexual difficulties, alcohol/drug abuse, pathological gambling and other life dominating problems usually referenced as addictions. It is my prayer that you will have victory and the abundant life that is referenced in the Bible, through finding God's intent and purpose for your life and following his instruction manual.

Seth F Nieding LISW, LICDC

Biblical Therapy Workbook – Your Personal Journal

It is my goal to have Biblical Therapy Workbook – Your Personal Journal distributed and read throughout the English speaking world. This workbook is a FREE PDF download and can be used by therapists, psychologists, psychiatrists, teachers, pastors, youth leaders, coaches, missionaries, evangelists, mentors, accountability partners, individuals, couples, families, and others, to overcome emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and character problems; to find purpose and direction; and to lead a life that is pleasing to God.

I would appreciate hearing from you regarding your comments, questions, experiences, and testimonials in using this workbook. I would also appreciate your forwarding a copy of this workbook to family, friends, and associates.

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An Explanation of Biblical Therapy

The Bible, which is used by Protestants, Catholics, and nondenominational Christians, is accepted by these communities of faith as the word of God. It is viewed as written by men, inspired by the Holy Spirit, inerrant, and sufficient for addressing the core of all of man's problems and needs. It is the instruction manual on how we are to live our lives. It is unchanging from generation to generation. Biblical counseling is more than praying for someone, it is following the Bible which is God's counsel, in God's format, for accomplishing God's purpose in our lives. There is a difference between a Christian counselor and Christian counseling. Many counselors who are Christians follow secular therapy and do not necessarily employ the Bible for counsel. The Bible is absolute, unchanging, and cuts through the confusion of our culture, our emotions, our thoughts, our life experiences, and our deceitful hearts. Biblical therapy is the process of directing, correcting, freeing, strengthening, teaching, warning, admonishing, healing, and restoring those who are confused, lost, misdirected, rebellious, or trapped in unhealthy or dysfunctional emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and/or relational patterns. The Bible provides clear direction, hope, and the power for corrective and positive life change.

An Explanation of Being a Christian

Being a Christian does not mean that we are perfect, strong, or sinless. In fact being a Christian, for the most part, is quite the opposite. We acknowledge that we are imperfect, weak in our own strength, and sinful. Being a Christian is an acknowledgment that we are lost, weak willed in our own volition to do what is right, and sinful in taking our own path and direction and putting our own will above God's will for our lives. It has been said that being a sinner does not disqualify us from following God; it is a requirement. We acknowledge that we are in need of God's grace, his forgiveness, his love, and his strength in order to find health and healing, and to obtain victory as we continuously struggle through the process of sanctification to become more like Jesus. (See section: A Message about Salvation)

Biblical References in Support of Biblical Therapy

Psalms 119:105 Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.

Colossians 3:16 Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your hearts and make you wise. Use his words to teach, counsel, and admonish one another.

Psalms 1:1 Blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly.

1 Timothy 4:11-13 Teach these things and insist that everyone learn them. Don't let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you teach, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity. Until I get there, focus on reading the Scriptures to the church, encouraging the believers, and teaching them.

2 Timothy 3:15-17 You have been taught the Holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Jesus Christ. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped for every good thing God wants us to do.

Hebrews 4:12 The word of God is full of living power. It is sharper than any double-edged sword, cutting deep into the inner most thoughts and desires. It exposes the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

Galatians 1:11-12 Dear brothers and sisters, I solemnly assure you that the message of the gospel which I preach is not based on mere human reasoning or logic. For my message came by a direct revelation from Jesus Christ. No one else taught me.

It is a good practice to memorize Scripture, so that when a crisis occurs, we have the knowledge and wisdom of God's direction. The Bible illuminates and prescribes good choices. God's word says that we are called upon to teach, counsel, and correct each other. It does not require us to have a PhD in clinical psychology, but a familiarity and grounding in the Bible. Many of my clients are in fact more knowledgeable and have memorized more Scripture than I have. I have learned much from my clients. With computers we can easily find Biblical verses that apply to our issues. As a Christian therapist I assist my clients in applying Biblical knowledge to their specific situation. The Holy Spirit frequently takes over and does a work on their hearts and their minds. If you are a good friend you will correct those who you believe are getting off God's track. The Holy Spirit admonishes us to speak in power and in the love.

To speak in power alone may be critical, judgmental, and confrontational. To speak only in love may be enabling friends and loved ones to continue to make poor choices. Biblical counsel requires teaching, encouragement, and holding our counselee's accountable. It also requires that we walk the talk, so that others see Christ through us and so that we may lead others closer, rather than farther, from the truth. The word of God, in and of itself, can fully equip us to help one another.

Be aware of some secular therapists and some Christian therapists who use secular therapy. They may provide counsel and encourage their clients to follow their feelings, regardless of the negative impact of their decisions on themselves and others. They may misdirect their clients to seek happiness, rather than holiness. From a Christian therapy perspective, the only true happiness comes from first seeking holiness.

If you are suffering from emotional and/or relational pain you may wish to seek counsel from a Christian who is firmly grounded in the Bible. If you are firmly grounded in the Bible and know of others who are suffering from emotional and/or relational pain, you may wish to gently approach and inquire from them if they would like you to disciple and counsel them.

My personal journal:

I will approach (name) _____ to see if they are willing to disciple and counsel me, and hold me accountable.

I will seek out a Christian counselor, who does Christian counseling. A lists of Christian counselors includes: (names)

I will commit to beginning my Christian counseling on (date): _____

Hope and Health for Healing

Our hope is in Christ and not in ourselves or in our own strength. Our hope is not in others such as our pastors or our therapists. The manual for therapy, which is the Bible, is not based on human ways, but on God's ways. Believers should have a great anticipation and expectation for change based on God's word, his promises, and the indwelling and assistance of the Holy Spirit. This does however require our personal response of obedience. This therapeutic approach involves the implementation of Biblical Throw Offs and Biblical Put Ons, which establishes clear treatment plans for action, personal responsibility, and accountability. Throw Offs are the things in our lives that we should deplore, eliminate, disdain, remove, and replace with Put Ons, which are the things that we should honor, seek, take up, embrace, renew, emulate, and implement in our daily lives. (See section: Throw Offs and Put Ons in the Renewal of Self)

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek his will in all you do, and he will direct your paths.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to (spiritual) death.

Romans 6:16 Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one you chose to obey, either of sin resulting in (spiritual) death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness?

Isaiah 55:8-9 My thoughts are completely different from your thoughts, says the Lord. And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

Many believers have utilized the Bible to get back on track, through studying and learning what the Bible has to say, and following Biblical precepts. When we are able to Throw Off our old self, our former nature, and prior emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational ways of doing things, and be reborn, with a new spiritual self, a new nature, and obedience to following Biblical precepts, we experience dramatic change. Obedience to God's word brings hope and health for healing. That change, when it occurs, should be savored and celebrated.

Any therapeutic approach that is reliable and effective should also apply to the pastor and the therapist as well as to the client. Many professional therapists today are being trained in secular forms of therapy, without any degree or licensure requirement that they experience those forms of therapy for themselves. Pastors and therapist, being human beings, also struggle with emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational problems.

Pastors and Biblical therapists recognize that Biblical therapy has universal and equal application for all of us, no matter what our sin life, our position, our role, or our status. Secular therapy has a vertical relationship between therapist and client.

Biblical therapy has a horizontal relationship between therapist and client, and a vertical relationship between both therapist and client in their relationship with God.

Biblical Therapy for the Non-Believer

Nonbelievers, whether atheists or agnostics, may also utilize the Bible to find useful, effective, age tested, tools for help in overcoming their emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and relational problems. Many are surprised at the wisdom of the Bible and have come to faith and trust in God, becoming believers. Biblical therapy has served as a pathway for pre-Christian nonbelievers, being led to salvation through acceptance of the authority of the Bible and through acceptance of Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior.

The Change Process, Victory over Ourselves and Our Emotional and Relational Problems

Why do we do what we do? Because of our upbringing, because of our self-esteem, because of our personality, because of our education, because of our culture, because of our learned behavior, because of our chemical makeup, because of our unmet needs,... etc.? What do the fields of sociology, psychology, philosophy, biology, neurology, and psychiatry say about our motives?

The Bible states that our heart is the source of our choices and the source of our motivation.

Luke 6:45 The good man brings good things out of the goods stored up in his heart, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For out of the overflow of his heart his mouth speaks.

Matthew 12:35 A good person produces good words from a good heart, and an evil person produces evil words from an evil heart.

Jeremiah 17:9 The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is?

Proverbs 4:23 Above all else, guard your heart, for it determines the course of your life.

The Bible does not validate the psychological and sociological perspectives that man is basically good. We may be self-actualizing by worshiping and serving our own desires, pursuing happiness rather than holiness, and pursuing our own self-centered ambitions, rather than living according to God's will for our lives. We cannot totally explain human behavior by our chemical composition or our brain chemistry. One only needs to look at the local, national, and world news to realize the basic sinful nature of man. Emotional, behavioral, and relational problems are likely outcomes in the pursuit of our own desires. We do not like to think of ourselves as being sinful or living in sin. Our battle to change, however, is basically against ourselves and our own human sin nature. We need to change the way we perceive, think, feel, and act, in order to have victory over the emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational problems that we face.

James 4:1-3 What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Is it not a whole army of evil desires at war within you? You want what you don't have, so you scheme and kill to get it. You are jealous for what others have, and you cannot possess it, so you fight and quarrel to take it away from them. And yet the reason you do not have what you want is that you do not ask God for it. And even when you ask, you do not get it because your whole motive is wrong - you want only what will give you pleasure.

Ephesians 2:1-3 Once you were dead, because of your disobedience and your many sins. You used to live just like the rest of the world, full of sin, obeying Satan, the mighty prince of the unseen world. He is the spirit at work in the hearts of those who refuse to obey God. All of us used to live that way, following the passions and desires of our evil nature. We were born with an evil nature, and we were under God's anger just like everyone else.

We need truth from outside of ourselves in order to overcome our human nature, our faulty thinking, our emotions, our experiences, and the distortions of our cultural influences. We need consistent, unchanging guidance in order to get on and stay on the right path. The Bible provides inerrant and sufficient counsel to overcome our cognitive, emotional, behavioral, and relational problems.

Many of our current problems that we label as diseases, disorders, dysfunctions, or chemical imbalances, are a medical or psychological reframing of the basic problem of sin. By calling many of our problems anything other than sin, is to minimize the problem and remove personal responsibility. We culturally redefine strip bars as gentlemen's clubs, redefine sexual and violent movies and video games as being for "mature" audiences, redefine killing unborn children as freedom of choice, justify extramarital affairs as responses to unmet needs, and remove personal responsibility for divorce by stating that "things" just did not work out. All of these decisions result in painful emotional, behavioral, and relational consequences. When we suffer from depression or anxiety due to our own poor choices, or the poor choices of others, we frequently seek help through medications.

This is not to say that some anxieties and depressions, especially where allowed to become chronic, do not have a biochemical influence. These may respond well or in part to medication management.

When we immerse ourselves in gambling or pornography, we prefer to label ourselves as having an addiction or a disorder. A basic definition of sin is a violation of our relationship with God. A similar definition of sin is putting our will above God's will for our lives. We have free will over our choices. Confession of sin, surrender, and repentance (turning 180°) are essential to the process of change. In terms of Alcoholics Anonymous, acknowledging that we have a drinking problem (confession), that we are powerless over alcohol (surrender), and that we commit to total abstinence from alcohol (repentance or turning 180°), establishes both personal responsibility for the problem as well as for the solution.

I am not saying that it is a sin to be an alcoholic, to be depressed, to be anxious, to be angry, or to have relational conflicts. However it is a sin, once we know that we have these problems, to continue to feed the problems. For the most part manifestations of depression, anxiety, negativity, anger, and relational conflicts are the result of poor choices by ourselves or by others. We need to avoid cognitively reframing problems in such a manner that minimizes or depersonalizes the problem. We need to provide hope through maximizing God and his power to help us overcome our problems by following his direction. It may just be that our problems are not too large, but that our faith is too small. We also need to recognize that sanctification, becoming more holy, is a process rather than an event or a destination, fraught with constantly

struggling against our own sin nature. In terms of Alcoholics Anonymous, expect relapse. What we are incapable of changing under our own power, believers can have victory over sin through empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Ralph Waldo Emerson stated that if we sow a thought we will reap an action; if we sow an action we will reap a habit; if we sow a habit we will reap our character; and if we sow our character we will reap our destiny.

It has also been said to be careful of our thoughts, for our thoughts become our words. Be careful of our words, for our words become our actions. Be careful of our actions, for our actions become our habits. Be careful of our habits, for our habits become our character. Be careful of our character for our character will determine our destiny.

We can be deliberate about what we choose to Throw Off, and what we choose to Put On. We can add or remove specific people, reading materials, places we frequent, movies, articles of clothing or how we dress, music, television programs, video games, activities that we engage in, and other things we choose to immerse ourselves in. These daily choices will impact and shape the way we think, the way we feel, the way we act, and the way we relate to others. If we immerse ourselves in television, in sex and violence, our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors will be influenced in that direction. What goes into us, or more accurately, what we choose to put into ourselves, will affect what comes out of us. It has been said that we are what we eat. Anything we choose to feed will grow, and anything we choose to starve will shrink and eventually die. We need to be more deliberate about what we consume.

If we build the foundation for our lives on our careers, our finances, our education or degrees, our pleasurable experiences, our accumulation of material wealth, our popularity, our status, or any other worldly pursuit, we will eventually find ourselves empty, lost, and disappointed. If we build our lives on the foundation of God's word, the Bible, and on our relationship with Jesus Christ, we will find fulfillment, a peace, and a joy, that we can never obtain through medications or therapy. As one pastor stated, Jesus plus nothing equals everything. Everything minus Jesus equals nothing. We need to be more deliberate about the foundation upon which we build our lives.

Attitude is also a choice. There is a story of a preacher in California who had two newly relocated families joining his congregation on Sunday. The Johnson family inquired as to how people were in this new city. The preacher responded by asking them how people were in their prior hometown. The Johnsons stated that people in their former community were competitive, gossipy, and unfriendly. The preacher responded that unfortunately, the Johnsons would more than likely find people to be the same way in their new community. The Ryan family also inquired as to how people were in this new city. The preacher responded by also asking them how people were in their prior hometown. The Ryans stated that people in their former community were warm, caring, and friendly. The preacher responded that the Ryans would most likely find people to be the same way in their new community.

Changing our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, behaviors, and relationships is a decision of our will to do the Word. It is a matter of choosing obedience rather than following our feelings or doing

what is customary within our culture. We need to confess our wrong direction, surrender our will to God and to Biblical precepts, and take on a willingness to be led by the Holy Spirit.

We need to choose righteousness, perhaps at the expense of immediate happiness or short-term gratification. We need to transfer trust in ourselves to trusting God. God demands change from feeling-motivated living to commandment-motivated living. If we immerse ourselves in the Bible and God's precepts for our lives, our thoughts, attitudes, feelings, behaviors, and relationships will be influenced in a positive direction.

Biblical References in Support of the Change Process

Ephesians 4:22-23 Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes.

Philippians 2:5 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.

Matthew 26:39 Jesus went a little farther, falling with his face to the ground and praying, my father! If it is possible, let this cup of suffering be taken away from me. Yet not as I will, but as you will.

To begin the process of change, start with small realistic goals. As the saying goes, “well begun is half done.” Focus on the present.

Luke 16:10 Unless you are faithful in small matters, you won't be faithful in large ones. If you cheat even a little, you won't be honest with greater responsibilities.

Matthew 6:33-34 ...and your heavenly father will give you all you need from day to day if you live for him and make the kingdom of God your primary concern. So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

Learning any new way of thinking, feeling, behaving, or relating requires practice. Change comes about by acquiring a new skill set. Like learning to play golf or learning to play the piano, it is important to practice, practice, and practice.

1 Timothy 4:6-7 If you explain this to the brothers and sisters, you will be doing your duty as a worthy servant of Christ Jesus, one who is nourished by the message of faith and the true teachings you have followed. Do not waste your time arguing over godless ideas and old wives tales. Spend your time and energy in training yourself for spiritual fitness.

Philippians 4:8-9 Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, then the God of peace will be with you.

Do not become discouraged and give up. Be patient and focus on God's timetable.

Galatians 6:9 So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time.

Beware, information does not equal transformation. Information is not enough and does not automatically lead to transformation. Commit to practicing therapeutic exercises. See section on Therapeutic Exercises and Homework Assignments.

Change is always a two-part process in all therapies and in following the word of God.

Step #1: The old self is crucified (see section: Throw Offs)

Step #2: The new self is reborn (see section: Put Ons)

Permanent change requires not only stopping bad habits, but replacing them with good habits. We need to Throw Off old thoughts, attitudes, motives, words, beliefs, and behaviors, and Put On new thoughts, attitudes, motives, speech, beliefs, and behaviors. In the example of our thoughts becoming our words, this would mean increasing our awareness of our terminology and discontinuing or Throwing Off, our erroneous language, such as, "this is hopeless", "I cannot take it anymore", "you always", "you never", "nothing is going right", "I can't", "that's just the way I am", etc.... And Putting On accurate language, cognitively reframing to a Biblically grounded understanding, such as, "I feel overwhelmed and discouraged, but I will persevere", "although this is difficult, with the Lord's help I can cope", "you usually", "you seldom", "some things are not going right, but I still have many blessings in my life", "although I feel unable, I will try", "although that's the way I have been, with the help of the Holy Spirit I can change", "I feel overwhelmed and discouraged, but I will look for God's hand in my life and in this circumstance", "things are not going my way, yet I know that God is sovereign and works all things to the good for those who love him".

Ephesians 4:17-25 With the Lord's authority let me say this, live no longer as the ungodly do, for they are hopelessly confused. Their minds are full of darkness; they wander far away from the life of God, because they have shut their minds and hardened their heart. They do not care anymore about right and wrong, they have given themselves over to immoral ways. Their lives are filled with all kinds of impurity and greed. But that is not what you were taught when you learned about Christ. Since you have heard all about him and have learned the truth that is in Jesus, Throw Off your old evil nature, and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead take on a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes. Put on a new nature, because you are a new person, created in God's likeness, righteous, holy, and true. Put away all falsehood and tell your neighbors the truth because we belong to each other.

Romans 5:3-4 More over let us exalt and triumph in our troubles and rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that pressure and affliction and hardship produce patient and unswerving endurance.

And endurance develops maturity of character. And character produces joyful and confident hope of eternal salvation.

Romans 8:28 We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him and are called according to his purpose for them.

Galatians 5:19-21 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your life will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impurity, eagerness for lustful pleasures, idolatry (creating a god to suite ourselves), participation in demonic activities (channeling with the dead), hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, divisions, dissension, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin...

Following the urges of our human nature are generally the things we need to Throw Off.

Galatians 5:22-23 But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, we will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...

Following the qualities of our spiritual nature are the things we need to Put On. These qualities are generally the antidotes for anxiety, damaged self-esteem, depression, anger, relational conflicts, and most life dominating problems.

When we make poor choices, the painful consequences we experience may be God's way of disciplining us to get us redirected and back on the path of healing.

Hebrews 12:5-6 And have you entirely forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you, his children? He said, my children, don't ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don't be discouraged when he corrects you. For the Lord disciplines those he loves, and he punishes those who he accepts as his children.

Hebrews 12:10-11 For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always right and good for us because it means we will share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening - it is painful! But afterward there will be a quiet harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

When we make Biblically prescribed choices, positive change and victory over life's problems is possible.

Where do I wish to have victory over myself, and what specifically do I wish to change:

What specific cognitive, emotional, behavioral, or relational problem, within my human nature, do I wish to Throw Off:

What specific quality of thinking, feeling, behaving, or relating, aided by my spiritual nature, do I wish to Put On:

(See section: Throw Offs & Put Ons in the Renewal of Self)

Role of the Holy Spirit in the Therapeutic Process of the Believer

The Holy Spirit of God is sovereign and can change man's nature. The Holy Spirit is not an "it". The Holy Spirit is a "He", the third person of the Trinity. Working in perfect harmony with the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit has a mind and he has a will. The Holy Spirit was active in creation. The Holy Spirit is the author of the Bible and the Holy Spirit provides all that we need.

Genesis 1:1-2, 26 In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was empty, a formless mass cloaked in darkness. The Spirit of God was hovering over its surface. Then God said, let us make people in our image, to be like ourselves.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It straightens us out and teaches us to do what is right. It is God's way of preparing us in every way, fully equipped, for every good thing God wants us to do.

The role of the Holy Spirit in the present day is: To indwell in the believer at the moment of belief/faith. To guide the believer. To teach us. To convict (not condemn) believers of our sins. To correct us. To rebuke us. To lead the believer in the process of sanctification or spiritual growth to become more and more like Jesus. The Holy Spirit helps us, strengthens us, and gives us counsel. The Holy Spirit has been given to us to renew us in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness. He prompts, leads, and guides us. He gives us power to overcome temptation and to do what is right beyond what we can accomplish under our own power and our own understanding. He gives us wisdom and discernment. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts to accomplish good works. The Holy Spirit, being of God, reveals to us the heart and mind of Jesus and the Father. The Holy Spirit prompts and leads us to take action consistent with the Father's will. The Holy Spirit both equips and empowers us to make positive life changes.

Only believers are able to understand the things of God inspired by the Holy Spirit. Nonbelievers may not be able to grasp Biblical wisdom such as: in order to be great one must be a humble servant; that it is when we become weak that we are made strong; that the first shall be last; that God disciplines only those whom he loves; and that we look through hard times as a means of developing strength, character, and a deeper relationship with God. This is the point at which many nonbelievers feel abandoned by God and cannot fully understand or appreciate Biblical counsel. Through Biblical therapy nonbelievers either begin to understand and grow in their spiritual belief, or continue to be lost, seeking secular counsel, believing in their own way, acting under their own strengths and understanding, and trusting their own experience. There is great hope however, in that many believers, who previously lacked faith, prayed for and received the faith to believe. If you would like to become a believer right now, jump ahead to section: A Message about Salvation.

Biblical References regarding the Role of the Holy Spirit

John 16:13-14 When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not be presenting his own ideas; He will be telling you what he has heard. He will tell you about the future. He will bring me glory by revealing to you whatever he receives from me.

1 Corinthians 2:10-12, 14 But we know these things because God has revealed them to us by his Spirit, and his Spirit searches out everything and shows us even God's deepest secrets. No one can know what anyone else is really thinking except that person alone, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And God has actually given us his Spirit so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us. But people who do not have God's Spirit cannot understand these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them because only those who have the Spirit can understand what the Spirit means.

Isaiah 55:8-9 For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to (spiritual) death

1 John 2:26-27 I have written these things to you because you need to be aware of those who want to lead you astray. You have received the Holy Spirit, and he lives within you, so you do not need anyone to teach you what is true. For the Spirit teaches you all things, and what He teaches is true - it is not a lie. So continue in what He has taught you, and continue to live in Christ.

Romans 8:26-27 And the Holy Spirit helps us in our distress. For we do not even know what we should pray for, nor how we should pray. The Holy Spirit prays for us with groans that cannot be expressed in words. The Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads for us believers in harmony with God's own will.

1 Corinthians 12:4 Now there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but it is the same Holy Spirit who is the source of them all.

1 Corinthians 12:11 It is the one and only Holy Spirit who distributes these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

Ephesians 5:17-18 Do not act thoughtlessly, but try to understand what the Lord wants you to do. Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.

Luke 4:1 Then Jesus returned to Galilee, filled with the Holy Spirit's power

1 Corinthians 6:11 There was a time when some of you were just like that, but now your sins have been washed away, and you have been set apart for God. You have been made right with God because of what the Lord Jesus Christ and the Spirit of God have done for you.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

2 Corinthians 3:18 And all of us have had the veil removed so that we can be mirrors that brightly reflect the glory of the Lord. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like him and reflect his glory even more.

John 3:5-7 Jesus replied, the truth is, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives new (spiritual) life from heaven. So do not be surprised at my statement that you must be born again.

Romans 8:5-6 Those who are dominated by their sinful nature think about sinful things, but those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is (spiritual) death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind there is life and peace.

Romans 8:12-13 So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live.

Galatians 5:22-23 But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

What specific form of help or assistance do I need to pray for, to the Holy Spirit, in order to obtain wisdom, direction, and empowerment to overcome my specific emotional, cognitive, behavioral, or relational problems:

Throw Offs and Put Ons in the Renewal of Self

Ephesians 4:21-23 Since you have learned all about him and have learned the truth that is in Jesus, throw off your old evil nature, and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception. Instead, there must be a spiritual renewal of your thoughts and attitudes.

In order to produce lasting or permanent change, we must not only stop doing a bad habit, we must put a positive behavior in its place. Persisting in a new behavior will develop a behavioral pattern or habit. Persisting in a new behavioral pattern will eventually change our character, and to a great extent the outcome of our lives. Throwing Off old ways of thinking, feeling, and acting, and putting on new ways of thinking, feeling, and acting will eventually change our character and our spiritually directed destiny. The Bible is full of change terminology such as: take off, throw off, put away, stop, get rid of, lay aside, no longer, put off, get rid of, discard, reject, crucify, do not, put to death, etc.... and Put On, renew, begin, take up, instead, but rather, make new, renew, cloth yourself in, live by, do, become, be, etc. Most of psychology, or at least good psychology, came from the Bible. The psychological process of cognitive behavioral therapy involves not only stop thought but also thought substitution, and not only stopping a behavior but also behavioral substitution. Biblical commandments and Biblical precepts serve as the prescriptions for very specific individualized treatment plans within Biblical therapy.

A Sample of Biblical Cognitive, Emotional, and Behavioral Prescriptions

Ephesians 4:25-32 Throw off falsehood, and put on truth. Throw off stealing, and put on honest work. Throw off abusive language, and put on encouraging words. Throw off anger and bitterness, and put on gentleness and kindness. Throw off malice, and put on benevolence. Throw off rage, and put on forgiveness.

Galatians 5:19-26 Throw off sexual immorality, and put on love. Throw off impure thoughts, and put on purity. Throw off lustful pleasure, and put on self-control. Throw off idolatry (anything we put first above God), and put on Christ. Throw off demonic (fortune-telling and other negatives spiritual) activities, and put on Christ worship. Throw off hostility and quarreling, and put on peace. Throw off jealousy, and put on kindness and joy. Throw off outbursts of anger, and put on patience. Throw off selfish ambition and division, and put on generosity and reconciliation. Throw off drunkenness and wild parties, and put on sobriety and self-control. Throw off conceit, and put on humility and other centeredness. Throw off envy, and put on joy and contentment.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

James 1:19-27 Throw off speaking, and put on listening. Throw off filth, and put on control of the tongue. Throw off evil, and put on obedience to the message of God. Throw off corruption of the world, and put on taking care of orphans and widows.

Philippians 2:3-5 Throw off selfishness, and put on investing in others. Throw off pride, and put on humility.

Philippians 4:6-9 Throw off worry, and put on prayer and peace. Throw off wickedness, and put on righteousness.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Throw off jealousy, and put on other centered love. Throw off boastful pride, and put on humility and boasting in the Lord. Throw off rudeness, and put on respect. Throw off demanding one's own way, and put on other centeredness. Throw off irritability, and put on patience. Throw off keeping score of wrongs, and put on forgiveness. Throw off rejoicing in injustice, and put on kindness.

Psalms 37:1-8 Throw off envy, and put on trusting in God. Throw off worry, and put on patience, stillness, and waiting.

Colossians 3:5-15 Throw off sexual impurity and lust, and put on other centered love. Throw off greediness, and put on generosity, appreciation, and thankfulness. Throw off anger, rage, malicious behavior, and put on tender heartedness, mercy, kindness, forgiveness, gentleness, love, and peace. Throw off slander, and put on truth and exhortation. Throw off dirty language, and put on respect and encouragement. Throw off lying, and put on speaking the truth. Throw off wicked deeds, and put on kindness and good deeds.

1 Peter 3:9 Throw off returning evil with evil, and put on returning evil with good.

Romans 12:3-8 Throw off pride, and put on honest self-appraisal and humility. Throw off inferiority, and put on acts, and use of spiritual gifts.

Romans 12:17-21 Throw off vengeance, and put on peace and mercy. Throw off evil, and put on good.

By now you may be able to refine your specific Throw Off/Put On:

I wish to Throw Off: _____

I wish to Put On: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Examples

Throw-Offs and Put-Ons in the Renewal of Self

As a therapist, I have increasingly noted that an individual's anxiety, depression, negativity, anger, faulty thinking, and relational problems are inversely related to the quality of their spiritual life. As their faith and trust in God grows, their anxiety, depression, anger, distorted thoughts, negative moods and relational problems tend to shrink. And as their spiritual life diminishes by spending less time reading the Bible, doing devotionals, going to church, praying, and serving others, their life problems tend to increase. I have also noted this to be true in my own personal life. When I begin the day doing devotionals, reading the Bible, and praying for others, my day goes much better. When I get too busy and gloss over or ignore my spiritual life, my negative thoughts and feelings reemerge, my day goes much worse, and life problems have a way of creeping back in.

Galatians 5: 19-21 When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasures, idolatry, sorcery, hostility quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, dissension, divisions, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other similar sins...

Galatians 5:22-23 But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in on us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control...

I have decided to share a number of Biblical therapy case examples, in order to assist the reader in developing their own unique Throw Offs/Put Ons, in dealing with their specific cognitive, emotional, and behavioral life problems. Individuals can do this on their own or in conjunction with a Christian therapist, a pastor, or an accountability partner. It should be noted that very individualized and unique Throw Offs/Put Ons can be developed for the same type of problem, according to the uniquely mismanage thoughts, emotions, attitudes, or behavioral patterns of the individual. Below I will try to list several unique Throw Offs/Put Ons that were developed during actual Biblical therapy sessions, addressing similar life problems in very different ways. Client names have been changed and their specific circumstances have been altered, in order to maintain client confidentiality.

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Damaged Self-Esteem

Judy presented with low self-esteem, feeling damaged, defective, inadequate, and that she was “not enough”. She had grown up with a father who was verbally abusive. Children in school had teased and harassed her for being overweight. She had several failed relationships with boyfriends who were verbally abusive and one who had cheated on her with her best

friend. Through Biblical counseling Judy came to believe that she was created by God, in his image, and that she was unique as a fingerprint. That God had given her, her physical appearance, her intellect, her emotions, her personality, and even her life experiences, all for his purposes. She gradually developed the perspective that she was part of a much larger picture. She created the unique Throw Off, “I am not enough” and Put On “I was created for a special purpose”. She went on to become a school teacher with a personal mission of making each child feel special and of not tolerating harassment, mean-spiritedness, teasing, or bullying in her classroom. When Judy relapses to feelings that she is inadequate or not enough, she reads her life verses:

1 Corinthians 12:18-22, 27 But our bodies have many parts, and God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as he desired. If they were all one member, where would the body be? Now there are many members, but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you; or again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary... Now you are Christ's body, and individual members of it.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

Where am I damaged: _____

How might God use me, even with my damage, for His purpose: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Depression

Mark lost his job and he began to feel unimportant, with a loss of identity which predominantly came from his work. As his unemployment continued, he became more depressed, pessimistic, irritable, and increasingly more discouraged and negative. He developed financial problems and with his increasing negativity, his marriage and family relationships began to suffer. He developed an all or nothing, black-and-white perspective that ‘everything’ was terrible and that he would ‘never’ recover. Mark focused on and became preoccupied with where his cup was partially empty. Through Biblical counseling Mark worked on making a

gratitude list, a list of blessings where his cup was partially full. He came to realize that for the first time in his life that he had time to spend with his wife and children. He grew an appreciation for the gift of being laid off and having marital and family time. He developed the unique Throw Off, “I am valued for what I produce”, and Put On, “I have value for who I am as a husband and as a father”. Mark came to see and appreciate where God was working in his life. Mark was out of work for a long time. When he did find another job, he continued to maintain a balanced lifestyle, making time for his wife and children, and appreciating being of value for who he is, rather than being of value only for what he does. When Mark gets his lifestyle out of balance by overworking, or when he worries about becoming unemployed, he prays his life verse:

Matthew 6:26 Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?

What am I depressed/anxious about: _____

In what circumstance do I need to have more trust in God: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Lying

Tom presented for therapy on the verge of his wife divorcing him. Tom grew up with harsh negative parents, and learned to tell them what he thought they wanted to hear, rather than telling them the truth. In later life he developed marital problems related to dishonesty and telling his wife lies. He would tell needless lies about insignificant things, significantly damaging their relationship and their foundation of trust. Through Biblical therapy, Tom made the decision to Throw Off “telling untruths” and Put On “telling the truth”. Tom had to continue practicing honesty, by catching himself even days after a false statement, confessing his dishonesty, and telling the truth. With continued practice he would catch himself after several hours. With continued practice he began to catch himself while the dishonesty was rolling off of his tongue.

He would acknowledge his dishonesty and immediately correct the exaggeration, the omission, or the false statement. With continued practice he began to even catch himself while the false thought was still forming in his mind. Tom has had victory over this sin. After many months of telling the truth, or at least correcting untruths, the foundation of trust was restored with his wife. Tom selected and has memorized the following life verse:

Proverbs 12:22 The Lord detests lying lips, but he delights in those who tell the truth.

Is there any dishonesty in my life that I need to Take Off: _____

What do I need to Put On in order to have victory over my dishonesty: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Anxiety/Panic Attacks:

Cindy was going through some difficult times in relationship to conflicts with a coworker. She was feeling overwhelmed and dreaded going into work each day. Nasty arguments and silent treatments with each other weighed heavily on her. She also had additional stressors related to her husband and her children. Each evening she would develop anticipatory anxiety, worrying about what was going to happen the next day and into the work week. Cindy began having panic attacks the evening before or on her way into work. She made a decision during therapy to Throw Off “returning evil with evil” and Put On “returning evil with good”. She began to treat her coworker with respect. Cindy was courteous, helpful, and when appropriate, gave her coworker complements, words of affirmation, and appreciation for her contributions in the workplace. Her coworker however, continued to treat Cindy poorly. Cindy also Threw Off “worrying about the future” and Put On “being in the present”. Cindy read Bible verses related to dealing with trials and tribulations, and learned that through God's sovereignty, trials and

tribulations, if handled correctly, would lead to positive changes in her character, strength and perseverance, and a closer relationship to God. Cindy's positive approach resulted in other coworkers having increased respect and a desire for friendship with Cindy. As she became obedient to God's commandments, her panic attacks were eventually eliminated, and her anxiety significantly decreased. This change occurred even before Cindy's other coworkers began to treat her better. Cindy adopted the life verse:

John 14:15 If you love me, obey my commandments.

Areas in my life where I am not obedient to God's commandments: _____

I will commit to being obedient to the following specific commandments: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Pornography/Lustful Thoughts

Jim presented to counseling due to being on the verge of divorce due to pornography. His wife felt hurt, degraded, devalued, and compared to other women. She broke off physical intimacy due to deterioration in their communication, companionship, emotional support, as well as her feelings of being betrayed and used as an object for Jim's sexual gratification. During therapy Jim eventually made the decision to maintain total abstinence from pornography. He came to realize that whatever he immersed himself in and whatever he put into his mind grew, and whatever he starved shrank and would eventually die. He Threw Off "pornography" and Put On "immersing himself in spiritual material". Despite this change Jim still had lustful thoughts of women even while attending church. Through Biblical therapy he was able to reframe women as someone's wife, someone's mother, someone's sister, and someone's daughter. After several experiments he came up with the individualized Throw Off of "lustful thoughts" and Put On "praying for women". Jim's sexual thoughts have significantly diminished. Now whenever

sexualized thoughts towards other women begin to creep in, Jim immediately starts praying for them, that they would be godly wives, excellent mothers, loyal sisters, loving daughters, and that they would have eternal salvation. Jim adopted the life verse:

James 5:16 Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another so that you may be healed. The earnest prayers of a righteous man can accomplish much.

I have inappropriate sexual books, magazines, movies, television shows, music, Internet sites..., etc. that I need to throw off:

I will choose to put on and fill my mind with: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Anger/Foul Language

Any valid therapeutic approach must not only apply to clients and the people we help, but also apply to the issues that all of us face, including therapists and pastors. What many would consider major life crises, are addressed rather calmly by this therapist, as I have come to, at a heart level, totally accept and trust in the sovereignty of God. This therapist has however, embarrassingly struggled with anger, yelling, and even profanity, when inconvenienced by minor disruptions in my daily routine. When my computer won't do what I want it to do, my lawnmower won't start, or when an unexpected even minor interruption occurs in my daily schedule, I can become frustrated and lose perspective. The Holy Spirit convicted me of my own sinful behavior of anger and profanity, which is a violation of my relationship with God. After thoughtful deliberation, this therapist recognized that my source of anger came from impatience, loss of perspective, and a temporary lack of appreciation for the many blessings in my life. This therapist made a conscious decision to Throw Off "anger and foul language" when confronted with an inconvenience in my daily routine, and to Put On "thanking God" for my numerous blessings, such as having the computer, a lawnmower, a yard to mow, a home, good health, adequate finances, a loving wife, spiritually minded children, etc. Each time something does not go my way, I quickly thank God for the specific blessings in whatever situation I'm dealing with, which has now developed into a positive pattern of gratitude. When my spiritual

life suffers, or more accurately when I neglect my spiritual life, my pattern of sin has a way of creeping back into my life. When I am actively involved in reading the Bible, praying, doing devotionals, attending church, interacting with other believers, serving in a ministry, and leading our family life group, my tendency towards anger and foul language diminishes and I am much more quickly able to Put On worshiping and thanking God and having victory over my sin of anger. The life verse I selected for this issue is:

1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 Always be joyful. Never stop praying. Be thankful in all circumstances, for this is God's will for you who belong to Christ Jesus.

Under what circumstances do I get angry or resentful, or lack gratitude: _____

What blessings are hidden in my difficult circumstances: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Self-Centeredness

Bob was criticized by his wife for frequently interrupting, over-talking, and putting his agenda above hers. He would share about his day, but when she began to share about her day, he would walk away or turn on the computer or the television. When friends would share about their lives, he had the habit of quickly changing the focus to himself and trumping them with his experiences. Although he became increasingly aware of this problem, his awareness did not change his behavior. During Biblical therapy he adopted Philippians 2:3-7 as his life verse. He made a decision to Throw Off “self-centeredness” and to Put On “other-centeredness”. He implemented specific skills in active listening, asking elaborating open-ended questions, and practicing empathetic responding. With practice, practice, and more practice, his relationship with his wife and friends has improved. At this point he may not be as other-focused and as empathetic as his wife, but he has made tremendous gains in his decline in self-centeredness and in increasing his heart felt concern for others.

Philippians 2:3-7 Do nothing from selfish or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although he existed in the form God, did not regard equality with God as

something to cling to. But emptied himself, taking the form of a bondservant, and being made in the likeness of men.

Where do I practice selfishness or self-centeredness: _____

Where do I need to be more selfless or other-centered: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Boastful Pride/Alcohol Abuse

Paul, who was a Christian, enjoyed being the center of attention. At social functions he would drink too much, tell what he believed to be funny stories, make offensive jokes, make witty hurtful comments about others, and would boastfully exaggerate his own accomplishments. Each attempt he made at drawing attention to himself resulted in his embarrassing himself and being the focus of negative attention. His wife began to hear negative comments regarding her husband's reputation and their invitation to social functions greatly declined. As Paul became painfully aware of how he was perceived by others, he became increasingly convicted of his own pride. As a result, he made the decision during couple's therapy to Throw Off "boastful pride" and to Put On "humility and boasting in the Lord". At social functions he reduced his drinking, shared positive comments about his wife, shared how other coworkers had contributed to his work success, and how God was working in his life. Each time bragging and self-focus creeps back into his life, there is a convicting embarrassment. Paul now perceives his embarrassment as a gift from God by way of a conviction from the Holy Spirit. When this occurs Paul quickly humbles himself, becomes other-focused, and boasts in the Lord. Both Paul and his wife have noted that his reputation has become more positive and that their invitations to social functions have increased. Approximately one year after the initiation of his change, Paul was promoted in his workplace to a team leader. Paul chose Jeremiah 9:23 and 2 Corinthians 10:17-18 as his memory verses.

Jeremiah 9:23 Thus says the Lord, let not a wise man boast of his wisdom, and let not the mighty man boast of his might, and let not a rich man boast of his riches.

2 Corinthians 10:17-18 But he who boasts is to boast in the Lord. For it is not he who commends himself that is approved, but he whom the Lord commends.

Is there an area of my life where I boastfully commend myself to others: _____

Where will I share my testimony with others about how God is working in my life: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Shutting Down

Scott and his wife Jane are Christians who presented for marital therapy. When Scott experiences either workplace stress, feelings of being overwhelmed, or feelings of being hurt, he shuts down. For Scott shutting down includes withdrawing, detaching, not communicating, losing motivation, and becoming critical of himself and subsequently critical of others. This pattern has created marital problems, with Jane attempting to push Scott to show more initiative. She perceived her attempts to be helpful. Her attempts however, were perceived by Scott as being critical or controlling rather than helpful. The generalized Throw Off of “shutting down” and Put On of “stepping up” did not prove to be helpful for Scott. When role-playing “stepping up”, Scott developed the feeling of being intrusive and aggressive. Scott went through a process of trying to not personalize his wife's “helpful” attempts at drawing him out as statements about his ineptness. He came to utilize the Biblical life verse of Proverbs 19:11. In therapy Scott also created a new Throwing Off of “personalizing and shutting down” and a new Putting On of “stepping forward with other-focus”. When coupled with “other-focus” Scott felt a reduction in intrusiveness and aggressiveness and an increase in initiative and helpfulness. When faced with marital stress, disagreements, hurts, or feeling of being overwhelmed, Scott now steps forward to attack the problem and focus on the needs of others, rather than withdraw, shut down, or attack the other person. He reports a lessening of self-criticalness and anger. When Scott moves toward shutting down, he is now able to recall the visual image of stepping forward in a way that is more pleasing in his wife's site and in the sight of God. Couple reports an improvement in their marital relationship.

Proverbs 19:11 A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

James 4:17 Therefore, to one who knows the right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin.

Are there areas in my life where I shut down, detach, or withdraw from my responsibilities:

Where might I show more initiative to be more Christ like: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Anxiety/Fear

Ed was a Christian who in addition to his primary job of teaching school, always worked a second job. His wife was also employed. Ed was frequently anxious and fearful about having enough money for his retirement. He would spend hours each week looking at the growth or decline of their retirement funds, investments, savings accounts, and their checking account. He became increasingly preoccupied with potential scenarios about their future lifestyle. He developed racing thoughts, anticipatory anxiety, hot flashes, sweating, inability to relax, racing heart, lightheadedness, and vague feelings of impending doom. His worries about their financial future turned into worrying about having enough money for their present lifestyle, which was clearly unrelated to the reality of their financial situation. Despite his wife's reassurances that they had enough money, he became increasingly distracted from daily living. When he presented for counseling he was frozen with fear, which adversely affected his work performance as well as his marital and family relationships. During Biblical therapy it became clear that his faith was head knowledge, which was not integrated into his daily life. As he began to spend more time reading the Bible, praying both alone and together with his wife, doing devotionals, and serving others, his spiritual life began to move from his head to his heart. He adopted Matthew 6:26-34, and Proverbs 3:5-8 as his life verses. He developed the Throw Off “trusting in myself” and the Put On “trusting in God”. In future months some of Ed's investments declined. His fear and anxiety however, continued to diminish. Since that time he has continued to notice his investments going up and down, but his emotional life has become detached from his investments. He has also noticed an increased ability to live in the present

and have an increasing connectedness with his wife through doing shared prayer and service to others. He has developed a balance in this lifestyle, by working less and enjoying life more.

Matthew 6: 33-34 Seek first His kingdom and live righteously, and he will give you everything you need. So do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

Proverbs 3:5-8 Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not depend on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight. Do not be wise in your own eyes; Fear the Lord and turn away from evil. Then you will have healing to your body and refreshment to your bones.

Are there areas of my life where I am preoccupied with anxiety/fear: _____

It is my goal to move my faith and trust in God, from mere head knowledge, to actual heart acceptance. I will commit to trusting God, in the daily practice of my life, in the following area(s):

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Keeping Score

Don and Diane presented with marital problems related to poor communication, lack of companionship with an absence of marital time, anger and resentments, feelings that the other was not contributing enough, decline and later absence of physical intimacy, and frequent arguments over the recall of hurtful experiences that had occurred throughout the years of their

marriage. They had developed a cultural perspective that marriage was a 50/50 proposition. They began to keep score of what the other was contributing to the relationship, and also keeping track of their hurts. Their relationship had regressed to the point where they were competitive and intentionally hurting each other. When they presented for marital therapy, Diane had already consulted an attorney regarding her rights should they get a divorce. Although Don did not want out of the marriage, he had taken a consumers perspective that Diane was not meeting his needs. During the course of Biblical therapy couple learned the relational skills of active listening, empathetic responding, and other-centered love. They began to cognitively reframe their spouse as a friend rather than an ill-willed foe. They also learned to adopt the position that marriage is a 100/100 proposition. Don developed the Throw Off of “keeping score” and the Put On of “serving his wife”. Through practice he was able to increase his other-centered love, and develop a servant's heart, focusing more on what he is giving rather than what he is getting.

Diane developed the Throw Off of “anger/resentment” and the Put On of “forgiveness”. With frequent struggles against their own selfish positions, and relapses back to arguing, conflicts began to lessen in both frequency and duration. Gradually marital connectedness began to increase in areas of communication, praying together, companionship, going on dates without the children, family time with the children, attending church and worshiping together, emotional support, and eventually physical intimacy. When conflicts now arise, this couple has learned to fight fairly, attacking the problem rather than attacking each other. Their active spiritual lives help to keep them focused on other-centered versus self-centered love. They both adopted the life verses:

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Where might I be keeping score or taking a consumer orientation to relationships: _____

Where might I focus on Putting On a servant's heart: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Alcohol and Drug Dependence

Patty began using alcohol and marijuana while in high school. While at college her alcohol and drug use dramatically increased. She began missing classes and her grades declined. Her life became focused around alcohol, drugs, sex, and partying. She dropped out of school focusing on a relationship which later failed. She obtained employment and began developing her career. She felt a void in her life which she tried to fill with alcohol and marijuana, relationships, sex, work, popularity, and being the center of attention at parties. Nothing filled her feelings of emptiness and she progressed to using cocaine. When she entered therapy she became increasingly aware of the emptiness in her life. During Biblical therapy she committed to total abstinence from alcohol, drugs, and sex, and began attending Alcoholics Anonymous, Celebrate Recovery, and a Bible based church. Although she enjoyed the worship music, the preaching, and the fellowship of others in AA, Celebrate Recovery, and other believers in her church, she continued to relapse to using alcohol and drugs. She developed the Throw Off of “getting high on alcohol and drugs” and the Put On of “getting high on life and being filled with the spirit”. She adopted the memory verses Ephesians 5:18 and 2 Timothy 2:26. She had several more relapses before being filled with the Holy Spirit and recognizing that she no longer felt a hole or emptiness in her life. Whenever she feels the urge to use alcohol or drugs, she calls her AA sponsor and her Celebrate Recovery sponsor. When she begins to feel a void in her life, she calls her accountability partner from her women's Bible study life group.

Ephesians 5:18 Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the spirit.

2 Timothy 2:26 And they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.

I am filling the void in my life with: _____

I will commit to filling the void in my life with the Holy Spirit in the following ways:

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Family Conflict

Michael and Sue have been married for 17 years and have three children Carlene 15, Jordan 13, and Erika 10. Michael and Sue presented with frequent arguments and conflicts over parenting. Sue saw Michael as harsh, arbitrary, and unreasonably provoking the children in his manner of discipline. He would frequently become angry and yell at the children. Michael perceived Sue as permissive and undermining his authority. Initially Michael and Sue presented for couple's therapy. Sue complained of not feeling loved due to Michael's anger and frustration with the children, which became redirected at her and her parenting style. Michael complained of not feeling respected due to Sue defending the children and criticizing Michael in their presence. Through Biblical couple's therapy Sue was able to define clearly for Michael what made her feel loved and what made her feel unloved. Michael was able to convey what made him feel respected and what made him feel disrespected. When the children joined their parents for family therapy, the children complained of not being heard and the parents complained that their children were disrespectful and disobedient. Through Biblical family therapy the children were able to define what made them feel provoked and what made them feel valued and loved. The parents were able to share with the children what made them feel honored and what made them feel dishonored by the children's behavior. The family developed the following collaborative treatment plan: Michael to Throw Off "anger and yelling" and to Put On "explaining and giving consequences". Sue to Throw Off "criticizing and undermining", and to Put On "joining Michael in disciplinary experiments". Carlene to Throw Off "talking back and defiance" and to Put On "obedience". Jordan to Throw Off "disrespectful language" and to Put On "respectful language". Erika to Throw Off "complaining and not doing chores" and to Put On "appreciation and performing chores". Additionally each member of the family became aware of both the positive and negative impact that they had on other members of the family. Each member of the family also became aware of the other's goals and how to be supportive of each other, as well as holding each other accountable for their positive or negative contribution to the family. Michael and Sue have developed more collaborative parenting experiments, clearly sharing family rules, expectations, and following through with logical and natural consequences. The children's behavior has dramatically improved with the children feeling more valued and respected even when they are being disciplined for their misbehavior. Family adopted the following Biblical life verses:

Ephesians 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. Honor your father and mother. This is the first of the Ten Commandments that ends with a promise. And this is the promise: If you honor your father and mother, you will live a long life, full of blessings.

Ephesians 6:4 And now a word to you fathers. Don't make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord.

Where may my own contribution, to marital or family relationships, be maintaining conflict:

I will commit to making the following change(s) in my own contribution to marital or family relationships that will be pleasing in God's sight:

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Depression/Medication Management

William presented with depressed mood, hopelessness about his future, feeling lethargic, inadequate, guilty, self-critical, indecisive, with loss of interest in family and friends, loneliness, loss of motivation, avoidance, loss of joy and pleasure in everyday living, not wanting to get out of bed, feelings of fatigue, and suicidal thoughts. He was withdrawn, failed to communicate, and was unresponsive when his wife would initiate conversation. When she left him, he

presented for therapy. Despite several experiments of Throwing Off and Putting On, William continued to be depressed. His wife joined him for couple's therapy with her expressed desire to save the marriage. William was unsuccessful in Throwing Off "silence" and Putting On "initiating and responding"; Throwing Off "negative thoughts" and Putting On "keeping a blessings inventory"; Throwing Off "feeling-centered living" and Putting On "Commandment-centered living". William was referred by this therapist to a psychiatrist for antidepressant medication. He responded remarkably with a dramatic change in his personality. He was more animated, talkative, responsive, and at times he even initiated conversations. With medication management William was successfully able to Throw Off "shutting down" and Put On "verbalizing his thoughts and feelings" with his wife. William however, repeatedly made the decision that he did not like or feel the need for medication. For the next year he had episodes of going off and on his antidepressant medication. Each time he went off his medication he relapsed into flat affect and shutting down. His wife's biggest complaint was that when William was depressed that he would not communicate with her. It has been my therapeutic experience that there are clearly some patients that require an antidepressant or anti-anxiety medication in order to reach their highest level of functioning. When William walks into this therapist office, I can immediately tell whether or not he is on or off of his antidepressant medication. William is clearly one of those patients who require medication management in order to cognitively, emotionally, and relationally be able to utilize the principles of Biblical therapy. Because of antidepressant medication William has been able to follow through on his therapeutic homework assignments of keeping a gratitude journal and sharing his journal with his wife.

Despite multiple efforts, I continue to have the following symptoms of depression:

If I continue to have symptoms of major depression, despite attempting several therapeutic approaches, including Biblical therapy, I will obtain a medication consult.

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Anxiety/Panic

Tom, who is a Christian, has for years had an active spiritual life in the service of other people. He began to experience a high level of anxiety related to health problems. After several medical

evaluations he was diagnosed with leukemia. He began to experience severe anxiety with racing thoughts and severe disturbance of sleep and appetite. Tom's anxiety progressed to having panic attacks with pounding-racing heart, shortness of breath, nausea, hot flashes, inability to relax, lightheadedness, choking sensation, shakiness, sweating, and fear of dying. His Bible study - life group laid hands on him and prayed for him, that he would be able to Throw Off "anxiety and fear" and would be able to Put On "peace". From that moment on, Tom reported an incredible sense of peace. Tom adopted Philippians 1:21 as his life verse, determining that he would live surrender to God's will for his life, whether that meant continuing his Christian ministry of service, or dying and going to heaven. Although Tom's cancer has come in and out of remission, he has continued to be at peace, no longer experiencing fear or panic.

Philippians 1:21 For to me, living means living for Christ, and to die is gain.

Are there areas in my life where I experience fear, anxiety, and or panic: _____

What do I need to surrender to God in order to obtain lasting peace: _____

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Relational Issues

Darla had been in an abusive marriage where her husband was emotionally, verbally, and at times physically abusive. He had an extramarital affair and he left her for the other woman. Darla went through a series of dysfunctional dating relationships making her relational decisions out of feelings of desperation. She was lonely and was afraid that she would end up alone. She found herself again settling for men who were angry, neglectful, hurtful, and/or dishonest. During Biblical therapy Darla came to realize that having no relationship was a step

up from having a bad relationship. Darla made a conscious decision to Throw Off “emotional desperation” and to Put On “thoughtful patience “. She began attending to her cognitive as well as her emotional data and used the cognitive behavioral experiential red light/green light. As she progressed in making decisions regarding her relationships, friendships, finances, and dating she would evaluate whether her head (thoughts)and her heart (emotions)were both red lights telling her to stop, or both green lights telling her to go forward, or mixed red/green lights, basically a crash in the intersection, telling her to stop and to use caution. She made the decision to live surrender to God's will for her relational life, with acceptance and being patient whether God brings the right man into her life or whether that means living single. Darla has continued to remain out of relationship. There are times when she has feelings of loneliness, but she reports feeling happier than when she was having feelings of fear or desperation. Darla has also reconciled that she may be single for the rest of her life. She adopted the following life verses:

Psalm 46:10 Be still, and know that I am God

Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

In what ways may I be desperately settling for a life that is not pleasing in the sight of God:

In what area of my life will I be patient and wait on the Lord to provide what I need, according to His wisdom:

Biblical Therapy Case Example: Damaged Self-Esteem/The Impact of Harsh Words

When Joe went to church and other social events he would withdraw and isolate from others. Since childhood he had feelings of shyness. During Biblical therapy he kept a cognitive/emotional journal with themes of having the feeling that he was in people's way and under their feet. Joe was also given the experiential assignment of writing an autobiography. Joe's father was a carpenter who worked out of their family home carpentry shop. Joe's father was successful and very busy remodeling people's homes and building cabinets. Joe had no memories of he and his father riding bikes, going camping, playing ball, or father coming to any of Joe's school events. When Joe wanted to spend time with his father, he would go to father's workshop and would usually be met with a statement by his father "shoo, you're in the way and under my feet". At subsequent social functions when Joe would begin to develop the feelings of being in the way and underfoot, he became aware that these feelings were not coming from other people, but coming from the APP that had his father's voice and that was playing within Joe's head. Joe chose the Biblical life verse Jeremiah 1:4-8. He began to give other people the benefit of the doubt and after reluctantly approaching them, Joe developed a sense of feeling welcomed and welcoming others. Joe never felt the need to develop a specific Put On. After three subsequent social experiments, Joe's feelings of being in the way and underfoot left him, and have never returned. Joe has since become more actively involved in serving in his church and in developing friendships.

Jeremiah 1:4-8 The Lord gave me a message. He said, I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my spokesman for the world. O sovereign Lord, I said, I cannot speak for you! I am too young! Don't say that, the Lord replied, for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you. And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and take care of you. I, the Lord, have spoken.

Where in my own life do I have damaged self-esteem: _____

From Major Depression to Happiness and Abundant Joy

Major depression is not sadness, grief associated with losses, unhappiness, discouragement, lack of joy or pleasure, or feeling down. For these emotions are partial, temporary, normal, and universal. Depressed mood, in and of itself, is not a sin. It is how we handle these emotions however, that lead to health, or how we mishandle these emotions that lead to furthering depression. When we feed depression it grows and can become chronic. For the most part, our ability to overcome depression, or inadvertently to worsen depression, is a choice, perhaps an unconscious choice or a choice outside of our awareness, but nevertheless a choice.

Major depression is the mishandling of sadness, grief, feelings of unhappiness, and misfortune, in sinful ways that become all-consuming, chronic, and characterized by the loss of hope, shutting down, and not functioning. Most of us do not like to think of our thoughts or behaviors as sinful. Our present day culture has for the most part eliminated any reference to sin, and has redefined sin as symptoms of some greater problem outside of our control or as a dysfunction. One way to think about sin is that we place our will regarding our life above God's will for our life. We conduct ourselves in such a manner as to violate our relationship with God. We put our ways above His ways. We become dominated by our feelings, resulting in disturbances of sleep and appetite, emotional fatigue, feelings of worthlessness, thinking that we have no value, criticalness of ourselves and others, irritability and anger, taking on a negative pessimistic worldview, detachment, loss of motivation, indecisiveness, withdrawal from family and friends, avoidance, experiencing a loss of joy and pleasure in everyday living, developing hopelessness, suicidal despair, and other related distortions in our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors resulting in a downward spiral. We can develop automatic negative cognitive distortions, through the use of erroneous vocabulary, convincing ourselves that "things are hopeless" or that "we can't take it anymore" or that "everything is terrible" or "that nothing will work out" or that "we are irreversibly defective", etc... self-messages which reinforce our weakness and our sense of hopelessness, and which strengthens our depression and the problems in our lives. If we allow ourselves to spiral downward we may develop other chronic patterns of anger and rage, abuse of alcohol and drugs, overspending, not eating or overeating, emotional lability, brooding, getting into conflicts with others, shutting down with failure to perform our responsibilities, isolating, not attending to self-care etc... which are dysfunctional, sinful responses that if continuously practiced or rehearsed, strengthen, compound, perpetuate, feed, and grow depression. These are choices of thoughts, attitudes, and behaviors that feed depression which we need to Throw Off.

A partial list of causes for major depression include poor choices made by ourselves, poor choices made by others that affect us, our sin, the sins of others, self-focus, selfishness, self-pity, damaged self-esteem, the belief that we are useless, belief that we have no purpose, unrealistic expectations, impatience in our time frame, and lack of appreciation for the blessings we have in our lives.

Other non-Biblical beliefs and values grounded in our culture, such as happiness is based in wealth, appearance, youth, status, successfulness, popularity, romantic relationships etc. also

contribute to depression. Major depression may also result from the belief that our moods, attitudes, thoughts, and feelings are inextricably connected to our life circumstances.

Four powerful Biblical approaches to overcoming major depression and allowing the opportunity for happiness and even an overflow of joy include: 1) a clear understanding and appreciation for the sovereignty of God, 2) an appreciation of our blessings and perceiving where our “glass” is partially full rather than a discontented focus on where our “glass” is partially empty, 3) understanding and mastery of the skill of taking our thoughts captive and deliberately choosing what to Throw Off and what to Put On, and 4) recognition that our circumstances in life do not have to dictate or dominate our mood.

Sovereignty of God In our culture we are more focused on being consumers, including what others and even what God can do for us, rather than focusing on being servants and on what we can do for God. Our prayers tend to be self-centered asking God to provide us with our list of blessings, rather than paying attention to where He is working in our lives and in the lives of others and what we need to be doing in order to serve him. Our goal in overcoming major depression should not necessarily be to alleviate our problems, but to be obedient to and trust in God's will for our lives. The solution is not a human solution, or the way of our culture, but God's way as outlined in the Bible. God is not our counselor to make us happy, but to make us holy. We find happiness, purpose, and direction as a result of surrendering our lives to his authority and to his purpose. If Jesus died on the cross for your sins and my sins so that we could enter into the presence of God and have eternal life, then he paid our ransom and we belong to him. Therefore our lives are no longer our lives do with as we please, but to live our lives in a way that pleases him, according to his book of rules, the Bible.

To overcome depression, and be more than undepressed, more than numb from antidepressants, to be truly happy, and have overflowing joy, results from the intentional practices of positive habits in two major areas. Most research on true happiness, beyond the absence of depression, comes from a life with close positive relationships and an active spiritual life. Close relationships involve good communication, companionship or spending quality time, emotional support and connectedness, empathy, and having a servant rather than a consumer orientation to relationship. An active spiritual life includes reading the Bible, doing devotionals, praying, attending church, fellowship with other believers and having a ministry of serving others.

It may seem difficult to accept God's sovereignty in the midst of our misfortune. A friend of mine Paul, who is a devout Christian, fell and broke his foot. Before he got up he prayed to God that his foot would not be broken, or if broken that God would heal him and that he would walk. When Paul stood up he fell. At first Paul was surprised that God did not answer his prayer. Afterward he became angry with

God. He was upset, irritated, and depressed, that the severity of his injury required him to be hospitalized. While in the hospital Paul was able to lead his roommate, who had terminal

cancer, to accept the Lord. After discharge Paul learned that his hospital roommate had died. It turned out that his roommate's wife had unsuccessfully attempted to lead her husband to the Lord on many occasions. When she informed Paul of her husband's death, she also shared her gratitude for what Paul had done while he was in the hospital. Paul was convicted of his anger and he came to an appreciation of God's sovereignty of allowing his foot to be broken in order that his hospital roommate would have salvation. Paul came to realize that God's plan for Paul's life was superior to Paul's plan for his life.

We need to follow his commandments and not our own feelings. It is disobedient and going our own way which puts us in despair. The Bible is God's textbook for our lives. The Bible teaches standards and teaches us where we fall short, provides correction, direction, and trains us in righteousness. We should take the perspective that trials and tribulations, which may involve physical, emotional, or relational pain and suffering, occur within the context of God's sovereignty. By going through adversity he develops our character, develops our strength and perseverance, and draws us into a closer relationship with him when we reach the end of ourselves. If we practice being filled with his Spirit, rather than being filled with our own emotions, we can overcome depression and develop true joy. We first need to have self-control, to give up our agenda, and put on God's agenda.

As I look back over my life, I now realize that God was working through my specific chapter of adversity to accomplish the following, for me and/or for others:

As I focus on my current life situation, I realize that God may be working to accomplish the following, for me and/or for others:

Blessings/Gratitude

A second perspective that helps us Throw Off major depression is to avoid dwelling on where our glass is partially empty. As part of our human nature we will always have seasons of trouble. Problems, trials, tribulations, hurts, disappointments, losses, conflicts, illness, and even death, are part of our human condition in a fallen world. These are true and should not be denied. We should not attempt to lie to ourselves or deny that the negatives exist. Nor should we attempt to minimize the significance of these problems in our lives. But when we dwell on the negatives, it is as if we are rehearsing them in our mind, they become our focus, and they grow stronger. We can actually develop the skill of perceiving negatives and complaining.

It is also true that there are many blessings in our lives and we should have an appreciation for where our glass is partially full. Keeping a gratitude list, an appreciation journal, or a blessings inventory is essential to overcoming major depression. We have a choice as to where we choose to dwell or camp out in our heads. We can focus on our illness with cough, congestion, and sneezing, which in reality does cause us discomfort, or when we are ill we can focus on our day off from work, our ability to rest in bed, and the opportunity to take the down time to read a good book. Both of these aspects of an illness are true and with proper perspective our illness can also be a blessing. Research has demonstrated that the habits of happy people include being intentional and deliberate about practicing appreciation and having gratitude.

A current inventory of my life reveals the following lists of appreciations, gratitude, and blessings:

Taking Our Thoughts Captive

A third way to overcome major depression is to recognize that we can take our thoughts captive and intentionally and deliberately choose what to Throw Off and what to Put On. Once making the choice to overcome major depression, we need to Throw Off: hopelessness or placing our hope only in ourselves, shutting down and not functioning, believing that we are worthless, practicing pessimism and negativity, withdrawing, detachment, lack of motivation,

avoidance, suicidal thoughts, impatience, selfishness, a self-centered perspective, abuse of alcohol and drugs, conflict, divisiveness, and other such negative moods, thoughts, and behaviors.

Thought stop and stopping a behavior are not enough. These efforts are usually only temporarily effective, as our old habits will eventually push back up unless there is something stronger in their place. In order to have long-lasting or permanent change we need to link stop thought and stopping a behavior with thought substitution and behavioral substitution. We need to Put on: placing our hope in the Lord, taking initiative, be attentive to our strengths and our giftedness, utilize our strengths and giftedness in the service of others, practice patience, discernment, confession and repentance of sin, forgiveness of others, reconciliation, appreciation, gratitude, obedience to God's word, and a changed heart. Many of my patients believe that they will change what they are doing, only after they feel better. Paradoxically, individuals need to perform their obligations and responsibilities and have positive ways of thinking and acting first. Our emotions will catch up later. The Bible requires obedient centered living rather than feeling driven living.

I need to take the following thoughts captive, and put on the mind of Christ. I will Throw Off/Put On the following thoughts, feelings, and behaviors:

Uncoupling Our Emotions from Our Circumstances

The forth way to overcome major depression is to recognize that our emotions do not have to be inextricably related to or dictated by our circumstances. When in the midst of feelings of depression, it may seem difficult to separate our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors from our difficult circumstances.

Mark, who was in Biblical therapy for depression related to workaholism and being laid off, eventually found work. Within eight months however, he came down with a major illness and missed several weeks of work. By the end of his first week off he was again becoming irritable, impatient, anxious, and angry regarding being out of work. He was focused on his illness and worries over his finances. He remembered his previous ability to Throw Off depression, pessimism, irritability, and negativity regarding his unemployment, and to Put On enjoying being a husband, father, and being of value for who he is, rather than for what he produces. Mark was again able to separate his mood from his circumstance. He was also able to accept his situation and focus on where his glass was partially full rather than where it was partially empty. He made the best of his situation and thanked God for his illness, which kept him in check from eventually returning to his previous life dominating problems of an imbalanced lifestyle with overworking and tying his identity to his career.

Paul, an apostle of Jesus, ended up in prison for preaching the gospel. After many hard years of serving Christ he ended up being martyred. I confess that if it had been me, I probably would have been whining, complaining, angry at Jesus for betraying me, shutting down, and not function. Paul on the other hand, is an excellent example of taking a godly approach to separating our mood from our circumstance. Paul utilized this time while in prison to preach to the palace guard, write letters to the newly established churches, and disciple the jail guards and visitors who came to see him.

Cognitive behavioral therapy for major depression has its origins in the Biblical commandments related to Throw Offs and Put Ons found in the Bible. The use of stop thought and thought substitution is best demonstrated by Taking Off our human nature and Putting On the mind of Christ. The use of stopping a behavior and behavioral substitution emerged from the Biblical commandments to Throw Off negative, self-centered, sinful thoughts, feelings and behaviors which are destructive to both self and others and to Put On obedience to God's word with positive thoughts, feelings and behaviors which are constructive for the individual, family, and the community. Our automatic negative thoughts and cognitive distortions feed depression. Cognitive reframing to Put On the mind of Christ and obedience to God's word, helps us to recognize God's sovereignty and where he is playing an active role in our lives, have gratitude and appreciation for our daily blessings, and separate out our feelings from our circumstances.

Is there an area of my life where I allow my circumstances to dictate and dominate my mood ?:

If I divorce my mood, from my difficult life circumstance, what will I be able to accomplish that will be pleasing in God's sight:

As I was writing this workbook I had the opportunity to attend a secular conference on the habits of happy people. Much of the research has shown that the vast majority of happy people display two essential characteristics:

The first is that they have fostered positive relationships with good communication, companionship or spending quality time, developing empathy and emotional support, and physical contact such as giving and receiving hugs and kisses. If they are married, having regular physical intimacy.

The second characteristic is having an active spiritual life. With Christians this involves reading the Bible, praying, doing devotionals, developing fellowship with other Christians, supporting the body of Christ through attending and getting involved in a Bible-based church, and actively serving others.

Psychotherapy and/or medication management in and of themselves cannot fulfill these two essential characteristics. Medication management, when necessary, should assist the person to feel better so that they may pursue development of positive relationships and an active spiritual life. Psychotherapy should provide counsel that is consistent with developing an active spiritual life and fostering relationships that are pleasing in God's sight.

Biblical Passages Regarding Overcoming Depression - Experiencing Happiness and Abundant Joy

John 15:9-11 Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; Remain in my love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in my love; just as I have kept my Father's

commandments and abide in his love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full. (Obedience)

Matthew 6:33 The thing you should want most is God's kingdom and doing what God wants. Then all these other things you need will be given to you. (Holiness over Happiness)

Romans 8:28 We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love him.

Proverbs 18:14 The will to live can get you through sickness, but no one can live with a broken spirit.

Psalms 32:1-2 Happy is the person whose sins are forgiven, whose wrongs are pardoned. Happy is the person whom the Lord does not consider guilty and in whom there is nothing false. (Focus on Blessings)

2 Corinthians 4:6 God once said, Let the light shine out of darkness! This is the same God who made his light shine in our hearts by letting us know the glory of God that is in the face of Christ.

2 Corinthians 4:8 We have troubles all around us, but we are not defeated. We do not know what to do, but we do not give up the hope of living.

2 Corinthians 4:16-17 So we do not give up. Our physical body is becoming older and weaker, but our spirit inside us is made new every day. We have small troubles for a while now, but they are helping us gain an eternal glory that is much greater than the troubles.

Philippians 4:6-9 Do not worry about anything, but pray and ask God for everything you need, always giving thanks. And God's peace, which is so great we cannot understand it, will keep our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus. Brothers and sisters, think about the things that are good and worthy of praise. Think about the things that are true and honorable and right and pure and beautiful and respected. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (Taking Thoughts Captive)

Romans 5:3-4 And not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. (Sovereignty of God)

Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned how to get along happily whether I have much or little. I know how to live on almost nothing, or with everything. I have learned the secret of living in every situation, whether it is with a full stomach or empty, with plenty or little. For I can do everything with the help of Christ who gives me the strength I need. (Separating Mood from Circumstances)

Ephesians 4:23 And that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind.

Psalms 97:11 Light is sown like seed for the righteous, And gladness for the upright in heart.

Psalm 118:24 This is the day which the Lord has made; Let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Proverbs 17:22 A happy heart is good medicine and a cheerful mind works healing, but a broken spirit dries up the bones.

Psalm 16:7-9 I will praise the Lord, who counsels me; Even at night my heart instructs me. I have set the Lord always before me. Because he is at my right hand, I will not be shaken. Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; My body also will rest secure.

Psalm 16:11 You will make known to me the path of life; In your presence is fullness of joy; In your right hand there are pleasures forever.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Romans 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is for you - his good, pleasing, and perfect will.

Romans 15:13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

I will select the following Biblical life verse(s), as my own verse(s), in order to have victory over depression and to bring happiness and overflowing joy:

From Anxiety/Panic Attacks to Peace

Clients presenting with anxiety usually reveal the following symptoms: pounding racing heart, shortness of breath, lightheadedness/dizziness, stomach distress, hot flashes, feelings of unsteadiness, anticipatory anxiety, inability to relax, nervousness, feeling scared or terrified, choking sensation, trembling hands, fear of losing control over their emotions, fear of dying, fear of going crazy, flushed face, and sweating. With prolonged anxiety, clients may experience an increase in severity of symptoms including panic attacks, social anxiety with restricted ability to go out in public, agoraphobia or fear of even leaving their home, phobias, and obsessive thoughts and/or compulsive behaviors.

A client's initial anxiety or panic may have resulted from the experience of acute stress, childhood traumas, relationship conflicts, health problems, financial stressors, school or workplace harassment, loss of a valued relationship, parenting stress, death of a loved one, major or life-threatening accident, experiencing or observing violence, or other emotionally painful or stressful situations.

The client may have experienced specific thoughts, feelings, or behaviors associated with the stressful event. They may have told themselves: I cannot handle this. Nothing will ever be the same. I have no control. I better not go out. I will lose everything. I can't live without them. My children will fail. I am a bad parent. I will have another panic attack. I cannot cope. I am going to lose control over my feelings. I am going to go crazy. I am going to die. Etc. With repetition, automatic, negative, catastrophic thoughts may develop.

Along with symptoms of anxiety/panic, such as anticipatory anxiety and fear of losing control over one's emotions, the client may develop behavioral patterns such as withdrawal, isolation, avoidance, shutting down, not leaving their home, and not functioning. Depression frequently becomes a byproduct for clients who mismanage stressors and develop severe or prolonged anxiety/panic.

Many clients, as well as other members of our society, have fallen into the unrealistic cultural expectations about what we deserve and/or what we need. We believe that we should always feel good, not be inconvenienced, not have losses, prosper, be accepted, be popular, be healthy, be youthful, be happy, not go through adversity, have what others have, be in a romantic relationship, etc.... and when we do not have these things, to either become anxious or depressed.

Let's take a look at the Biblical view of facing adversities, suffering, distress, trials, losses, afflictions, disappointments, and other difficult chapters in our lives. As part of our human condition we will all have difficult chapters to contend with.

Romans 5:3-4 And not only that, but we also glory in tribulations, knowing that tribulations produce perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for the good of those who love God, to those who are called according to his purpose.

Since God is sovereign, trials and tribulations are either caused by, or allowed by God, to occur in our lives. God is sovereign and works all things to His good, and in retrospect, on many occasions, God works things to our own good. Trials and tribulations, if properly handled according to God's precepts, builds our strength and endurance, builds our character, and draws us into a closer relationship and reliance on God when we reach the end of ourselves. If we have a close relationship with God, are grounded in and have an understanding of the Bible, and have faith and trust in God and in his word, we should diligently be looking for God's involvement within our life circumstances. Rather than ask, "Why is this happening to me?", We should be looking for where God is working, what we are to be learning, and what we are to be doing, as we go through our trials, our suffering, our adversities, our distress, our losses, our disappointments, our afflictions, and within whatever difficult chapter we face. At the time we are going through trials and tribulations we may be unaware of God's hand. If we look back over our lives we can often reframe our experience based on our current understanding of where God was working at that time. We can however, develop the skill of increasing our spiritual perspective, putting on our spiritual lenses, and getting better at perceiving where God is working in our lives in the moment. When we get better at seeing God at work in our lives, our primary job is to cooperate with God, rather than struggle and resist his plan. It is an awesome experience to be able to look into our lives, see where God is working, and attempt to join him in his work, which can change the whole course of our lives.

Where is God currently working in my life?

The attributes of God, include that he is all-knowing, all-present, all-powerful, sovereign, unchanging, eternal, just, righteous, patient, and merciful. He is the God of love, but we must remember that he is also the God of wrath. There are times when he disciplines us, because he loves us, when we get off-track with his plan for our lives. Fear and respect for God, should replace and eliminate all other fears. Trust and hope in God, should replace and eliminate trusting in ourselves and in our own self-reliance. Am I trusting God only in my head? Am I willing to get out of the boat (my comfort zone), when he calls? Am I willing to really trust God and to move forward with my responsibilities and what I am called to do, despite my anxieties and fears?

Information does not necessarily lead to transformation. Where do I need to trust God with my life?

Worries and concerns, in and of themselves, are not sinful. Our reaction to life circumstances, and how we choose to respond, can be sinful choices. If we focus on ourselves, trusting only in ourselves and our own self-reliance, focus on the future, and allow ourselves to have automatic, negative, catastrophic thoughts, rather than immersion in spiritual thinking, we are likely to have severe anxiety and panic. It is frequently too late to immerse ourselves in Biblical passages when we are in the midst of a crisis. If we arm ourselves with Biblical knowledge and live surrendered to God prior to the crisis, we are likely to fare much better. If we are only casual Christians or knowledge-based Christians without walking daily with the Lord, we are likely to lack faith when confronted with a crisis. Christianity is not about a religion, but about a relationship with God. A focus on self produces fear, severe anxiety, and panic. Anticipatory anxiety is usually focused on the wrong day, either worrying about tomorrow or what will happen in the future. Panic is a cognitive and an emotional distortion of not seeing God's hand in our lives or trusting in his sovereignty. Not trusting in our relationship with Him. It really is scary, and we should experience fear and panic if we do life alone, outside of a relationship with God.

What do I need to do to further my daily walk with the Lord, in order to equip myself for when I will experience trials and tribulations?

Matthew 6:33-34 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today.

The Bible instructs us in the proper manner for facing our anxieties:

Philippians 4:4-9 Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I say rejoice! Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be known to God; and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, please do, and the God of peace will be with you.

We are able to take our thoughts captive and to renew our spiritual minds through practice.

Romans 12:2 Do not copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is.

Whatever we immerse ourselves in will affect the way we think, feel, and act. It will eventually shape our character. If we immerse ourselves in law, we will think about our problems in legal terms regarding our rights, how we have been wronged, and potentials for lawsuits. If we immerse ourselves in materialism, we will focus on our wants and our deprivations. If we immerse ourselves in the common culture of television, our minds will be filled with sex and violence. If we immerse ourselves in pornography, we will sexualize relationships. If we immerse ourselves in the daily news, we may become pessimistic, anxious, fearful, and cynical.

We can retrain our minds, by taking control over not immersing ourselves in, and Throwing Off, things that lead to negativity, pessimism, hopelessness, and fearful thinking. These may include what we read, what we view, places we go, and even people we associate with. We can Put On immersing ourselves in things that lead to being positive and hopeful, thus reducing our anxious thoughts and producing internal peace. These may include what we read, what we view, places we go, and even the people we associate with. These are choices. Choices we need to recommit ourselves to on a daily basis.

We can learn to worry for nothing and let people see God at work within us. We can learn to magnify the Lord by having a thankful attitude in looking for blessings even in the midst of our trials. We can learn to take captive and Throw Off every negative thought such as fear of losing control, fear of going crazy, or fear of dying. We can choose to Put On positive thoughts such as God is at work in my circumstance. If I seek God and where he is at work in my life and join him by cooperating with the Holy Spirit, anxiety, fear, and panic will be dramatically reduced or eliminated.

Once we accept the sovereignty of God and move trusting God from our head to our heart, commit to his plan for our lives, and leave the outcome of the situation up to God, we will be far less anxious. It is helpful to focus on scheduling our daily activities to follow our schedule, rather than focus on or follow our emotions. We may feel anxious and not feel like dealing with

people, but once we begin our agenda, somewhere along the way, our feelings are likely to catch up with our behavior, and we are likely to develop a sense of accomplishment and victory over our anxieties. Anticipatory anxiety is a perverted fear related to our own need for control, our own wants, and our own expectations, rather than respecting what God wants, or fearing what he forbids. If we align our agenda with God's agenda, we can develop an attitude of allowing feared experiences to unfold, and not worry about either ourselves or the outcome. Acceptance of God's sovereignty at a heart level requires that we totally accept that God's mind is superior to our own mind, and that his ways are superior to our ways. This requires that we live surrendered to his will, and that we fully lean on our relationship with God.

Fear has power and is an obstacle to trusting God. Fear distorts, deceives, produces doubt, sabotages, and destroys our relationship with God. If we feed fear, it creates avoidance and paralysis. Trust also has power and can deliver us from fear. Trust produces faith and confidence in God which guides and protects us. By affirming and reaffirming your trust in God, regardless of how you feel, your feelings will eventually fall in line with your faith. Practice persistence of faith and fearfulness will gradually lessen its stranglehold on you.

The therapeutic tools of cognitive behavioral therapy for anxiety/panic, include stop thought and thought substitution, bracketing off and scheduling worry times, and behavioral modification with progressive exposure, immersion, saturation, and desensitization to the feared situation. Cognitive behavioral therapy utilizes the tools of taking our thoughts captive by reframing anxiety from an intolerable, catastrophic feeling, to a tolerable, although uncomfortable, temporary state. Stop thought, or Throwing Off of automatic negative, irrational, catastrophic thoughts, and Putting On relying on our relationship with God, will get us through the unwanted chapters in our lives and bring us internal peace. To either break a dysfunctional habit or stopping negative, destructive thoughts will only be temporary, unless a positive, cognitive or behavioral substitute is put in its place. The precepts of the Bible are positive, constructive thoughts, feelings, and behaviors which bring enduring peace. (See Throw Offs/ Put Ons related to Anxiety)

Biblical Passages Related to Victory Over Anxiety/Panic Attacks, and Experiencing Peace

Isaiah 26:3-4 You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal rock.

Isaiah 41:9-10 I have called you back from the ends of the earth so you can serve me. For I have chosen you and will not throw you away. Don't be afraid, for I am with you. Do not be dismayed for I am your God. I will strengthen you. I will help you. I will uphold you with my victorious right hand.

Psalms 32:7 For you are my hiding place; You protect me from trouble. You surround me with songs of victory.

1 Peter 5:6-7 So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in his good time he will honor you. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you.

Luke 12:22-31 Then turning to his disciples, Jesus said, So I tell you, don't worry about everyday life... Can all your worries add a single moment to your life? Of course not! And if worry cannot do little things like that, what is the use of worrying about bigger things?... These things dominate the thoughts of most people, but your Father already knows your needs. He will give you all you need from day to day if you make the kingdom of God your primary concern.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths.

Philippians 4:11-13 Not that I was ever in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation... I can do everything through Christ who gives me strength.

Proverbs 9:10 Fear (respect and obedience) of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Knowledge of the Holy One results in understanding.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but a spirit of power, love, and self- discipline.

Philippians 4:19 And the same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from his glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus.

Proverbs 16:9 We can make our plans, but the Lord determines our steps.

Colossians 3:16-17 Let the words of Christ, in all their richness, live in your heart and make you wise. Uses wisdom to teach and counsel each other. Sing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs to God with thankful hearts. And whatever you do or say, let it be as a representative of the Lord Jesus, all the while giving thanks through Him to God the father.

Colossians 3:23-24 Work hard and carefully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and the master you are serving is Christ.

John 14:27 I am leaving you a gift - peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is not like the peace the world gives. So do not be troubled or afraid.

I will meditate upon the following Biblical verse in order to help me have victory over anxiety/panic:

I will meditate upon the following Biblical verse in order to obtain true peace:

Restoring Damaged Self-Esteem with Purpose and Direction

Damaged self-esteem is thinking of oneself as having little importance or value, and at worst, thinking of oneself as being defective and worthless. Appropriate guilt is based in the condition of violating our own values and having committed a wrong. People with low or damaged self-esteem may chronically feel guilty and apologetic, that they are in the way or that they are a burden, even in the absence of committing an offense. They may feel as though they have little or no significance. At the core, an individual with damaged self-esteem may feel shame or a sense of being defective, faulty, unlovable, useless, unworthy, undeserving, and/or that they are "not enough". They are likely to feel hopeless to change or to ever be accepted.

Low self-esteem frequently results from growing up with emotional, verbal, physical, and/or sexual abuse or neglect. Individuals with low self-esteem frequently grow up with a high level of criticism and/or frequent correction. Neglect can also lead to damaged self-esteem. Children who do not experience love and affection at an early age, are incapable of differentiating between being unloved and being unlovable. Children, in the absence of an environment of love and affection, usually feel unlovable and develop low or damaged self-esteem.

Children can be vicious to each other and especially towards children with physical deformities or even physical differences, intellectual differences, or behavioral differences. Low self-esteem can result from children being victimized by teasing, name-calling, harassment, being excluded, mocked, verbally or physically assaulted, and experiencing other forms of bullying.

Adults can also develop damaged self-esteem when rejected, betrayed, excluded, or simply not being chosen. Extramarital affairs and unwanted divorces frequently result in damaged self-esteem. Betrayal within a marriage frequently leads to feelings of inadequacy, not being nice enough, attractive enough, interesting enough, sexy enough, and simply "not enough". Victims of an affair tend to negatively compare themselves to a third-party. Most individuals going through an unwanted divorce usually feel like a failure. Many men and women who have never been married have damaged self-esteem from never having been chosen. Being laid off or fired from employment can have a similar result, especially in individuals who have come to define themselves and their self-worth by their careers.

Individuals with low or damaged self-esteem are frequently afraid of meeting other people, encountering new situations, initiating relationships, or taking other risks. They have a fear of failing which results in a fear of even trying. When receiving a sincere compliment, it tends to bounce off rather than be savored, because individuals with damaged self-esteem do not believe that the complement could possibly be true. They rarely feel that what they do is good enough, consequently they end up feeling that they are not enough. Whatever strengths the person with low or damaged self-esteem possesses, they have difficulty perceiving their strengths, and frequently fail to utilize their unique giftedness.

God's yardstick for measuring people is quite different than that of our culture. How many degrees we have, how much money we have, how many friends we have, what type of house

or car we possess, and even many of our accomplishments, are unimportant and may actually be counted as loss in the eyes of God. God measures us by our hearts. He knew us before we were born and we are His creation. He made us in His image. He gave us our physical appearance, our intellect, our emotions, our personalities, our capacities for relationship, and even our life experiences, and he did this all for His pleasure and for His purpose. We are unique as a fingerprint. God made each of us for a specific purpose, not to try and be like someone else or like something we are not.

Throughout the Bible there are many examples of how God used not only ordinary, but in many cases, flawed individuals to accomplish His purpose. Moses had a stuttering problem and was not an eloquent speaker. Abraham was very old. Jacob was insecure. Leah was unattractive. Joseph was rejected and abused. Rahab was immoral. David had an affair and was guilty of murder. Gideon was poor. Sampson was codependent. Jeremiah was depressed. Jonah was reluctant and disobedient. Naomi was a widow. John the Baptist was eccentric. Mary, mother of Jesus, was a young poor peasant girl. Peter was impulsive and hot tempered. Martha was a worrier. The Samaritan woman had multiple failed marriages and was guilty of adultery. Zacchaeus was unpopular. Thomas was doubtful. Timothy was timid and fearful. Paul had poor health. Mark deserted Paul and Barnabas. God, however used each of them in His service, to accomplish His purpose.

No matter what our shortcomings or our imperfection we are God's workmanship. If we reject ourselves as God has designed us, we also reject our designer. If we hate ourselves and hate our lives, we are not trusting in God. Consequently, we should not think less of ourselves, but as servants of God we should have appropriate humility and think of ourselves less often. We should not ruminate on our disabilities, but focus on our abilities. We should work on building our Godly character, removing sinful changeable features where we are able. We should also discover, accept, and even learn to appreciate, the way God designed us. We should use our spiritual gifts and uniqueness to find meaning and purpose in the service of others.

If we look for God's hand in our lives, where he is working, despite our brokenness, we can discover our purpose. Individuals who feel damaged and defective, who dwell on their inabilities, frequently feel that they have no direction or purpose for their lives. They miss their calling. They miss their purpose. They develop empty meaningless lives that lead to anxiety and depression. Many of the stories in the Biblical Therapy Case Examples are of individuals who turned their problems, misfortunes, losses, physical and emotional pain and suffering to build their strength, their character, and their relationship with God for a positive purpose.

God may want me to use my painful life experiences for the following purposes:

I will act out my Godly purpose, by implementing the following direction, despite my feelings of inadequacy, inability, or damage:

The major reason for Christians to overcome their low or damaged self-esteem, is a recognition that each individual, regardless of their circumstance, has the ability to accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. As such they will have the very Holy Spirit of God dwelling within them. They will also share in the inheritance of heaven, with a new body and a new life, in a perfect environment, in the presence of God. There are many hope filled and powerful Biblical verses that can be used in therapy to help individuals overcome damaged self-esteem. These include verses related to the fact that every human being is created by God, each as a part of a larger body, with a specific role, and with a specific plan and a specific purpose for their existence. Each of us has the freedom of choice to fulfill our Godly purpose.

Biblical Verses Related to Self-Esteem

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Psalms 139:13-14 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.

Jeremiah 29:11 For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.

1 Corinthians 12:18-22, 27 But God made our bodies with many parts, and he has put each part just where he wants it. What a strange thing a body would be if it had only one part! Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, I don't need you. The head cannot say to the feet, I don't need you. In fact, some of the parts that seem weakest and the least important are really the most necessary... Now all of you together are Christ's body, and each one of you is a separate and necessary part of it.

Romans 8:28 And we know that God causes everything to work together for the good of those who love God and are called according to His purpose for them.

Jeremiah 1:4-8 The Lord gave me a message. He said, I knew you before I formed you in your mother's womb. Before you were born I set you apart and appointed you as my spokesman for the world. Oh sovereign Lord, I said, I cannot speak for you! I am too young! Don't say that, the Lord replied, for you must go wherever I send you and say whatever I tell you. And don't be afraid of the people, for I will be with you and take care of you. I, the Lord, have spoken.

Romans 12:3 As God's messenger, I give each of you this warning: Be honest in your estimate of your selves, measuring your value by how much faith God has given you.

Ephesians 1:11 Furthermore, because of Christ, we have received an inheritance from God, for he chose us from the beginning, and all things happened just as he decided long ago.

Colossians 1:12-14 Always thank the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance that belongs to God's holy people, who live in the light. For He has rescued us from the one who rules in the kingdom of darkness, and He has brought us into the kingdom of his dear Son. God has purchased our freedom with his blood and has forgiven all of our sins.

Philippians 2:13 For God is working in you, giving you the desire to obey him and the power to do what pleases him.

Galatians 4:4-7 But when the right time came, God sent his son, born of a woman, subject to the law. God sent him to buy freedom for us who were slaves to the law, so that he could adopt us as his very own children. And because you Gentiles have become his children, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, and now you can call God your dear father. Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are his child, everything he has belongs to you.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

Ephesians 2:8-10 God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you cannot take credit for this, it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the things we have done, so none of us can boast about it. For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

1 John 3:1 See how very much our heavenly Father loves us, for he allowed us to be called his children, and we really are! But the people who belong to this world don't know God, so they don't understand that we are his children.

2 Timothy 1:7 For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-control.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may know what the good and pleasing and perfect will of God is for your life.

Romans 8:14-17 For all who are led by the Spirit of God are children of God. So you should not be like cowering, fearful slaves. Instead you have received God's very own spirit when he adopted you into his family - calling him Father, dear Father. For his Holy Spirit speaks to us deep in our hearts and tells us that we are God's children. And since we are his children, we will share in his treasures - for everything God gives to his Son, Christ, is ours also. But if we are to share in his glory, we must also share in his suffering.

I will adopt the following Biblical life verse, as my own, to overcome my reluctance to see myself as God sees me, and to act out my life according to His purpose:

Couples, Family, and Relational Health

The Biblical models of how we should conduct ourselves within relationships, Ephesians 5:25-33 on how to be loving, and Matthew 7:3-5 on how to positively resolve conflict, provide two of the most hopeful and therapeutically powerful approaches to dealing with relational therapy issues.

Biblical Relationships: Wives and Husbands

Ephesians 5:21 And further, you will submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

Ephesians 5:25-33 And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her to make her holy and clean, wash by baptism in God's word. He did this to present her to himself as a glorious church without a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. Instead, she will be holy and without fault. In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man is actually loving himself when he loves his wife. No one hates his own body but lovingly cares for it, just as Christ cares for his body, which is the church. And we are his body. The Scriptures say, a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one. This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

During couples therapy I frequently hear wives saying that they do not feel loved by their husbands. It is powerful clinically for wives to define for their husbands when and how they feel loved, and when and how they feel unloved. Love languages may include words of affirmation and encouragement, doing chores or other acts of service, giving individualized personal gifts, physical intimacy, spending quality time, etc. The husband may be loving his wife in the way he would like to be loved, but in a way that she does not feel loved. He may be a good provider, but provides very limited time to the relationship or very few words of affirmation.

In Ephesians, the use of the word love pertaining to the wife and the word respect pertaining to the husband, are intentionally different languages. During couples therapy I frequently hear husbands saying that they do not feel respected by their wives. It is powerful clinically for husbands to define for their wives how and when they feel respected, and how and when they feel disrespected. The husband's love language may be very different than that of his wife's. His love language may be appreciation or words of affirmation and physical intimacy, rather than quality time.

The most frequent secular view of marriage that I hear during couple's therapy, is that the relationship is a 50/50 proposition. This model is grounded in a culture of equality and fairness. It is however, a terrible model and leads to keeping score, doing only as much as the other person does, and/or responding in the same manner as one's partner. 50/50 is a better model for divorce than it is for marriage.

Biblical instruction regarding love and serving one's spouse are commandments. They are not conditional, they are not grounded in one's own feelings, and they are not based on the behavior demonstrated by the other individual in the relationship. A better model for marriage views relationships as a 100/100 proposition. Our spiritual lives and our relationship with God significantly alters our relationship with other people. We should focus first on becoming holier, then secondly focus on our relationship with our partner. **We should take a look at the log in our own eye, make a list of our own sin life, then Throw Off thoughts, feelings, behaviors, and behavioral patterns that harden our heart, and Put On the anecdote or opposite elements that soften our heart. (See section Throw Offs/Put Ons). The best thing we can do for our relationships is to work on our relationship with God and the condition of our own heart. It is more important to turn one's self into a soul-filled mate, rather than to search for a soulmate.**

Pay attention to the condition of your heart, which is the source of your thoughts, words, feelings, attitudes, and behaviors. Hardening of the heart is a process that can occur gradually. The hardening process may result from living a self-centered or selfish life; from mishandling hurts and disappointments in a sinful manner with anger, resentment, and lack of forgiveness; from a pattern of unconfessed and unrepentant sin, from settling and being satisfied with shallow superficial relating; and from defensiveness and lacking the ability or willingness to be open and vulnerable. The hardened heart produces negativity, criticalness, complaining, jealousy, stubbornness, disrespect, defensiveness, sarcasm, anger, bitterness, lack of forgiveness, selfish ambitions, conflict, envy, apathy, harshness, and self-focus on where we have been hurt or wronged by others. With repetition and practice, these traits become strengthened and become our character.

Mark 10:2-12 Some Pharisees came and tested Jesus by asking, Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife? What did Moses command you? He replied. They said Moses permitted a man to write a certificate of divorce and send her away. It is because your hearts were hard that Moses wrote you this law, Jesus replied. But at the beginning of creation God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate. When they were in the house again, the disciples asked Jesus about this. He answered, Anyone who divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her. And if she divorces her husband and marries another man, she commits adultery.

On the other hand, the softening of our heart is a process that can also occur gradually. The softening process may result from living an other-centered life; practicing forgiveness; developing a pattern of confessing and repenting from our sins; fostering deep friendships; and practicing openness and vulnerability. Focusing on our spiritual lives softens our heart and results in love, peace, joy, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. With repetition and practice, these traits become strengthened and become our character.

Luke 6:43-45 For a good tree does not bear bad fruit, nor does the bad tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they gather grapes from a bramble bush. A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth evil. For out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.

Proverbs 4:23 Guard your heart with all diligence, for out of it flow the springs of life.

Psalms 51:10-12 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

What elements of a hardened heart do I possess, that I need to Throw Off?:

What elements of a softened heart do I need to Put On and to practice until they become part of my character?:

The Biblical Commandment of Love, and the Best Model of Love

The Bible, the Word of God, commands us on how we are to love. Jesus, is the perfect model of love. He is the perfect model of leadership, grace, forgiveness, compassion, and other relational qualities. In order to love as the Biblical model of love commands, we are to be imitators of Jesus. When we love like Jesus, it brings hope and breathes new life into our relationships. It also brings the opportunity to heal damaged relationships. The love of God, the love of Christ, manifests itself through the following characteristics: Love is sacrificial, there is always a cost. Love is inconvenient and sometimes can be measured by the degree to which we are willing to be inconvenienced for others. Love is not based in feeling but in doing the next right thing. Love is initiated by the one who is most spiritually mature. Love like Jesus is based in grace rather than in fairness. We should never act out what others deserve, we should practice mercy. Love originates from a servant's heart and not from a consumer's heart. Love is always other-centered rather than self-centered. Love is more focused on giving rather than on receiving. Love is unconditional. Love is empathetic and compassionate. When we receive God's grace, forgiveness, we are not to keep it to ourselves, but let it flow through us that we may be grace filled and forgiving towards others. As we receive blessings from God, we are not to keep them for ourselves, but we should be a blessing to other people. Likewise, when we receive the love of God, we are to love other people. We can only love like Christ, if we choose to be filled with Christ's love. Love can only be an overflow of the condition of our heart.

Ephesians 5:1-2 Be imitators of God, therefore, as dearly loved children, and live a life of love, just as Christ loved us and gave himself for us as a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Romans 5:6-8 You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrated his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

Philippians 2:5-7 Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God. He made himself nothing, he took the humble position of a slave and appeared in human form.

Mark 12:28-31 One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, Of all the commandments which is the most important? The most important one answered Jesus, is this: Hear, Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.

By being holy first, we can then be equipped to love others. Keeping the order these commandments affects our ability to be obedient to these commandments. Love God first, then we can love others with the love of God that flows through us. It is not our normal human condition to love in this way, but by accepting Jesus and the gift of the Holy Spirit, we can become what we otherwise could not become through our own efforts.

Where do I need to practice being more like Jesus in the way I love?:

In our culture we value independence and personal rights, often to the exclusion of considering the impact we have on others. When we are in a relationship we should remember that everything we do, and everything we don't do, affects our partner. Couples should change their cognitive orientation from "I" to "we" when making plans or taking certain actions. One of the core reasons for divorce is selfishness and lack of consideration. Leaving a note or making a brief call or text to let their partner know where they are or when they are returning home is not childish reporting, but rather respect and consideration for the other partner. Marital and family therapists usually attend to the quality of the couples level of attachment or connectedness. A good relationship has good communication with active listening and empathetic responding, companionship or dating without children, family time with the children, emotional support and compassion, and physical intimacy. For Christian couples additional ways of connecting include spiritual connectedness by praying together, reading and discussing the Bible together, doing devotionals together, worshiping together, and serving together in a ministry.

Conflict Resolution, Fighting Fairly

Even as Christians, and even with our best intentions, we will fall short of the Biblical model of how we are to treat our spouse, our children, and others. We will always have disagreements and conflicts. Conflicts are inevitable within relationships.

John 16:33 These things I have spoken to you, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

The book of Matthew provides a wonderful model for addressing the problems of relational conflict. Before we confront others with our grievances about their conduct, we should first be open to taking a look at our own role in the conflict.

Matthew 7:3-5 And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own eye? How can you think of saying, Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye, when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite! First get rid of the log from your own eye; and then perhaps you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

Logjams within couple's therapy frequently result when one or both participants are defensive, minimizing the other's concerns, keeping score, and/or shifting blame. Be careful when sharing your relational problems with others outside of the relationship, or painting a negative picture of your spouse to others. It may change the perspective of others towards your spouse and may not be easily erased, lasting well beyond the resolution of the conflict. A powerful therapeutic technique in couples therapy is to utilize Matthew 7:3-5 to have participants look first and foremost at their own contribution to the relational problem. As we say in therapy, you cannot fix another person, you can only fix yourself or your reaction to the other person. After you have addressed the log in your own eye, approach the other person in truth and in love. Truth without love can be confrontational and critical.

Matthew 18:15 If another believer sins against you, go privately and point out their fault. If the other person listens and confesses it, you have won that person back.

It is important to check out your own motives for sharing your marital problems with others. Are you truly seeking help, or are you simply seeking self-justification or attempting to make the other partner look bad. Both men and women should be very cautious about seeking emotional and relational support from the opposite sex outside of the marriage. In such circumstances with increased communication and confiding, an emotional bond may result, and may lead to sexualization of the relationship.

Where is the log in my own eye, that is contributing to a current relationship conflict, that I need to confess and Throw Off?

When I address the speck in my friend's eye, their contribution to the relationship problem, how will I do that with love and respect?

Confession, Repentance, and Forgiveness

God is offended not only by our sin, but by our attempts to cover our sin and to shift blame.

Genesis 3:8-13 Towards evening they heard the Lord walking about in the garden, so they hid themselves among the trees. The Lord God called to Adam, where are you? He replied, I heard you so I hid. I was afraid because I was naked. Who told you that you are naked? The Lord God asked. Have you eaten the fruit I commanded you not to eat? Yes, Adam admitted, but it was the woman you gave me who brought me the fruit and I ate it. Then the Lord God asked the woman, how could you do such a thing? The serpent tricked me, she replied, that is why I ate it.

If you are guilty of selfishness, dishonesty, an affair, verbal abuse, or other sins that harm your relationship, healing of the relationship will not come through good works, gifts, acts of service, or even through being kind. Healing will only come from acknowledgment of the wrongdoing, remorse at a heartfelt level, confession, repentance or turning 180°, and not repeating the offense.

Seek forgiveness from those you have harmed by your wrongdoing. We are to Throw Off defensiveness, concealment, minimizing the significance of our violation, keeping score, blame shifting, and anger. We are to put on confession, openness, and owning and taking responsibility for our hurtful actions.

James 5:16 Confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The earnest prayer of a righteous person has great power and wonderful results.

We are also commanded to forgive each other. (See section on The Process of Forgiveness). Unresolved feelings of anger and resentment will block not only the healing of the relationship, but our own personal healing.

Matthew 6:14-15 If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your heavenly father will not forgive your sins.

Matthew 18:21-22 Then Peter came to him and asked, Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times? No! Jesus replied, seventy times seven.

Is there anything I need to confess and repent of, in order to heal myself and then heal my relationship?

Is there anyone I need to forgive, in order to heal myself and then heal my relationship?

Active Listening, Empathetic Responding

The clinical techniques of active listening and empathetic responding are powerful when addressing the specks in each other's eyes. These therapeutic tools should be utilized in conjunction with the participants removing the logs from their own eyes. Active listening, rather than passive listening, is a skill that we can develop in order to be able to learn new information about our partner, our children, or others.

The presenter should use self-disclosure, “I” statements, and avoid attacking the other with “you” statements. The presenter should express how they think, feel, and what they need or want regarding a specific topic. The active listener should not only sit quietly, but put their agenda on the shelf behind them. If the listener does not do this, they will be contemplating their rebuttal while the other person is speaking, rather than listening for new information.

After the presenter is through expressing their position, the active listener should be able to give a report, rather than a commentary, on the other's position. The listener needs to check out with the presenter, the accuracy of the listener's understanding. All of us see through our own lenses and hear through our own filters, which inclines us to listen and respond in a commentary style. Individuals can learn the skill of being a reporter rather than a commentator. The goal of communication should not be to push our view or agenda on the other until they relent, but to learn something new about the other person. Once each individual has accurately heard the other, and have new information about each other, then they can go about the process of serving each other. Empathetic responding should not come from a consumer's heart, but should be grounded in a servant's heart and other centered love.

What skills do I need to develop, or what steps will I take or Put On, to be a better listener?

What skills do I need to develop, or what steps will I take, to be an empathetic responder with a servant's rather than a consumer's heart?

Biblical Relationships: Parent and Children

Children are a gift from God. Like all gifts from God, including our basic needs, money, time, and blessings, we are to be good stewards of our children. We are to provide them will love, safety, provision, training and discipline. It is the primary role of the mother to nurture her children and to bring them up in the ways of the Lord. It is the primary role of the father to be the provider, the spiritual head of the household, and to provide care, training, and discipline. It is the role of the children to be respectful and obedient.

Psalms 127:3 Behold, children are a gift of the Lord, the fruit of the womb is a reward from him.

Deuteronomy 6:5-7 Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Proverbs 22:6 Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.

Proverbs 1:8 Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

Proverbs 15:5 A fool spurns his father's discipline, but whoever heeds correction shows prudence.

Ephesians 6:1-3 Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. Honor your father and mother. This is the first of the 10 Commandments that ends with a promise. And this is the promise: If you honor your father and mother, you will live a long life, full of blessings.

Proverbs 6:20-23 My son, observe the commandment of your father. And do not forsake the teachings of your mother; Bind them continually on your heart; Tie them around your neck. When you walk about, they will guide you; When you sleep, they will watch over you; And when you awake, they will talk to you. For the commandment is a lamp and the teaching is light; And reproofs for discipline are the way of life

In family therapy I frequently hear parents say that they feel disrespected by their children. It is a powerful clinical technique for parents to reveal to their children specific ways in which they feel honored or respected, and specific ways in which they feel dishonored or disrespected, by the child's words, attitudes, and/or behaviors. The therapist should help the child develop a specific behavioral treatment plan, grounded in Biblical precepts with specific Throw Offs and Put Ons. Frequently this involves Throwing Off specific forms of disobedience and Putting On specific forms of obedience.

Children, ask your parent what you do that makes them feel dishonored or disrespected. I will commit to Throwing Off such behavior.

Children, ask your parents what you do that makes them feel honored or respected. I will commit to Putting On the following behavior.

Ephesians 6:4 And now a word to you fathers. Do not make your children angry by the way you treat them. Rather, bring them up with the discipline and instruction approved by the Lord.

Colossians 3:20-21 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

In family therapy I frequently hear children share their frustration regarding their parent's failure to listen, their parent's anger or harsh words, and/or their parent's arbitrary or inconsistent discipline or follow through. Some children reveal that their parents are absent, detached, or overly permissive, having few rules, setting few limits, or giving them premature adult responsibilities, making them feel lost, without direction, and unsafe. It is a powerful clinical technique for parents to listen to their children about their parenting style, and specific ways in which the child feels safe and respected, or inappropriately provoke, unsafe, or disrespected. Parents should avoid inappropriate breaches in family hierarchy, when they lower themselves to the level of the child, entering into arguments and ongoing conflicts, as if they were peers with their children. Parents can be more powerful, and at the same time more respectful, by the use of clear expectations, rules, and the use of consequences. Parents need to learn parenting

approaches of inclusion or involving and engaging their children alongside of them in doing work and play. They need to employ limit setting, rewards, and the use of natural and logical consequences. They also need to provide structure and consistency for children to feel safe.

Parents should let their yes be yes and their no be no, rather than frequent idle threats with lack of consistent follow-through. Discipline without love is harsh and at times abusive. Love without discipline is misguided and enabling. There needs to be an appropriate balance. Engaged parents, who are loving and who frequently use inclusion, have a far less need to evoke discipline.

God is the perfect example of love, but also the perfect example of discipline. A special note to parents who used both positive parenting techniques as well as being role models of integrity; Your children may still rebel. After all Adam and Eve had perfect parenting, but utilized their free will to rebel against God.

Hebrews 12:5-6 My son, do not make light of the Lord's discipline, and do not lose heart when he rebukes you, for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines

Proverbs 3:12 For whom the Lord loves He reproveth, Even as a father corrects the son in whom he delights.

Proverbs 13:24 If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves that you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them.

Parents, is there anything in your parenting style that you need to Throw Off?

Parents, what skills do you need to develop, or what steps you need to take or Put On, in order to improve your parenting?

Biblical Relationships: With One Another and With Those Who Wrong Us

Romans 5:6-8 When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Treating others well, with righteousness, is not contingent upon our feelings or upon the other's conduct towards us. Our forgiveness of others is not even contingent upon their remorsefulness or repentance. Our relationships, when viewed as 50/50 propositions, are grounded in a cultural concept of fairness. This model encourages us to treat others as they treat us. God's love for us however, is not based in fairness, but in grace. His love is initiating, sacrificial, compassionate, forgiving, and originated from a servant's heart not from a consumer's heart. At times when we are stubborn, we are reluctantly willing to concede that we will meet people half way. To put on the attitude of a servant's heart, and not keep score, will contribute to healthy relationships. If the relationship focuses on radical, other centered love, healthy relationships and healing wounds, become possible. We should put on the heart of humble servants, loving and serving others, regardless of the other's posture. Other centered love is a commandment, not an option.

I encountered an interesting situation, years ago, when I built a new home in the country. When I saw my neighbor dealing with water problems near our property lines, I went out to introduce myself. Surprisingly, he did not look up, did not talk to me, and did not even acknowledge me in any way. Quite an awkward situation! Several days later I returned, offering my assistants and to pay for half of the problem, which was probably caused during the construction of my home. Again I was met with the same lack of responsive. I felt grounded in whom I was, and I told my wife that my neighbor did not know me well enough yet to dislike me. I considered the problem to be his heart. The next time I went out my neighbor confronted me stating that he was sorry that he did not buy my land. Although I continued to offer assistance and financial responsibility, my neighbor continued to rebuff and reject me.

In the middle of the winter I noticed that his driveway was no longer being cleared. My son and I cleared his driveway for the remainder of the winter, declining their offer of financial payment. I later learned from my neighbor's wife that her husband had suffered a heart attack. In the spring when I was outside, my neighbor came over and thanked me. From that point on he was friendly, treating myself and my family with warm greetings. I must confess, that had this situation occurred several years earlier when I was an emotionally and spiritually immature Christian, I would have dished his attitude right back at him, perhaps even trumping him. However, adopting a Biblically grounded approach to treating others as Christ commands, resulted in health for myself and a healing relationship for our two families.

Is there any emotional or spiritual immaturity in my dealings with others that I need to Throw Off? :

What Biblical commandment do I need to Put On in my dealings with others who wrong me? :

Additional Biblical Passages Regarding Couples, Families, and Relational Health

1 Peter 3:1-4 Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the Word, your godly lives will speak to them better than any words. They will be won over by watching your pure, godly behavior. Don't be concerned about the outward beauty that depends on fancy hairstyles, and expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes. You should be known for the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God.

1 Peter 3:7 In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of a new life. If you do not treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard.

1 Peter 3:8-9 Finally, all of you should be of one mind, full of sympathy towards each other, loving one another with tender hearts and humble minds. Don't repay evil for evil. Don't retaliate when people say unkind things about you. Instead pay them back with a blessing. That is what God wants you to do, and he will bless you for it.

James 1:19-20 My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. Your anger can never make things right in God's sight.

Matthew 12:25 Jesus knew their thoughts and replied, Any kingdom at war with itself is doomed. A city or a home divided against itself is doomed.

Galatians 5:13-15 For you have been called to live in freedom - not freedom to satisfy your sinful nature, but freedom to serve one another in love. For the whole law can be summed up in this one command: Love your neighbors as yourself. But if instead of showing love among yourselves you are always biting and devouring one another, watch out! Be aware of destroying one another.

Genesis 2:18 And the Lord God said, It is not good for man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him.

Genesis 2:24 This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

Malachi 2:14-16 You cry out, Why has Lord abandoned us? I'll tell you why! Because the Lord witnessed the vows you and your wife made to each other on your wedding day when you were young. But you have been disloyal to her, though she remains your faithful companion, the wife of your marriage vows. Did not the Lord make you one with your wife? In body and spirit you are His. And what does he want? Godly children from your union. So guard yourself, remain loyal to the wife of your youth. For I hate divorce! Says the Lord, the God of Israel. It is as cruel as putting on a victim's bloodstained coat, says the Lord Almighty. So guard yourself, always remain loyal to your wife.

1 Timothy 3:1-5 It is a true saying that if someone wants to be an elder, he desires an honorable responsibility. For an elder must be a man whose life cannot be spoken against. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exhibit self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guest in this home and he must be able to teach. He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, peace loving, and not one who loves money. He must manage his own family well, with children who respect and obey him. For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?

Colossians 3:18-21 You wives must submit to your husbands, as is fitting for those who belong to the Lord. And you husbands must love your wives and never treat them harshly. You children must always obey your parents, for this is what pleases the Lord. Fathers, do not aggravate your children. If you do, they will become discouraged and quit trying.

John 13:34 So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other, just as I have loved you, you should love each other.

Philippians 2:3-4 Do not be selfish; do not live to make a good impression on others. Be humble, thinking of others as more important than yourself. Do not think only about your own affairs, but be interested in others too, and what they are doing.

Philippians 2:5-6 Your attitude should be the same that Christ Jesus had. Though he was God, he did not demand and cling to his rights as God.

Matthew 22:37-39 Jesus replied, You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: Love your neighbor as yourself.

John 15:9-14 I have loved you even as the father has loved me. Remain in my love. When you obey me, you remain in my love, just as I obey my father and remain in his love. I have told you this so that you will be filled with my joy. Yes your joy will be complete! I command you to love each other in the same way that I love you. And here is how to measure it - the greatest love is shown when people lay down their lives for their friends. You are my friends if you obey me.

1 John 4:9-12 God showed how much he loved us by sending his only Son into the world so that we might have eternal life through Him. This is real love. It is not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as a sacrifice to take away our sins. Dear friends, since God loved us that much, we surely ought to love each other. No one has ever seen God. If we love each other, God lives in us and his love has been brought to full expression through us.

Luke 6:27-28, 32-33 But if you are willing to listen, I say, love your enemies. Do good to those who hate you. Pray for the happiness of those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you.... Do you think you deserve credit merely for loving those who love you? Even sinners do that! And if you do good only to those who do good to you, is that so wonderful? Even sinners do that much!

From Anger to Patience

Anger can be manifest as a thought, feeling, attitude, or behavior. Anger, in and of itself, is not sinful. The manifestation of our anger however, can be sinful, if it is selfish and self-centered. The manifestation of our anger can also be righteous anger, which is concerned about those things which God is concerned about, such as injustice, dishonesty, corruption, sexual immorality, violence, and other forms of sin. The manifestation of our anger is a choice. Our thoughts determine our feelings, our feelings determine our behavior, our behavior determines our habits or behavioral patterns, our behavioral patterns shape our character, and our character determines the choices we make, the way in which we live our lives, and eventually our destination.

Ephesians 4:26-27 In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the Devil a foothold.

There is a high correlation of anger/rage with individuals who grew up with one or both parents displaying frequent anger or rage. Individuals who frequently use marijuana and other drugs tend to display periods of anger or rage 8 to 12 hours after their last use due to drug withdrawal. Individuals experiencing neglect or abuse, and/or a history of being teased or bullied while growing up, may display anger/rage as adults. Individuals experiencing these patterns tend to develop the life dominating problem of anger/rage.

The type of anger we reveal is a reflection of our heart. Within our culture we are encouraged to be open-minded and tolerant. Biblically however, we are commanded to be intolerant of sin. We are to hate the things which God hates. Hate the sin. Love the sinner. Individuals with self-centered anger need to learn techniques to Take Off their anger/rage and to Put On internal peace. With righteous anger, our strong emotions should be channeled to right the wrong. Within the context of marital, family, or organizational conflicts, we need to teach the involved parties how to attack the problem rather than attack each other. The skills of active listening and empathetic responding are particularly helpful. Participants can also learn to "fight fairly" by using appropriate conflict resolution skills.

Self-centered anger may involve either angry explosions or angry implosions with denial and suppression of angry feelings. Both are ultimately harmful.

Angry implosions may involve resentments, bitterness, passive aggressive behaviors, envy, jealousy, distancing oneself or breaking off of relationships, sabotaging others, shutting down, obstructive behaviors, etc. while denying that any problem exists. Such manifestations of anger usually result in self-pity, brooding, sarcasm, gossip, depression, and/or health problems such as chest pain, high blood pressure, headaches, constipation, diarrhea, and stomach distress. Imploded anger can also contribute to heart disease, a weakening of our immune system, and worsening of such medical conditions as multiple sclerosis, colitis, and even cancer. Suppressed anger can often be displaced towards others.

Angry explosions are usually associated with underlying feelings of hurt, pride, feelings of entitlement, unrealistic expectations, and/or a cognitive orientation that others are ill willed or out to get us. Sinful anger may result from the perception or the feeling of being hurt by others, rejected, humiliated, dismissed, ignored, teased, or disrespected. Angry or abusive fathers frequently reveal that they personalize their children's age-appropriate misbehavior as disrespectful and intentionally directed at the father. These types of cognitive interpretations tend to feed anger, resulting in the individual acting out their anger. Sinful anger usually involves intimidation to get what we want and allowing ourselves to be out of control or selectively in control. Many angry individuals who claim that they have no control over their anger, tend to break others belongings rather than their own things, or tend to blow up at their spouse or children, but never blow up at their employer. Sinful anger may become a habit and dominate one's character. We may keep a record of mistreatments and how we have been wronged. Keeping score usually leads to becoming bitter and holding grudges, or even seeking revenge.

Where, when, and how do I display self-centered, selfish anger, that I need to Throw Off?

Where, when, and how will I practice displaying exhortation or using positive words to lift people up?

Do I have any righteous anger that is in agreement with God? How will I share my righteous anger in truth and in love?

Therapeutic techniques, helpful in the reduction or elimination of anger/rage include:

Paradoxically getting angry more often and expressing our anger in small manageable pieces, using "I" self-disclosures rather than "you" statements

Sharing underlying feelings of hurt or disappointments, rather than sharing anger

Checking out our assumptions

Developing anger management techniques such as active listening and empathetic responding

Take Off anger and Put On the anecdote of exhortation or positive and encouraging words to build people up

Such techniques as catharsis may be counterproductive and may actually feed anger and make anger stronger. Anger expressed does not necessarily result in anger reduced.

Learning the forgiveness process as a skill and forgiving others for perceived or actual hurts. Forgiveness is powerful in not only resolving anger, but also in finding internal peace

Biblical Passages Related to Overcoming Anger

Ephesians 4:29-32 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every other form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

Romans 12:2 And do not be conformed to the patterns of this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

Titus 1:15 Everything is pure to those whose hearts are pure. But nothing is pure to those who are corrupt and unbelieving, because their mind and conscience are defiled.

Romans 12:17-21 Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live in peace with everyone. Do not take revenge my friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: It is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the Lord. On the contrary, If your enemy is hungry, feed him. If he is thirsty, give him something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

Matthew 5:21-22 You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment. But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment!

1 Thessalonians 5:15-18 Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always try to be kind to each other and to everyone else. Be joyful, pray continually, give thanks in all circumstances, this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.

James 3:9-12 With the tongue we praise our Lord and father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in God's likeness. Out of the same mouth come praise and cursing. My brothers, this should not be. Can both freshwater and saltwater flow from the same spring? My brothers, can a fig tree bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Neither can a salt spring produce freshwater.

Philippians 4:8-9 Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise. Keep putting into practice all you learned from me and heard from me and saw me doing, and the God of peace will be with you.

Romans 5:3-4 Not only so, but we also rejoice in our suffering, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us.

James 1:19-20 My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry, for man's anger does not bring about the righteous life that God desires.

Proverbs 14:16-17 A wise man fears the Lord and shuns evil, but a fool is hotheaded and reckless. A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a scheming man is hated.

Proverbs 14:29 A patient man has great understanding, but a quick tempered man displays folly.

Proverbs 12:16 A fool shows his annoyance at once, but a prudent man overlooks an insult.

Proverbs 17:9 He who covers an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends.

Proverbs 19:11 A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

Proverbs 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.

Proverbs 15:18 A hot tempered man stirs up dissension, but a patient man calms a quarrel.

Proverbs 22:24-25 Do not make friends with a hot tempered man, do not associate with one easily angered, or you may learn his ways and get yourself ensnarled.

Proverbs 29:22 An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot tempered one commits many sins.

1 Peter 2:19-23 For it is commendable if a man bears up under the pain of unjust suffering because he is conscious of God. But how is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and enduring it? But if you suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God. To this you are called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to Him who judges righteously.

I will select and memorize the following Biblical life verse in order to have victory over my anger?

From Resentment to Forgiveness

The opposite of love is not hate, but indifference. Hate maintains a relationship. Resentment is the preoccupation with a negative relationship. Holding onto hate, anger, and resentment, leads to many physical, cognitive, and emotional problems, such as stomach distress, high blood pressure, insomnia, heart attacks, racing thoughts, preoccupation, difficulties with concentration, emotional fatigue, bitterness, and depressed mood. Resentment leads to being stuck in the past with difficulty moving forward. There is an increasing body of research that indicates that catharsis, or the extreme external expression of anger, by itself, may not resolve anger, and may actually feed anger. Anger expressed, is not necessarily anger resolved. There is also an increasing body of medical and psychological research that forgiveness leads to anger reduction and health advantages. Forgiveness is a powerful process for reducing and/or eliminating anger. Paradoxically, forgiveness of the offender by the offended, has greater healing power for the offended. Forgiveness heals the forgiver.

Secular wisdom tells us that the offender must first apologize before being forgiven by the offended. We may rationalize that the offender does not deserve to be forgiven. Our cultural perspective is that we should at least pursue justice, or even revenge.

Biblical Wisdom:

Romans 5:7-8 Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though some might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

Psalms 103:8-10 The Lord is merciful and gracious; he is slow to get angry and full of unfailing love. He will not constantly accuse us, nor remain angry forever. He does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquity.

The Lord's Prayer teaches us to be careful what we pray for.

Matthew 6:12 And forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.

Matthew 6:14-15 If you forgive those who sin against you, your Heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins.

God in his sovereignty allows for trials and tribulations in order to build our character, develop our perseverance, and draw us closer to God. See the story of Joseph in Genesis. Although his brothers plotted against him and sold him into slavery, Joseph was lifted up by God to a position of great authority. Joseph forgave his brothers and took care of them. We need to trust God's sovereignty in all situations, despite our limited human perspective. We need to forgive like Joseph.

Genesis 50:20 ...you intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives...

Psalms 86:5 Oh Lord, you are so good, so ready to forgive, so full of unfailing love for all who ask your aid.

Romans 12:17-21 Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible. Dear friends, never avenge yourselves, but leave room for God's wrath. I will take vengeance; I will repay those who deserve it, says the Lord. Instead, do what the Scriptures say: If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink, and they will be ashamed of what they have done to you. Do not be overcome by evil, but conquer evil by doing good.

Matthew 18:21-22 Then Peter came to him and ask, Lord, how often should I forgive someone who sins against me? Seven times? No! Jesus replied, seventy times seven.

Luke 6:37-38 Stop judging others, and you will not be judged. Stop criticizing others, or it will all come back on you. If you forgive others, you will be forgiven. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.

Luke 7:41-43 Then Jesus told him this story: A man loaned money to two people - 500 pieces of silver to one and 50 pieces to another. But neither of them could repay him, so he kindly forgave them both, canceling their debts. Who do you suppose loved him more after that? Simon answered, I suppose the one for whom he canceled the largest debt. That's right, Jesus said.

Luke 23:33-34 Finally they came to a place called the Skull. All three were crucified there - Jesus on the center cross, the two criminals on either side. Jesus said, Father, forgive these people, because they do not know what they are doing...

Forgiveness

In A Study of Interpersonal Forgiveness, Peter Bliss defines forgiveness as: The cancellation of a legitimate debt, which is owed to us, but which can never be repaid.

Forgiveness is God's commandment, for it is more virtuous than justice. Forgiveness is not about an emotion, but a process which results in a choice, the decision to forgive another who has wronged us. It is letting go of the desire to seek justice or retaliation. Anger management techniques that do not include the process of forgiveness may be ineffective.

The therapeutic process of forgiveness involves accountability for something within our power to control. Forgiveness is not contingent upon the behavior of the offender. It is obedience to the Word of God. It is a decision. It is a commitment to a Biblical principle. All of us at some time during our lifetime will be hurt or wronged by others. We will be faced with the decision on whether to forgive or not.

We will also, inadvertently or intentionally hurt others, and we will also be forced with the choice of whether or not to seek forgiveness.

Some Christians feel guilty if they are not quick to forgive. Forgiveness is, however, a process. Some Christians also feel guilty and do not feel that they have truly forgiven if they still have a remembrance of the wrong. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting i.e. "that time will heal all". Forgiveness is not condoning, i.e. "that it was not that bad". Forgiveness is not excusing i.e. "that it was not their fault". Forgiveness is not justifying or rationalizing i.e. "that it is okay". Forgiveness is based in grace and is not seeking justice or retaliation. Many Christians have said, "never ask God for what we deserve; ask God for his grace which is forgiveness".

Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation. Forgiveness requires only one party; reconciliation requires two parties. Forgiveness is not the same as trust. One may wish to forgive their rapist, but not trust or seek reconciliation, which may be foolish at best, and highly dangerous at worst.

Phases In the Process of Forgiveness

1) The initial phase of forgiveness, paradoxically, involves taking an inventory or journaling all the ways in which one has been harmed by the offender. These may include feelings of betrayal, humiliation, depressed mood, anxiety, panic, anger, preoccupation with the offense, resentment, a permanent adverse change in oneself, loss, an altered view of the world as unsafe, racing thoughts, insomnia, fear, no longer trusting others,... etc. This phase should include not only an account of the offenses, but the continuing consequences and future impact on the offended.

Sylvia and her husband presented to therapy because of husband's affair. Sylvia's husband had an affair with Sylvia's best friend. Sylvia not only lost trust in her husband but also lost her best friend, felt hurt, angry, suffered damage to her self-esteem, but also realize that she had suffered an adverse change in her personality, becoming an angry and resentful person. For months afterwards she would experience severe anxiety and panic attacks when her husband was on the phone or on the computer, and when he was late in returning home from work. The legitimacy of the debt is fully uncovered and acknowledged. The negative consequences that result from the affair continued long beyond the actual act. Because the consequences of the offense can never be reversed nor the clock turned back, therefore the debt can never be repaid.

2) The decision phase involves the realization that anger, resentment, and holding onto the hurt, is not working for the offended. This phase involves making a decision and a commitment to forgive. Since the debts are uncollectible, they are canceled. No matter how remorseful, repentant, changed, or loving Sylvia's husband is after his affair, there is nothing he can do to undo or remove the painful consequences for Sylvia.

3) The processing or working through phase of forgiveness may involve the softening of the offended and their developing empathy or compassion. There may be an acknowledgment that we have all harmed others either inadvertently or even intentionally. It is our human nature to be selfish, to put our needs above others, and at times be insensitive. There are times when we are hurt or angry when we can be deliberately hurtful to others. This phase involves a recognition of our own humanness, our own sinfulness.

4) The learning phase may involve finding new meaning within our suffering and that we are not alone in our own experience. We may develop a new perspective and perhaps even a new purpose. There may be an acceptance of God's sovereign plan at work within our situation, with the reduction in negative emotions and an increase in positive emotions. Hurt, if handled Biblically, may result in growth and an acceptance of our changed character. We may develop strength and perseverance, a closer relationship with the Lord, and a new direction for our lives.

Judy, who was teased and bullied in school as a child, initially experienced damaged self-esteem. She was angry and resentful. She went through a process of forgiving her offenders, who were also children at the time of the bullying. She realized during therapy, that through the Biblical handling of her resentment, that she had developed a character with greater empathy and compassion for others. She felt that God, in his sovereignty, had been working in her life to make a positive change in her character, to direct her purpose to become a school teacher, a protector, and an advocate for teased and bullied children.

Clinical Tools That Aid in the Forgiveness Process

Praying to God for the grace to be forgiving

Writing letters to the offender, separately listing each offense and forgiving each offense, whether or not the letters are mailed

Role-playing and/or talking to an empty chair, representing the offender, during a Biblical therapy session

Reading Bible verses related to forgiveness

Making disclosures in a small group setting

Burning and/or destroying one's letters or journals chronicling one's hurts

Finishing any unfinished business, getting closure, with the offender

Canceling the debt(s)

For the offender, if possible, to make amends

Using Throw-Offs for resentment and lack of forgiveness and using Put-Ons for forgiveness by following each of the four steps of the forgiveness process

I am harboring the following resentments with a lack of forgiveness:

I am willing to initiate the forgiveness process by committing to the following steps:

I will select and commit to memory the following Biblical life verse to aid in my process of forgiveness:

Sexual Problems or Sexual Pleasure

God created men and women to be sexual. Sexual relations within marriage are holy and Biblically prescribed.

1 Corinthians 7:2-5 But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each wife should have her own husband. The husband should not deprive his wife of sexual intimacy, which is her right as a married woman, nor should the wife deprive her husband. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and her husband also gives authority over his body to his wife. So do not deprive each other of sexual relations.

Sexual relations between men and women are equal and reciprocal. The Bible does not give the man rights superior to the rights of the woman. One should not, however, make unreasonable sexual demands upon their spouse. There is to be no sexual bargaining or manipulation, such as the man manipulating for sex or the woman manipulating with sex.

Sexual relations are to be regular and continuous. Both parties are to provide such adequate satisfaction to the other that both unfulfilled sexual desires, "burning", and the temptation to find satisfaction elsewhere, are avoided. Positive sexual satisfaction can only occur within the context of an overall positive relationship with good communication, companionship, emotional support, and spiritual connectedness.

Hebrews 13:4 Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are sexually immoral and those who commit adultery.

Sexual pleasure should be regulated by the central principle that one's sexuality does not exist for oneself or for one's own pleasure, but for the pleasure of one's partner. One's rights over one's body are given in marriage to one's partner. Every self-oriented manifestation of sex is sinful and lustful, rather than holy and loving. The general principle throughout the Bible, also applies to the sexual relationship, that love is always other centered. Physical intimacy should also be other centered.

Biblically Forbidden Sexual Behaviors That Should Be Thrown Off:

Premarital Sex is disrespectful to the future marriage covenant and it is disrespectful to each partner. Premarital sex sacrifices the sanctity of the future, for immediate gratification. When individuals enter into a marriage, having had prior sexual partners, there is no longer anything special about the marital sexual relationship and sexual problems frequently emerge. When such couples present for marriage counseling, individual emotional problems and couples' conflicts over past sexual conduct and sexual partners, frequently emerge as central issues.

Pornography and other forms of Lust and Self Gratification These forms of self-oriented sex are extremely disrespectful to one's spouse, who is likely to feel compared to the pornographic image as well as devalued. Pornography replaces or dilutes and damages the marital sexual

relationship. Similar consequences and damage are frequently seen from lusting after members of the opposite sex. See section on Life Dominating Problems. Whatever we feed will grow stronger. Whatever we starve will shrink and eventually disappear. Treatment for pornography and other forms of self-oriented sexual gratification involves total abstinence from the Biblically forbidden behavior.

Extramarital Affairs The relational therapy to repair adultery is a long and painful road. The individual committing adultery usually does not want to focus on the multitude of issues caused by or brought to the surface by their affair. He/she wants to jump ahead and focus on the future in order to avoid feelings of embarrassment, guilt, and shame. It is not uncommon for the adulterer to become angry when their spouse brings up their emotional pain. The offender's anger may be used to cover their feelings of guilt and shame. Anger also has the consequence of shutting down the emotions of the offended, which the offender may feel helpless or difficult to deal with.

The offended party usually needs to process and reprocess the multitude of issues over a lengthy period of time. When this happens, the adulterer frequently accuses the offended of not being able to move forward and not having true forgiveness. What the adulterer fails to realize is that the emotional pain of the offended spouse is in the present, and will continue to be present, well into the future, long after the affair has ended. A blanket apology for the past, is in no way sufficient for covering the pain of the present and the reemergence of emotional pain in the future. Trust can rarely ever be fully restored. Repentance requires that the offending party attend and re-attend to the current emotional pain of their spouse which will most likely continue for months and years afterward. The offended spouse will most likely have symptoms similar to those of posttraumatic stress disorder. Certain places, names, movies, music, dates, and numerous other unforeseen situations become triggers for intrusive and unwanted thoughts and feelings. The damaged spouse may pace and become nauseous when their spouse is running late, experience crying spells when hearing certain songs or watching certain movies, have emotional lability with depressed, anxious, and angry mood swings, experience anxiety or panic attacks, be untrusting and accusatory, not liking the person they themselves have become, having disturbing racing thoughts during physical intimacy... etc. For these reasons a one-time blanket apology is insufficient. It is important that the offending party develop empathy and compassion, and apologize for each of the emerging symptoms experienced by the offended spouse. The offended's anger may be the most difficult emotion for the offender to empathize with, but they must come to realize that their spouse's anger comes from the same wellspring as their anxiety and depression. Coupled with an apology for the offended spouse's present symptoms, and offer by the offender to be supportive of the offended spouse in the moment of their distress, contributes greatly to the individual and relational healing process.

It is also important, at some point, for the offended spouse to learn forgiveness, which is a decision, not based on their feelings, to cancel the legitimate debt that is owed to them, which the offending party can never repay. See section on The Process of Forgiveness. The offending party is usually consumed with guilt and shame for the unanticipated pain inflicted on their

spouse, the damage done to the other person involved in the affair, and the damage done to both families. It is not uncommon for marriages damaged by an affair to continue on in conflict for years or to even end years later.

Same Sex Relationships, although controversial or culturally accepted, are Biblically forbidden and should be Thrown Off.

It is not uncommon for some adolescents and even preadolescents, who have feelings towards the same sex, to feel that homosexuality has chosen them, and that they did not choose it. These young people may fall into deep depression, hating that they have an attraction to the same sex. Some individuals in this situation have chosen to remain out of relationship, or even to marry an individual of the opposite sex, minimizing the importance of their sexual relationship and focusing primarily on their friendship, communication, companionship, emotional support, and spiritual connectedness.

Some self-identified gay and lesbian individuals have a history of childhood sexual abuse, often offended by the same-sex perpetrator. In these situations the sexual experience frequently gets entwined with feelings of love, affection, attention, and being cared for. Some of these individuals have later discovered that when they experience love, affection, attention, and being cared for by the opposite sex, that they question their sexual orientation and discover their attraction to the opposite sex.

In our hedonistic culture, where pleasurable experiences are highly valued, along with alcohol and drug abuse/dependence, many teenagers and young adults who identify themselves as gay or bisexual have experimented by having sex with both male and female partners. When some of these individuals obtain and maintain total abstinence from alcohol and drugs, and/or experience significant emotional and relational pain from such relationships, it is not uncommon for them to make a conscious decision to become monogamous with an opposite sex partner.

Sexual Promiscuity frequently results from early exposure to sex. Such exposure may come through children and preadolescents viewing pornography, witnessing adults having sexual relationships, and/or being lured into a sexual relationship with an older child or adult. When sexuality is opened up at an early age, it is difficult to be closed up. Such individuals will frequently become involved in sex before marriage, sexual affairs outside of marriage, and/or have multiple partners in serial or concurrent sexual relationships.

Swapping and Threesomes are other forms of self-oriented, hedonistic sex which have destroyed many relationships. Participants profess that the rules to swapping partners, and/or engaging in group sex, are to avoid becoming emotionally attached. Many marriages have been permanently damaged or have unintentionally ended in the sinful pursuit of sexual pleasure.

Vulgar, Profane Sexualized Language is demeaning and devalues the sacredness of love and sexual intimacy within the marriage, and should be Thrown Off.

Date Rape, Marital Rape, and Other Forms of Forced Sex should be treated as violence. Therapy should occur in conjunction with the arrest and domestic violence or criminal justice involvement of the offender.

Sexual relationships are always intertwined with individual emotional and relational needs. Biblically forbidden forms of sexual behavior always involve pathological emotional, cognitive, and/or relational issues. Therapy should focus on the differentiation of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors. Stop thought/behavior and Throwing Off forbidden sexual behaviors, and thought/behavior substitution and Putting On Biblically permissible sexual behaviors, have helped many individuals obtain emotional and relational stability. There are individuals who maintain feelings of attraction to the same sex, or to others outside of their marriage, but who have overcome acting out on such feelings. Cognitive behavioral therapy for sexual problems is only effective when used in conjunction with total abstinence from the Biblically forbidden behaviors.

Biblically Permissible or Prescribed Sexual Conduct That Should Be Put On:

Sexual relationships within marriage on a regular and continuous basis

Other-centered sex with the central focus of pleasuring one's spouse

Nonsexual affection as the context for physical intimacy Sex, in the absence of a loving relationship, will usually result in a multitude of sexual problems. Good communication, companionship or spending quality time, emotional support, and friendship are important within the marital relationship in order to have positive feelings of physical intimacy. Other love languages include words of affirmation, individualized gifts, and acts of service. Praying together, doing devotionals together, reading and discussing the Bible together, worshiping together, and serving others together in a ministry are important bonds within the Christian marriage. There should be a central focus on serving one's spouse. Men are to love their wives like Jesus loved the church. Women are to love and respect their husbands. They should be best friends, each serving the other.

I confess that I practice and that I will Throw Off the following forms of selfish or forbidden sexual sin:

I will Put On the following Biblically permissible sexual practices:

From Slavery of Life Dominating Problems to Freedom

Those problems which have occurred for a lengthy period of time and which have come to define one's character, may be viewed as life dominating problems. These may include such problems as pornography, anger/rage, fearfulness/timidity, alcohol/drug abuse, deceitfulness/dishonesty, selfishness/self-centeredness, lust, chronic depression, profanity, overspending, boastfulness/arrogance, stealing, gossip/slander, violent behavior, overeating...etc... and many other similar problems, which within our culture are typically viewed as addictions.

The Bible does not reference addictions or dependencies, but refers to such life dominating problem as sinful habits. Whatever we are immerse ourselves in or give ourselves over to, determines our thoughts, which determines our emotions, which determines our behaviors, which determines our behavioral patterns or habits, which determines our character, and determines where we end up in life. Most psychological theories suggest that if we deal with only an external or superficial change, that we may shift our symptoms or develop an alternative behavioral problem or symptom which may be worse than the first. In Biblical therapy, we need to take the approach of first changing our heart, through remorse for putting our ways above God's ways and for violating our relationship with God, confessing our sinful habits, and repentance or turning 180° from our sin life, and adopting a new behavioral pattern which is pleasing to God. If we merely take off old habits without replacing them with positive ones, we may end up worse than we were before. See section on Throw Offs/Put Ons.

I have the following life dominating problem(s) that keeps me enslaved, and that interferes with my relationship with God and with others:

From a Biblical perspective we are responsible for all sinful actions, even those that appear to be addictions. We become slaves to whatever values, beliefs, behaviors, impulses, people, indulgences, or habits that we give ourselves over to. I may not be responsible for being an alcoholic, but I am responsible for my recovery. I may not be responsible for my depression, but I am responsible for shutting down and not functioning. If I give in to my temptations, I strengthen my problem by rehearsing it over and over again, I feed it, and it grows, consuming a larger portion of my life.

From a Biblical perspective, no matter how serious or long-standing our sin habit has been, it can be overcome. We are to flee, turn 180° and go in the opposite direction, and maintain total abstinence from the sin habit.

We have the ability to change. We can Throw Off giving into sinful behaviors and we can Put On being obedient to Biblical precepts, the promptings of the Holy Spirit, and being empowered by the Holy Spirit in every area of our life. The results will be a changed life. What seems overwhelming or impossible to do alone, if we accept Jesus as our Lord and Savior, we can do with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Practice is essential to any change in habit. This requires making a thorough and detailed log of our sin life, our triggers, and listing when, where, and how we commit our life dominating sin. We need to develop a specific cognitive behavioral recovery plan for Throw Offs and Put Ons in each situation. We need to be intentional and deliberate about our change. Like learning to play an instrument or perfecting any skill, practice, practice, practice is essential.

Biblical Passages Related to Overcoming Life Dominating Problems and Obtaining Freedom

Romans 6:16 Don't you know that when you offer yourself to someone to obey him as slaves, you are slaves to the one whom you obey - whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death (literal or spiritual), or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; He will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Romans 8:12-13 So, dear brothers and sisters, you have no obligation whatsoever to do what your sinful nature urges you to do. For if you keep on following it, you will perish. But if through the power of the Holy Spirit you turn from it and its evil deeds, you will live.

Romans 2:6-9 God will give to each person according to what he has done. To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. For those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil...

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Do you know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor male prostitutes, nor homosexual offenders, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor slanderers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were, but you were washed, you were sanctified, and you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Matthew 3:8 Prove by the way you live that you have really turned from your sins and turned to God.

1 Timothy 4:7-8 Have nothing to do with the godless myths and old wives tales; rather, train yourselves for spiritual fitness. For physical training is of some value, but spiritual exercise has value for all things, holding promise for both the present life and the life to come.

2 Corinthians 13:5 Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves. Do you not realize that Christ Jesus is in you - unless, of course you fail the test?

Galatians 5:22-23 But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, He will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.

Ephesians 4:21-24 Surely you heard of Him and were taught in Him and in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regards to your former way of life, to Put Off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be Made New in the attitude of your minds, and to Put On the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

1 Corinthians 15:33 Do not be misled: bad company corrupts good character.

Colossians 3:5-10 So put to death the sinful, earthly things lurking within you. Have nothing to do with sexual sin, impurity, lust, and shameful desires. Don't be greedy for the good things of this life, for that is idolatry. God's terrible anger will come upon those who do such things. You used to do them when you're life was still part of this world. But now it is the time to get rid of anger, rage, malicious behavior, slander, and dirty language from your lips. Don't lie to each other, for you have Stripped Off your old evil nature and all its wicked deeds. In its place you have clothed yourself with a brand-new nature that is continually being renewed as you learn more and more about Christ, who created this new nature within you.

I commit to Throwing Off, not practicing, starving, and maintaining total abstinence from the following life dominating problem(s):

I will commit to the following spiritual exercises, Put On the mind of Christ, and practice the following spiritual disciplines in order to obtain freedom from my life dominating problem(s):

I will select and commit to memory the following Biblical life verse to aid me in my victory over slavery to my life dominating problem:

Overcoming Childhood Traumas

Many Types and Sizes of Traumas

Many adults that I see in therapy, and many adults that are activate in self-help recovery groups, have experienced childhood traumas. Traumas can differ significantly in severity and longevity. Some children experience the breakup of the family through parental separation or divorce. Others grew up in families where there was anger, rage, and/or violence. Many experience emotional, verbal, physical, and/or sexual abuse from inside or outside of their family, feeling unprotected by their parents. Some children grow up with alcohol and/or drug dependent parents or older siblings, experiencing chaos, conflict, and drama. Some children grow up in families where a parent has severe mental illness with psychosis, bipolar disorder, major depression, or even suicide. Other children experience the premature loss or death of a parent or sibling. Some have been abandoned and/or taken from their parents to be placed in foster care or adoption. Even children being adopted into good families have a higher incidence of mental health problems. Children may also experience being teased, harassed, or bullied. There are many forms of trauma. It is not the size of the trauma, but the impact of the trauma, that is significant in shaping the emotional, mental, behavioral, and relational character of traumatized individuals. (See Biblical Therapy case example, Damaged Self-Esteem/the Impact of Harsh Words). Joe grew up in a stable family with good parents. His father was busy working providing for the family. Whenever Joe wanted to spend time with his father, father would say “shoo you're in my way and under my feet”. Most of us would admit that this was not a major trauma. However for Joe, as an adolescent and as a young adult, he experienced feelings of damaged self-esteem, feeling that he was in people's way and under their feet. He would withdraw from interacting with others. To interact with others was perceived by Joe as being intrusive and that he would be unwanted. Moderately harsh words significantly impacted Joe's emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and relational character.

Normal Responses to Abnormal Traumatic Situations

One normal or typical response to growing up with childhood trauma is to become fearful and develop anxiety, panic attacks, or in severe situations even agoraphobia. Others become depressed, blame themselves for their role in the trauma, shut down, or in severe situations have suicidal urges or suicide attempts. Some who experienced prolonged stress, developed chronic stress with psychological and physical health problems such as pounding or racing heart, shortness of breath, lightheadedness or dizziness, stomach distress with severe constipation or diarrhea, high blood pressure, chronic migraine headaches, lowered immune system, and other chronic health problems. Chronic stress can also worsen health care problems such as multiple sclerosis or cancer and other chronic health conditions.

Another typical response to childhood trauma is to develop mental status problems such as inability to focus or lack of concentration. Children, while at school, maybe more focused on or worrying about what's happening at home or in their family. By normal responses I do not

necessarily mean healthy responses, only typical or expected outcomes from childhood trauma.

Dysfunctional Adaptive Patterns and Avoidance/Escape Patterns

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way that seems right to a man, but in the end it leads to (spiritual or physical) death.

Children, adolescents, and adults who have gone through traumas, commonly develop dysfunctional patterns to cope, adapt, or avoid being re-traumatized. Many turn to alcohol, drugs, or prescription medications and abuse or become dependent in order to change the way they feel. Some seek love, affection, and attention by coming sexually active at an early age, developing a pattern of sexual promiscuity and seeking love in all the wrong places. Others engage in overspending, or what I refer to as retail therapy, in order to feel better. Some may alter their mood by becoming involved in high risk behaviors such as gambling to seek an adrenaline rush and to feel high. Many will overeat and use comfort food to self soothe when they are feeling unwanted emotions. Others may develop sociopathic tendencies with anger, rage, rebelliousness, disrespect, defiance, and/or violence, becoming part of the criminal justice system. Some become chronically depressed, shut down, and do not function. Others become chronically anxious, frozen, fearful, avoidant, and develop a timid character. Others pursue pornography and extramarital affairs. Others act out their emotions and become emotionally labile with behavioral and relational problem. Some may become codependent, becoming hyper-vigilant at reading and managing the emotions of others in order to feel safe. Although it is important not to blame the victim, because they may have been adversely impacted or damaged by the bad choices of others, as older adolescents and adults we become responsible for what we do, the choices we make, and how we react to past traumas. We may not be responsible for what we went through, but we are responsible for our reactions to traumatic events and for our own recovery.

My dysfunctional adaptive or avoidant pattern for coping with unwanted feelings that I need to Throw Off:

Choosing Functional Adaptive Patterns and Making Positive Choices

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths.

Isaiah 55:8-9 My thoughts are completely different from your thoughts, says the Lord. And my ways are far beyond anything you could imagine. For just as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts higher than your thoughts.

Overcoming Trauma

If you have made the choice to become a Christian, and have accepted Jesus as your Lord and Savior, and thereby receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit, you can have victory over trauma and its consequences. You can be empowered by the Holy Spirit to accomplish together what you could not accomplish on your own. There are several powerful spiritual approaches to overcoming childhood traumas:

You can use your traumatic experience as a way of developing strength, perseverance, and a godly character. God created you in His image. He gave you your physical appearance, your intellect, your emotions, your capacity for relationship, and allowed you to go through your life experiences, both good and bad. He did this all for His purpose. Knowing that you are God's unique creation, and that you have a specific purpose and mission to accomplish for Him, is the antidote for damaged self-esteem, anxiety, anger, and depression. You are useful to God, just as you are, without being perfect. You are important to God. Accepting this reality, not only in our head but also in our heart, cannot help but promote positive self-esteem. God is sovereign, he allows us to go through trials and tribulations, and if we manage these correctly, we will develop strength, character, perseverance, and draw closer in our relationship to him. Give some thought as to how you can accomplish your purpose in life, not despite your life experiences, but because of them. Think about how you have grown as a result of your trauma and how God might use you in a capacity that is specifically unique to you.

I believe that God can use me as a unique tool, different than anyone else, to accomplish the following purpose:

Psychological research on past versus recent traumas suggests that recent traumas respond well to critical incident stress debriefing, whereas past traumas respond better by looking in the windshield rather than looking in the rearview mirror. If we keep looking in the past, dwelling on our past traumas, it is like rehearsing, practicing, and strengthening the impact of the trauma in our life. It is important to develop a windshield/strategic life plan, using all of our attributes in the service of God.

We should be prayerful and allow for God to direct and redirect us and for the Holy Spirit to both empower and equip us. I have had many therapy patients who were alcoholic or drug addicts who became alcoholic and drug counselors. Children who were severely teased, harassed, and bullied have become teachers, guidance counselors, and advocates for the protection of children. I have had sexually abused boys and girls who became very engaged and protective parents. We cannot only overcome, but we can have victory by utilizing the traumatic experience, to develop our character in a positive direction in the service of God. We do not have to be perfect tools to be used by Jesus.

A second way to respond to past traumas is to go through a process of sanctification. Sanctification is the process of becoming more and more like Jesus, but at the same time not expecting to be perfect like Jesus. Most good psychology comes from the Bible. Stop thought is not enough and must be coupled with thought substitution. Stopping a behavior is not enough and must be coupled with substituting a positive behavioral change. In Biblical terms with must Throw Off our negative sinful thoughts and behaviors and Put On positive holy thoughts and behaviors. If we are self-centered we must Put On thinking of others. If we are selfish we must Put On generosity. If we are angry we must Put On patience. If we are depressed we must Put On joy. If we are anxious we must Put On peace. If we struggle with life dominating problems we can Put On freedom. We can learn to Take Off automatic cognitive distortions and Take Off automatic negative responses. We can also learn to Put On the mind of Christ, and Put On a daily gratitude list or a blessings inventory.

See section on Biblical Therapy Case Examples: Anger/Foul Language. In that chapter I shared my own anger and foul language as a result of my automatic negative cognitive distortions that I should never be inconvenienced or deterred from accomplishing my goals. I develop tunnel vision and a loss of perspective on how awful things are in the moment. Once I start going down that path, I need to Throw Off my automatic negative cognitive distortions, which are sinful, and Put On the mind of Christ, looking where God's hand is in my life and focus on his many blessings. My automatic negative response is a violation of my relationship with God which involves complaining, anger, and profanity. It is putting my way and what I want above what God wants. My behavior at that time constitutes a sinful childhood tantrum. At the time I am not even aware that I am sinning. Imagine Apostle Paul when he was imprisoned. He did not mumble and complain and ask God why he was imprisoned after all he had done in the service of the Lord. But rather he chose to preach to the temple guard, write letters to the churches, and to preach to visitors. Not exactly what I would have done. I more than likely would have complained to the Lord about His unfairness and His failure to reward me for my service. We have a choice: to continue in our sinful patterns or to Throw Off sin and seek a process of sanctification and Put On holiness.

I will commit to the following choices in the process of sanctification:

A third way to have victory over childhood traumas is to seek where God's hand is in our life, past, present, and future, and join Him in his work. When we look over our past life, we can review our history from a spiritual perspective, thinking about where God intervened and perhaps what He was up to at that time.

With prayer and thoughtfulness, we can develop a present spiritual perspective on where God's hand is and where he is currently operating within our life. What we personally may experience as a derailment or misfortune in our life, frequently results in a positive change in the course of our life or in our character. See section on Biblical Therapy Case Examples. Remember the case of Mark, whose identity was inextricably connected to his job and his vocation. After being let go from several jobs, he came to redefine his identity and his value by who he was rather than by what he produced. He also learned to slow down and smell the roses. Remember the case of Judy who grew up with a verbally abusive father, teased and harassed at school, and betrayed by her boyfriend. After being mistreated for years as if she were nothing, she came to accept God's yardstick for measuring human beings, that she was in fact enough, and that she could be used in His service, becoming a teacher and protector of children.

With prayer and spiritual eyes, we can look for where God is currently working and how we might shape our future lives by joining him in his work. That is precisely why I am writing this book. Now, put on your spiritual eyes, be prayerful, and look for the future direction for your life by joining God in his work. This should be a mission that you have been prepared for throughout your life and that you are uniquely created and equipped to perform as a result of your life experiences, including any traumas.

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's masterpiece. He created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

I believe that God wants to use me in the next chapter of my life, to join him in the following project:

A Hopeful Message about Salvation

Individuals who suffer from severe anxiety, guilt, shame, and depression, not uncommonly contemplate suicide, their future on this earth, and afterlife. Many individuals in therapy believe that they have been so terrible, that they have lived their lives in such a sinful way, that there is no way possible for them to be forgiven or to get into heaven. They may have committed a horrific act in their past and believe that salvation is now unobtainable.

I sometimes have feelings that I am, or have been, too bad to get into heaven because:

Biblically, Let Us Examine the Position of, Too Bad to Be Saved or to Get into Heaven:

1 John 1:7 But if we are living in the light of God's presence, just as Christ is, then we have fellowship with each other, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, cleanses us from every sin.

1 John 1:9 But if we confess our sins to Him, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.

Romans 5:16 And the result of God's gracious gift is very different from the result of one man's sin. For Adam's sin led to condemnation, but we have the free gift of being accepted by God, even though we are guilty of many sins.

Acts 10:42-43 And he ordered us to preach everywhere and to testify that Jesus is ordained of God to be the judge of all - the living and the dead. He is the one who all the prophets testified about, saying that everyone who believes in Him will have their sins forgiven through his name.

1 Timothy 1:12-16 How thankful I am to Christ Jesus our Lord for considering me trustworthy and appointing me to serve Him, even though I used to scoff at the name of Christ. I hunted down his people, harming them in every way I could. But God had mercy on me because I did it in ignorance and unbelief. Oh, how kind and gracious the Lord! He filled me completely with the faith and love of Christ Jesus. This is a true saying, and everyone should believe it: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners - and I was the worst of them all. But this is why God had mercy on me, so that Christ Jesus could use me as a prime example of his great patience with even the worst sinners. Then others will realize that they too, can believe in Him and receive eternal life.

Luke 15:7 In the same way, heaven will be happier over one lost sinner who returns to God than over ninety-nine others who are righteous and have not strayed away!

Matthew 9:12-13 When he heard this, Jesus replied, Healthy people do not need a doctor - sick people do. Then He added, Now go and learn the meaning of the Scripture: I want you to be merciful; I don't want your sacrifices, for I have come to call sinners, not those who think they are already good enough.

Romans 10:13 For anyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.

Romans 3:22 We are made right with God by placing our faith in Jesus Christ. And this is true for everyone who believes, no matter who we are or what we have done.

On the other hand, many individuals believe that they may be saved, and have eternal life in heaven, because they have been a good person. They believe that they have done nothing terribly wrong, and that they have not been very bad in comparison to other people. Some have a generic spiritual life with a vague belief system that a "higher power" exists. Some believe that everyone goes to heaven. They may also believe that they will go to heaven because they treat others relatively well. This is the belief that one can earn their way to heaven through good works or good deeds.

I feel that I am, or have been, good enough to go to heaven because:

Biblically Let Us Examine the Position of Salvation by Good Works or Everyone Goes to Heaven:

Romans 3:20 For no one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what His law commands. For the more we know God's law, the clearer it becomes that we are not obeying it.

Romans 3:23 For all have sinned; all fall short of God's glorious standard.

Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord.

2 Corinthians 5:21 For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

Romans 3:21-22 But now God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight - not by obeying the law but by the way promised in the Scriptures long ago. We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in the same way, no matter who we are or what we have done.

Isaiah 64:4-6 Since the world began, no ear has heard, no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for Him! You welcome those who cheerfully do good, who follow godly ways. But we are not godly. We are constant sinners, so your anger is heavy on us. How can people like us be saved? We are all infected and impure with sin. When we proudly display our righteous deeds, we find they are but filthy rags. Like autumn leaves, we wither and fall. And our sins, like the wind, sweeps us away.

Philippians 3:8-9 Yes, everything else is worthless when compared with the priceless gain of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. I have discarded everything else, counting it at all as garbage, so that I may have Christ and become one with Him. I no longer count on my own goodness or my ability to obey God's law, but I trust Christ to save me. For God's way of making us right with himself depends on faith.

Titus 3:4-7 But then God our Savior showed us his kindness and love. He saved us, not because of the good things we did, but because of his mercy. He washed away our sins and gave us a new life through the Holy Spirit. He generously poured out the Spirit upon us because of what Jesus Christ our Savior did. He declared us not guilty because of his great kindness. And now we know that we will inherit eternal life.

Romans 5:20-21 God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful kindness became more abundant. So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful kindness rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

Romans 5:6-11 When we were utterly helpless, Christ came at just the right time and died for us sinners. Now, no one is likely to die for a good person, though someone might be willing to die for a person who is especially good. But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ who died for us while we were still sinners. And since we have been made right in God's sight by the blood of Christ, he will certainly save us from God's judgment. For since we were restored to friendship with God by the death of his Son while we were still his enemies, we will certainly be delivered from eternal punishment by his life. So now we can rejoice in our wonderful new relationship with God - all because of what our Lord Jesus Christ has done for us in making us friends of God.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.

John 3:3 Jesus replied, I assure you, unless you are born again, you can never see the kingdom of God.

John 14:6 Jesus answered, I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me...

John 1:12-13 But to all who believe in Him (Jesus) and accept Him, he gave the right to become children of God. All they need to do is to trust Him to save them. All those who believe this are reborn. This is not a physical birth resulting from human passion or plan - this rebirth comes from the will of God.

Galatians 2:20-21 My old self has been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. So I live in this earthly body by trusting in the son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me. I do not treat the grace of God as meaningless. For if keeping the law could make us right with God, then there was no need for Christ to die.

Ephesians 2:4-9 But God is so rich in mercy, and he loved us so very much, for even when we were dead because of our sins, he gave us life when he raised Christ from the dead. For he raised us from the dead along with Christ, so we were seated with him in the heavenly realms—all because we are one with Christ Jesus. And so God can always point to us as an example of the incredible wealth of his favor and kindness towards us, as shown in all he has done for us through Christ Jesus. God saved you by his special favor when you believed. And you cannot take credit for this; it is a gift from God. Salvation is not a reward for the good things we have done, so none of us can boast about it.

Romans 10:9-10 If you declare with your mouth, Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.

Acts 4:12 There is salvation in no one else! God has given no other name (Jesus) under heaven by which we must be saved.

Of course there is a place for good works in the Bible. Good works should be abundant and in appreciation for being saved by faith, not performed in the hope of being good enough to be saved. The whole New Testament reveals that good works or good deeds without faith, is dead. Dead in the Bible refers to both literal death, or in this instance, spiritual death, meaning eternal separation from God. Our good works, however, will never be sufficient to earn our way into heaven. After all, how good is good enough? A proper reading of the Old Testament also shows that God's chosen people, such as Noah, Moses, Abraham, Joseph,... etc. were saved by trusting God and acting obediently on their faith.

James 2:20 Fool! When will you ever learn that faith that does not result in good deeds is dead?

James 2:22 You see that his faith and his actions were working together, and his faith was made complete by what he did

Ephesians 2:10 For we are God's masterpiece. He created us anew in Christ Jesus, so that we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.

The New American Standard Bible (NASB) Lays out a Clear Process for Salvation:

In his mercy, God has determined that salvation is a free gift. To receive it, you need only do the following:

- 1) Acknowledge your problem of separation from God because of your sin
- 2) Admit to being a sinner, and that you are in need of salvation from outside of yourself
- 3) Confess that Jesus Christ died on the cross for your sin; that He willingly made the sacrifice
- 4) Commit yourself to Jesus Christ so that he may save you (Savior) and guide you (Lord)
- 5) Receive Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord, right now

Romans 10:9 That if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

Romans 10:13 For whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved.

A Prayer to Receive Jesus Christ as Your Lord and Savior:

You can say this prayer right here, right now.

Lord Jesus, I know that I have sinned against you and that I have not lived according to your plan. Therefore, I ask you to forgive me. I believe that you died for me, and in doing so, you paid the debt for my sins. I repent of my sins and now I want to live the kind of life that you want me to live. I ask you to come into my life as my personal Lord and Savior. Help me to follow you and to obey you as Lord. Allow me to discover your good and perfect will for my life. In Jesus name I pray, Amen.

Your personal decision:

On this date _____, I _____ accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Lord and Savior.

You have now received eternal life! When you prayed to receive Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord of your life, He heard you, and several things took place:

1) Your sins were forgiven.

Colossians 2:13 You were dead because of your sins and because your sinful nature was not yet cut away. Then God made you alive with Christ. He forgave all your sins.

2) You became a child of God.

John 1:12 But to all who believe Him and accept Him, He gave the right to become children of God.

3) You received eternal life.

John 3:16 For God so loved the world that He gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in Him will not perish but have eternal life.

You may have many strong feelings because of your decision to become a Christ follower, but do not let yourself be carried away by your emotions because your feelings can change from day-to-day. Accepting Christ is not meant to be your destination. It is the beginning of a new life, of being born again. Becoming more like Christ, through obedience to his Word, the Bible, is a lifelong process. It is a process of sanctification.

Talk and have fellowship with God daily through prayer and through reading the Bible. It is also helpful to join a Bible based church and attempt to have fellowship with other Christians, so that you can receive support and spiritual guidance from mature believers. The church is not a building, but believers who are the body of Christ. This is the beginning of an abundant life on earth that Jesus Christ came to offer. It is also helpful to serve others. You do not have to be perfect to serve.

Once having assurance of salvation, all earthly things pale in significance. Things that we used to worry about and feel anxious about, and situations and circumstances that we became depressed about or angry about, seem to no longer hold much importance. We look for God's sovereignty in all situations. Through obedience to the Lord, we can overcome anxiety, depression, anger, and life dominating problems that consume us. We can also learn to have healthy relationships. Through the Holy Spirit we have the resources and are fully equipped to overcome our former way of life.

You are now free to discover your God-given purpose. Many Blessings.

Seth F. Nieding LISW, LICDC Please be encouraged to share comments or ask questions.
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Self-Help Therapeutic Exercises or Counseling Homework Assignments

Begin each day with prayer, in order to have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, and to obtain direction, support, reduce anxiety, and overcome reliance solely on yourself

Have active church attendance at a Bible based church, in order to study the Bible, gain insight into God's word, and gain support and guidance from mature believers

List and confess your sins, in order to establish personal responsibility, repentance, and accountability

Read the Bible daily, in order to seek Biblical wisdom, to renew your mind, to take your thoughts captive, and to overcoming anxiety, depression, anger, relational and life dominating problems

Schedule and follow through on your responsibilities, in order to overcome the loss of motivation associated with depression, and to avoid giving into or acting only on your emotions

Serve others, in order to overcome depression and self-centeredness and to gain a perspective beyond yourself

Use your spiritual gifts to minister to and serve others, in order to overcome low self-esteem, depression, anxiety, and an internal focus on self

Join a small Bible study or prayer group in order to make application of God's word into your daily life, and to support, correct, mentor, and encourage each other

Establish an accountability partner, in order to overcome your sin life and to stay on or get back on the right path

Do daily devotionals and pray together as a couple and as a family, in order to strengthen your relationships and integrate Biblical principles into your everyday life

Keep a blessings inventory and a gratitude journal, in order to overcome automatic negative cognitive distortions, negativity, pessimism, anxiety, anger, resentment, and depression

Practice putting others before yourself, in order to overcome self-centeredness

Memorize key Biblical passages, in order to renew your mind and have spiritual direction when encountering difficult situations

Make a list of your sin life, in order to establish an attitude of humility, take personal responsibility, and establish your need for change

Develop a specific plan of Throw Offs and Put Ons, in order to overcome your negative dysfunctional patterns of thinking, feeling, and acting and to develop positive functional Biblical ways of thinking, feeling, and acting

Forgive others in order to overcome bitterness and resentment

Practice peacemaking and reconciliation with others where possible

Practice daily obedience to God's word, rather than living according to your feelings, in order to overcome anxiety, depression, and anger

Transfer trust from yourself to God, in order to overcome anxiety of self-reliance and to overcome human ways which may appear to be right but which lead to destruction

Live surrendered to God, in order to develop dependence on God rather than dependence on self and to overcome anxiety

Pray without ceasing, communicating or chitchatting with the Lord throughout the day, in order to develop your personal relationship, trust, and reliance on Jesus Christ

Focus on the concerns of others, in order to overcome an internal focus on one's self and self-absorption

Use the Bible for reference when facing any type of problem, in order to seek godly wisdom

Reestablish priorities, according to what is important to God rather than self, in order to please God

Develop a budget based on tithing 10% of one's income to the church, saving 10%, and living on 80%, in order to establish sound finances, to develop trust in God's provision, and to overcome financial distress

Become generous by giving time and money to those in need, in order to overcome self-centeredness

Practice taking your thoughts captive, by use of stop thought and thought substitution, putting on the mind of Christ (WWJD, what would Jesus do)

Practice separating your feelings from your circumstances, recognizing that your circumstances do not have to dictate or dominate your mood

Put On spiritual lenses and seek to understand where God is currently working within your life circumstances

Work at fulfilling God's purpose and direction for your life

If you have successfully gone through trauma, determine how you might utilize your experience, your strength, and your changed character to define your godly purpose and future mission

Therapeutic Outcomes, Peace and Joy

The Biblical principle of peace and joy specifies that we can be at peace and that we can have joy apart from our personal circumstances, our finances, our job satisfaction, our popularity, our acceptance by others, our health, our emotions, our relationships, or any other earthly concern. We are able to be at peace with God and our peace should come from God, rather than be at peace with the world or expect our peace to come from the world. We can learn to be happy with little or with much. Our circumstance does not have to dictate or even dominate our mood. Peace and joy comes from the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, rather than the comforts of our circumstances. God in his sovereignty may choose not to remove our burdens. In this world expect trials and tribulations. Our primary goal should be to be holy, rather than to be happy. Happiness often follows from holiness.

Biblical Verses Related to Peace and Joy

John 14:27 Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.

John 16:33 I had told you these things, so that in Me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.

Philippians 4:11-13 I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength.

1 Corinthians 10:13 No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.

Galatians 5:22-23 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

Isaiah 26:3-4 You will keep in perfect peace all who trust in you, whose thoughts are fixed on you! Trust in the Lord always, for the Lord God is the eternal rock.

Proverbs 3:5-6 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on your own understanding. Seek His will in all you do, and He will direct your paths.

Colossians 3:23-24 Work hard and carefully at whatever you do, as though you were working for the Lord rather than for people. Remember that the Lord will give you an inheritance as your reward, and the master you are serving is Christ.

Reasons for Therapeutic Failures

Unbelief

Faith only at a head level, rather than faith at a heart level

Lack of Biblical knowledge

Lack of trust in God

Lack of obedience, failure to commit to what the Word of God requires

Maintaining a feeling orientation with feeling driven behaviors

Hopelessness and giving up

Following secular, cultural, ungodly counsel

Minimizing, rationalizing, or taking a lite attitude towards sin

Blame shifting with lack of confession and lack of repentance

Cultural immersion, blending the current culture into the Word of God

Self-reliance and self-control with fear of transferring trust from self to God

Having a broken relationship with God through a pattern of unrepentant sin

Praying outside the Word of God

Lack of a prayer life

Lack of a personal relationship with God

Failure to recognize or utilize the Holy Spirit

Lack of accountability, lack of an accountability partner

Going solo, failure to establish relationships with mature believers

Failure to integrate Biblical knowledge into the fabric of everyday living

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Sermon Series by Dr. Jonathan Schaeffer, Senior Pastor, Grace Church, Middleburg Heights, Ohio

Bible Verses through multiple Biblical Internet Sites

About the Author and the Author's Mission

I had not originally planned on doing a segment about myself, so as not to detract from this message. I was urged by a valued Christian consultant to include a preface which some readers find important in order to establish a personal relationship with this writer. It is my preference however, that people establish a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. This message is not my own but that contained in the Bible, only reorganized in a format to help individuals obtain a positive resolution with their life problems of trauma, depression, anxiety, anger, resentment, damaged self-esteem; marital, family, and relational conflicts; sex, alcohol/drug abuse, overeating, pathological gambling, and other life dominating problems usually referred to as addictions. It is my prayer to lead Christians who are unfamiliar with the Bible, or who have not been obedient to the Word of God, to find the right path. It is my prayer that this writing helps you to establish hope, direction, and victory in your recovery.

My mission is to assist individuals suffering from emotional and behavioral problems to seek Biblical wisdom, to accept Jesus as their Lord and Savior, and to find God's purpose and direction for their lives.

I would like to hear from you regarding the impact of this writing on your personal journey. Please send any comments to **Seth Nieding LISW, LICDC at bibicaltherapyseth@gmail.com**

Education

Bachelor's degree in sociology and psychology from Miami University in Oxford, Ohio

Master's degree in clinical social work from Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio

Three-year postgraduate certificate in gestalt therapy from the Gestalt Institute in Cleveland, Ohio

Biblical studies certificate from Moody Bible Institute, extension program of Northeast Ohio

Clinical Credentials

Licensed Independent Social Worker, LISW, State of Ohio

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Instructional Experience

Case Western Reserve University, School of Applied Social Sciences, Adjunct Professor/Field Instructor

Case Western Reserve University, Department of Family Medicine, Field instructor

Professional Career

Past Therapist/Supervisor, Family Service Association of Lorain County, Ohio

Past Director of Chemical Dependency Services, Lakeland Institute, Lorain Community Hospital, Lorain, Ohio

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Book Reviews for Biblical Therapy Workbook, Your Personal Journal

Pastor Joel Zaborowski, Associate Director of Leadership Development for Sonlife

This is a great workbook. Biblical Therapy Workbook, Your Personal Journal, is a great discipling tool that every believer should go through. The style of the workbook is very personal. I love the Put On-Throw Off emphasis and the recurring acknowledgment of the sovereignty of God.