

GROW IN GRACE

NEWSLETTER

Volume 39, No.42, October 15, 2013 / Southside Baptist Church & Christian School / P.O. Box 1594 / 1028 South Water Avenue, Gallatin, TN 37066 (615) 452-5951 / **The Grow in Grace Newsletter**— a weekly Bible Study, plus news notes— designed first and foremost for members and those attending services at Southside Church... sent forth to aid one and all, (including friends far and wide who receive the Newsletter), in the experience of 2 Peter 3:18. *"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our LORD and Saviour JESUS CHRIST. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen."*

BE HEALED! MODEL THE WAY OF HEALING TO OTHERS!

Around 1960, a patient gave Christian witness of faith in Jesus to his medical doctor. By the amazing grace of God, the doctor was born again. The doctor was totally unfamiliar with the Bible. However, as a new born Christian, from the very first day of being in Christ, this doctor testifies that [I], "... poured my life into learning what the Word of God had to say to me as a husband and a father, then putting it into practice as best I knew how." For two years his wife and daughters were unresponsive to the gospel and his new walk of following and serving Jesus. The doctor further testifies, **"I have always been grateful for that heartbreaking experience of prolonged rejection, for this drove me to the Word of God to learn exactly what I should do. I learned that it was my responsibility to love my wife the way Christ loved me. Many times I did not feel like loving her, for rejection, even quiet, courteous rejection, is hard to handle. BUT I DID IT OUT OF OBEDIENCE TO GOD. I found that as I put the principles of the Bible into practice and as I learned how to really love my wife, this became pleasure as well as responsibility. OBEDIENCE TOOK ON THE BRIGHT COLORS OF JOY!** As I slowly became the husband God had designed me to be, my wife began to respond with love just as God had planned and promised. When she trusted the LORD JESUS CHRIST as her personal Savior, it was the real beginning of our own love affair as God had planned it from ages past." (Dr. Ed Wheat, author of *Love Life for Every Married Couple*)

Many Christian homes and churches are falling apart. Destructive, unresolved conflict abound— often leading to divorce, church splits, etc. Many of those in the middle of such chaos and hurt already have what they believe to be a sure solution: ***"If only 'THEY' (the other people in the conflict!) would change— all could be healed!"***

***** BUT ASK YOURSELF:** "What are the circumstances and who are the people **I can change?** What are the circumstances and who are the people **I cannot change?**"

1. **Circumstances:** There are circumstances over which we have NO CONTROL. There are circumstances we can positively or negatively impact by the choices, decisions, attitudes, and/or actions which we personally take. Thus, it is critically important that we focus on the need for godly responses to circumstances and people.

2. **People:** **We can positively or negatively influence other people; but we cannot change them!** We cannot control their attitudes, words, or deeds, etc. However, if we are Christians — we can experience God's enabling grace so that we are personally being transformed and changed more and more into Christlikeness— regardless of what 'they/he or she' is or is not doing! (This is exactly what Dr. Ed Wheat's testimony demonstrates!)

3. Marriage is an important setting where we will experience and live out the above realities! (The same is true of 'church-life'... but our focus in this article will be husbands and wives.)

***** For over 40 years I have been privileged to engage in discipleship-counseling** with many couples. At the same time, I have been a 'fellow pilgrim' seeking to personally apply the Biblical principles which I shared with others. I have witnessed many sin-wrecked marriages healed— to God be the glory! I have witnessed many others proceed into destruction.

In Every Case, the Following has been True:

1. ***I never met an 'innocent party!'*** In other words, I never found a marriage where either the husband or the wife was 100% the blame for their troubled, wrecked, or hopeless marriage. In every case they both had faults, failures, and blame.

2. ***In every case where the couple DID NOT experience healing but continued down the road to further destruction, the following was always true:***

One or both insisted on justifying their anger, bitterness, and/or resentment. They refused to forgive. They continued their 'finger pointing' at the faults (real or imagined!) of their spouse. Moreover, because of the real or imagined failures of their spouse— they also justified their own refusal to obey God's Word.

In other words, they would each protest: "The reason I do not love my WIFE with Christ's redemptive, forgiving, sacrificing, serving, unselfish love is because she does not submit; and/or because of her failure to do this or that; and/or because of her moral failure, etc."

OR: "The reason I do not submit to my husband is because of all his failures, etc."

By pointing to their spouse's failures— they FELT JUSTIFIED in rebelling against the clear words which God had directed to their own behavior and attitudes.

3. **MOREOVER, THOSE WHO CONTINUED in failure consistently refused to deal with their own heart needs. Instead, they looked for sympathy.** They would speak negatively against their spouse to others. They refused to embrace their God-ordained responsibilities. They refused to walk in the steps of Jesus. Some would even '**demonize**' (present them far worse than they really were) **their spouse** to others, as they sought to hide or justify their own sinful attitudes and actions.

4. ***IN CONTRAST, in every case where HEALING in the marriage developed, the following was true:*** The healing usually started with just the husband or with just the wife. The healing often started with the most 'offended' party. Either the husband or the wife embraced this mind-set: ***"From the Word of God I choose to discover and obey my God-given responsibilities; and I will do them as acts of worship to Jesus. I will leave the results with God! What my spouse is or is not doing does not change my call to live to please Jesus so as to be a channel for His supernatural life!"*** Sometimes, both husband and wife started down this glorious road simultaneously; but usually it is just one of them.

***** IF I AM TO BE on the HEALING WAY,** it matters not who is MOST to blame. It only matters that I deal with MY personal failures; AND that I yield to the Word of God and embrace my God-given responsibilities. **Reality:**

1. ***Unless a couple submits to Biblical counsel, they will 'see' the opposite of reality! Because 'everyone proclaims their own goodness'— (openly admitted or not), the husband will place most of the blame on his wife and the wife will place most on him. With this strategy, hell will 'freeze over' before such ones run out of ammunition to shoot at one another!***

2. ***In contrast, by submitting to the Biblical HEALING WAYS OF GOD, each will simply deal with their own contributions to their marriage breakdown as if their own failures were 100%... while forgiving the failures of their spouse. In other words, each one must deal exclusively with their own sins of commission, sins of omission, sins of attitudes, etc... and begin to fully embrace God given responsibilities; and leave their spouse's failures (real or imagined!) with God!***

THE HEALING WAYS OF GOD IN MARRIAGE: Embrace them and BE HEALED! Embrace them and be re-kindled in love! **Embrace them** and be strengthened with a God-given 'Hedge' of Protection from outside attack! **Embrace them** and MODEL Jesus to a watching world! **Embrace them** and MODEL and TEACH them to a needy world! **Embrace them** model Christ to your children/grand children! **Embrace them and MODEL and proclaim these ways of God** to any who attempt to seek sympathy from you as they UNLOAD ON YOU the real or imagined failures of their spouse.

******* What follows is just the pure Word of God, unfolding foundational attitudes and actions for husbands and wives to carry out one toward the other.

(Likewise, read and apply these Scriptures in situations in the church, at work, etc.) Faith responses to God's Word will yield miracle fruit! Excuses, rejection and/or rebellion against the pure Word of God will yield increasing heartache and coming judgment.

1. WIVES:

Ephesians 5:22-24— "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. 24 Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything." **Ephesians 5:33b**— "... and the wife see that she reverences her husband." **Colossians 3:18**— "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as it is fit in the Lord."

1 Peter 3:1-6— "In the same way, you wives must accept the authority of your husbands. Then, even if some [husbands] refuse to obey the Good News, your godly lives will speak to them without any words. They will be won over by observing your pure and reverent lives. Don't be concerned about the outward beauty of fancy hairstyles, expensive jewelry, or beautiful clothes.

You should clothe yourselves instead with the beauty that comes from within, the unfading beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is so precious to God. This is how the holy women of old made themselves beautiful. They trusted God and accepted the authority of their husbands. For instance, Sarah obeyed her husband, Abraham, and called him her master. You are her daughters when you do what is right without fear of what your husbands might do." (New Living Translation)

2. HUSBANDS:

Ephesians 5:25-31— "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; 26 That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, 27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. 28 So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loved his wife loved himself. 29 For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourished and cherished it, even as the Lord the church: 30 for we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. 31 For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."

Ephesians 5:33a— "... nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself..."

Colossians 3:19— "Husbands, love your wives, and be not bitter against them."

1 Peter 3:7— “Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.”

3. “Where the rubber meets the road!”

I must not only read these Scriptures, I must APPLY them in faith. **Faith is acting upon the Word of God in obedience.** Faith that is not expressed with obedience is not Christian faith. Jesus is very clear when He speaks: “And why call ye me, LORD, LORD, and do not the things I say?” (Luke 6:46) “If ye love me, keep my commandments.” (John 14:15) True Christian faith issues forth the fruit of obedience to the Word of God by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. **REALITY:** In the quoted verses ALMIGHTY GOD does not allow for any 'loop-holes!' He gives no place for excuses. **My required loving-faith-obedience to Jesus as LORD is not altered or lessened just because my spouse may not be obeying his/her God-ordained responsibilities.**

Real or imagined, we sometimes think/feel that our dearest loved ones, (especially a husband or a wife), are **majorly mistreating us.** If 'they' or if 'he' or if 'she' would just straighten up, our lives would be just fine. But since 'they don't/won't do right' we often feel justified in our responses on anger, resentment, bitterness, criticism, depression, etc.

REALITY: SUCH FEELINGS AND CONFESSIONS ARE DECEPTIONS FROM THE FLESH AND SATAN! Loved ones may indeed mistreat us, even persecute; and so we have sorrow and pain and tears. However, none of that has the power to steal JOY or HOPE or to cause any of the above negative responses in us or from us!

4. In reality JESUS has given us an opportunity to manifest life transforming miracles by heeding and obeying the following Scriptures:

Matthew 5:44-48— “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; 45 That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. 46 For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? 47 And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so? 48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” **Note: Since this is God's standard for how to treat enemies, how we are to treat family could not be less!**

ROMANS 12:14, 17-21— “Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. 17 Recompense to no man evil for evil... 18 If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. 19 Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place

unto wrath {Leave the field clear for God's wrath!}: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord. 20 Therefore if thine enemy hunger, feed him; if he thirst, give him drink: for in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire on his head. 21 **Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good.**"

***** Walking in faith-obedience to these Scriptures by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit will yield much good fruit!**

1. **Life will be simple!** For you only have one thing do to— LIVE TO PLEASE JESUS! Keep yourself in the love of God, in the steps of Jesus, and leave the results to Him!

2. In spite of tears and pain, **your life will have joy, rejoicing, and song.** 'He', 'She' and/or 'They' will not be able to shut your mouth from praise. They can't steal your joy. They can't cause you to be angry, resentful, bitter or depressed. **They can't rile up any aspect of your Galatians 5:19-21 'FLESH POTENTIAL!'**

[The works of the flesh are: ¹⁹Now the doings (practices) of the flesh are clear (obvious): they are immorality, impurity, indecency, ²⁰Idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, anger (ill temper), selfishness, divisions (dissensions), party spirit (factions, sects with peculiar opinions, heresies), ²¹Envy, drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you beforehand, just as I did previously, that those who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.]

3. **WHAT 'HE/SHE/THEY' can do and often do is to give you an opportunity to respond in the Spirit or to respond in the flesh— to manifest Galatians 5:19-21 (the bondage of the flesh) or Galatians 5:22-25 (the fruit of the Holy Spirit)!**

a. If we respond in the Flesh—that's our choice to resist, grieve, and quench the Holy Spirit. It is our choice to please and listen to our carnal flesh and satan himself. If such is one's continuing lifestyle— the kingdom of God will not be inherited! (Gal. 5:21; 1 Cor. 6:9-11; Eph. 5:3-6)

b. When we respond in the Spirit— such is the Christian's responsibility, privilege, choice, and power by the indwelling Holy Spirit; and God gets all the glory for His previous and present grace!

When we respond in the Spirit with faith-obedience to the pure Word of God we are able to live in unhindered fellowship with God. Moreover, like our LORD JESUS CHRIST and like saints throughout the ages our lives will be especially marked with joy and rejoicing and with a supernatural resilience!

RESILIENCE: The ability to bounce back after being pressed or stretched; the ability to recover strength, spirit, good humor! Don't miss this: 2 Cor. 4:7-18.

***** BEWARE! FEAR INIQUITY!** One definition of iniquity is 'GROSS INJUSTICE.' The most serious **GROSS INJUSTICE** ever committed on earth is to say that **Almighty God is wrong in any decision, judgment or command He makes.** Now, we may say, "O, I would never think or say such a horrible thing as that!" Yet, that is precisely what we do whenever we excuse or cover our sin! **When we cover our own sin, excuse our sin, or rationalize our sin, or blame others for our sin, or fail to agree with God that our sin is sin— we turn that sin into iniquity.** Adam's sin of eating the forbidden fruit 'turned to iniquity' when he said in Gen 3:12 ..., "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me..." **Realized or not, that *blame-shift*, that *smokescreen* was a subtle accusation that God had mismanaged his life. Adam was really saying that his rebellion was God's fault!**

Verbally or 'under my breath'— if I criticize and/or back-bite others, in reality I am blaming the good providence of God who permitted their 'wrongs' to be dumped on me! I am refusing to walk in humility. I am refusing to walk in the steps of Jesus, who responded to wrong done to Him with, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do!" **Moreover, when focused on wrong done against me, I am not focused on my God-given responsibilities!** (See earlier pages for Scriptures which unfold some of those responsibilities!)

When I deny and hide and justify my carnal responses by pointing to 'their' failures— I may convince a whole army to sympathize with me.

However, in **GOD'S SIGHT,** I am adding iniquity to my own sin.

***** HOW DANGEROUS IS INIQUITY?** Matthew 7:22-23— **"Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? And in thy name have cast out devils? And in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity."**

Reality: A lifestyle of blame-shifting, murmuring against and/or accusing others gives alarming evidence of a lack of true Christianity!

Psalm 38:1, 4— HOWEVER, BEWARE: Even a real Believer may be heavy laden with iniquity. For months King David excused his sin and refused to repent. However, ultimately he cried out, "O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure. **For mine iniquities** are gone over mine head: as a heavy burden they are too heavy for me." For quite some time, **David had hid/excused his sin.** But praise God, there came a day when David was troubled by his own iniquity. Hope, Forgiveness, JOY and usefulness in God's Kingdom revived! (Ps. 32, 51) **LET EACH OF US diligently SEEK to see if**

we have covered or made any excuse for any sin. Let us join with David in praying, "**For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.**" (Ps. 38:18)

So be it in each of our lives! Grace to all! James Bell