DISMANTLING THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL WITHIN SO LOVE CAN THRIVE

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

This book or map is written in response to questions I had accumulated over the years as I struggled with sin strongholds that I wanted gone. I confessed my struggles to spiritual directors, priests, and those I trusted with my baggage over many years, but none had the necessary experience to fully deal with my issues or had lived with as hard a heart or confused mind like I had. They had never walked in my shoes. Yet, I was open to the wisdom that came my way and this helped me to navigate life until the contents of this book were revealed to me.

Ultimately I landed up embracing God and my Bible, and decided to let them speak to me. I did not have immediate revelations that answered all my questions all at once. But I began to journey with God with Him using triggers such as awkward and uncomfortable circumstance and people, to show me what was in my heart so that I could work on cleaning my life from the inside out with His guidance.

I began to discover that my vocabulary, understanding, and practice of the Christian basics was weak and that led to me searching for and getting revelations on how to repent from my strongholds of sin, my addictive behaviors, and how to change my negative unloving attitudes to become a more positive person with Jesus' help, promises, teachings and truth found in the Scriptures. I learned how to process my emotions and baggage within and learned how to navigate my conflicts healthily. The "how to do this part" was not immediately obvious to me for the longest time even though I was a serious Christian who had gone through many serious trials that had made my faith stronger.

Having said this, many people accept that in this life, they will never go to church with everything right in their souls, that they have supposedly arrived, that they got the package or are the correct package, or keep all the rules; nor do they suppose that anyone belongs for such reasons. None of us are the package: only Jesus is. Fact is, we sin, sometimes grossly, sometimes repeatedly. If one is honest, one realizes that even with cleaning up the outside, there are often many unresolved issues or sin habits that we likely don't have the desire, commitment, energy or know how to overcome. And we often come to accept that we will focus

on one or two issues in our life times because we don't know how to start cleaning up even a little of the stuff in our hearts that we feel guilty about, because we don't understand what is happening in our hearts that causes us to sin habitually.

But one can learn to conquer together with Jesus many sin strongholds in one's life through His promises, teachings, commands, authority, power, truths, and presence; and I want to share the outline on how to do just that with the reader in this book. I go for grace when receiving communion, I don't earn it by being in a state of grace. Being in a state of grace is good, but confessing sin and working on repentance so love will blossom is more important to God than supposedly being prepared to receive communion because one is abstaining from all visible sins just prior to communion. A thorough cleaning job is better than cosmetic changes in most people's eyes; I think God agrees. However, if we can repent from serious sin, we should do so to restore us to a state of grace.

I need to say that the invitation to change written about in this book isn't based on deep mysteries, or complex doctrines, but on the basic teachings of the Good News of Jesus Christ that all too often are forgotten about soon after conversion, discounted as "that is too easy to be true" or are jettisoned as only being important for "baby-Christians". The reason we often don't make progress and don't grow into maturity as Christians is because we think we know better and have moved onto greener pastures. Real change comes slowly and only comes to those who don't give up, who do search for how to care for and love people, and don't discount or despise the simplicity of the Good News as taught by Jesus.

As with all messages that make promises, there is a warning with this one. When one is set free by a truth in an area that may have plagued one for decades, the impulse is often to carry the truth to an extreme, get proud, and start to judge and hurt people because of our twist on it. Church history unfortunately has witnessed many clergy trying to "muzzle truths" that "seem dangerous" and "threatening" to the status quo. Whatever the place of shepherds in the church is, and they do have a place, if one can't embrace truth one embraces fear and "the tree of knowledge of good and evil". When we encounter a new truth we usually don't grasp all of its aspects or properties immediately and need to wrestle with it until we understand its limitations, and its freeing power. We need the freedom to make mistakes and that means sometimes taking things too far. Without this freedom to make mistakes we just won't learn and grow in the freedom to love or mature.

The strongholds I speak about in this book make up the structures erected in our hearts over time, and can fittingly be called "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" within, and needs to be replaced with LOVE. We will learn some tools to do just that in this book.

Here is an overview of this book:

- In chapter two, I give a description or outline of the methodology God gave me so I could enter a deeper transforming-friendship-with-Him like He promised me a long time ago. This chapter shows what to expect from God and what energy and humility is needed for real change.
- In chapter three, I talk about the "sin nature" and "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" and how they differ on their impact in our lives. Understanding this helps us to choose our battles wisely.
- In chapter four, I start to describe how to dismantle "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" in our lives, give what key Scriptures are used to drive the methodology, and give some definitions of Christian jargon that make transformation possible in this life. Without them little but cosmetic change is possible. In the next five-chapters I attempt to show the connections between the different parts belonging to "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" which is intended to help us pray through them more thoroughly and help to dismantle them in the different contexts of our lives:
- In chapter five, I expand my discussion on the process of transformation, by talking about broken relationship with God and our search for peace in the wrong places which is where "the tree of knowledge of good and evil's" life deceptively comes from.
- In chapter six, I explain how to heal fear and its related vices which are a part of "the of knowledge of good and evil". I talk about healing self-pity, worry, pressure, cowardice, and conceit which are all fruits of the tree.
- In chapter seven, I explain how to kill the stronghold of pride from the tree, and grow humility. Renewing the mind with healthy truths and thinking is key stopping the tree's growth. Arrogance, pressure, and using force are also related fruits of this tree and are discussed.
- In chapter eight, I explain how to kill lust and the related vices of sloth and gluttony from "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" and how to grow healthy habits instead.
- In chapter nine, I explain how to kill envy and related vices such as judging, anger, addictions, moral policing, greed, and selfishness from the "tree of knowledge on good and evil" and how to grow generosity instead.
- In chapter ten, I summarize what was discussed in the previous chapters and deal with some trouble shooting tips when we get stuck.
- In chapter eleven, I give four personal successful examples of how to work and pray certain parts of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil"

so, that the strongholds spoken about can be dealt death blows in one's life.
- In chapter twelve, I present an alternative tree to replace "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" whose source is God and is accessed through a humble faith relationship through His Son: Jesus.

There are many graphic and coarse examples of strongholds in this book. They are brutal, ugly, selfish, proud, arrogant, mean and often angry…and they are mostly mine. When I believed the devils' lies about myself and my relationships over many years in many contexts a big mess resulted. I stuffed the bad energy that came from me believing the lies for years with me not liking it and not knowing what to do with it until God gave me the keys found in this book. Lies usually sound good when we believe them, but the consequences of doing so are often horrible. Lies always have catches.

Chapter Two

METHODOLOGY

Having a vocabulary for inner emotions/ attitudes/ and energy that are unwholesome is very important to being able to diagnose, pray more strategically, and to destroy the sin-strongholds or "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" within us. I have developed this vocabulary in this book. I know that I have had "really" bad energy within me often, and the vocabulary in this book has helped me to deal with it. Also, there have been times when my energy has been so bad, with me not knowing where it came from, that to deal with it I had to feel the energy and put the emotions/ attitudes into words as I connected with it, and this revealed to me the applicable vocabulary which enabled me to pray through it as outline in this book until it was killed and replaced with more positive, clean, holy, healthy energy and attitude.

To annihilate all the bad energy, or kill the pull towards sin completely in this life is not possible. We can destroy the strongholds of bad attitudes though, but we will always have the flesh to deal with. It's natural to feel, experience, and agree with it to some degree when confronted with stuff we do not expect or when others make requests we have not counted on. Trying to kill it "all" is not wise, is very unhealthy, and comes from a perfectionistic mindset. Perfectionism should not be worshipped. It is unhealthy to want to be too righteous. When we expect too much from ourselves we will expect it too much from others and make their lives as miserable as ours.

Canonized "Saints" were never perfect spiritually in this life. They are often entrepreneurs, or clear thinkers in certain areas of spirituality that the hierarchy

esteemed. They were very developed in one or two areas, but not in all other aspects of life. I thought I was advanced spiritually until I got married. Watching movies about people who were canonized gives me the impression of blandness, dryness, misguided idealism, and wrongly putting people on pedestals. These "Saints" are special but no more than anyone else. Aiming to be perfect like these people "supposedly" were, is not wise. We need balance. If one struggles with a stronghold of pride, then the tools in this book together with relationship with God in my opinion can help. But don't expect to kill the "flesh" outright. If we pretend the sinful nature does not exist, it will come back to bite us.

A long time ago I was made aware of this promise:

> God grants His grace to the Humble,
> but opposes the proud.[1]

It is found in both the Old and New Testaments. By itself, if we do not know our own pride, and what healthy humility looks like, then this promise won't bear any good fruit in our lives. But if we know what pride looks like inside of us, and what true humility is (and how to get humbler), then we will have a chance to milk this verse for what it is worth. I went through years of not knowing my own pride, and the little I saw I did not know how to mortify, and landed up stuffing most of it. But when I started to seriously pray for humility and started to search for wisdom that could Kill the stronghold of pride, then God started to give me revelations, and I started to see victories in my battles against my pride. This book is the result of that search.

The place of the commandments of Jesus and their relationship to the Old Testament (OT) Law play a huge role in having victory in the battles against the strongholds of pride and related vices or attitudes. The OT Law was a minimum standard of behavior between one another, and between humankind and God. The commands of Jesus are higher than the OT Law and are altruistic in nature and submitting to Jesus' commands in grace will inevitably help us to fulfill the OT Law. The OT Law is very passive, and negative in nature compared to the teachings and commands from Jesus found in the New Testament (NT) Scriptures. Focusing on the high goal of love: "to do to others what we would want done to us" is key to victory. Too often the "thou shall not" - Laws found in the OT are reacted to with "what is in it for us?", or with rebellion and the desire to do the opposite.

The OT Law said to not steal or covet; Jesus said to give freely to the poor. The OT Law said don't murder; Jesus said to love our enemies. The OT Law said to sacrifice cattle, bulls and sheep to God; Jesus called us to be living sacrifices. The OT Law

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[1] James 4:6

said to commit no adultery; Jesus says to love our spouses as ourselves. The OT Law said to not worship lifeless idols, Jesus invited us to true life for free. The OT Law said to honor our parents; Jesus said to take them into our homes, help them, and care for them. The OT Law said to not work on the Sabbath; Jesus said it is healthy to do good on the Sabbath. The OT Law said not to use the Lord's Name in vain; Jesus says we get to call God our Father. The OT Law said, "an eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth", but Jesus said use non-violence to spread love. The OT Law said bear no false witnesses; Jesus said to speak the truth in love, believe the best about people, and not to judge or condemn people. The OT Law said to give a percentage; whereas Jesus asks us to be generous just like He is.

Holding onto Laws, to somehow let them save us from sin, will inevitably suck the life, breathe, energy, and joy out of us. However, little "t"-truths set us free like medicines, but if we hold onto these truths too tightly, rigidly and religiously they too also start to suck the life out of us. We only need the BIG "T"-Truth: Jesus Christ; who will supply the right little "t"-truths at the right times with the right touch and energy, when we are listening for them, and open to His grace that is upon grace.

The Law was made for those who sin...by that I mean the Law only points out our sins. The Law can't save us from our sins. Jesus came to save us from our sins.

Once one gets healthy in an area because the corresponding little "t"-truth has done its job, then we don't focus on it anymore until we need it again. We don't keep taking a certain cough medicine when we no longer have a cold. So, our focus and attention ought to be redirected to Jesus and His grace not the little "t"-truths that have set us free in certain areas.

It is about the grace giver, and His grace flows into us naturally if we don't block it. And if we don't block it, then it will flow into our lives and, also out of us into all those people we are called to love: both friends and enemies.

When we see things, and have wonderful insights it is too easy to get preachy. I know that many times God has spoken to me indirectly through people, but often it does not clue into my mind that what was spoken applies to me. I think this true of others too. The Holy Spirit is a far better convincer than we are. He does not do so to make us feel and remain guilty, shamed and condemned, but to have a change of heart, and to joyously go our way thereafter. Correcting people when we have wood in our eyes (think: our consciences) is hypocritical, un loving, hurtful, and proud and should be abandoned. Thankfully God loves us so much that He does all in His power to convince us to choose healthy attitudes instead. We are not moral policemen.

When we pray, “God, please help ‘so and so’ be MORE LIKE ME in this area of love or humility” we are being proud and judgmental. We ought not compare and put others down and attempt to raise ourselves up in prayer or out of it. None of us have arrived. When we do grow in love and humility we give glory to God. Let’s not pretend that we are paragons of virtue, have it all together, and are masters of virtue. We all have gaps in our thinking, reasoning, understanding, and philosophies; and we all fall short in our actions to love and be completely humble in every area of our lives…all of us to some degree major on minor issues, and we all minor on many major issues. We skip over stuff that ought to be done when people are not looking because we think we can get away with it. So many of us have higher opinions of ourselves than are warranted. We cannot judge or condemn others, the Sermon on the Mount teaches us to not judge or condemn others no matter how informed we think we are.

The tools outlined here are basic (but not always easy to honestly use). Using them in relationship with Jesus through prayer can make us spiritually healthy. But we ought not think we have mastered humility once a victory or string of victories is achieved.

When the Bible calls for intense-accurate-honest-confession-prayer it is not asking the child of God to view God’s throne room as a COURT-OF-LAW. It is asking us to look at His throne room as a family room. The difference is that the LAW-MENTALITY-ATMOSPHERE deals with not wanting to go to Hell (which can be a very selfish preoccupation for some), whereas the FAMILY-ROOM-ATMOSPHERE-ATTITUDE has to do with admitting how we hurt people, did wrong to them, upset God, but more than that: it is where we seek healing in our attitudes/ character/ hurts/ relationships, and where we want forgiveness in our lives and for those who did the hurting. This isn’t done to bring about shame/ humiliation/ fear/ self-pity/ anger/ judgmental ism/ or condemnation but is diagnostic in nature and is meant to bring healing to self-wounds and relationship-wounds through God’s grace and loving touch. LAW-stuff does not do this. LAW stuff just cares whether you are guilty or not and what your sentence or penance will be.

The LAW-approach seems only concerned about heaven and hell whereas the GRACE-approach does that but much more. Grace is into restorative justice like healing in the here and now of the hurting self, broken relationships and hurting people. Grace is more holistic and closer to the Father heart of God. God is not a cold judge but a restorer.

The Law-approach has no humor, joy, joking, freshness, life, imagination, and creativity associated with it because it is only concerned about the outcome. The grace-approach does embrace humor, joy, warmth, joking, freshness, life, imagination, and creativity, because it is not a “heaven vs. hell” battle but an

“unhealthy approach vs. a healthy approach” battle to life. There is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus. The way we talk to God is the way we will talk with others. So, changing our attitudes in prayer will give deeper intimacy with God as well as more warmth towards people.

Pain by itself does not make one humble or heal one. When pain is with us, our reactions to it can be negative, poor-me, bitter, proud-envious, self-pitying, judgmental, angry, hostile, rebellious, hateful, and resentful with cries of unfairness. But God can use pain to prepare us for healing if we choose to humble ourselves in its presence. It is faith in Jesus that brings spiritual healing and cleansing from sins through spiritual medicines and it is faith that helps us get through the pain that accompanies the surgery He wants to perform on us. We just need to know how to access these and we do so through praying God’s promises found in Holy Scripture in strategic ways by not letting self-pity rob us of the treasures awaiting us. Truth sets us free. Jesus is our Savior, not pain. Pain can alert us to the need of a Savior. Pain happens when Jesus pokes around to bring spiritual healing. But it is the Savior of the world: Jesus, who heals, forgives and cleanses, not necessarily the pain! It is how we navigate the pain that can bring blessings. Let's not give up when seeking spiritual healing! It starts with prayer that says God is good and a rewarder of those who seek Him. Seeking God with self-pity is unhealthy, seeking God to get rid of self-pity is healthy.

The suggestions, promises and truths in this book should be viewed as prescriptions and medicines to get healthy. One needs to be serious about them, try to understand them, but to not forget the face of Jesus, His warmth, kindness, patience, love, compassion, and tears. He is with you all the way. Keep your sense of humor. There is joy in the journey.

It is so easy to acquire sour attitudes, but wholesome ones seem so much harder to get. But we are the only ones who can change our attitudes, and we can do this with Jesus help in prayer the instant we realize our attitudes (and emotions) are sour, wrong, sinful, proud, envious, selfish, rebellious, full of self-pity, lustful, slothful, unloving…etc.

The journey to wholeness is a marathon, not a sprint. There are periods where we encounter all sorts of chaos, pain, random acts, senseless suffering, and generally stuff that confuses us, and makes us question the goodness of God and can start us feeling plenty of self-pity. Only by focusing on the goal, and focusing on the promises of God will we be able to persevere through the mess. Without a goal, or a focus we are open to the lies of the devil who will do whatever is in his power to torment us, draw us away, and drive us away from the straight and narrow path before us.

“The Expanded Twelve Steps” from this Website show how to forgive, make amends, and heal certain areas in our spiritual lives like some addictions to substances. But they can’t stop us from the addiction to judging or some kinds of unhealthy motivated anger. This book attempts to point us in these directions; and more.

The book is dogmatically systematic… but don’t follow it that way at all. Stay open to the Holy Trinity speaking to you in your humanity, and inviting you to fellowship and the freedom the true God gives. Don't look at the medicines in this book as cold algorithms meant to get the ideal package for life. Don't go to that place of “scraping at the bottom of the barrel” to somehow muscle your way through to freedom. Try to refrain from coming from a place of pressure, and dryness. The pressure-driven, clutching and robot-like approach will hamper the Holy Spirit’s ability to set you free more quickly.

Please don’t think that only the suggested prayers in this book drive positive change…JESUS is the ultimate bondage breaker and relationship with Him and answers to our prayers said in humility help to set us free; but also, we need to renew our minds with His healthy truth so our stinking thinking will be done away with, because stinking thinking is knotted with pride, foolishness, and stagnation.

All the vices [or attitudes]: pride, envy, lust, sloth, gluttony, greed, selfishness…etc. promise stuff they can’t give. Undoing the “lies” the devils promise through them requires renewing our minds. Searching, and not letting anything get us bogged down in the path to freedom and winning the battles that grow us up into bearing the fruit of the Spirit as God promises.

Truth is so very important. Saying certain ideas/ stories/ imaginations from the world that people see as truth that are lies aren’t unhealthy or don't matter is unwise. That does not mean that we ought to go around trying to correct people when they assert stuff that the Bible says is unhealthy. One needs to use healthy wisdom and be non-judgmental in one’s relating style. But we need to stand our ground against these unhealthy ideas or weapons meant to harm people.

In this book, very specific categories of sin will be pointed out that make up the roots, branches, and fruits of the old life: “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” that will be shown to be connected. Being able to pray through them to God in a logical and systematic way does help to dismantle old sin structures/ strongholds/ habits from within, and helps to establish new outlets for grace to bear love in our relational lives.

This book has many tools that together make up a strategy to conquer sin, but please don’t trust in them alone, ignore God, the body of Christ and the people God brings into our lives. God is always the center of life, healing, direction, hope,

humility, and love but we need relationships to remain real and to practice humility and love in joy.

When we do confess our sins to God as part of the processes described in this book, I have found from experience that the peace granted through forgiveness ought "really" be savored, reflected on, appreciated, and accepted as gifts made possible because of Jesus' crucifixion and resurrection. This gift of peace stabilizes us, calms us down, and allows God's grace to flow through us more perfectly. So, don't rush or intellectualize the process of being forgiven…God's felt presence is very real. In following this wisdom, we will eventually get in touch with the joy of our salvation. I strongly encourage the reader to not abandon the emotional aspects when asked to confess in all the different contexts found in this book.

Generally, the process of inner-transformation, described in this book, involves the following Principles to be practiced daily in all our affairs:

a) Pursue a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ,
b) Ceaselessly pray [will define this] (this enables one to find one's bearings),
c) Ask the Holy Spirit to heal one's mind and heart,
d) stop doing it all by ourselves, stop pushing bad-stuff down or shoving it under the carpet, and use "I"-statements [will define this] to process one's feelings to move away from judging towards truth telling,
e) Forgive those who hurt you and deal healthily with your anger, feelings, and confusion,
f) Accurately, gently, and genuinely confess all one's sins as much as possible in the moment to God,
g) Give up pretending that one doesn't have the wounds one has, i.e. be honest and choose to humble oneself,
h) Search for love out of caring; don't wait around for it,
i) Repent in prayer [will define this] of one's sins as much as is humanly possible,
j) Renewing one's mind (i.e. exposing believed lies and toxic thinking by replacing them with healthy relational truth),
k) Throw out one's idols if any,
l) Invite God (into where He belongs) in one's own life daily
m) Submit to God and resist the devil [will define this],
n) When the strongholds are killed, and we feel tempted in an area, then there are two-things we can do: Either (1) we simply say directly to the "sin nature": "I accept you, but I don't need you right now" and then invite Jesus into our empty space, or (2) confess the wrongness of satisfying our thirst for peace with an idol, then redirect our thirst for

peace at the place of attachment to the idol back to Jesus, and then receive Jesus' peace through faith.[2]

o) Live by grace "thinking"; and not by Law "thinking", and
p) Live for and give oneself to something greater than one self out of caring obedience to Jesus commands, truth, teaching, and promises, i.e. practice the golden rule in the context of grace.

These spiritual acts together will help one to get healthier spiritually and to bear the fruit of the Spirit. When I say I "will define…" please don't gloss over the definitions when given as without them this book has no power to change anyone. The Sixteen-Principles above will be discussed in depth in this book in the context of dismantling "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" within. I will attempt to explain my "take" on these basics of the Christian life (that I did not understand well or did not know the importance of for a very long time) that need to be practiced daily to remain free in love for God, self and one's neighbors. They are the basics to growing up into maturity, deep fellowship with people, and intimacy with God. They are done through God's grace…not self-righteous-self-effort.

When we are renewing our minds, confusion will be a visitor. That means we need to find our bearings often because we need some clarity of mind, along with embracing healthy clean energy to process our divided loyalties, emotions, attitudes, beliefs, thinking, understanding, and knowledge when it comes to our relationships to make progress spiritually and relationally. We do this in prayer, and not through analyzing.

Renewing our minds means learning to see people, God, and ourselves positively, healthily, and warmly. Sour, negative, judgmental attitudes can and should be jettisoned in our relationships by further embracing the "golden rule" with grace as that something higher, and the other commands from the New Testament. In getting free from our negative sinful attitudes as outlined here, we will have a foretaste of Heaven on earth. But we need to accept life as bumpy, and people as perfectly imperfect too.

When it comes to any lie; know that we believe them because we trust their source, or foolishly see them as true because they have just enough truth to sway us. Asking the Holy Spirit to heal our hearts and minds, asking Him to show us what needs to be jettisoned, and to lead us into the truth, and believing He will is key to finding renewal. And then to focus on loving others and at the same time

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[2] Note: (1) and (2) don't work when we have just been mean or insensitive to someone and have not repented in prayer from it. First repent, then apply (1) and (2) when needed.

listening for little “t”-truths to guide and set us free. We know something is true when it sets us free.

When one realizes one has sinful thoughts, the first thing to do is to connect with God, and dialogue and reason with Him in prayer to get one’s bearings straight. One ought not blindly try to coldly, mechanically, lifelessly, fearfully, and religiously confess ones “supposed” sins immediately. Not all thoughts in our heads are ours. The healthiest thing to do is talk with the Holy Spirit as our friend and guardian, and if He says it is okay, then to go ahead and confess the unhealthy thoughts that spring from our unhealthy attitude(s).

It is not wise to jump to conclusions when praying about the vices mentioned here. Trying to not go for red herrings is wise, although as beginners that will happen as part of the learning curves we are on. The understanding behind the tree-diagram from this book is a skeletal framework to help bring healing. But the motives, roots, and intrigues of the heart need to be searched out with a commitment to truth, respect, wisdom, God's will, and leading. Not with hatred, not with pressure, not by being hard on oneself, and not judgmentally. Confusions in the context of hurts or wounds need to be walked through into the light or attacked skillfully with rubber-meets-the-road-wisdom and God's empowering presence and leading. God is with us in this process.

Situations can arise that have many seemingly possible courses of healing through many seemingly wise prayers, and we may try praying one of them only to find out that we don't see the whole picture and to have somehow gotten numb and fleshly inside instead of getting free. This may happen because we are:

I. Re-confessing a sin that was already forgiven and dealt with (this is not healthy or wise as it is not genuine and respecting the truth that God already forgave). Prayer should not be lazy, calve leer, and insulated from the truth.
II. Consciously agreeing with a demonic kind of wisdom somehow within a prayer to God and not coming to Him to give it up (i.e. thinking that truth does not matter).
III. Praying to God with a proud attitude instead of approaching God to get rid of our pride.
IV. Using prayer as a spell (as an algorithm, like a coin we put into a vending machine) to get what we want, instead of humbly respecting that God's will be done.
V. Making self-righteous independent declarations or commitments to supposedly right behaviors in prayer (and even out of prayer).

VI. Making huge blanket-covering-types of prayers that act more like sweeping stuff (sin/ feeling/ motivations/ energy/ attitudes) under rugs, than being real and in touch with what is within us, and

VII. Praying an acceptable prayer that God could use to start getting the bad-stuff processed and cleaned up inside of us, but with nothing happening, because we won't relax and let Him do what we asked. For example, when we push bad-stuff down within to supposedly clean our insides up (instead of connecting with it and cooperating with God to process it) stops us from doing healthy business with God.

These do mean we may have unwisely trampled on stuff in our prayers and need to be more connected, observant, or aware of what we are doing, and then to address issues in our hearts or relationships from a healthier perspective that God leads us to. What I am saying is that it can be hit-and-miss at times when it comes to praying healthily and making progress. We need to refrain from generalizing and rushing over stuff in prayer and when making resolutions.

For instance, we might think we need to forgive a person for holding back on something we wanted, but the real issue can be that we have a demanding, manipulative, and grasping spirit that is rooted in pride and selfishness. If it is the latter, then no amount of forgiving the other person will heal the relationship, but when we confess to God the sin in our hearts, and repent in prayer we will find healing and love in us for the person who was seemingly holding out on us.

Then again the situation could be reversed, it might have nothing to do with our pride or supposed jealousy, but that the other person was insensitive towards us. In this case, we need to forgive them from the heart.

Also, the situation can involve hypocritical expectations on our part, with there being dirty laundry belonging to the other party too. This should be sorted out with wisdom and prayer.

Also, we might have believed lies about the people involved, including ourselves. Either way the Holy Spirit needs to be invited into the situations and we need to listen, and obey; and we need to know when to sit back and wait for wisdom and when to fight off any possible demonic oppressing thoughts that cause confusion with attacks of lies or accusations in our minds, so our moral compasses, intuition, and consciences can once again speak to us so we will know where we stand and what to do.

Next, we might not have the full picture so we need to give the benefit of the doubt to all the people involved, as love believes the best about people.

When situations arise like this, then we need to own our anger. We might direct our anger one way only to find out it should have been directed another way. That

is par for the course. That does not mean the anger shouldn't have existed...it is always a sign or alarm that something is wrong (we might not know the details or reasons for it immediately). We need to try to not jump to hurtful harmful conclusions and actions. We need to get into the act of nonviolent conflict resolution because the anger alarm has gone off, when we do, then our anger has done its job. We need courage to confront people when we are level headed when needed provided the Lord gives the go ahead.

When I first started working the tree diagram found in this book, I was dealing with generalities and mostly my unhealthy attitudes rooted in the past. Then after quite some time, I began to learn how to navigate situations in real time wisely using the strategy to dismantle the connections from “the tree of knowledge of good and evil”. These situations are far trickier to deal with because they are current and we can still do the right things from the inside out in healthier ways as we go forward with Jesus. As we go on we will see more things in play, and get a better feel for how healthy relationships work and how to diffuse conflicts in healthy nonviolent ways and this all leads to gentleness, humility, and love.

Gentleness does not mean you don't own your anger because if you don’t own your anger and process it healthily, then your gentleness is faked. The processes outlined in this book when implemented also mean greater and greater intimacy, relating on deeper levels, being more honest with people, having warmer humor, and not going to attitudes of self-pity, and “wow-is-me” kind of thinking because of little disappointments, and the benefit of staying away from the darkness of demons for longer spells of time.

Sometimes something can hit me the wrong way and I think it was a momentary “thing” yet it touches and affects negatively my thinking, attitudes, and the way I navigate my relationships until it is processed in a healthy way. Not processing baggage can cause plenty of self-pity because it frustrates or blocks living out the "golden rule" in my life. I feel restricted, clumsy, powerless, and disconnected when this happens. And it is not that I'm screaming for blood, or want revenge...I'm just “really” slow in realizing that I took offense, or hold things against other people at times. In sharing this with others I know I'm not the only one who experiences such things.

Our feelings can still linger around a bit, and they linger because we often say to ourselves that because we still sort of feel them they must be our true-state and so validate the “old us”. This is dangerous and untrue. When we see movies, we will see stuff that is portrayed as true that we naturally get emotional about even though it is all acting. When thoughts enter our heads they immediately trigger our emotions and we experience them whether or not they are true or false.

The attitudes we experience don't mean the beliefs behind them are always true or grounded in reality. It is important to not struggle with them in a fleshly dark-way, and to not wrestle with them in our own negative energy.

We should not navigate purely by our feelings or attempt to manufacture feelings in our own strength to supposedly feel holy, pure or happy. Feelings fluctuate, and truth is a better compass. Having said this, certain feelings/ emotions/ energies/ attitudes generated by lust, pride, envy, jealousy, greed, self-pity, conceit, fear, and judging should be monitored by what thoughts trigger these vices at the time. And if we don't want the feelings generated by these vices we must deal with our beliefs/ thinking in the contexts of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" as outlined in this book through prayer and relationship with Jesus.

The maxim: "the universal needs to be made particular" always applies to the "golden rule". But when we can't seem to focus on or practice the "golden rule" then it can be quite the fight. We might need to forgive people we are holding resentments towards; or we need to accept our emotions (i.e. anger) and process them (or it) in prayer using "I"-statements to move from judging to truth telling and grace. Just don't quit, asking the Holy Spirit to heal our minds and waiting for His touch might be all we can do. He will come through.

One should realize that one's identity should not be that of a "slave" or to see oneself as a perpetual victim to the whims, assaults, violations, disappointments, negativity, and shortcomings coming from others. We can have positive attitudes in the face of devastating news. We can choose to be cheerful when people expect more from us than we were counting on. Our emotions and attitudes don't have to be at the mercies of capricious circumstances, and fickle or selfish people or honest people who are just doing their thing. We don't have to have victim mentalities. We can own and should process our attitudes (reactions or emotions in response to disagreeable things) for they determine the difference between (strong in) joy and (weak in) self-pity and the difference between peace and unhealthily processed anger. We can be joyful so much more than Satan wants us to think we can. We don't go by our feelings, but by the truth and God's love! This stabilizes us.

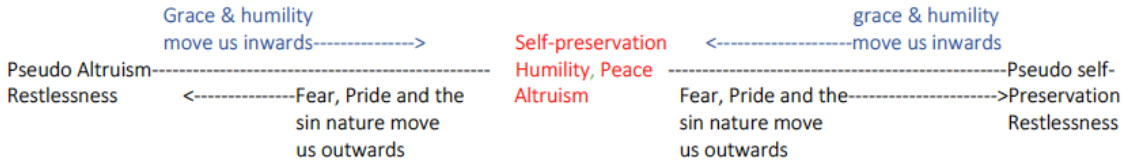
In making progress Jesus will confront our perfectionistic tendencies with liberating truths. Perfectionism makes us hard on ourselves and others. The Law expects perfection, but we aren't the Law, so we can choose to be gracious instead like God is. Practicing the "golden rule" [do to others as you want done to you] will give us more connection to what we personally desire, and to want the best for others too.

The war against pride is constant, the battles are the only possible victories. The capital vices do not exist by themselves. There are usually other sins involved with the attitudes of pride, envy, lust…etc. that must be processed together with these if we want freedom to love others deeply. Self-pity is an attitude that grows so quickly when things don't go our way and often is the first one that needs to be dealt with. Also, it is not wise to box things in or compartmentalize stuff. For instance, "insensitivity" and "meanness' are results of pride and envy, but insensitivity and meanness also need to be confessed together with pride and envy in prayer for there to be victory and progress in our spiritual journeys. The prayer/confession needs to be accurate, gentle, heartfelt and with the same intensity as the vices, sinful attitudes, and sins we have participated in. We also need to repent in prayer from these unhealthy vices, attitudes and sins. Shallow prayer does not work or get to the heart of the matter or the roots of spiritual maladies. Just saying "no" to sins is not enough, we must aim high enough to replace the darkness with light for there to be real lasting change. Jesus provides this.

Chapter Three

THE POWER OF THE SIN NATURE VS. THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

In this chapter, I develop a rationale for how "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" develops and is acted on by the "sin nature", fear, and pride. The diagram[3] below shows two-continuums of behavior where we can find ourselves. In the center is the place of humility, where we are aware of our self-preservation and connected to our altruism.



These two natures are healthy God-given qualities, but within us is a "dark energy", a "force", or a "pull" known as the "sin nature" that tries to pull us away from humility through fear and pride towards pseudo self-preservation (envy/ selfishness) on the right, and pseudo altruism (lust or fake love) on the left. This "pull" is always there in this life and is known as the "flesh". It tries to warp the

[3] I am immensely grateful to my friend Rafael for a discussion that inspires this diagram.

spiritual healthiness or humility within us and tries to push us to the extreme left or right in the different contexts of our makeups, relationships, and lives through fear and pride. When we grow in humility we move along either continuum towards the center. Even when we are near the center we will feel our self-preservation and altruism being pulled and harassed by the "sin nature". We can get self-preservation confused with selfishness when we don't understand the pull of the "sin nature". If we don't jump the gun and patiently wait we will see the difference. The more we move away from the center the more we act out fear and pride.

Our sense of self-preservation is strong, and we need to acknowledge it as a gift from God. The pull to the right by the "sin nature", fear and pride is strong too, and should not be ignored, stuffed, and pushed down to try and mortify or supposedly annihilate. To annihilate the "sin nature" is an impossibility in this life. Yes, we can kill strongholds of fear and pride, but we can't kill the "sin nature", the "pull", or the "dark energy" within us. God grants us grace, truth, and strategy to say, "I accept you, but I don't need you right now"[4] directly to the "sin nature" when it rears its ugly head, and to say, "yes" to Jesus' peace instead. But we will always feel the pull to the extreme right in this life.

We need to say, "I accept you, but I don't need you right now" directly to the "sin nature" when it calls because in trying to just say, "no" to it, we give it more power and that means we need to expend more energy and time as well to resist it. We need to accept the "sin nature" and not leave it out of our calculations. God calls us to "be still" or to "cease striving" and to "know Him" in Psalm 46 and when we are still and connected to God, and we say, "I accept you, but I don't need you right now" directly to the "sin nature" and invite Jesus' presence in, we become strong in the Spirit and are able to stay away from the sin that is tempting us provided the Strongholds are gone. We can't do this if we are struggling to "not" sin by just saying repeatedly, "no" to the sin. When we are still and connected to the Lord, He is more than enough to satisfy our needs with "grace upon grace."

Our sense of altruism is strong too, and we need to acknowledge it as a gift from God, not as a badge of merit or honor that gets us God's favor. The "sin nature", "pull", and "dark energy" tries to draw us to the left, congratulating us on noble acts, trying to motivate us with fears of rejection and losses of honor, trying to move us with pride/ conceit, and seeks to put pressure on us so we will push towards a reputation of goodness that "actually" is full of lust, empty of love, and is self-righteousness. The fear is one of not being accepted, welcomed, loved, and cared for. Our conceit (also known as "the ego" going bad), actual steals genuine

[4] Insight from my friend Suda

honor and real love directed towards us, and we need to say, “I accept you, but I don't need you right now” directly to this dark energy within when it rears its ugly head so we can say, “yes” to Jesus’ peace. We say this because in saying, “no” to it we give it a firmer place and added power in our lives to tempt that it doesn't deserve.

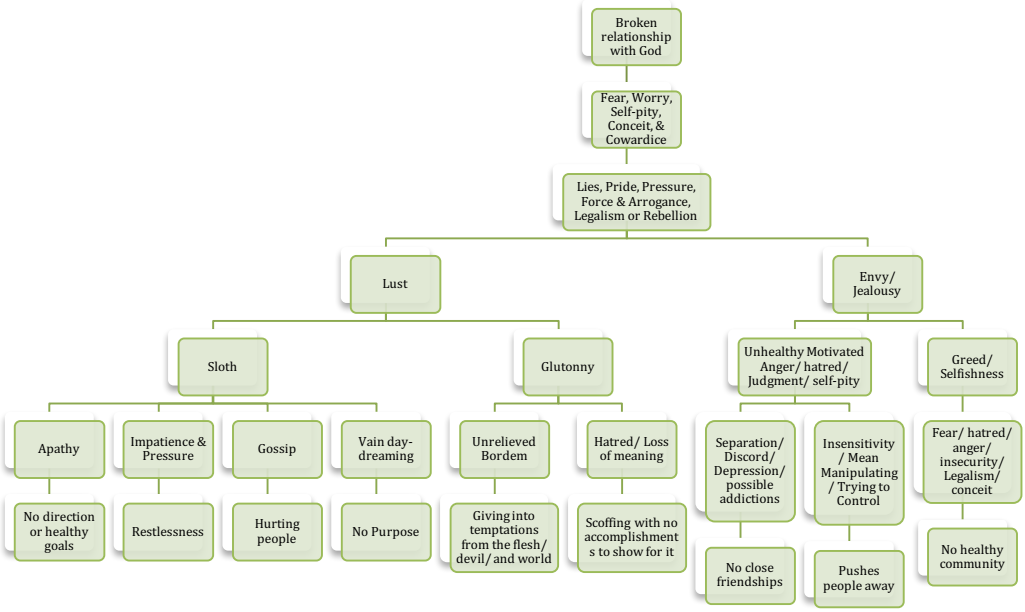
"It is in dying that we are born again" comes from a Prayer inspired by Saint Francis of Assisi’s life, and is often used in conjunction with Saint Paul’s statement: "For me to live is Christ, to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21) to wrongly mean that we can kill the part of ourselves we don’t like, the “sin nature”, so we can love people more deeply. This is done religiously through putting pressure on oneself through self-hatred. This is all a horrible trap. We can't crucify ourselves or our flesh, and we can’t kill the “sin nature”, but we can kill the strongholds mentioned in this book with Jesus’ help. When Paul used the word “die” he was referring to physical death and being united with Jesus in heaven. We can't add to Jesus to get better.

“The tree of knowledge of good and evil” is not the same as the “sin nature”. Why is it that one person has no addictions, while another can’t stop eating or getting drunk? Or, why is it that one person has spiritual pride, whereas another is humble about spiritual things? Or, why is it that one person gets jealous so easily, while another person is altruistic? One person’s “sin nature” is not better than another person’s “sin nature” surely? No, there is a level playing field. But we can allow our “sin natures” together with our choices and folly to grow the seed of “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” in us into a structure of death, hatred, malice, bad fruit, addictions and negativity that pushes everyone away from us in the worst-case scenario.

When we see that all people have a “sin nature”, a “pull”, or a “dark energy” within that the Bible calls the flesh or sin (Cf. Romans 7:14-20), then we begin to realize that we are all basically the same. There is no need to feel superior, to judge, or to condemn others, and if we do, then we have spiritual pride. No matter how far we walk spiritually in this life the flesh is still with us; any healthy righteousness within us always comes from God. We have nothing to boast about (not even about God’s Spirit within us) because we are not better than anyone else.

So, Pseudo Altruism is basically fake love also known as lust. This is spoken about and developed as the left side of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” below. Pseudo Self-preservation is basically envy/ selfishness and is developed on the right side of the “tree of knowledge of good and evil” below. Fear and pride together with the “sin nature” try to push us to these two extremes that are never absolute or complete because they are perversions of healthy humility. The power of the “sin nature” works to establish in our lives the strongholds of fear, pride,

envy, judging, lust, gluttony, sloth and the sins that come from them. These strongholds can be dismantled in our lives, but the "sin nature" can't be dismantled. The Strongholds make up the "tree of the knowledge of good and evil" found in the Garden of Eden as told in the book of Genesis, and looks like this:



Obviously, this tree does not list all the sins mentioned in the Bible but it will do for our discussions. Lying, cheating, stealing, murder, brutality, brawling, adultery, homosexuality, sexual sins, rape, abusive communication, violence, witchcraft, malice, idol-worship, materialism, devaluing people, abusive authority, manipulation, self-righteousness, withholding help from the poor, not helping the weak and disadvantaged, suppressing justice, and all the other sins mentioned in the Bible, but not listed here, can easily be penciled in as one feels led. We will discuss this tree and give prescriptions on how to dismantle it within us and how to replace it with a life-giving structure instead. The very bottom row of the tree contains some of the more visible fruits or consequences of indulging in the nature of the tree; many harsher ones can be added.

The good from this devilish tree is not defined in the sense of real tangible right-ness/ spiritual healthiness…but in the popular deceptive-shallow sense of "better-than or more-special-than"- which leads to comparisons and unhealthy pride/ superficiality which are perceived as good but that lead to hurtful comparisons, evil (in the real-unhealthy-sense) along with hurt because of judgments which are negative in nature; which slowly can lead to the death of the image of God in us (that we were made in). The hurting will often hurt others. A rotten apple in the

presence of healthy apples usually infects the good apples. For it to be the other way around something supernatural must happen.

I think that Satan sold the idea to Adam and Eve that the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" would get them to be as "special" as God. He wanted them to think God was holding out on them. The reason I think this is because the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" was the source of a devilish kind of knowledge or dark wisdom where:

Good = (I'm more special because…) or (This is more special because…) or (You are less special because…)

and where:

Evil = (I'm less special because…) or (This is less special because…) or (You are more special because…)

This kind of knowledge or thinking is a hurtful kind of paradigm of thought, rooted in restlessness, fear and pride, and they bear the rest of the vices that all destroy wholesome/ healthy community/ and peaceful relationships. This kind of knowledge slowly defaces the image of God within us (except for the grace of God in our lives). And in so doing this knowledge helps us to hate, kill, and relish revenge, "eye for and eye" and "tooth for a tooth" actions against everyone who crosses our paths and eventually seeks the death of all. It is devoid of love, joy, peace, humility, warmth, kindness, hope, gentleness, valuing people, caring, altruism, and being a living sacrifice.

The "sin nature" is wrongly relied on by us to save us from boundary violations, and things that are uncomfortable, so that we can have supposed peace or instant gratification. We only land up with guilt or meanness and restlessness in the end.

The "tree of knowledge of good and evil's" seed, structure and fruit has infected all humanity: Adam and Eve and us their fallen descendants. The tree's infecting power is in the lies spoken to us that we too quickly and easily embrace because they promise us instant peace, alleviation of fears, and the lie that God's promises to provide ways through are not trustworthy. The devil promised independence, but made us slaves to sin, but only Jesus can free us from this tangled mess through the Good News found in the New Testament (NT).

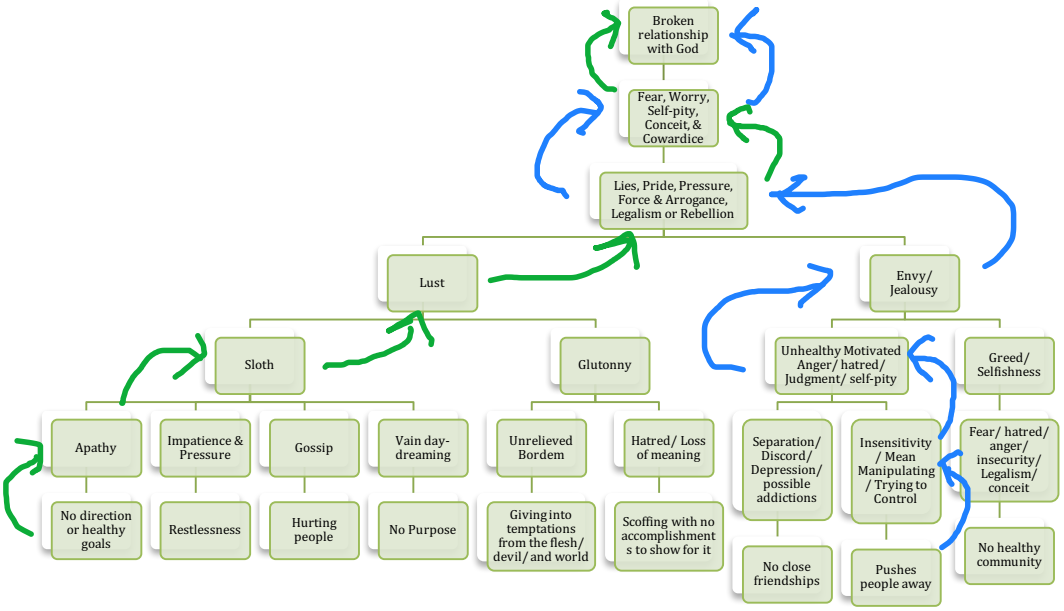
Chapter Four

HOW TO DISMANTLE THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

Jesus is the true Vine and we need to put our faith in Him if we want to bear good fruit. We can't earn a spot in the true Vine by our actions, human intellect, or great philosophies. We can't earn good relationships with God. By resting in Jesus

through faith we will if we are committed to mercy bear much good fruit and in the process, dismantle the dead structure mentioned above. The “tree of knowledge of good and evil” promises to keep us supposedly special; it has a devilish understanding of goodness that bears the bad fruit that sane people “really” don’t want in their lives.

Below is the full “tree of the knowledge of good and evil”, and we “work out our salvation” by dismantling it within us through confession, repentance in prayer, and renewing our minds. We do so based on what is currently happening in our lives spiritually by noticing the bad fruit and working our way up the tree diagram in prayer dealing with one stronghold after another until we get to the sources. For instance, if we struggle with apathy we can pray through the connections from the bottom upwards (like the green line-arrows are shown in the diagram), from sin to sin or attitude to attitude until we deal with our fears. In so doing we cooperate with God in healing our broken hearts through His grace. We also have our relationships with other humans made healthier through working this process. The reason we start at the bottom of the tree-diagram is because that is where the most visible fruit-sins are located; to us they are the most visible too when we have sinned (our consciences usually tell us quickly enough) and by reflection we see the connections between the sins all the way up to our broken relationship with God. Praying through the relevant connections will bring healing and growth. Because life is messy and complicated, we will work these connections in prayer regularly over time and we will slowly grow in purity of heart as God promises in First John 1:9.



For example, following the blue-arrows; suppose that somebody is withholding something that we used to take for granted, and we feel hurt, and angry because it is now denied. We can therefore be tempted to try to control the person in our anger because we have an attitude of self-entitlement, and so have jealousy because they have and are withholding what we are coveting. This can be connected to unhealthy pride, because we have judged the person in a negative light thinking we know better than them; but then the pride is connected to the fear of losing forever what is now being withheld. The way to deal with this is to pray through the connections in a thorough manner, something like this:

> Lord Jesus, I confess that I have anger, and am therefore tempted to control the person in question. I yield my right, or sense of entitlement to you in faith, and I give up my desire to control this person out of my pride. I give up my coveting what this person has through my jealousy, and instead I choose to go to a place of warmth in my heart towards this person with your help in faith as I can't do it myself, because I'm not better than this person. The highest "good" is "to love", and I choose to love this person with your help Jesus because there is nothing else that matters more, and in doing so I speak to my "fear of losing what I wanted so badly because of my sense of entitlement" saying, "I give you up fear because Jesus is sufficient and supplies all my needs" and I say, "yes" to loving this person as myself with your empowering presence, Lord Jesus, and I accept your forgiveness and healing for all my sins mentioned here. Thank you and Amen!

The reason why this method works is because it connects the mind and the heart with God in a biblical, thorough, and strategic way that deals with many of the roots or growths that have lived in us bringing death into our lives over the years.

Praying repeatedly in this way in the different contexts of our relational lives will help to slowly dismantle the strongholds mentioned in the diagram. The confession and prayer needs to be genuine, and so I will define these terms in a way that has worked for me. This is not a complete map to freedom; I know that other truths will very well be needed to heal the heart so we can love people more deeply.

There are times when we feel unhealthy fleshly stuff/ emotions/ attitudes/ energies and don't know how to label or classify them, and therefore deal with them. I have found that when I experience these attitudes/ energies the healthiest thing to do is to connect with the feelings or unhealthy attitudes/ energies and say to myself the words: "I feel…" while searching for words that describe the energy and the words come naturally. Only then am I able to pray in the pattern as suggested above.

With some people, they feel nothing virtuous when they know they should in some situations. This means that they are numb inside, stuck emotionally, and have unprocessed baggage to deal with. I have found that feeling the numbness within, and using the same strategy in the last paragraph works well.

I don't feel that the dead structure within me is like an invisible complex vine that is wildly knotted and a nebulous mess to untie, difficult to understand, and so confusing that it disheartens and intimidates me like it used to. I now have a strategy to fight the strongholds within me with Jesus' help. This strategy is built from the following Scriptures:

- Dear children, keep yourselves from idols. (1 John 5:21)
- You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:13)
- Pray unceasingly (1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)
- Humble yourself therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He might lift you up in due time. (1 Peter 5:6)
- If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. (1 John 1:9)
- Repent for the Kingdom of Heaven has come near. (Mark 3:2)
- That's why I tell you to have faith that you have already received whatever you pray for, and it will be yours. (Mark 11:24)
- Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with that person, and they with me. (Rev. 3:20)
- Cease striving and know that I am God. (Psalm 46:10)
- Do not conform 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--his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:2)
- I can do all things through Him who gives me strength. (Philippians 4:13)
- Judge not and condemn not. (Cf. Luke 6:37)
- Submit yourselves, then, to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. (James 4:7)
- Do unto others as you want them to do to you. (Matthew 7:12, aka the "golden rule")
- Love your neighbor as yourself. (Mark 12:31)
- We are not under Law, but grace. (Romans 6:14)
- Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them. (John 7:38), and
- For we live by faith not sight. (1 Corinthians 5:7)

Again, all necessary revelations that bring freedom will come gradually. Don't rush things, don't generalize, and seek to listen to the Holy Spirit.

Humility is key to making these Scriptures work in our lives. Please don't pray just any prayer modeled in this book until you see/ discern/ sense/ and understand the vices spoken about contextually in yourself and can remember having committed them or know you have such attitudes. Always connect with your feelings, your hunger and thirst when praying about them to God! In doing so we are connecting our minds to our hearts. Being in touch with our feelings will put us in touch with our thinking which we can then renew as we continue to seek God with all our hearts; and we will find God and the freedom He offers in the process. Being connected to the source of our feelings such as unhealthy desires/ faulty beliefs/ stinking thinking/ bad commitments/ and misguided loyalties means we can repent fully with God's help from them. Disconnection often means we have stuffed, denied, compartmentalized, or become blind to our attitudes, and the vices.

I will now make some important definitions (along with some commentary) that make the dismantling process understandable, and easier to work. These definitions are what this book hinge on. Without them the contents of this book are meaningless, and have no power! Biblical language and concepts can often have religious ideas superimposed on them, and so lose their meaning and power. Who uses the word "repent" in public these day? It is often misunderstood by people both outside and inside the church. These definitions below are meant to put us on the same page and move us forward:

DEFINITION (for ceaselessly pray):

♥ To ceaselessly pray means to replace one's constant monologue to oneself in one's head with two-way dialogue with God. ♥

This is done by reasoning with God through faith, and letting His wisdom and life flow like a river into the otherwise stagnant pool of our minds and hearts to bring life, joy, relationship, and renewal. Also, it means to express one's feelings honestly to God so we can honestly process them…the Holy Spirit gives us wisdom on how to make wise decisions that are non-judgmental and kind in nature so our relationships grow and don't stagnate.

Asking the Holy Spirit a question, and listening for an answer can be very straight forward when we know the promises and principles found in the Scriptures and believe them. We can test the source of the communications we hear after having asked a question to the Holy Spirit by simply asking: "Does the spirit speaking acknowledge Jesus Christ as God incarnate?" If it is a "no", then we reject the source; if it is a "yes" then the Holy Spirit has spoken to us and then we can move

to the next step of unpacking what the Holy Spirit has said. The book by Brad Jersak called, "Can You Hear Me?" provides a lot of wisdom on how we can go deeper into two-way prayer and I highly recommend it.

Mark Virkler's book on two-way prayer through journaling called: "Counseled by God" is also very helpful. He has four keys meant to give structure to the process of journaling. They are: key 1). Quiet yourself, key 2). Tune into spontaneity, key 3). Tune into vision, and key 4). Journal. They help one to listen, remember and reflect on what "actually" is said in a non-judgmental and less skeptical fashion. He provides biblical tests to discern what is written and is well worth the read.

Both books have been foundational to arriving at the contents found in this book.

DEFINITION (for "I"-statements):

♥ "I"-statements follow the formula: "I feel such…when you…because…and therefore I would like…", and they are to be simple, none-threatening, none accusing, non-judgmental, without putdowns, and without name calling. ♥

Such statements help us start to process our feelings, sense of injustices, motivations, and our sinful or confused attitudes. They help us move away from judging and hurting others, and to become healers and lovers. "I"-statements are specifically meant for ourselves to help us process personal stuff (they move us from judging to truth telling); they don't need to always be spoken to the person we are having difficulty with, but we can speak it to him or her when prompted by God. There is grace, we don't have to confront everyone who offends us.

DEFINITION (for Attitudes):

♥ Attitudes are evaluations people make about objects, ideas, events, or other people. Attitudes can be positive or negative. Explicit attitudes are conscious beliefs that can guide decisions and behavior. Implicit attitudes are unconscious beliefs that can still influence decisions and behavior. ♥

Thoughts and ideas trigger feelings. Whereas beliefs about what we or others deserve determine our attitudes. In changing our thoughts we change our feelings. In changing our beliefs we change our attitudes. Feelings come and go whereas attitudes have so much more staying power for good and evil. Attitudes are energies (commitments to behaviors) that have likes, dislikes, and desires that can carry judgments that determine some of our emotions and behaviors. In getting rid of bad attitudes we no longer want, we need to give up the lies believed, and judgments associated with them, and the energy (commitment) that translates into the behaviors. Confession together with repenting in prayer, renewing the mind, forgiving, and seeking God's will is the way to do just that.

DEFINITION (for Confession):

♥ I use the word, "confess" a lot in this essay. By it I mean that we admit gently, accurately and emotionally (not acted or forced) our unhealthy attitudes, our sins, and their history; agree with God that they are wrong, and say we are sorry for them. We then ask for forgiveness and healing; and then to receive them in faith (cf. 1 John 1:9). ♥

It is very important to not just intellectualize stuff. We need to connect with our emotions, and that means getting in touch with the peace that comes from being forgiven by God, along with the joy, stability, Devine touch, and breath of life this all brings into our lives.

While confessing our sins to God, it is a bad idea to always speak in generalities. When we can put meat on the bone we should do so. Lies have a better chance of being exposed when we get specific and look at the details more closely while trying to understand the unhealthy energy/ attitudes/ and mechanisms working in our hearts and minds when it comes to sin. When we do this, the Holy Spirit can speak truth into the different areas of our lives and so set us free.

DEFINITION (for Repent in Prayer):

♥ The word **"repent"** means to change one's mind. I also use it with the additional meaning of: "I give up the sin of "_____". So, when I use the phrase: "**repent in prayer**", I mean: praying to Jesus in clean energy using words something like: '"**Dear God I change my mind about and give up, in faith with your help, this sinful attitude of: "_____" with false beliefs of "_____" bad motivations/ energy/ expectations of "_____" as well as the sinful behaviors they inspire of "_____" (i.e. wearing masks, or projecting negativity, hostility, insensitivity, and meanness, or exerting force, or pressure; using lying, stealing, hurt, hating, manipulating, and demanding to get one's way) together with the corresponding sins: "_____"; I therefore choose to humble myself and not pretend that I'm healthier than what I am, and I ask you the living God to heal me**" and then to speak to the sin/ attitude in faith with clean energy saying to it: **"I accept that you are in my life, but I don't need you right now along with the empty promises of "_____" that inspired you, that I wrongly believed; instead I have accepted Jesus as my Lord, Truth, Savior, Healer, and Peace Giver!"** when the sin/ attitude tries to assert itself."' ♥

The strategy to confront negative strongholds is to admit they are in our lives, but to say to them we don't need them right now because God provides for our needs with His grace and peace. All sins are done because we come to falsely believe that they will fulfill our needs or save us somehow. Admitting this in each context, and mourning the losses incurred by the sins because they "really" promise emptiness, and committing to and connecting with Jesus as Prince of Peace is key

to moving on. We need to do this emotionally as well as intellectually. In this way, we count dead previous strongholds of sin, and embrace the full life promised by Jesus. Nature hates vacuums, so we should replace sin with virtues. Virtues come from clean energy, peace, the presence of God along with healthy truth.

Masks and "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" go together. Adam and Eve also put on masks after they ate from this tree. They felt shame, and immediately had fear so they tried to protect themselves with leaf coverings after their innocence was stolen. God knew that would not work, so He chose to shed blood to give them leather skin coverings to help remove their shame, and fears. This shedding is prophetic of Jesus' blood being spilt so that our masks (idols of protection) could also be washed away leaving us pure, clean, and able to enjoy rich community once again.

There is fear of being shamed, and then there is fear of people. They aren't always the same. Both need to dealt with in prayer and renewing one's mind with the promises and truth found in Scripture.

Note, this process of repenting prayer asks us to deal with the lies that we believed in the moments we were seduced to become slaves of certain sins that became strongholds in our lives. These lies are the reasons why certain idols were used to try to satisfy our needs.

For instance, it we were hurt by being rejected, we can be deceived into believing the lie that acquiring a conceited attitude will protect our self-images and give us the sense that we are still likable. Or, we can come to think that sloth is the answer to having peace in our hearts. Or, we can be deceived into thinking that food will give us peace. These idols don't satisfy us, and can be very expensive, besides marring our personalities and bodies; and confusing us about our identities.

Also, this prayer is a way of basically committing to a clean conscience with the help of God and committing to renewing the mind, attitudes, expectations, thinking, and beliefs through grace in a way that changes one's actions from sin to love in gentle obedience to Jesus as Lord and Savior.

For instance, if we were rejected as young children, we could have vowed to aim hatred and malice at those who rejected us because of the hurt, and at those who later in life seemingly threaten our self-images. This can go very deep and be unhealthily layered in our hearts with meanness, scoffing, scorn, judging, negativity, and insensitivity pouring out of us at others when triggered. But just as sadly and importantly we must realize that this meanness, scoffing, scorn, judging, negativity, and being hard on people are also directed at ourselves for letting the first rejections happen (and those subsequent).

Further, we could have believed the lie that we will be better than others through self-effort, and vowed to be perfect always, and eventually come to believe the lie that we are better than others. This becomes so habitually ingrained within, distorting and defiling our personalities and self-image if not reversed.

I have found that when such a wound goes very deep, situations that challenge one's self-image will trigger the sins mentioned here towards others, and these sins need to be confessed and repented from in prayer (also dealing with pride, fear, and negativity in this context) and confronted with strategic truth each time they materialize to get rid of their bad energy. But the real cancer is the hatred directed towards oneself within which also needs to be confessed and repented from in genuine prayer. If we hate ourselves, we will hate others. If we hate others, it is because we hate ourselves.

One must deal with these wounds from rejections and self-hatred through forgiveness, truth, confession, and repentance (also dealing with pride, fear, and negativity in this context). Forgiving oneself for visiting these horrible reactive-burdens on oneself and everyone else throughout the years, and to forgive those who rejected us initially, all the while having a paradigm shift that makes us see reality more clearly that leads to not being hard on ourselves and to stop hating ourselves. In doing these things the healing will become complete in this area of being hard on ourselves (but is crucial that we have faith in Jesus; that He cares for us and that He will heal us as we trust in Him).

Our words have power for good or bad and using them for good can bring freedom. Sin is no longer our master when Jesus sets us free by His grace flowing through us. This is done gradually area after area with our cooperation. To successfully put to death the sinful attitude we need a clean energy in our prayers, tone of speech, beliefs, thinking, will and efforts and with it to say "YES" to the corresponding virtuous acts in obedience to Jesus. When we use clean energy, we will see great victories in our emotional life and attitudes. It only takes a little leaven to leaven the whole batch of dough. We can't throw out negative energy with negative energy. We all have safe places within us no matter how sinful we are where together with faith in Jesus and grace, we can conquer the darkness within with His Light.

Occasionally, we will react with a fleshly attitude, and this should inspire confessing and repenting in prayer but sometimes the emotions of the attitude linger, and one may try to wrestle with it. This last part is counterproductive. One shouldn't think inside the box, or outside the box but without the box. The former two-scenarios give the box (or emotion/attitude) power; whereas the latter does not. The more one focuses on a negative attitude and tries to wrestle with it the

more power one gives to it. God says, "not by human might, but by my power". God's power works with truth, and sets us free.

DEFINITION (for forgiveness):

♥ When we humans choose to forgive some body, we are jettisoning our bad energy towards the person and choosing good energy towards them instead. This is what it means to have a pure heart. We don't even have to use the words: "I forgive you" with them, but we can just decide to give up the hardness, give up the blackness, give up the coldness, give up the un-grace, give up not loving the person in our hearts, and instead saying "yes" to loving the person with clean energy and refusing to bring up the past because we have forgiven them from our hearts. This is based on living out the "golden rule" together with "grace": we want unconditional love (i.e. grace) so we grant the same grace to everyone. When it comes to judging someone, who did us wrong, this kind of forgiveness is most needed, otherwise we are wounded. We forgive for our own sake. If we don't forgive people who piss us off, it won't affect their destiny, but it can affect ours. I choose to forgive others because it is healthy for me to do, and because I "really" want to be a good person. I can't be a good person if I cut off my love from anyone. ♥

We can't be friends with everyone. Yes, we are called to forgive everyone who sins against us, but if they are toxic, unkind, judgmental, and uncaring and basically rub us with friction or the wrong way all the time, then a friendship just is not practical. We get to choose our friends; we don't have to be friends with someone just because they want it. Forgiveness yes, but friends not always.

This goes both ways. Not everyone wants to be our friends. Accepting this is very healthy both generally and particularly. Hanging around others hoping they will notice us and pretending they aren't ignoring us needs to be abandoned, given up in prayer, and processed so we can move on. Love does not demand to be loved by others.

Moreover, sometimes it seems impossible to forgive no matter how much we wrestle with doing so, I have found that when this happens the issue is not so much, "I can't forgive", but to repent from my conceited ness. Pride blocks us from forgiving others.

DEFINITION (for Holiness):

♥ Since the NT is written to the "holy ones" and all the letters have much advice, wisdom, and correction regarding sinful acts; this means the holy ones' actions weren't always holy but they themselves were holy in God's eyes. Therefore, they are holy position ally because of their faith in Jesus since God dwells within them but they need to become holy in their actions. For those of us who consider

ourselves Jesus' disciples we can't make ourselves holy independently of God, but we can make our actions holy (cf. 1 Peter 1:13-15) through faith in and cooperation with the Holy Spirit. So, when the NT writers call us to be holy they mean to become healthy in our behaviors, deeds, speech, acts, and attitudes. This is the meaning of: "Be Holy for I [God] am Holy" that Peter mentions in his first letter. True holiness comes from being dependent on God through His grace and trust in Him, it isn't something we just decide to do and become through our own energy. ♥

The aim of holiness is to live healthily. That means doing what we were hardwired for. Jesus commanded us to live out the “golden rule” which says: “do to others what you want done to yourself.” This does not mean that we assume that what makes us happy to be the same thing that makes others happy. Everyone gets to decide what makes themselves happy. But, the golden rule does mean that we love others unconditionally because we want to be loved unconditionally. This means that we love people whether or not they do good, do bad, or have apathy.

If we are to obey Jesus' commands, like the "golden rule" for instance, and not just call Him "Lord, Lord" without doing anything, then we need to do what He asks when He asks us and to do it with His peace and energy without pressure and force. The devil quotes the same scriptures to us too, but they become Law and not liberating truth because the devil has a mean, disrespectful, restless, pressurized, and “I got a whip in my hand so do what I say” dark dry energy about him. Jesus though, is gentle, kind, respectful, and asks us to obey Him with a peaceful yet authoritative energized presence. The devil appeals to our guilt, fear, pride and desires for perfectionism, whereas Jesus appeals to that part of us that cares and believes in Him and wants His will done.

We can adopt either of these mentalities when we attempt to speak to ourselves and others or also when we attempt to motivate our or other people’s actions. But if we choose to heed or copy the devil's voice we won't ever keep Jesus' commands gently and we will drown in negativity, dryness, anger, "it's my right"-kind-of-anger, “it isn’t fair”, poor “wow-is-me”, and "I can't do it" - thinking with sour and bitter emotions and attitudes; with no healthy actions to show for any of it. But if we choose Jesus' peaceful clean energy poured into our hearts by listening to Jesus voice (and speaking to ourselves like He does with us), His peace will come with the power so that we will be able to love like He commands. This does not come from intellectual-analyzing of things...it comes from caring, faith, wisdom, and the desire to love people like Jesus does.

How do we know to whom we are listening to or copying? When we ask people to "believe in Jesus as Lord", do we do so in a "hard, abrasive, dry, “damn-you-better, you got no choice”, “just grin and bear it and do it" tone? If so, then we got Jesus

confused with someone else. Jesus has healthy speech, clean energy and emotions; respects that people have a choice in the matter of His invitations, and He is not abrasive, hard, and mean, or over-bearing.

We need to process our thoughts/ emotions in prayer, reasoning together with God, and get to the place where we call Jesus "Lord" with healthy respect, firmness, being at peace with who He is, with clean consciences, knowing Him as caring, loyally and kind; and not give people the impression that He is heartlessly demanding, judgmental, or spiritually constipated.

Fully believing in Jesus means we see Him as He is portrayed in the New Testament. It means that we have not laminated a darkness on to Him in our minds. It means that we respect Him as Leader, shepherd, brother, King, Lord, anointed one, son of God, and as fully God and as fully man. It means to not buy any lies from the devil about Jesus. When we do this, Jesus' promise that living waters would flow within us becomes true. For some it is a stream, others a creek, and others a river. But it can grow as we persevere in our faith walk with Jesus.

DEFINITION (for Submission & Resisting):

♥ What does: "Submitting to God and resisting the devil" so that "the devil will flee" mean? It is very important in cementing victory in the spiritual life. The "submission" part means we accept and commit to God's will (the good, bad and ugly in life), desire God's will, pray for God's will, and say yes to God's will above our own wills whole-heartedly, firmly; and not superficially, and not flimsily. The "resisting the devil" part means we say, "I don't need your empty promises Satan", countering his lies with strategic truth, and saying, "yes" to the grace and life giver: Jesus. ♥

Giving up commitments to bad attitudes/ vices/ energies is one way to resist the devil, and committing to the opposite of the vices, namely virtues (healthy attitudes) all in prayer will help bring about healthy behaviors and is seen as submitting to God.

The new attitude or resolve or commitment to submit to God and His will in an area, is key to maintaining one's freedom to love, freedom from bearing all the fruits of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil", and enjoying God's peace, sanity, perspective, joy, and holy consolation. After confession, repenting prayer, and renewing the mind submission to God is key to maintaining freedom from self-pity and the vices making up "the tree of knowledge of good and evil".

Chapter Five

EXPANDING OUR UNDERSTANDING ON HOW TO DISMANTLE THE UNWANTED TREE

I observed one morning that when I prayed rote prayers like: The Lord's Prayer, The Serenity Prayer, and especially The Prayer to the Holy Spirit...I said it with the expectation and request that all the unpleasantness, the yucky emotions/ energy inside of me would somehow not be felt by me. I prayed it because I feared this darkness and what it could do; and whenever it peeped out I tried to push it back down. I began to see this request as wrong...and my strategy to attempt pushing the darkness down within as unhealthy, because in doing so it also kept "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" intact, hidden, and very powerful.

Truth is, if I don't allow myself to feel the negative emotions/ energy/ attitudes such as selfishness, greed, pride, envy, lust...etc., then

(a) I won't be able to process them and get rid of them for good,

(b) I am saying no to the positive emotions/ energy/ attitudes too because it along with the dark energy come from the same source: my heart. I realized I can't stand on top of my emotions like a moral policeman suppressing negative emotion/ energy repeatedly, I just get numb, out of touch, lose focus, and disorientated by doing that, and

(c) I land up being an actor or hypocrite because my heart doesn't change and I only look clean on the outside.

If I don't push down on the negative emotional attitudes, then they are going to be felt by me and that is a healthy thing because, then God and I can process them together. That does not mean I speak it out, or act it out against people because, then I'd hurt them by it. But when I deal with it wisely like suggested in this book, it will eventually be cleaned up one area at a time. Ignoring our negative attitudes and trying to focus on the positive keeps us from cleaning the inside of the cup so the whole cup remains dirty like Jesus warned us to keep from doing. But there is negative energy in us too, called the Flesh or the "sin nature" that we can't kill. This too must not be suppressed interiorly, but accepted and given over through relationship with God by not ignoring it, but embracing Jesus' peace while holding onto the promises of Jesus, and focusing on constructive, beneficial, kind, virtuous, pleasing graces poured into our lives by the Holy Spirit.

When we are aware of the "sin nature" or flesh within us, we know it can't submit to the Spirit. It is sinful, corrupt, selfish, and insecure and tries to push us away from living humbly and with self-control through grace. Knowing it won't die in this life keeps us humble because we know it is with us as it is with every other fallible human. We come to see that we are no higher than anyone else: we all

have this “sin nature” or “flesh” to deal with; no matter how spiritual we are or how hard we try to live holy lives. This book attempts to show us how to have victory over the “sin nature” one battle at a time.

Practicing the "golden rule" is not “fully possible” until the roots and branches of the tree of knowledge of good and evil are killed or dismantled. But also, when we have any resentments against anybody, then we will have problems practicing the "golden rule" as well and the bad fruit will persist, and pride won't be defeated until we forgive whomever from our hearts.

It should be noted that confession and repenting in prayer deal with our ties to the past (distant and recent when applicable) and present struggles in all contexts found in this book. They deal with guilt and baggage for good, and open our eyes to a better way. Jesus is that better and healthy way. Jesus helps us aim so high that the negativity, poor-me, self-pitying, selfish-me-centered, perfectionistic, and judgmental fleshly self-dies and is replaced with love, positivity, kindness, generosity, and gentleness.

Jesus said that, “those who keep his words, are truly His disciples, they will know the truth, and the truth will set them free” (John 8:32). This is a promise, and Jesus always keeps his promises, provided we hold onto them. When the past is dealt with through confession, and repentance in prayer we are forgiven and given new opportunities to grow the fruit of the Spirit. As we forge ahead, we continue to confess and repent in prayer, renewing the attitudes and expectations of our minds with Jesus’ presence/ teaching/ grace/ commands/ and promises and choosing to put them into practice daily. The New Testament has so much truth, and all of it will help us to be set free through the Spirit’s leading. When we get stuck which can happen depending on how strong the battle is, just asking the Holy Spirit to heal our minds and then resting in His faithfulness is key to victory. God will never leave us nor forsake us. He will complete the work He began in us.

DEALING WITH THE VICES/ ATTITUDES:

Self-pity stems from unmet expectations. Being able to give up expectations, in prayer with Jesus’ help, that will never come through is key to being free from self-pity. Either that or recalibrating our expectations so people will feel as free as we do by it as warmth returns within us and to our relationship(s).

When asked to do stuff that is altruistic in nature, the natural thing to do for one who is not far in love is to pout, sulk, and become full of self-pity because one’s pride is hurt and one doesn't feel honored. This can be very ugly when not hidden from others. But there is a better and healthier path to take: recalibrating one's expectations for ourselves and others. We do this in prayer by giving up our negative selfish poor-me attitudes in faith and choosing in prayer to expect

altruism from, going the extra mile, and doing to others what we'd like from ourselves with God's help. We will love more often and more deeply and our self-esteem will skyrocket.

Mourning, shedding tears and weeping is natural when real injustices happen. But everyone will have different opinions on what are violation, or injustices. A healthy spiritual person won't go to a place of self-pity because they do go the extra mile, care for, and love people.

Self-pity can spring up in all our relationships: work, play, friendships, families, marriages, and travels or commutes; and from things that are denied us.

If we feel powerful self-pity in the context of hurt feelings (when people seemingly ignore us or are cold towards us) we might be struggling with conceit too (along with trust issues, judging, manipulative tendencies and scoffing) and need to pray about our conceit along with all the mentioned baggage as outlined here…and to be open to the wisdom from above that will fortify our minds and prevent us from falling into the ruts of fleshly blindness again, then to submit to God and resist the devil.

As we persevere in these tactics, we will make progress towards freedom. Yes, there can and will be dramatic results. For me being the proudest person on earth for the longest time the results have usually been felt observably gradually, gradually, and gradually. Yes, there have been very dramatic results for me at times…but not all the time. Give time for the Holy Spirit to help you process your beliefs, feelings, thinking, and attitudes. Don't rush things. If you know you are "really" dealing with sin in your life, then know that God will honor your prayers. Often self-pity has sprung up on many fronts in our lives and it will take time to sort them out, but it will be sorted out eventually because God's promises can route the enemy's strongholds when we cooperate with God to bring them about.

I have found that defending against and attacking our sour-attitudes is best done in dialogue with God, as we experience these negative mind-sets, by using "I"-statements, confession, repenting in prayer, renewing the mind and committing to living out the golden rule (and other New Testament commands), submitting to God, resisting the devil, and seeking healthy, clean, and pure responses in navigating our relationships and looking after ourselves.

HEALING A BROKEN RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD:

As for relationship with God, none are "absolutely" healthy, and many are dead, so there is always room for growth and resurrection. Not wanting to love, or pay the price to love weakens or breaks connection with God and grows "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" within us. So, deciding to commit to love through grace and caring helps to mend our relationship with God. Un forgiveness, envy,

believing lies, judging, pride, and constant-anger can all be walls that keep God out of our lives. Putting one's faith humbly in Jesus is the start and foundation from which to live, be forgiven, and successfully give up sin.

Un forgiveness, envy, believing lies, judging, pride, and constant-anger are roots for many addictions. But there is one more root. This root has to do with trying to fill that God-shaped-vacuum (for peace) within us with idols such as sex, porn, food, junk-food, cigarettes, pot, soda pop, alcohol, exercise, shopping, music, gadgets, people, games, gambling… etc. These idols can feel like magnets that attract us relentlessly. But these can be broken by getting in touch with our wrongly directed hunger and thirst (meant for God) and confessing the wrongness of it to God as sin, owning its history, saying we are sorry, asking for forgiveness and healing, fully receiving it emotionally as well as intellectually (don't skip this step); repenting in prayer from it and asking Jesus to take the idol's place, along with renewing our minds and submitting to God and resisting the devil.

This ought not be rushed, and it is a good idea to pray through this in Jesus' name in whatever areas God brings to our minds, to establish a firm foundation from which we see God as good, kind, patient, and compassionate through which we can tackle the rest the strongholds in our lives through this book. When we've prayed to God renouncing our idols that we previously had put in place of God, then we need to remember that we did so because we wanted peace but the idols could not satisfy our hunger and thirst for this good thing: "the peace"; only God can. Often we wrongly look for "peace" with certain parts of our bodies. If we have gluttony in our lives for instance, then feeling the location that most gives pleasure when eating is where we are seeking our "peace." If this is the case, then to give up seeking peace in that place through prayer is the place to start.

We can do this by praying something like: "I give up my gluttony with your help Lord Jesus" and saying to the sin: "I don't need you right now because Jesus is enough" and this should bring some relief. When we feel tempted again we repeat the prayer and eventually we begin to know Jesus as our peace and temptation is all but gone. I talk more about this in the Essay called "Cycles of Addiction" from this Website found on the "Insights" page. This is not the only possible root to addictions, so other medicine might be needed too.

It is only fitting that when we worship God one of the things we can do is call Him "our Peace" and accept Him in faith. But all this can be done in vain if we don't nurture our relationships with God. To do this we need to seek God with all our hearts and this means spending time with God, speaking with Him, listening, and saying no to other distractions and pursuits that would seek to supplant relationship with God. Reading theology or self-help books do not count as time spent with God, even though they can be beneficial in many ways. Relationship is

not only knowing about somebody, but interacting with somebody in meaningful ways. One way is to practice two-way-journaling by pouring out our hearts to God and listening to and writing down His spontaneous responses.

Jesus said that He is the true Vine and that we are the branches. His life should flow into us. When we abide in Him, then His life flows into that God shaped vacuum that has an appetite and thirst for God. We must abide in Him with Him in us, if we are to bear good fruit. To abide in Jesus means to humble oneself and jettison through prayer the idols (we are aware of) so the life of the Jesus can fully sustain us. Saint John told us to keep away from idols. Next, to abide in Jesus means our allegiance belongs to Him and not to the world, the devil, and the flesh. When God teaches us something we need to hold onto it. When people tell us something contrary to the Good News then that is the world's message that we ought to reject lovingly, gently, patiently, respectfully, and caring ly; not judgmentally, coldly, meanly, angrily, hostilely, ugly, or hatefully. Next, we develop our relationship with God as stated in the previous paragraph. And then out of our relationship with God we do what God asks with healthy attitudes.

"The tree of knowledge of good and evil" when mature leads to much idol worship and competes for our devotion and time that we would otherwise give to God. In dismantling this horrible structure with the tools developed in this book we can grow in relationship with God and others through faith in Jesus.

Note, the devils try to attract us with idols and not to themselves because the things in this world still reflect a part of God's glory, but the devils do not because the devils are ugly and we are not attracted to them. A devils only power is in its lying tongue trying to make us fear or covet things with empty promises so we will land up worshipping those idols.

Throughout each day, we can encounter situations that baffle us, and seem to dry up the soft places in our hearts turning us into cold, dry, judgmental and abrasive people interiorly even though outwardly we wear masks to keep peace, or to do damage control. When this happens remember that talking to God about it in conversation is where to start. It is always the place to start. God may first point out un forgiveness in our hearts that need to be dealt with, or lies we believed that need to be replaced with truth. Or, to healthily own our anger (it is not a sin). If not, then likely places to turn to for answers are the contents found in this book. The tools mentioned here are all found in the New Testament but brought together to provide a focused strategy to conquer sin and to grow love.

Saint Paul says somewhere in his letters to pray without ceasing. What does he mean? Does he mean to just make requests and petitions and stuff like that all day long? I don't think so...that is too needy, too one-way, too self-centered, and

makes God into the local vending machine. I have noticed that my approach has been to pray asking for stuff only when I get into trouble...with the rest of the time just having long conversations with myself, relying on what I know, believe, mixed up with fear, blind spots, and often being out to lunch or off topic when it comes to what needs to be dealt with. When this happens the thing to do is give up trying to heal myself all by myself, in my own energy and instead obediently trust God.

I now realize that instead of having a conversation with myself all day long, I can have one with the Holy Spirit. And you know what? The ideas and truths that come to mind when I do so are so freeing, calming, and so needed that I know they have come from God, because no amount of my analyzing, scratching my head, and taking leaps in logic have ever given me something so wholesome to hang onto like what the Holy Spirit gives. We have a choice: either a stagnant pond or a life-giving stream flowing into our interior lives.

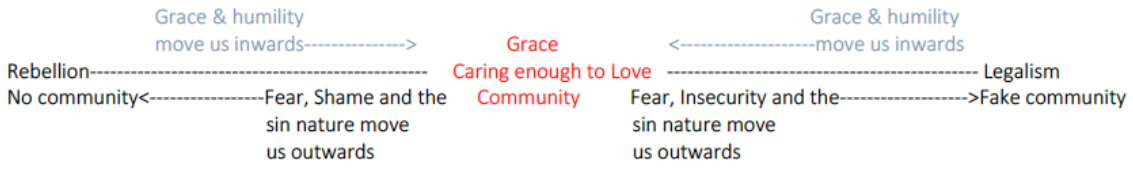
We all need a focus to have direction in life. Knowing, being able to sense the tone, the energy, the attitude, the grace, the truth, and the authority of Jesus' voice and listening to Him brings a peace the world cannot give, and the correct and healthy disposition necessary to walk in this, the valley of the shadow of death. When we start talking to ourselves like Jesus does to us, then we "really" start loving ourselves healthily.

Chapter Six

EXPLAINING & HEALING FEAR

When a relationship with God is broken in some way, fear comes into play. This fear is a building block to "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" within. Fear has much destructive power and can move us to where a sane person would not tread.

Below are two-continuums. In between these is where spiritually healthy individuals embrace grace and love and can form real community. As a person becomes more fear driven either out of insecurity or shame they will move to the right and left respectively in the different contexts of their lives away from the center on the two-continuums in the diagram below. The insecure person will gravitate towards legalism whereas the shame driven person will gravitate towards rebellion.



The “sin nature” within each of us provides the energy and pull to move one away from the center towards the extremes along either continuum through fear, insecurity, shame, and anger when we let it. These extremes of rebellion and legalism aren’t absolute or complete, but are perversions of what “safety” looks like in a healthy community. No community seems “really” safe to those who are hurt or have been threatened with shame because trust only comes when people know they are cared about. Fake community results from those willing to do anything to belong out of insecurity and willing to obey rules to belong.

All Christian communities on earth are not perfect, so when shit and injustices happen within, and we don’t rely on God’s grace and love we move towards either rebellion or legalism because then we don’t fully embrace giving forgiveness, grace, mercy, love and tolerance to those within the community.

Rebellion means we don’t want rules (or the rules from our former community), and out of anger we want self-determination to become the captains of our own ships, and maybe even toy with the idea of being our own gods. We may do so because we want to be strong in the eyes of others and not show our fears or be the objects of shame and ridicule. Some who slowly rebel against the community begin to play around with the idea of hating their former home and for what it stands for.

When we have legalism, then it means we feel insecure, and this moves us to seeking security through rule keeping which leads to measuring and focusing on performance. In this context, the rules slowly become more important than the people in the community. Infractions of the rules will cause guilt in the offenders but anger, judging, and hatred from the legalistic members, and the possibility of discipline or rejection from the colder group leaders and this prompts a “try harder and do more” mentality to avoid pain by the guilty party. The rule keeping will be done more and more out of angry pressure and fear as time goes by. The rules will initially look something like fairness or love, but the practices, energy and interpretations will focus more on conformity based in fear than the unconditional love found in genuine healthy communities as time goes by. No person is perfect, so those people from the group who are legalists will do a lot of pretending; therefore, there is plenty of hypocrisy within, and the fake community will persist in its unhealthy relating style.

Legalism holds people to anal standards impossible to keep in ways most sane people wouldn't imagine. The legalists are often full of self-pity, anger, fear, and are miserable when something challenges their smooth ride or schedule.

DIFFERENT FEARS:

We are all hungry and thirsty people. We have earthly appetites and spiritual appetites. When we don't know how our needs or wants are going to be supplied then we can have plenty of fear. Fear pushes us either to God, or it pushes us to solving our own problems through our own "know-how," "creativity" and "energy". When we choose unbelief, and ignore God we will use pride to meet our physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. It is what we do with our fear that matters. Simply giving up the fear and believing God for His ever-helping-presence and His provisions in prayer is the wise path to take, and helps kill the life belonging to the whole "tree of knowledge of good and evil" within us. The less fear within us the more we are rooted in love.

There are other fears such as having to pay the price for certain consequences, having to wait for people, to be inconvenienced, not getting attention or recognition, not getting one's way, having to work or sacrifice, or having to commit to loving a person or group of people. We need to give up these fears as directed below.

Fears of the known and unknown can also be powerful motivators (especially in creating judging[5]). If we are unhealthily angry it often is because of fear because fear produces all the vices that, in turn produce all sorts of anger and judging. If we have a severed relationship with God, we will attempt to do many things apart from Him out of fear. And we will (seek to) give ourselves the credit for our results; blame God when stuff goes wrong, and we will use methodologies that are not only unhealthy but are harmful and independent from God's grace. Such methods of action do kill supernatural unconditional love also known as "grace".

God "really" wants to help us so He does everything in His power to restore us to Himself. The fears we have need to be dealt with.

Giving up our fears in prayer is done by confronting them, meeting them head on, and confronting them with common sense truth, biblical truth, God's promises, and intellectually and emotionally embracing God's love. Making a list of fears, and praying through them is key. Love casts out all fear with truth that is positive, humble, respects boundaries and starts healthy believing and thinking based on the touches of God. This does not mean that we ought to act like suckers, or parasites towards the people in our lives to get love, and feel love; love sets free. It is not wise to pray: "Jesus, I wish you were my meaning and peace (as well as life and joy)". But it is wise to pray something like: "I give up my fear of '_____' in faith with your help dear Jesus; and God I choose you as my source of LOVE in its place", and then to invoke the promises found in Scripture that push our fears

[5] Grateful to my friend Anita for this insight!

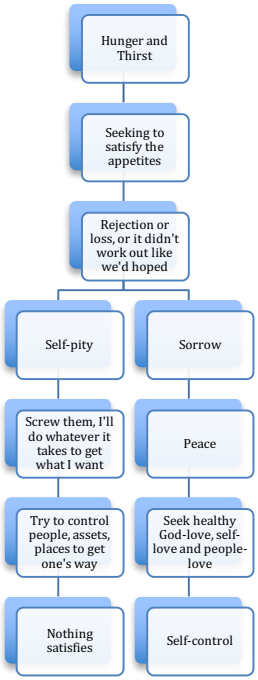
away. When we do the latter, we are opening the doors of faith, putting to death our fears by changing what we believe, and giving God His rightful place, being the center of our lives.

Now it is true that love casts out all fear. When we know that we are loved then accusations in our heads that question that love will easily be deflected with our shields of faith. Fear can be crippling when it turns into self-pity, worry, cowardice and conceitedness. Knowing who God is and who we are in Him is very important when it comes to listening to our intuitions. Listening to our spirits when they say trust or don't trust a person in our lives will give peace and remove fears that otherwise could drive us crazy and paranoid. Listening to the Holy Spirit is also important, along with reading and understanding the Holy Scriptures. All relationships are based on trust, or the lack thereof.

Giving up a fear by committing and saying to it, "I give you up through God's grace" is wiser than just trying to say to it, "no". The former is freeing, whereas, the latter tries to use force usually ending in a power struggle with the flesh being given a stronger in-your-face-presence with more temptation in our backyards spiritually speaking. Making this switch in how we speak to our "fears" along with all "sins" can be life altering.

HEALING FEAR & SELF-PITY:

Fear can motivate self-pity because of loss, supposed unfairness, and possible despair. We can go around searching for ways to feed our appetites, but when they aren't satisfied through God or spouses, or parents, or children, or friends, or coworkers, or employers for whatever reasons, then either we move to sorrow or self-pity because of the seeming-unfairness. If we move to sorrow, then we will move to self-control and not look for unhealthy ways to get our hunger and thirsts met. If we move to self-pity we will move to trying to control others or whatever is at our disposal in unhealthy ways to get our way. These thoughts are summarized in the diagram:



Jesus said that He had food that His disciples knew nothing about. His food was to do the will of His Father. Jesus is saying that there are real rewards like meaning, purpose, happiness, and fulfillment in healthily seeking to do and accomplish what God desires from us, and these are more satisfying than instant gratification or earthly hunger and thirsts. Love does not seek its own in any relationship. We are wired for altruism, nobleness, and honor because we are made in the image of God despite being infected with the “sin nature”.

There is a real difference in godly sorrow versus self-pity. Sorrow is selfless-rational-sadness. Self-pity is self-centered-irrational-sadness. Self-pity can lead to suicide, whereas sorrow leads to giving one’s life so that others can live. So, self-pity goes to the point of possibly taking life; whereas godly sorrow seeks to give life.

People who can't take a perfectly good “No!” for an answer to a request will sulk and have plenty of self-pity if they don't take by force what they covet. Learning to accept awkward people, situations, and unfairness in life, and giving people the right to refuse will transform one’s “ME” attitude into humility and love.

Realizing any bad structures in us when they rear their ugly heads in our consciousness is necessary for change. We need to repent in prayer from the bad structures; and say, “yes” to healthier structures. Healthy relationships with God/ Jesus are the only ways to conquer and dismantle these dead structures. It is in the context of relationship with Jesus, community, and prayer where we find

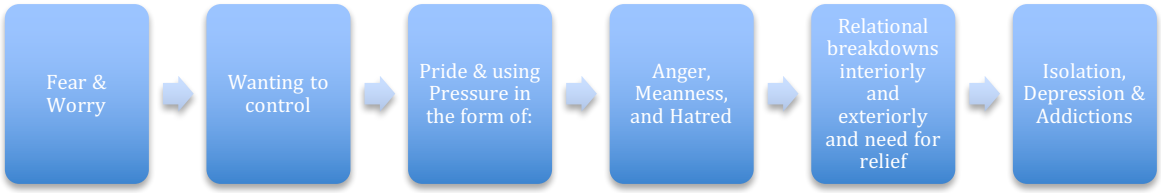
change. In this book, I will repeat the importance of the concepts of confession, repentance in prayer, renewing the mind, and inviting God into our lives, hearts, committing to Jesus' teaching/ grace/ commands/ and promises, in communion, fellowship, and obedience that springs out of faith as necessary and sufficient to kill all these pride-related-attitudes that are lived out by us to varying degrees and to become lovers not defeated and people not stuck in living life through the power coming from "the tree of knowledge of good and evil.".

HEALING: FEAR, WORRY, & PRESSURE:

I have wobbled back and forth from being too easy on myself to being too hard on myself. I have erred on being too hard (or mean) to myself most my adult life. This pressure caused a lot of stress until it was removed, but it did have health-related-repercussions in my body because of what went on in the mind. Listening to one's body allows one to in part recognize one's unhealthy attitudes of pride/ pressure/ and being hard (meanness) on oneself. One can't get rid of being hard, angry, and mean with oneself by being hard, angry, and mean with oneself.

Being hard on others means we are hard on ourselves. This is a "reap what you sow" kind of justice. If we seek to start loving others like we want to be treated, then we start to draw and grow positive energy or grace, but we need to deal with the past deposit and growth of pressure, meanness, and pride through prayer.

Being hard on oneself is a result of pride which is a result of fear and worry. When we have fear we will worry, and worry leads to the need to control which leads to pressure which leads to meanness, anger, and hatred. When we are hard on ourselves (mean to ourselves) we will be hard on others. When we are hard on ourselves we will do so in God's throne room too.



I have realized that I ought not try to manufacture gentleness, and heartfelt ness when I honestly attempt to confess to God and do business with Him in prayer. I need to be real, honest (not magnifying or minimizing my sins), or more exactly, I need to be truthful and be myself. Being hard on oneself is an attitude or disposition that needs to be jettisoned through prayer as we encounter it. And we need to deal with putting pressure on ourselves, worrying, and giving into our fears about the future through trust. Yes, confession and repentance in prayer are very important, but we need to deal with our thinking through wisdom and seeing

things in new ways. If Jesus is gentle with us, we ought to be gentle with ourselves and act out of the good in our hearts. This is called renewing the mind. We need to invite the Spirit of Jesus into our darkness, and emptiness; asking Him for healing, and listening to Him in patience, asking questions that can lead to wisdom, and knowing how to pray so things get processed-healthily and are dealt with, are all important.

When we have crippling pressure, or black meanness, then we must realize that it did not get that way over night. Looking back and admitting as much of it (along with the pride and worry) to ourselves and God as we can remember is important because we can then see how the habit formed in us over the years and just how much we need to change our wrong thinking, unhealthy commitments, and idol worship. God will in forgiving us cleanses us.

I'm powerless to control others: God, family, spouse, friends, coworkers, bosses, people on the street, on the buses, and in line ups, and accepting this powerlessness is key to working on dispensing grace instead. Controlling others is an illusion. We can be so bound to wanting to control people, being impatient with them. There is no rest or peace in seeking our own wills. Praying for God's will to be done is important to breaking this cycle. There is peace in seeking God's will, and it moves us away from unhealthy expectations, and selfishness. Wanting to control people to save our lives also comes from the energy found in our "sin nature".

We determined our wrong thinking by accepting untruths or lies spoken to us. We must take responsibility for this, and realize that God is willing to help us change in repentance and guiding us to new thinking. Praying like a wimp saying: "Oh God, I so much want to change, poor-me, I hurt so much, I so much want to change. Amen!" will not work because it is superficial, and leaves everything to God. We must search out what is in our hearts with God's Light and help, repent in strategic prayer, and put to death the weak "poor me I can't do it" attitudes (of worry and fear) in our hearts by resting our faith on God's promises. Then invite the Spirit of Jesus into our darkness to replace the fear and worry with believing God's promises, since "we can do all things through Christ Jesus who strengthens us." There are two-actual-addiction-cycles, one involves putting pressure on oneself, the other fear. I will talk about them in an article found in this Website on the "Insights" page called "Cycles of Addiction".

HEALING COWARDICE:

I heard it said in a recent Batman movie, "that some people are not afraid to die" along with the question: "But are they afraid to live?" I'm not afraid to die…but deep down inside I just wanted an easy cushy, and wimpy passage to Heaven. I did

not want to live, I saw it as exhausting, draining, and I feared and hated the burden. Basically, I was afraid to live. This is cowardice…and it does make us demanding, judgmental, and un loving because we don't want to pay the price of living life or loving people. This attitude is negative and attracts negativity to us and gives room for demons to work in our lives. When we are not wanting to pay the price, we take shortcuts. Hence we have sloth, instant gratification, and gluttony too, just to feel good by numbing the negative. Not wanting to pay the price for stuff in our lives leads to not wanting to pay the price to love others. Praying to Jesus through this issue as is suggested in this book, will bring life and freedom…not the opposite of depression, self-centered ness, boredom, and despair.

If you selfishly don't want to live, then you can't expect the Holy Spirit to fully indwell you especially when most of your needs are met. God grants His empowering-grace to the humble, and less so to the cowardly.

Crippling fear is the nemesis of courage. Fear is a feeling that can become an attitude that causes us to back away weakly from confrontation. If we have negative, poisoned and hurtful speech then confrontation is a "no" until we deal with the fear and cowardice, and renew our minds with healthy thinking, speech, and relating that lends itself to non-violence as a pathway to peace.

The Bible says that being cowardly is unhealthy. Cowardice is produced by fear, so confessing our cowardice as wrong, owning its history, saying we are sorry to God, receiving forgiveness and healing (of our emotions and thought life), repenting in prayer, and receiving grace to get out of our comfort zones in real life by getting into the Word of God to renew our minds on how to love more deeply there in, while submitting to Jesus' teaching (we are more than conquerors); submitting to Jesus leadership and resisting the devil's (lies, temptations, and seductions) will slowly bring healing and courage, and get us to live for something greater than ourselves.

HEALING CONCEIT:

I never knew that I was conceited until I heard what the word "actually" means. Conceited ness is a fear of not being respected or honored and using all means to achieve it or protect it. Being conceited means one is self-focused, selfish or greedy for attention or fearful of not being esteemed or belonging. To seek self-esteem has to do with ego.

There is a relationship between self-pity, conceited ness, and justice that I discovered in my interior life. I encountered it one morning. I realized that I wanted foremost to be respected by another person rather than to speak the truth in love. If I were to confront the person the possibility of unsettling the

person and so seemingly robbing myself of the honor, respect and esteem I felt in his eyes, did not look appealing. In not speaking up I was trying to protect my honor but I hated it because I felt an injustice was visited on me that needed to be rectified. I was caught between justice (just plain putting an end to an injustice, but not retributive justice (aka revenge)) and unhealthy honor. It was a dead end if I chose unhealthy honor above the need for justice because then I'd just endlessly experience self-pity because I would see that I was stuck. If I choose justice over unhealthy honor, then the conceitedness is struck a blow. I did this. But if that is all I do then my conceitedness would bother me something fierce. I realized that two further things need to happen for closure. (1) Confessing and repenting of the conceit, selfishness, pride, and fears I had yet not dealt with in this context, in prayer to God; this would also deal a death blow to my self-pity. (2) Then, after I stand up for the desired justice, when the old conceit tries to reassert itself, I need to choose and commit to justice instead of unhealthy honor to cement the victory.

God used the definition of conceit to illumine the construct (below) within me so that I could start to repent from it and find more freedom to care, love, and feel empathy for others and so connect with them in more meaningful ways.

Being conceited is a fear based attitude that works together with both pride and envy that lead to isolation and emptiness.

We break the strongholds of conceit (together with addressing selfishness, pride, and fear) in prayer by confessing it when it becomes an issue. Then repenting with Jesus' help in prayer. Giving up trying to establish one's own supposed: honor/ respect/ and glory out of pride is important and replacing it with seeking true honor and true justice. When we choose healthy justice, we have healthy honor; but if seek honor above justice our moral compasses get screwed up and we get stuck with loads of self-pity and if we are violent we will engage in brutality.

We can have conceit in many different relationships and situations in our lives, so when our conceitedness tries to reassert itself again and again, we confess and repent in prayer to God again and again, and each time renew our minds with Jesus' truths/ commands/ promises/ teachings/ and unconditional love, so we begin to see the world and people differently through the eyes of grace and follow through with obedience. Seeking justice (restorative, or just stopping injustices, not retributive justice (revenge)) establishes humility and kills conceit. Growing in

gentleness and appreciating the worth of others is key. We do this by choosing to care for others, and to live out the "golden rule" when it comes to receiving and giving grace. Believing others have worth gives us faith that we have worth too. They go together. This also helps to kill our conceitedness, and turns us into servants instead of pursuing selfish ambition. Fighting off self-pity in this context is also important.

Our battle with conceit cannot be defeated when we refused someone justice because we were too busy protecting our respectability unless we do process it in prayer as outlined above, and make possible needed amends.

Chapter Seven

EXPLAINING & HEALING PRIDE

Pride is the next building block to "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" after fear. Pride decides it knows better than anyone else on how to approach life/ and navigate fears especially in the face of traumatic hurtful experiences. So as it grows so does the structure known as "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" within us. People who try to save themselves by their own bootstraps and refuse to humbly call on Jesus are acting out of pride. Pride does not trust anyone and is consumed with fears (hence wearing masks), and with giving oneself all the credit for accomplishments and distorts how one sees reality. Pride thinks we are better than other people (hence the tendency to judge people). When people do hurt us we can feel justified in our proud reactions. We will take wild jumps in reasoning and lose our ability to see reality in ourselves, and our relationships; we will see people in a distorted way. This needs to be healed.

To Kill the stronghold of pride, we need to uncover the lies we believed in the contexts of the hurts we experienced and the other fears we hold onto. To help mortify pride (and for this I am in debt to Websites found through Google search results) is to give God credit for all that He gives to whomever He gives. That means expressing gratitude to God in prayer and in the heat of the moment. This requires us to see God with the eyes of faith that say He is good, generous and kind to all (and thanking Him despite the situations where we feel it is the opposite) for this is freeing. This is not enough…we should confront the pockets of pride (we feel) that say we are superior and more significant than others, with potent and sober truth (inviting Jesus into each space) along with correct thinking that puts things into perspective. This requires that we see our pride as foolishness, and ridiculous. This is the beginning of renewing the mind.

Confessing our foolishness for believing the lies we hold onto, and confessing the wrongness, and history of our proud attitudes is where we start. Then to repent in

prayer from our proud attitudes and the wrongs and hurts that come from our proud attitudes.

Being open to learning new things is key to practicing humility (instead of being closed minded) and that means listening to others. So, we pray for humility. To further de-throne pride we put to death fear by putting our faith in a merciful caring, graceful, and compassionate Jesus. Fear motivates trying to control people, things, and situations usually all by ourselves and that leads to living out pride which says one knows better than anyone else.

Confessing this to God brings forgiveness, relief, peace, and a sense of starting over. It removes the guilt. Confession together with repentance in prayer, renewing the mind, submitting to God, and living out the "golden rule" in the context of "grace" will deal with our past proud habits, proud thinking, proud attitudes, and proud actions. Seeking to do God's will means we don't see ourselves in control and such is very healthy and humble. In slowly breaking pride, we move from negativity to positivity in our journeys. It also requires spending time with God.

From the Website page:

http://www.fabsharford.com/6-weapons-to-Kill the stronghold of-pride/

we get the six tips below in "bold text" that help to Kill the stronghold of pride (the Website is a must read) the rest in parenthesis below is either commentary from myself or from other sources:

(1) **Consider the ridiculousness of pride** (Pope Francis said: When you believe that you are better than others: remember your worst sins and know that you wouldn't wish others to see or know about them).

(2) **View each day as an opportunity to forget yourself and serve others** (Consider others as more significant than yourself). This begins at home, commuting back and forth from work, and at work, as well as in social circles. It starts by rejecting a lazy superiority and to grow in seeing the value of people other than oneself. See point (15) below for more).

(3) **Seek a deeper knowledge of God** (This is done by pursuing intimacy with God…this requires becoming dependent on God and aiming to be open with God…not becoming "only" sin focused all the time (this keeps one's focus away from God which is not wise). Also, meditate on the cross of Jesus and His solidarity with us in the Gospels. This takes away the pressures, and comparisons that lead to pride. Read helpful books on prayer, humility, and love that inspire us to follow God and grow in humility, tolerance and love).

(4) **Read the biographies of great saints** (Also listening to what others say, think,

believe, and do with not wanting to judge them helps us learn from them. This is helpful in nurturing humility that leads to love. Be careful to not only seek head knowledge (see point (2) above). Everyone is a vehicle of meaning from one degree to another so don't discount anyone's opinion based on religion, color, age, or culture… Loyalty can either be a downfall or it can help…whatever leads to love is humility based).

(5) **Remember daily the danger of pride** (Just because we find ourselves struggling with pride seemingly because we have incorporated a new belief into our paradigm does not mean that the belief should be rejected. Often there are other beliefs, ideas and understandings that need to be incorporated into our lives that will help stabilize us and help to humble us and fight off the pride. We are complex creatures and we need to realize that much is hidden from us…so patience is required when we come to reject or accept stuff. Remember that unhealthy independence when it comes to how we are going to live our lives is not wise. So, pursue wisdom and realize that real wisdom is practiced and is not a cursory familiarity with certain notions/ ethics/ or morality).

(6) **Pray for help to practice humility** (Why pray for it? Is it because you want to be holy? What is holiness anyways? Holiness is spiritual healthiness, not superficiality, a projected image, or merely a reputation that has no trusted foundations).

These next fifteen-tips below I came across in my journey; the first four were given to me by the Holy Spirit and have been very helpful in Killing my stronghold of pride; tip (11) below was given to me by my wife Sophie (and has the power to get us to live in the moment because pride/ negativity all too often focuses on what is not; whereas humility focuses on what is):

(7) **Change my attitude from, "Impress me" to, "I care for you".** This is done by confessing in the moment the wrongness of this attitude of, "Impress me" to God and deliberately replacing it with, "I care for you" in each context. I have often said to myself in my head: "I don't care" about this or that thing...and I then realized that there can at times an unwholesome judgment behind it when I invoke it, meaning pride and fear along with trust issues between me and my God needing to be dealt with.

(8) **In Prayer confess the exact nature and history of my Pride-Based-Attitudes, owning them as my own telling God I'm sorry and asking Him to forgive me while I'm still connected to the attitudes I want gone: attitudes such as scoffing, ridiculing, and thinking-the-worst-of-others, because these go against humility and love; then to repent in prayer from them, and replace this negativity with thanksgiving.**

An anally proud attitude can say:

> Impress me; scoff, scoff, scoff...You aren't putting out...I'm better than what you have to offer…I'd rather indulge in my negative, poor-me-unhappiness because you disappoint me and don't give me the attention I need or want; or, won't entertain me! I have seen better, you have nothing that would make me happy...because it takes a lot to impress me and you aren't coming through because you are not creative enough, sacrificial enough...good-looking enough…rich enough...funny enough…kind enough… and special enough…etc.

We need to start where we are at. Praying prayers like those suggested in this book won't work if we aren't connecting to the emotions/attitudes of scoffing, ridiculing, and thinking-the-worst-of-others we have entertained. One needs to pray and ask in faith until these dark vices are broken and are replaced by healthiness. The best way to do so is to stand on God's promises, be conscious and connected to our hearts (emotions/ desires/ commitments) and seek God with all our hearts/ minds and to not give up.

(9) Practice genuine thanksgiving for the good and the bad: the good because it is good; and the bad because God can and often does use it for good eventually. Commit in prayer to God that He is "absolutely" good, praise Him for His goodness, rest in His love, and focus on Him and not on how holy, pious, and wise you are (in worship or in your theology, or actions). Worshipping God kills our pride. Worshipping God regularly with Him the focus is healthy. God does not need our worship; but He ought to be the focus of our worship and praise because that puts the credit for good things in the right place.

Coming into God's presence with thanksgiving, from the holy ground set aside in our hearts is the only way to gain access to God's presence in friendship. We can't cast out Satan with Satan. We can't cast out darkness with darkness. We can't cast out meanness with meanness. We can't cast out hostility with hostility. But when we come with clean energy, God will add to that even if our energy is a hunger and thirst for righteousness with tears.

(10) Put my trust in Jesus to save me from my sin, and to love supernaturally in my own way. Submit to God and resist the devil. Submitting to God also means putting up with stuff that God allows into our lives that is negative without complaining/ criticizing/ or judging; i.e.) tolerate the uncomfortable and agree to live with the consequences of other people's hurtfulness towards us; i.e.) forgive from the heart. Submitting to God also means submitting to His teaching and leadership. The most authoritative teaching is found in the New Testament. Then go and do the good works God has prepared in advance for us to do.

(11) **"Focus on the opportunity in the difficulty; not on the difficulty of the opportunity".** Got this quote from the wife that when applied in the presence of self-pity (which usually means pride/ envy/ greed/… are within) kills the self-pity: It is a fitting way to kill self-pity, negativity, complaining, blaming, ugly anger, and calls of unfairness. It kills sloth, envy, and greed) and creates a great work ethic, and aids the creative process. This is a principle that when practiced allows one to live in the moment. Problems and difficulties require processes to diagnose and solve, and when there are no immediate solutions then powerlessness, depression, and self-pity can result and this can fuel our negativity, anger and direct our attention away from what we can do. When engaged in a project, we can focus on what is still not done or we can focus on what we are doing and has been done. The latter gets us into the moment and makes us feel good, the former will weigh on us so long as the tasks are not done and can steal our motivation and make us feel a lot self-pity along with the temptation to give into sloth and so quit.

(12) **Start seeing people as "special" in a true and healthy way**. A fleshly insensitive-energy that I had, had these thoughts behind it.

> Some people "really" think they are, "so damned" special. You just can't trust them. They are so predictable. They will do anything to pull one over you. They only care for themselves. I see through them. They think they are oh so special. They think they own the world. I'm better than them.

These words come from someone who has been hurt badly, turned scoffer, is skeptical, is sour, is jaded, and has no hope in people. These words drip with self-pity, pride, envy, hurt, and an, "I will show them I'm better and more special"-attitude. People who have been hurt badly can lash out in this way: The hurting land up hurting others. But this does not have to be permanent. Obviously there needs to be forgiveness directed at one's enemies that will bring healing. And that starts with feeling one's wound using "I"-statements instead of judging the people as expressed in the rant above. This gets us in touch with our feelings.

We can see just how irrational the thoughts are behind some of our attitudes or feelings. When one feels a fleshly insensitivity within oneself, countering the lie of: "I'm better than them" behind that dark energy with, "I'm not better than them; and we are what we are" is the medicine that helps to kill this rise of pride within. We have power to choose our thoughts, thinking, words, tone of voice used, and their energy, so that they can be healing instead of toxic.

If we don't see people as special in healthy ways, we might go to a place where we become arrogant, and try to flaunt our supposed superiority or "special ness" in other people's faces. Each person bears the image of God stamped on their souls.

We need to respect the whole person. People respond to kindness more warmly than anger. When we have prayed through our strongholds of arrogance (however much we have it), then countering our pride with the truth that: "all of us are special in our own unique ways", together with declaring/praying out loud that our personal walls/ boundaries of superiority are dismantled and lowered through trust in Jesus, forgiveness, caring, and love; and declaring all real estate in our hearts to belong to God, and no longer to the devil, will let more good stuff in, but also help us to love outwardly in newer more intimate ways which means we are more victorious against pride through Jesus' care, grace, and mercy.

Sometime praying even deeper about a sinful stronghold may be needed. Here are two such ways:

a. Praying the scriptures. Here is an example of my own: after Jesus taught the Sermon on the Mount (that was all about humility in action), and goes His way with many following Him. A Leper comes up to Him and tells Jesus that if Jesus is willing He can heal him. Jesus does. To pray this I have visualized myself as the Leper (but with a certain attitude of pride in my life being my skin disease) with me kneeling before Jesus, and asking Him to heal me. And He did.
b. Going back to our painful memories and looking for where Jesus is in those hurtful scenes and to ask Him to speak healing into the painful memory (there are many healthy books on this topic) can bring health too. He might speak a word to us that opens up an overlooked area of sin that we need to deal with in prayer that can possibly resolve our painful memory.

(13) Use your higher right to sacrifice your lower rights. Pride says I got to have the best, be the best, or have what others have. Pride often means an attitude of self-entitlement. With such attitudes anger is not far away when what we have is threatened or violated, ridiculed, stolen or disrespected. The way to conquer this area is, "to yield our personal rights and possessions to God and allow Him to return them back to us as privileges"[6] in His time. Everything we have is a gift from God. Even if we fought to keep the devil from stealing it, we don't own it, we can't demand it from God even if it is a "right" or a "normal" part of everyday human existence. Self-made people think everyone including God owes them what they hold dear.

But, people who respect God also have pride, and so can and do have varying degrees of entitlement, dearly held onto rights, and things we hold onto that we

[6] Bill Gather

feel very strongly about and protecting them sometimes in very mean ways. When our rights are violated we will get angry unless we have given those rights to God. Jesus did not count equality with God as something to be grasped or exploited. He humbled Himself in total respect for who He was, and did it out of His humility, His love, and His care for humanity. We are called to imitate Him. But we can't do it through our own strength, our own wisdom, and our self-righteousness. If we do, then we become, "spiritless, characterless, and religious-robots."[7] We need to approach this task through humble prayer, taking Jesus as our model and using Scripture as our encouragement and support. If we have self-pity, anger, feelings of injustice, and calls of unfairness in giving up our rights, or entitlements then we are not doing it with Jesus' help. Joy, freedom, kindness, patience, and peace should be the outcome when we give up our rights or entitlements in a healthy way.

When we have difficulty in forgiving a coworker for not respecting us, or for not obeying a rule that in our eyes symbolizes respect for us when kept, or whose actions make us go farther than our self-honor seeks to permit, then the anger can only be eliminated when we give up our pomp, our surge to protect our honor, and give up "our" right to the "respect we covet or desire from others", through Jesus' example, power, joy, humor, and wisdom through heartfelt prayer.

In prayer, I have found confessing my supposed entitlements, repenting in faith from holding onto them rudely, declaring Jesus as Lord and Savior (all in those areas of my life where I cling onto my rights, as a jerk would, along with recounting the history of doing it in meanness and self-pity) as the best way to clear this stronghold in my relational life. It is so easy to think that people owe us, to view them as useful only so long as they serve a purpose in our lives. Humility loves people not because of all their power, intellect, and creativity, but because they have worth, dignity, and a destiny. An Example:

> I have strongly felt entitled to quietness about me so that I could determine my own thoughts; not others, or be pestered with annoying sounds. When I did not get, the quiet I wanted, I'd get nasty and self-pitying inside and when pushed to it I'd act like a jerk. Now I pray about it to God, admitting my dogmatic commitment to being nasty and mean inside when my sense of entitlement is threatened. I receive forgiveness, and repent in prayer as thoroughly as possible. And with God's grace give up my entitlement. This approach is not done though being a whipping-boy, or defacing my personhood, but through the example, grace and presence of Jesus Christ.

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[7] Mark Virkler, Counseled by God, p. 96

(14) **Practice forgiveness and process our emotions.** Not forgiving punishes us not those who hurt us. Also, we need to deal with our anger, confusion, and broken expectations when they show up by owning our feelings in prayer to God with the help of "I"-statements that move us from judging to truth telling. Knowing that God feels our struggles, and just getting in touch with our feelings goes a long way to healthily processing them. Not processing all this limits or kills our ability to practice the "golden rule." In processing our feelings, we get in touch with how God wired us which is to be noble, kind, pure, healthy, and at peace. The flesh can't compete with the Spirit; we are made for the Spirit.

(15) **Practice humility; not just Killing the stronghold of pride:** Yes, there is a place for Killing the stronghold of pride, but something must take its place. There is death, but it is not complete without resurrection. Jesus is the Resurrection. Committing to viewing oneself the way God sees us is a part of humility. This isn't supposed to be a static state, but a dynamic way and a work in progress. Let's not settle for Law, having to have things personally fair all the time, demanding our rights meanly, having to be first all the time, and only being concerned about getting to heaven. "Anyone who seeks to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life will gain it". Jesus' commands are high enough to steer us in the right direction, and He comes into us to not only help us fulfill the OT Law, but more, to care for our neighbors in tangible ways. When we grow in the fruit of the Spirit then we know that we are growing in humility.

The strategy to confront negative strongholds is to admit they are in our lives, but to say to them we don't need them right now because God provides for our needs with His grace and peace. All sins are done because we come to falsely believe that they will fulfill our needs. Admitting this in each context, and mourning the losses incurred by the sins because they "really" promise emptiness, and committing to and connecting with Jesus as Prince of Peace is key to moving on. We need to do this emotionally as well as intellectually. In this way we count dead previous strongholds of sin, and embrace the full life promised by Jesus. Nature hates vacuums so we should replace sin with virtues. Virtues come from clean energy and peace and the presence of God.

Note, this process of repenting prayer asks us to deal with the lies that we believed in the moments we were seduced to become slaves of certain sins that became strongholds in our lives. These lies are the reasons why certain idols were used to try to satisfy our needs.

For instance, it we were hurt by being rejected, we can be deceived into believing the lie that acquiring a conceited attitude will protect our self-images and give us the sense that we are still likable. Or, we might believe the lie that we need to project a strong and arrogant attitude to others so they won't think we are hurt

and weak inside. Both these instances help to destroy the image of God we are made in. They destroy identity, and rob us of being fully loved and reciprocating love.

Overnight success won't necessarily happen…but a gradual process of renewal will be formed as new patterns of thinking, talking, and acting are slowly formed. The "thou shall not's" or the "no, no…no's" by themselves in the face of fleshly energy are not sufficient for positive victory and healthy change…they leave us stuck and defeated…we need negative-attitudes-habits replaced with positive-attitude-actions. Jesus offers this to all of us through His presence, His teaching, His Commands, and His guiding strength all correctly focused.

(16) Humility grows when we aim for love. Humility does not grow when our foremost aim is to acquire truth, because then all we are looking for is informative-insights that may broaden knowledge (which can lead to pride) and we won't get beyond it to connecting with people which is what love is all about. When we are "people" focused, then in caring for them we will find ways to grow in love which means growing in humility too.

(17) Focus on whatever is true, positive, uplifting, kind, clean, and gentle. The ability to love is sustained by focusing on Jesus and nurturing clean and pure energy within to love people. Once we have confessed our sins, we focus on Jesus and doing His will. "Whatever we focus on will grow inside of us. What grows inside of us we become."[8] Now, Jesus is Lord, and so has authority, but He is gentle, kind, and honest; and does not meanly and angrily lead us to obedience. So, we too should not meanly, dryly, angrily, and unkindly expect obedience from ourselves and others. It is God's kindness that leads us to repentance.

(18) Become able to accept people's choices when they say "No!". This will open doors of love in our hearts, make us generous, kind, and compassionate instead of stuck, mean, judgmental, and angry all the time.

(19) When one gets healthier within in an area don't compare oneself to others. Because then we undo the blessings coming from God.

(20) When one gets proud of the little humility one does have, then healing comes when one confesses it to God, repents from it in prayer, renew one's mind, submits to God, and accepts one's cross.

(21) When one starts to spout off about how one achieved, earned, or created through pain, work, or intellect certain accomplishments, then one needs to humble oneself.

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[8] Mark Virkler

EXPLAINING AND HEALING PRESSURE, & FORCE:

Humility is gentle, whereas pride uses pressure (which is usually inwardly focused on self and manipulatively on others) and force (which is usually directed outwards at others). Pressure hardens our hearts and violates other people's boundaries, it is often angry, abusive, cold, hateful, mean, sinister, and strives using a whip to get its stinging way usually with the aim of some misguided perfectionism. When pride uses force, it does so because it treats people as objects or tools to be dropped or picked up when needed. There is little peace in the hearts of those who put pressure on themselves through pride. There is little community for those who hold fearlessly and insensitively to using Force to get their way. People with these characteristics will treat animals and people the same way…poorly. Using force is usually very ugly (no shame intended; just a warning).

The only way to kill using pressure and force on people is to confess them to God, repent in prayer; and then to deal with them in the context of our pride and fears (as suggested above); and to explore how to see people and animals more healthily. People with this dynamic operating in their lives, need to learn to see the humanity in others, along within themselves. They have believed lies about themselves usually in the face of rejections, or having been hurt by others. Healing of memories through prayer can "really" help in this context.

EXPLAINING AND HEALING ARROGANCE:

Arrogance is defined as an offensive display of superiority or self-importance. It can be a smile on the face when tears are appropriate. It is the most hurtful and hostile kind of pride. When we think, we are better than others (i.e. more special) some of us are tempted to go out of our ways to rub our supposed superiority into the faces of those we despise. Arrogance goes out of its way to hurt people. Arrogance is devoid of love because it seeks to hurt people. Usually a hurt person will land up hurting others. Usually the arrogant are hurting people…or wounded and numbed from the pain within.

Arrogance is an attitude that says I don't care about other people! It says my interests are most important and searches and applies oneself to getting what one wants, but when something blocks the way or when people block the completion of a goal from an arrogant person, he or she will have either meanness or self-pity or both. The meanness will be directed at people, whereas self-pity is sign of defeat and anger turned inwards. Arrogance says I only care about myself and my goals are more important than others.

So how do we personally get in touch with "caring" for others, and how do we nurture or cultivate it? I know everyone is born with a caring spirit. This is so because we are all endowed with the natural loves at our conception when God

knits us together in our mothers' wombs. These caring attitudes can grow or diminish, be stolen from us, or redirected towards things instead of towards people. But caring is ultimately from God, and we can ask Him to make it grow, to heal it, and make it healthy. Caring for healthy things is noble in God's eyes. Arrogance, because it does not care chooses its own self-centered values, and that means it can be industrious or slothful. If industrious, then it cares about rules, quotas and quality more than people. If it is slothful, it will not care about doing work, or doing anything useful. Arrogance goes against grace, love, and caring for people. The following Prayer will help to kill arrogance, and replace it with caring healthily for people:

> Lord Jesus, I confess that over the years I have robbed, handled poorly, wasted, ignored, and defiled the deposit of "caring" you put into my heart at conception. I am so sorry for not having cared for the things you care about. I receive your forgiveness, and healing starting now...and in faith I give up my arrogance and choose to care for people with the grace you have poured into my heart. Please help me to renew the attitude of caring for people in my heart and mind by the inspiration of your Holy Spirit. I submit to your will, and I rest in your love as I choose to live out the "golden rule"...I pray in Jesus' name. Amen!

The Lord promises to provide a way out of every sin: Jesus presence/ teaching/ grace/ commands/ and promises along with those who care in truth are all we need. It is not a good idea to ignore His presence, or refuse to listen to Him and obey Him when He speaks to us directly.

The way out of not caring comes from replacing lies with truth that liberates us. It has been said that if we look for truth to love we won't land up loving because concepts, ideas, and principles eventually become more important as time goes by than love. Also, if we seek power to love, we won't love either. We will always be waiting for more power to love, and when we are weak we won't love because we complain that we don't have enough power to love. Focusing on love out of caring leads to the ability to love. Love is the way; not truth, and not power; but love. Love grows in weakness, not strength. Putting truth or power first distracts us from love. Truth is important only as far as aiding us in love. The ability to love comes from God whether we are weak or strong.

It is not about being in ministry and holding onto power, position, and pedigree so we can somehow love authoritatively and supposedly dispense wisdom. We must focus on love: "doing to others what we would want done to us" and in this way we will live out our destiny and overcome obstacles (lies) in the way of love.

As Christians, we trust in Jesus to save us from our sins and to help us love meaningfully. To renew one's mind, one needs to jettison the judgmental boxes we put people into, and see people as special in the kindest ways possible. Satan sows the lie in our minds that others are proud, saying, "they think they are something special when they are not, we are the humble ones; not them"; and when we believe this we land up judging and being more proud and arrogant than those we judge. The reason this lie is so powerful is that it is done in the context of being hurt by others. When we are hurt by others we can land up having a jaded view of people and start having a crisis of identity. Which is fertile ground for fallen angels to do their mischief and grow arrogance in our lives.

Once we have thoroughly prayed through these issues, then we will willingly seek to lower our walls and un commit to arrogance, and re-commit to love and intimacy, this will allow more wholesome stuff in, and allow more wholesome stuff out. We will need to become more conscientious when it comes to the stuff that wants to come out and deal with the negative in prayer, so more positive stuff comes out. All this will help us warm up to others, be more caring, be more sensitive, and therefore humbler in our attitudes.

Chapter Eight

EXPLAINING & HEALING THE LUST BRANCHES OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

Lust is one of two-building blocks that spring from pride; the other being envy. The building block of lust is found on the left side of "tree of knowledge of good and evil". It looks like love but is not based on truth or honesty and healthiness.

Lust loves to use people and things to optimize pleasure. Lust kills love. Lust cares only for itself. During the day, if we try to push people with needs and requests out of our way, then we are giving in to lust. We should not try to force things over to our liking exteriorly just like it is unhealthy to do it interiorly through pressure. We can try to fit people into our lives or we can die to self-importance and selfish pleasure seeking, let lust die, and care for people more. Lust seeks to "feel good" and "gratified" at the expense of people and will use people for pleasure alone.

We are restless, impatient, angry, and self-pitying when we have lust in our lives. We won't be a Good Samaritan when we are led by lust. Ouch! Finding out where we are at and confessing these things when applicable to God, repenting in prayer, submitting to God out of the renewing of our minds will help to kill this aspect of lust. But then we must also pray through and process our related pride, fear, and broken relationship with God to find healing. Then, we can focus on

living in the moment instead of demanding that everything be made over to suit us. Lust promises us happiness, but never consoles us. Lust is a nightmare in the making.

Lust also desires to "feel good" and "gratified" at the expense of health; and these are its primary motivators. These things lead to sloth and gluttony which are cured through the grace that comes through prayer and changing what we value. The more we remove our idols from our God-shaped vacuums in prayer (inviting Jesus to take His rightful places in our hearts) and renewing our minds with healthy truth and thinking, then the more it will make practicing self-discipline and self-control realistic goals to manage (we will know for the first time that it is do-able with God's empowering presence). Putting pressure on oneself kills self-control and patience. If we have pressure, it too needs to be sorted out through prayer, confession, forgiveness, and repenting in prayer whenever we sense it working in our lives.

As for the thinking-part we need to decide not to go after stuff only because it tastes or feels good or because it is easier to take the lazy way. If certain feelings lead to healthiness good; if not, then one puts to death those feelings by changing how one thinks and believes. One needs to commit to living for a higher purpose than pleasure alone to heal lust. So how does one get started?

One needs to get one's bearings by talking with and reasoning with God in prayer. Then, when He says it is OK to confess (and feel) the lustful attitudes, energy, and thoughts one has, when one has them, to God, owning their histories, asking forgiveness and receiving forgiveness (and God's presence) with thanksgiving (emotionally not just intellectually) in faith, then to repent in prayer with Jesus' help. In feeling our lusts, we will get to explore and know the thinking and rationale behind them. This will then help us to counter the "stinking" thinking by exploring healthy (holy) and more believable thoughts whose inspiration is the Holy Spirit and working the strategy of choosing health over feeling instant gratification alone. We need to consciously put our faith in Jesus to save us from our sins regularly. Then we submit to God; and resist the devil. Death without resurrection is incomplete…Killing the stronghold of lust is empty without focusing on Love and accepting God's will in the uncomfortable situations in our lives.

Temptations to lust are normal.

If the stronghold of lust does not go away after fighting it in this way, then we may have to work: "The Expanded Twelve Steps" found on the "Insights" page from this Website which deals with other possible roots to addictions, such as having resentments.

EXPLAINING & HEALING SLOTH:

Sloth grows out of lust in “the tree of knowledge of good and evil”. Sloth only cares about itself and can’t love. It has no depth, purpose, and no meaning. People who have this sickness of sloth usually put angry pressure on themselves to achieve things. They don’t want to go the extra mile. And get angry when asked to change plans or do extra stuff. We need to see this as wrong and ask the Holy Spirit for the gift of self-discipline. We start by reasoning with the Holy Spirit to find our bearings, then when led to confess (and feel the motivations and energies of) our slothfulness to God (sloth provides counterfeit peace), owning our history of it, saying it is wrong and that we are sorry, and asking for and receiving forgiveness with thanksgiving from God (not just intellectually but emotionally); and then repenting in prayer from sloth. We do this to deal with our history of sloth. Then we pray about it as it relates to our lust, pride, fear, and broken relationship with God. When it tries to reassert itself again and again we confess, and repent in prayer again and again to get at the roots of this illness within us. As we do this we become open to the Holy Spirit’s gift of self-discipline and His healthy teaching meant to bring about healthy thinking and believing. Next we need to submit to God in this area, and resist the devil. Death without resurrection is not complete. The restorative medicine is to seek meaning in love. Love is active…and most of the time we can look to our families and places of work to find outlets of meaningful giving.

I never really thought of myself as a servant and did not have the attitude and healthy disposition of a servant whose heart is wholly devoted to God...but looking into how entitlement operates in my life has brought this more into focus for me. So much written in the Sermon on the Mount is only possible when we give up our strangle hold on: personal fairness, grasping our rights, and instead to follow the example of the Lord Jesus with His grace, and Holy Spirit through transformation through prayer so our hearts and minds change to healthier beliefs, motives, energy, and are led by the Holy Spirit through truth. This fruit is of the Holy Spirit through strategic prayer with Jesus; not through analyzing, and not through psycho-analysis.

Attempting to love like Jesus did in our own energy leads to a struggle that can't be won and invites plenty of self-pity; so, is self-defeating, and is impossible unless the sinful strongholds from the past are dealt with through prayer. Those who seek to follow and obey Jesus and care about living out the Beatitudes out of grace, for example: "Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy" will make great strides in becoming a servant in the life, way, energy, spirit, and likeness belonging to Jesus.

Practicing the “golden rule” will get us out of our comfort zone. We do this not by just giving mental assent to the rule. But we imagine what it looks like and set out

to do it. We may have blockages to being obedient to the “golden rule” at times and this calls for patience and perseverance. Un forgiveness, fears, pride, and lust can all be blocks to loving others in obedience to Jesus. Getting rid of these blocks is done through the strategy outlined in this book. Living out the “golden rule” is easier when we embrace and accept our crosses: difficult circumstances and people, temptations, and the pull of our “sin natures”.

We will slowly learn to see things differently. Instead of seeing things as burdens, nuisances, and pains in the butts, we see them in healthier ways where we start doing something good with God’s help; to contribute instead of acting like a black hole relationally. This will involve prayers where we join with God in faith to change our attitudes and the way we see and act. Wisdom means that we put to death living by our feelings alone and trusting Jesus to save us from our sins instead. Emotionless or shallow prayer achieves nothing!

We are made for work and work is made for us as the New Testament attests: “For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10). All too often the devil tries to steal the good that we can do, and therefore loading on us guilt, poverty, and low self-esteem. This is not the way it ought to be. If we pursue God’s will, confess, and repent in prayer and receive His forgiveness after we fail, then we can overcome sloth. The intensity of prayer needs to be proportionate to the sin.

Also, we need to live in the moment if we want to Kill the stronghold of sloth. We need to kill indulging in too much daydreaming and useless fantasies. A way to do this is to focus on our opportunities and not the difficulties in the opportunities. This can give us a sense of achievement, and healthy pride, and will help eat away at our self-pity.

People who dwell on injustices or unfairness can fall into self-pity, and land up having victim mentalities. And, also, land up having negative outlooks to life, and drawing negative things to themselves. This steals our joy which is a fruit of the Spirit. If joy is a fruit of the Spirit, then self-pity is a malady of the flesh which means it is sinful. The only ways to kill it is to not feed it, and pray strategically so that God can cleanse us from it. Then to practice thanksgiving for all that we receive from God and others.

I remember as a young child being summoned to do yard work while my sister and brother got to watch TV. I wept bitterly with self-pity, screamed unfairness, and hated the labor. Why? Five reasons dealing with my direction or aim in life:

a) I had not my father's values. So, what I saw as important was immature, and only mixed with laziness and instant-self-gratification...not of creating something longer lasting and more enduring and less selfish.

b) I had not my father's vision, I did not have eyes to see the opportunity beckoning, and the ability to see the fruits that my labor could bring.
c) I had not my father's desires. My only reason for doing it was because I had to, not because it would bring beauty and pleasure to others.
d) I had not my father's willingness to sacrifice for something better. He was willing to give up the pleasures of entertainment for the pleasure of accomplishing something worthy of his time and efforts.
e) I had not my father's healthy commitment to persevere. I just wanted to get it over and done with.

To help kill the kind of sloth talked about here I need to pray for healthier values, clearer vision, healthier desires, willingness to sacrifice, and the grace to commit to something greater than mere entertainment if I want to reflect the Glory of God the Father more realistically and accomplish something worthwhile. What I care about is what I value, so I need to pray for the healing of my ability to care for people, and then to choose to care for people and good causes that God leads me to.

When a parent asks us to do a chore, or when a spouse asks us to do something (that Satan suggest with a lie is unfair), we can indulge in self-pity very easily. If we give into self-pity, then we are letting Satan spoil or steal a good deed that could have otherwise communicated to the parent or spouse that we love them! So, let's not let the devil steal our sense of purpose, healthy attitudes, and actions, with self-pity! While indulging in self-pity in this context we will be treating the parent, or spouse and God as pains in the royal butt because of our selfishness. When this dynamic is at work then we are treating people as task masters, or worse as slave drivers who we are trying to appease with a certain quota of works so they will seem happy (i.e. get off our case) so we can go back to our own lazy ways! We need to repent in prayer from the self-pity, and counter the lies of the devil with liberating truth.

Again, the battle against sloth repeatedly needs to be tackled. But it should not remain a stronghold. We were wired for work, and work was prepared for us. Confession, and repenting in prayer are keys that ought to be practiced repeatedly. Then implementing the "golden rule" to replace the negative attitude of sloth.

Not having a work ethic is one problem. But we can have a desire to not be slothful but go about being industrious the wrong way. The wrong way is putting on oneself pressure, hatred, anger, meanness, hostility, self-revenge or self-blackmail, malice, hitting oneself with stones, trying to conform to rules and commands (the minimum required quotas), angrily, tooth and nail, mercilessly, heartlessly, fearfully, hoping to earn favor from God by our efforts, hoping to find

peace through our efforts, hoping to find freedom in our strengths, hoping to "find all the things" through doing works instead of through Jesus who offers grace freely through faith in Him, but never getting them because we have been negative/ dark/ and independently motivated along with being performance-rule/ law focused, carrying burdens, weighed down, full of emptiness, stretched to the limit, weak, shamed, and feeling guilt instead of forgiveness.

This is often aided by an Old Testament - Law mentality of: "I got to, I have to, and I must because the Law says I must; otherwise I'm not a good person and am off to hell" (think FEAR-MOTIVATION). Writing these last two-paragraphs has been difficult. All these words and bad motivations I have personally carried with me in one form or another. My heart and mind have been sick this way for way too long. Confessing it all (along with its history) gently, and repenting of it in prayer is key. It is conquered through relationship with Jesus, seeking to do His will (not overnight but day in and day out), but in the new way of the Spirit (God's empowering presence) by going through a learning curve. We weren't given to only coldly obey a minimum cold standard. We are given the warm person of Jesus and His Spirit who come along side of us and counsel us urging us on to victory one battle at a time.

Also, focusing on the negative, and a passive set of laws (no matter how good) that try to bring fairness and protect our lower rights is no way to motivate giving to people or sacrificially loving them if we are only looking for fairness. But focusing on Jesus and gently submitting to His command to "go the extra mile" is key to developing action motivated by caring for people with the guilt washed away through confession with the bad habits' power broken through repentance. Jesus does not invite us harshly, meanly, and angrily to go the extra mile. Jesus does not force us, or put pressure on us to keep His commands. He is kind and gentle. We need to speak to ourselves the way Jesus speaks to us. It is God's kindness that leads us to repentance. We need to focus on Jesus and what He is saying to us, and not take the lonely road of an inner monologue with ourselves that achieves nothing but a stagnant lifeless interior and dead exterior-relational-life.

We need to start with being connected to what we care about and we find this place through two-way prayer to God. We can't care about everything. We all have different interests. We all have different gifting's. We all have different opportunities; we all have different callings. We can't be all things to all people all the time. That is not realistic. But we can do something passionately, useful, with caring, that is higher than ourselves, that has value in our eyes, that calls us out of ourselves, that helps others feel good, relieved, at peace, hopeful, full, like somebody cares, and happy.

EXPLAINING & HEALING GLUTTONY:

Gluttony also grows out of lust in "the tree of knowledge of good and evil". When we are not willing to be active in love we will resent action unless it makes us seemingly feel good within a short enough time frame; the quicker the action the more likely it is to gratify us. Food and drink are quick and easy ways to feel good. The good we are "really" seeking is lasting peace. So, if we only want to feel good, gluttony will be a natural place to look, if we seek it independently from God. To Kill the stronghold of gluttony, we need self-control which is a fruit of the Holy Spirit. That means that it is a gift from the Holy Spirit. It is not a result of self-effort or self-will. To help to protect against gluttony one needs to live within some healthy boundaries set up by God so that we stay away from unnecessary temptations. Pursuing stillness and connection with God is the healthiest place to dwell through expectant faith as that is where the peace is. This helps us to commit to healthy thinking and values when it comes to what we eat and drink, and then to live for a purpose greater than pleasure. Gluttony also has the effect of making us hate the perceptions we have of our bodies. This also needs to be confessed with the same intensity as it is felt. Gluttony is also hard on the pocketbook. Wining this battle against gluttony will help us live within our budgets.

The pathway to self-control is relationship with God. That means getting our bearings in conversation with God. Then when the Spirit gives consent to confess (by feeling, or connecting with) our commitments to pleasure or comfort seeking-gluttony (and selfishness), its history, owning it, saying we are sorry for seeking peace in the wrong place, asking for forgiveness and receiving it from God with thanksgiving (not just intellectually) is where we start; then repenting in prayer from it will start to restore our sanity. This process deals with our past, our guilt, and gives us a new hope, a new start with positive attitudes, and a healthier strategy to live life. Getting in touch with our feelings/ attitudes/ expectations/ and energy behind our behaviors gets us in touch with our believing and thinking. This gives us a chance to see our fallen values. Putting to death the unhealthy believing and thinking, and replacing it with positive submission (in grace) to the teachings and commands of Jesus is key to victory, because Jesus' truths set us free.

Seeking to do God's will is so important to stabilizing us. If the above strategy does not dislodge the stronghold of gluttony, then practicing the "Expanded Twelve Steps" from this Website may be needed to deal with other dynamics or roots tied to this disorder (like resentments).

Self-control comes from being at rest inside of us; which comes from the peace the Holy Spirit gives. The Holy Spirit's gift of self-control also comes as we learn to

think more healthily and trust Jesus to save us from our sins enabling us to love and value: people, nature and other healthy tasks instead of finding unhealthy empty happiness in creature comforts. In submitting to God, we seek His will which is higher than ourselves, and that means seeking to think and act healthily in our decisions…this is called walking in holiness.

The pull of the "sin nature" ebbs and flows constantly. It can motivate gluttony and sloth too if we give into it. Simply speaking directly to the "sin nature" when gluttony is at the door and saying: "I accept you, but I don't need you right now" and invite Jesus' grace and peace into our space, gives self-discipline, and self-control to conquer the temptation. As for food eating healthy instead of eating to lose weight is wiser.

Chapter Nine

EXPLAINING & HEALING THE ENVY BRANCHES OF THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL

Envy grows out of pride on the right side of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil". Envy sees God as a miser. It is a jealous and hateful attitude. It demands being first when it comes to the loyalty others show us, or to have the best attributes or abilities when compared to others. Repeated pointed accurate, gentle, and genuine prayer is a key to help breaking this stronghold. If we are envious of a person, then like pope Francis advises: give thanks to God in prayer for Him being so generous with the gifts He gave to the person we envy. This works if we respect God. Faith in a good and generous God also helps to Kill the stronghold of envy in us. Also, giving thanks to God that one gets to give instead of only receiving stuff all the time also helps kill envy and "actually" aids us in being generous. Jealousy is more about getting stuff than getting a better reputation. Envy is negative in nature and by itself can force a person to seek relief through other means and therefore also starts addictions like eating comfort food. These are some little "t"-truths that help us to become free of envy/ jealousy. But we need to deal with the guilt from past envy/ jealousy to have a fresh start, and this begins with confessing.

Confessing (by feeling, or connecting with) our envy, its history, owning it, saying it is wrong, saying we are sorry, asking for forgiveness and receiving it from God with thanksgiving is where we start; then repenting in prayer from it will begin restoring our sanity. We then submit to God and resist the devil; being open to the Holy Spirit as we learn to think more healthily and trust Jesus to save us from our envy, and enable us to love as we put to death envy and say yes to thanksgiving. But we need to be mindful, aware of where we are at, and fight with truth, and

not try to wrestle our self-pitying-feelings all by themselves with fleshly/forceful energy, and instead fight with strategic-accurate, gentle wisdom and genuine-prayer and faith in Jesus to help us love and to put to death envy, when it tries to reassert itself in our attitudes, so that our minds and attitudes are slowly renewed with little "t"-truths.

Jesus calls us to altruism, to seeking the highest good of those we meet. Jesus calls us to love others like ourselves. When we are purely absorbed with only our own whims, cares, and personal desires, always watching that things are fair, with self-pity when we don't get our own ways, we are not happy campers, and in fact living in the flesh not the Spirit. The flesh and the Spirit are opposed. The flesh can't please the Spirit. The flesh can't submit to the Spirit. We are designed to give unselfishly and so feel happiest when we do so. We find meaning and purpose in giving honor, respect, and value to others, but fleeting happiness in hoarding position and power for ourselves. Position and wealth don't fill the void within. Moving to seeing people as treasures as opposed to earthly wealth and position is a journey worth taking. People who get this are usually the happiest of us all. We get there battle after battle.

EXPLAINING & HEALING JUDGING & UNHEALTHY MOTIVATED ANGER:

Judging grows out of pride in the tree, and happens when we give our opinions on other people. We tell the truth when we speak honestly about ourselves. When somebody does something that we dislike, then in judging them, we may do any of the following: accuse, blame, insinuate, label, call names, castigate, use hateful and negative speech, and cast a bad light on them, hurt them, and make them angry. This will only make them want to defend themselves, and judge us back out of anger. But when we tell the truth, we will use "I"-statements that say: "I feel… when you do… because…and I would like…" with a clean, non-hostile energy that appeals to the nobleness of the accused, and not their anger or supposed shame. Telling the truth never puts anyone down.

In short, I now know that anger is like an alarm. When we have it, it says something is wrong within or outside of us that needs to be addressed. We can feel injustices of rights being violated...or our expectations not being met...or we may believe our supposed entitlements have been compromised when we feel anger. What we believe may need to be dealt with, reassessed and repented from when what we believe does not reflect reality or truth or honesty or healthiness.

If we believe anger can be immoral, then we will get angry with our anger and ourselves...and that just screws us up interiorly to the point of confusion, self-pity, exasperation and more anger. This blinds us to what the real issues really are. When judging causes (or increases our) anger, then dealing with the judging will

clear up (much of) the anger (that ought to be a short-term visitor not a long-term visitor, i.e. it shouldn't become a resentment). Anger that is not relieved or dealt with in healthy ways poison our minds/ hearts/ speech/ energy/ and compromises our connectedness. Also, anger that is not dealt with or is stuffed turns into resentments… addictions, hostility, bitterness, and hatred and needs to be addressed too if we want to be healthy spiritually.

Given that we are allowed to be angry with others, it follows that others are allowed to be angry with us too. Anger is about how one feels when one perceives an injustice. We need to set people free to process their anger. And we ought to process our anger healthily too. We can't go around telling people they ought not be angry. And we shouldn't stuff or burry our anger.

A HEALTHY WAY TO DEAL WITH ANGER AND BROKEN EXPECTATIONS:

When we have expectations that aren't being met, then the unhealthy thing to do is to get stuck and become full of self-pity and pout or direct unresolved anger at the person in question. The healthy thing to do when we are angry because our expectations aren't met is to give up, with Jesus help through faith in prayer, the expectation along with the anger, and accept that the person in question has said no, and then to move on in a constructive way. Re-calibrating one's expectations regularly sets others and ourselves free and so is very healthy.

When we have expectations that are not met, instead of just getting angry we can also judge the person who did not come through for us. In this case, we need to repent in prayer from our judging to find peace. Judging people is always wrong. Using "I"-statements in telling the truth can be helpful in processing the worries in non-judgmental ways, and helps to set us free from confusion and burdens.

DEALING WITH ANGER AND REJECTION:

In dealing with anger, rejection is a BIGGY. In speaking about Jesus, an Old Testament writer said:

> "He was rejected and despised by people...familiar with pain..."[9]

When we are rejected we can handle it in our own ways or in Jesus' way. My way was to not process it at all, to try to push it down, to get and stay angry when I was very young, and to plot getting even through withdrawal, or pretend nothing happened at all because I felt such pain (note: when we pretend, then we are putting on masks, and we do so because we think it will save us from our shame and make us look strong). None of these feel good and steal from one's human destiny. And it gets laminated onto how one views reality in a really un healthy

[9] Isaiah 53:3

way. I now know how to process rejection/ anger/ pain in a healthy way thanks to Jesus. This means not being a masochist, and not being a doormat either.

When we inflexibly demand our rights without giving people choice, then we are asking for rejection, defiance, low self-esteem on our part, and a lot of “No’s”. When we go this route, we use dark negative energy, and things get ugly. Giving people a way out, or the ability to dialogue, express where they are at, and to what they can commit to or not is a more humble and flexible path to take.

The person who can't take a “No!” for an answer is stubbornly selfish, envious, and proud. They have problems accepting when others say no. Because of this they are prone to ugly angry outbursts, and plenty of self-pity. This needs to be healed through the medicines found in this book.

Jesus was rejected to the point of being crucified and left for dead. Jesus handled rejection not by going to a place of resentment, but by pouring Himself out in love from death to resurrection, by seeing us with care (He said: “they know not what they do”), and forgiving us (He said: “Father forgive them”), and declaring “it is finished” when it came to our forgiveness. Jesus did not run from His pain, hide from His accusers, say He deserved it, or numbed His pain. He navigated the pain by caring for people, by loving people, and focusing on the joy set before Him: people. Jesus did not see the cross as a problem but an opportunity to show His love to the full. Rejection is not the end of life as we know it. There is life after rejection, and when we navigate rejection healthily, there is joy waiting for us; as the anger does not have to be eternal.

I have found that rejection does not have a “poor-me” hold on me when the stronghold of conceit is dead. When I do struggle with rejection, praying through conceit/ fear as outlined in this book, and renewing my mind with the truth that God loves me, helps me to move on in positivity, kindness, and care in my relationships.

ANGER AND PERFECTIONISM:

Anger often comes from a “religious” person because he or she perceives that the Law has been broken in some context. I have struggle with this mentality personally for a long time. I now have a better grasp of it, thanks to a revelation. The following broke into my mind:

> The Law expects perfection. I’m not the Law, so I shouldn’t expect perfection from others or myself. Because when I expect perfection I’m always angry, inflexible, hard, unkind, rigid, ungracious, and unhappy.

This brought some freedom (and breathing room), but it slowly eroded as I felt we still needed some sort of standard to live by instead of what looked more and

more like a license to sin. But then I asked myself: “Am I under Law or grace?” The answer was obvious: “I’m under grace.” So, if I’m not under Law, then how can I expect perfect compliance to the Law from others? Is there now “no standard” at all for anyone?

Yes, there are standards. For me, the standard is Jesus’ commands found in the New Testament which are much higher than the Old Testament (OT) Law, and in living out Jesus’ commands the Law is “actually” fulfilled through His grace. So, no matter what people do, according to Jesus’ standard, I’m asked to love people unconditionally, and this is what Jesus asks me to do. This kills the expectation within me of perfectionism from others, and myself. Grace is deciding to love somebody whether or not they do good, do bad, or have apathy. I like it when people are that way to me, so I want to be that way to them: “Do to others what you want them to do to you” which is the golden rule. Mental assent to this rule is not good enough…I choose to live it out with Jesus’ grace.

I live it out by dealing with the past first, and then the present through confession, and repentance in prayer when I (remember having or “actually do”) experience the inclination to judge, the emotions of anger, hostility, hardness, hatred, un-grace, blackness, void-ness of empathy or sympathy, dryness, and no feelings of warmth of compassion, when the rule is more important than the person. Then, to submit to God, resist the devil, and seek to live out grace.

But what about those not under God’s grace? They have consciences just like anyone else. For some people, they embrace the Law (which was God’s minimum OT standard), and this helps them until they discover grace. Even those, without the OT written Law, are created in God’s image, and so they have some sense of right and wrong (often better than mine).

Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would convince the world of sin. So, it is not my responsibility or job to convict others of sin or be a moral policeman (I’m sure they feel guilty enough). Jesus said for me to not judge or condemn people. When I’m angry it is because I have judged. When I’ve judged, I have used a standard that I don’t even keep perfectly myself, so I am judged because I have, in pride, put myself above another, and so are also a hypocrite.

So “grace” and the “golden rule” set me free from judging and anger that come from the expectations of perfectionism tied to the Law (and personal anal codes of conduct).

Trying to put out a fire by trying to blow away the smoke is not smart. We can do this with anger a lot of the time trying to control it, stuffing it, and wrestling with it, but we should not feel guilty about the actual anger; just process it healthily. In this context anger is a sign, an alert, and a warning that we need to act, and be

responsible for our envy and judging. Fear leads to pride. Pride leads to envy and envy to judging. Judging leads to anger or even rage. Rage can very easily birth hatred too. So, getting rid of fear, pride, envy, and judging will help get rid of our anger in this context.

When our boundaries are violated, or people get into our personal spaces, the "sin nature" can or will rear its ugly head and try to push us into the ugly direction of demanding our rights anally. I have found that when I'm put into such situations, simply speaking directly to my "sin nature" saying "I accept you, but don't need you right now" and invite Jesus' peace in lifts me above the dark pull and I instead am able to love unconditionally giving grace instead of intolerance to the people who make me feel uncomfortable.

ANGER & JUDGMENT THAT INEVITABLY LEADS TO ADDICTIONS:

Pride and envy both spawn unhealthy-motivated anger in "the tree of knowledge of good and evil". Pride and envy are very hard on others. If we have anger issues and don't forgive then judging leads to resentments. The anger we feel towards the person will be justified in our eyes and will create negativity: emptiness, discord, sourness, coldness, hardness, depression, and bitterness but since we were made for joy we will seek to nurse these negative feelings with pleasures if we don't forgive and this will create compulsion towards whatever pleasures comes first. "The Expanded Twelve Steps" from this Website is a constructive way to forgive and deal with such addictions. See the link:

http://www.brokenintofreedom.ca/PDFs/ExpandedTwelveSteps.pdf .

When we forgive, the negative burden lifts, the anger is given up, and the judgment is lifted. But we are not free yet. If our envy is not dealt with we will fall into judging again and again and no one wants that. Therefore, we need to deal with the (envy/ pride/ fear/ conceited ness/ and arrogance) in our hearts with the medicine mentioned above. When these are dealt with regularly we will find less money being spent on our addictions and more on others, hence giving will become a way of life. With freedom from addictions we will move onto the way of love. Jesus is the way to love.

When one has a demanding spirit...it means one is (whether hidden or revealed) harsh, mean, angry, without good will, nasty, forcefully expecting others to give, and comply with one's wishes as though it is an unquestionable Devine right. The energy is ugly, the attitude is jerk-like, and it does not respect the people it is aimed at.

I am convinced that I can't demand things from others that I think will make me happy. That includes everyone in my life. If I demand it then it is no longer a gift, and isn't done in freedom, in joy, hope, and altruism. So, what about my

expectations? What sort of place do they have? Do I have to watch myself carefully from crossing over from expecting to demanding? Yes! Saint John of the Cross said in the last stanza of one of his famous poems called, "Stanzas of the Soul":

I abandoned and forgot myself,
laying my face on my beloved;
all things ceased; I went out from myself, leaving my cares
forgotten among the lilies.[10]

After trying to love from my heart through learning to practice humility in brokenness, pain and suffering for years, I went through a confusing, disorientating, "wow-is-me", "nothing satisfies me" period with the "inability to 'really' focus on meaningful goals", "lacking altruistic motivation", "having dryness interiorly", "having feelings of unfairness"-wanting to accuse God, "lacking the power to love" shallowly or deeply and basically having no wind in my sails.

I felt depressed and sad, like I was at the end of myself, like all my efforts were futile, knowing what I wanted I could not demand from others: God first, family second, and friends next. Because when I demand (which is negative in nature) I seek my own which is not what love is, and if people comply, then there is a good chance it isn't done freely, genuinely, healthily, and caring ly when they respond to my bad energy. I'd rather people be genuinely caring, than doing things out of guilt, or out of some sense of obligation, or out of fear of my anger or my disapproval; or fear of my rejection for them not complying with my wishes.

I found it freeing to pray through all the relating I was involved in where I had a demanding spirit. A person with a strong demanding spirit does not bend easily, pouts a lot when they don't get their way, and manages to find convenient excuses to not give or go the extra mile.

Where do "demanding" spirits come from? They start out with expectations, and when fear/ pride/ and selfishness come into the picture they become demanding. It is self-preservation gone bad. Giving up these expectations along with our fear, pride, and selfishness is key to giving up a demanding spirit. This book has the tools necessary to break these strongholds with Jesus' help.

ANGER & JUDGMENT THAT LEADS TO SHALLOWNESS:

[10] K Kavanaugh, O.C.D, O Rodriguez, O.C.D, The Collected Works of St. John of The Cross, ICS Publications (1991), pp. 358-359, or P. 2.; John Michael Talbot has beautifully put the words of this poem to music along with others on his CD called, "The Lover and the Beloved".

When we have an Unhealthy Motivated Anger (which is defined as being rooted in envy/ pride/ fear/ arrogance & conceitedness) and a Judging problem we will forever be drawing lines in the sand. By that I mean that we won't find pleasure in people too easily (we may very well hate them or be unable to love them because of blockages in our thinking and hearts). We will have this negative energy about us and it will push us away from others and them from us. This will only validate our belief that people deserve our judgments (and possibly land up being a hypocrite too because we let things slide when we do the same things that pisses us off when others do them). Hence we will have less intimacy, be more insensitive, and tend to isolate from others. We will not be able to value people for who they are and that means we will have superficial relationships. Truths that help to kill judging are to sincerely believe that "everyone is special in their own way", and to reject malicious thoughts towards people that put them in negative boxes in our minds. Then to choose to care for and value people like we value ourselves.

To kill our judging mentality, we must understand the difference between judging and telling the truth. Giving an opinion about someone else is judging, whereas giving our honest opinion about ourselves is truth telling. The reason why we are very sorely tempted into thinking judgmental thoughts and to want to follow through on judging is because we feel injustices have been visited on us. Even when we recognize that Jesus commanded us to not judge, we are pulled this way to try to make things right because we think that if we don't speak up things will get worse. This tension occurs because we don't know how to speak our truth gently. Judging attacks whereas speaking the truth does not. Truth speaking involves using "I"-statements that own our feelings in conversations with those who hurt us and are more likely to illicit understanding and change (although those who don't care may laugh us off) whereas, when we judge, then we blame and put people on the defensive. This will not bring healing by itself. Healing will come after only if there is forgiveness on both sides.

Years ago, I was promised an opportunity that was not coming through for me. I was tempted to get bitter, hostile, and I had many judgmental thoughts towards the person I thought was responsible for reneging on his promise. But when it came time to confront the person I did not blame him, I said how I felt, I did not vent, hate, scream injustice, or judge the person. A few days later the opportunity came my way. I now know the person did not feel judged by me, and he was warmed by my response to his cold shoulder. I see this as a powerful example of the difference between judging and telling the truth.

Again, to kill the judging fully we will need to be healed from all the negative attitudes: (envy, pride/ arrogance, and fear/conceited ness) that are in our hearts

by using the medicines from this book. In killing these we will kill the judgmental-ism and superficial-ness in our lives and people will be attracted to our positive energy. To stay free, and love supernaturally we need to care more and grow in thankfulness, and trust in Jesus.

After one has done a lot of work Killing the stronghold of pride and related attitudes (one's such as judging), one will have more clarity and connected ness in one's mind...and one will be able to see just how childish or immature one's old thought-patterns, attitudes, and desires look like compared to before after working "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" diagram through strategic prayer.

Certain situations will trigger certain thoughts that will trigger these immature black and white childlike reactions/ attitudes to stuff that was not handled healthily or properly in the past that threaten to do so in the present. For me I still wanted to go to a place of childish judging in certain areas, and I realized I needed to use "I"-statements to process my feelings in healthy ways in these areas, and then to examine my beliefs, and thinking behind them that triggered my immature meltdowns so that I can trade them in for wise, mature, and realistic beliefs/ thoughts that can be tied to gentle, kind, patient, and peaceful expressions/ mechanics/ behaviors/ speech/ relating to others when it comes to the people and situations that were triggers to hostile judging before. All this positivity is made possible through Jesus, His teachings, commands, and promises. It does not work if we only give mental assent to the truth, we got to trust it all where the rubber meets the road (in the face of the negative, mean, hostile, bitter, self-pitying attitudes/ emotions) and move onto grace, and to choose to dispense grace to others as well.

ANGER & JUDGMENT THAT LEADS TO MORAL POLICING:

Another bad fruit from envy is that we will become territorial and intolerant (mean) towards those who too close for comfort cross our boundaries, and those who do things we find immoral. This is where learning about compassion, and non-violence as a pathway to resolving disputes that Jesus championed is so very important. The meek are slow to anger, and knowing how to channel anger is so invaluable. But envy will produce intolerance and this needs to be dealt with first, along with the pride, and fear in our hearts as shown in "tree of knowledge of good and evil". Humility is what will result…and it will help give enemy love power and non-violence (which does not mean we do nothing) power and certainty when it comes to conflicts as a pathway to love and compassion.

Moreover, taking a close look at the energy in our speech is also important. Do we call people derogatory names (behind their backs)? Is there meanness in our

words? Is there self-pity behind our words? Do we put people down (i.e. do we put them into boxes)? Do we hurt people with our words? Do we rob hope from people? Are we hostile? Do we try to manipulate others to try and get our own way? Do we throw stones at people (judge them before they are spoken to)? If so, then we have crooked tongues. For me knowing that, "It is God's kindness that leads me to change for the better" is helping me in how I treat others because if it works for God it will work for my relationships too. Confessing and owning the developmental history of these vices and bad fruits in our lives to God, receiving forgiveness and healing in faith, repenting in prayer from this stronghold, and renewing one's mind with healthy truth is the path to take. Then to submit to God and resist the devil. Changing how one speaks won't happen overnight…but it can be done gradually through heartfelt prayer as truth and wisdom come into play.

Understanding and embracing the grace that comes from God, and jettisoning our attachments to our lower rights (when needed), dark demands or impulses for personal-fairness to be meted out at every turn will help to kill moral policing and make us open and strong in kindness. Love often means forgetting selfish interests; love does not seek its own. The NT calls us to believe the best about those we meet (cf. 1 Cor. 13). When we do this, we see people as having been made in the image of God, that they were made for God, that they are called to love, that Jesus' intention towards them is altruistic, caring, and hope-filled in nature. Nothing changes out of loading people down with guilt. Supernatural change comes from kindness, caring, and seeing people the way God does: with love. If we seek to be mean to try to get a mean person to change for the better, then we are deluded.

Saying "Yes" to the "golden rule" in the context of dispensing "grace" and accepting God's will are powerful tools meant to replace judging with restorative-justice and mercy.

Anger can show up when people withhold what we wrongly think is our just deserve. Like, when we do something wrong to someone, and we confess and apologize to the person but they don't immediately forgive us. We don't deserve to be forgiven. We need to set people free to process the hurts we inflicted on them, and to journey to forgiveness in their own time. Love is not coercive. Love sets free with no manipulation, threats, or strings attached. Yes, Jesus requires them to forgive…but that is between them and Him. Like Jesus taught us we can't judge or condemn. The Holy Spirit will convince, we don't have to go around and preach condescendingly, and try to convict people through guilt and shame and fear. Blessed are the merciful for they will receive mercy. God convinces us through His kindness, with neither anger nor hostility. Let's use our spiritual-mirrors to see where we are at.

EXPLAINING & HEALING GREED/ SELFISHNESS:

Pride leads to greed for two reasons. Pride must have more possessions than others do to feel good about one self. And because fear motivates pride one never has enough because fear is always there, and therefore greed and selfishness live on. When we seem to observe being left out of something, the inclination is to feel jealous, angry, and judge, but owning the hurt with "I"-statements is key so that we know how we feel and why we feel the way we feel: so, we know our current values, commitments, and thinking behind it all, and therefore are able to navigate and make appropriate changes.

The best way to process stuff like this is to:

a) Talk with God in prayer to get our bearings using "I"-statements that helps us process our stuff, and move from judging to truth telling.
b) Choose to humble ourselves, to no longer pretend, but to navigate by truth
c) Connect to what is in our hearts and with God (don't push the bad-stuff down)
d) Confess (receiving forgiveness through God's touch of peace)
e) Repent in prayer and
f) Renew the mind
g) Submit to God and resist the devil
h) Obey the golden rule as its truth frees us with grace

As far as correct thinking is concerned, aiming for altruism, and being generous to others like God is to us, is key, i.e. "Love like we have been loved by Jesus" is as high as we can aim for and is a positive way to replace the negative commands of "do not covet" or the mentality of only seeking fairness and trying to protect my entitlements and rights.

When the stronghold of greed/ selfishness is broken our freedom still needs to be maintained through wisdom, prayer, connecting with God, submission to God, and faith in Jesus to continue to save us from ourselves. Feelings of anger or jealousy ought not be repressed in prayer to God, instead they need to be owned, and not fleshly wrestled with or wholly focused on as right or fitting. We need to commit to generous giving to those in need out of the peace Jesus gives; then deal with envy/Jealousy, and then deal with pride and fear which will bring freedom from greed. People who focus on or live by their feelings alone will be slaves to them. If one wants to completely conquer unwanted feelings (attitudes), one needs to change one's thoughts and beliefs through the grace of Jesus Christ; we do this through confession and repentance in prayer and aiming to live out Jesus' commands.

When self-pity and selfishness go untouched (not healed), then it will warp one's attitudes, intuitions, perspectives, and relationships. This quest for healing, and making room for healthy attitudes, desires, and thinking can be a real fight and a work of labor. To work out our salvation in fear and trembling means to clean our insides so the outsides are clean too like Jesus instructed. Praying through blockages and receiving the promises of God over our lives and resisting the devil's attempts to cause confusion and immobilization is key. We should deal with those areas that confuse us and those that seemingly have no obvious solution. There are ways through challenges and out of them (maybe not pleasant ways, but noble ones). Let's think without the box. Let's reason together with God, and He will anoint our thinking when we seek Him with all our hearts. Knowing His voice is key to breakthroughs!

Irritability can be fueled by the "sin nature", and can lead to judging, self-pity, and using force to get our ways. I have found that speaking to the "sin nature" by saying: "I accept you, but I don't need you right now" and invite Jesus into my space makes me more tolerant, kind, and peaceful.

Chapter Ten

SUMMARIZING HOW TO DISMANTLE THE TREE OF THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOOD AND EVIL IN OUR LIVES

Working the connections above by just analyzing stuff (without prayer and God) can lead to burdens, weights, emptiness, and lack of grace to change. Because of fear, the first growth before pride and gives rise to the evil methodology/ evil machinery/ moral sicknesses from "the tree of the knowledge of good and evil" is an orphaned-mentality as per our relationship with God the Father and this also leads to blaming people. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they did not know God's forgiveness, and started to blame whomever or whatever was convenient because they felt lost and had fear to deal with. When we are forgiven, then we have peace with God, and His peace rests in our hearts. The devils do everything they can to plant lies in our minds to rob us of this peace.

With Father God's help, we can uproot the dead structures (based on lies) in our hearts and minds and plant the healthy wisdom and truth rooted in Jesus who grows good fruit (by gradually replacing "the tree of knowledge of good and evil's" influence in our lives).

Living a superficial life where there are no roots, no enduring values, and no commitments to caring for people leads to plenty of fear. The fear comes because there is little trust, with no real knowledge of genuine love, no understanding that

many people do care, and no motivation for living for a higher purpose greater than puppy-love. When stuff is revealed below the surface, embarrassment, fear of rejection, denial, and donning masks become the order of the day. Not being able to value what is inside us, comes from brokenness, blindness, lies, hurts, and fears that we are not nor ever will be good enough.

Sometimes praying to uproot pride seemingly does not work because the spiritual malady has other roots that must be dealt with too. For instance, I realized that often a wall came up in me pushing others away when the healthy thing to do is care, feel other people's pain, frustration and struggle. Some pride was involved but it wasn't the mother-load and confessing only pride didn't heal the wound of insensitivity. However, confessing as wrong and repenting in prayer from the insensitivity, unwillingness to trust, to not care, to not feel for people, and having an arrogant attitude, and then asking God for forgiveness and healing and receiving them in faith did help. Then choosing to care for people out of the "peace" God puts into one's heart to willingly dispense grace as far as the "golden rule" is concerned helps to break the walls we have erected (to vainly protect us against rejection). Grace is never stagnant. It flows into us and out of us when we relate healthily.

Sometimes we think we have exhausted praying about the vices in "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" and still feel stuck. I have found it has to do with four things:

a) Not accepting God's will for one's life (i.e. not accepting that people are perfectly imperfect, and shit happens).
b) Caring more about one's knowledge of spiritual things than "actually" caring about and loving people practically.
c) Not submitting to God and resisting the devil.
d) Not having processed uncomfortable stuff using "I"-statements.

Having certain feelings doesn't always mean our thinking is justified, natural, and healthy because of those feelings resonate with us. Thoughts determine feelings. We reject wrong negative hard feelings by rejecting wrong negative hard beliefs and thinking and replacing them with caring, loving and truthful thoughts. It does not normally work the other way around. However, we can have negative attitudes that are so sour, bitter, and judgmental that just spout out of our hearts unwanted. This needs to be prayed through with accurate, gentle, genuine, honest, strategic prayers when we have enough clarity of mind so we can sort through our confusion and emotions, and when the memories are fresh enough. When we are renewing our minds, we will encounter plenty of confusion so we need to be patient and persistent.

Prayer is so important to maintaining a close relationship with God, along with replacing an unhealthy view of God with a merciful, caring, kind, loving view/ experience of God. Challenging sour attitudes towards God can be done by seeing (and reading about) Jesus in the Gospels and realizing He looks exactly like God the Father. The gentle words of Jesus inspire us to turn away from our angry sour attitudes and beliefs as we trust His forgiveness, grace, compassion, wisdom, plans, and actions.

There are many good books on how to cultivate healthy two-way-prayer such as by Brad Jersak, and Mark Virkler. They can help to clear up confusion or how to walk through confusion into the light and have more inward clarity. Prayer is not just about petitions, but about communion, hearing each other, and touching each other.

Chapter Eleven

APPLYING WHAT WE HAVE LEARNED

As one probably realizes, “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” can be grown within any person in many ways depending on the decisions, loyalties, foolishness, bad commitments made, and lies believed by the person in the direction of toxic behavior. We will undertake to do four last examples on how to dismantle some of the strongholds found in this tree, and to start having victory over certain sins in the four areas we will explore.

I have chosen the examples below because they were what I struggled with most of my life. I hope the reader will be able to relate even though my details differ from theirs.

Fear is a major theme in the situations revealed in this chapter. After praying my way up and through “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” in each situation recorded here, fear is the final root that needed to be dealt with to finally remove the major portions of the tree for good within me. Dealing with one’s fears is always the final step to healing.

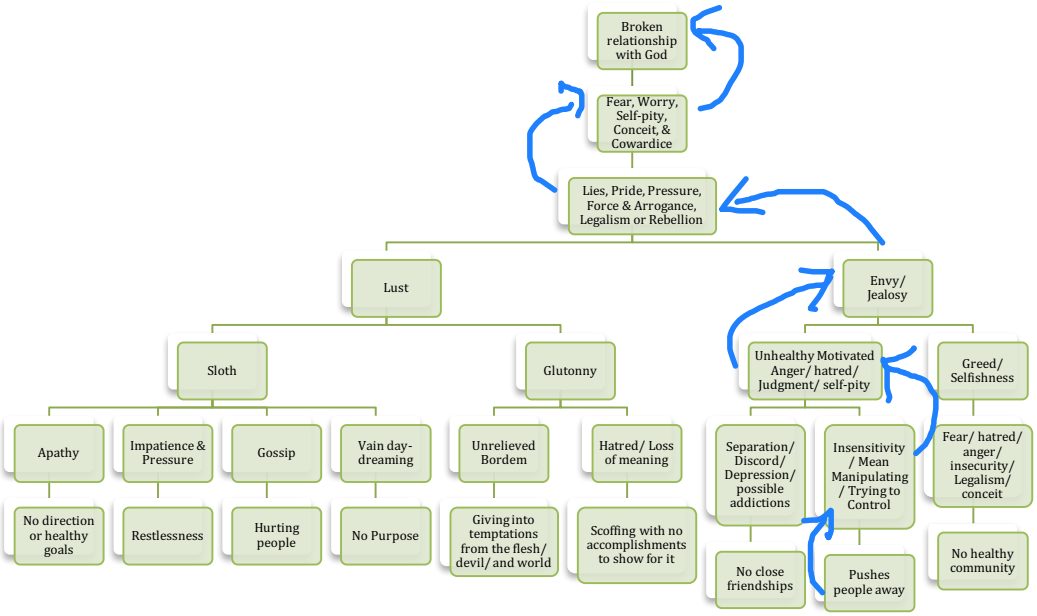
EXAMPLE ONE:

The situation:

I'm “really” hard on others. That means I'm insensitive, and mean when I have fears that what I covet won't come my way. Most of the time I'm “really” a kind person, but when I “really” want something badly, then the fear, pride, and selfishness trigger my meanness and being hard on others so I somehow get my way. Fact is I'm hard on others because I'm hard on myself. The fruit of this is that I land up doing all this ugly stuff and pushing people away.

So how do I deal with it so it doesn't reoccur?

We will follow the blue-line-arrows, and show how to pray through “tree of knowledge of good and evil” in the context of a particular-relational situation.



Get my bearing:

First off, I need to find my bearing. I do so by asking God for wisdom, and asking the Holy Spirit for healing. Then to start processing the situation I use “I”-statements to rid myself from my judgment-mindset and turn it into a caring mindset where there is clean energy, humility, or some purity somewhere in my heart from where to act.

Then I begin to pray:

Lord God I admit and confess that I was hard on “such and such” person by doing “such and such”, and that I have a history of being hard on myself. I give this all up through faith in you, trusting your forgiveness and healing. I admit I'm not loving people and “actually” pushing them away when I go to this negative, mean and insensitive place of trying to win my life, doing things my way, but doing the opposite in losing my life and sanity. I tried to control this person by doing “such and such” and this always turns out to be ugly. I give up with your help Lord Jesus, trying to control everyone and trying to save my life. I admit I work up a lot of anger against the people I do this to, including myself. I give up my anger and

hatred because these are not loving, kind, and caring towards everyone including myself. I get absorbed with my own self-pity and my own selfish narrow limited view of justice, that cares more for my devilish goals than people made in your image. I give up my self-pity, and selfishness and poorly sought agendas with your help Lord Jesus. I admit I believed the lies that pressure on myself and force on others is the best path to take because I'm supposedly most important than them. I have arrogance in my attitudes, and I just hurt myself and others with living out my pride. I admit that am rebelling against your Holy Spirit when I get caught up in this fleshly energy, and I make rules and judge people by them attempting to find a skewed-sense of justice, and just land up hating and hurting people instead. I'm sorry, and ask for your forgiveness and healing in all these matters. I give them up with your help Holy Spirit through faith in Jesus. I admit I worry and am fear driven to the core. I give up my fears in this area, and instead choose to trust in you the Living God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Please help me to thaw this cold, dark pull, and stronghold of selfishness within, so I will truly love my neighbor as myself and so I will fully bear the good fruits of the Holy Spirit. God, I ask you to enter my darkness as you are the Light, and to free me like you promised so long ago. I pray this all, in Jesus' Name!

Renewing the mind:

Lord I felt self-pity, went into insane anger, bitterness, hatred, and meanness after I felt the wound of rejection as a child in school, and I focused a lot of that energy on myself...it hurts to this moment; I still feel the consequences...Lord God I went into a rebellious mode, a conformity mode, and a legalistic mode...all out of fear...fears of missing out...I give up that fear now with your grace Jesus; I give up the rebellion, conformity, and legalism because they are empty cisterns...since you are with me Jesus...walking with me...wanting my healing...being my peace...my salvation...my life...joy...consolation.

So, that is a stronghold: "fears of missing out on the goods". Goods of having happiness, being first, having instant peace or gratification, the easy way, being on the in, having loyalty, being in covenant, having solidarity, and unending friendship...but with fear motivating it out of pride with all the wrong ways to attain these. Either I'm very good at lying to myself...or I'm very foolish for believing the devil's lies in this context. Satan, I reject your lies: the BIG one of I'll miss out on the goods unless I act out of my "sin nature"! I accept you for what you are, but I don't need you right now; Jesus is sufficient with grace upon grace! AMEN! This led to the following two-truths that liberated me a little while later:

a) How does one stand up and ask for something? With flexibility...not rigid, dark, ugly, demanding, got to have it, and no compromise energy. Humility allows people a choice in the matter...gives people a

say...empowers people...not giving them the impression that they absolutely got to come through! This frees them and us to laugh and love.

b) Be able to accept the healthy "No's!" from all people. This helps to kill self-pity, respect people, and love people.

Finally, I prayed to give up the strongholds of inflexibility and refusing to accept "No" in my requests, as is suggested by the definition "for repent in prayer".

There that is how I prayed one portion of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" to bring healing. Notice it deals with my history, the wound, understanding the lies I believed, and finally telling Satan I reject his lie(s) and repenting in prayer from it all asserting that Jesus is generous and sufficient in providing all the peace I need.

EXAMPLE TWO:

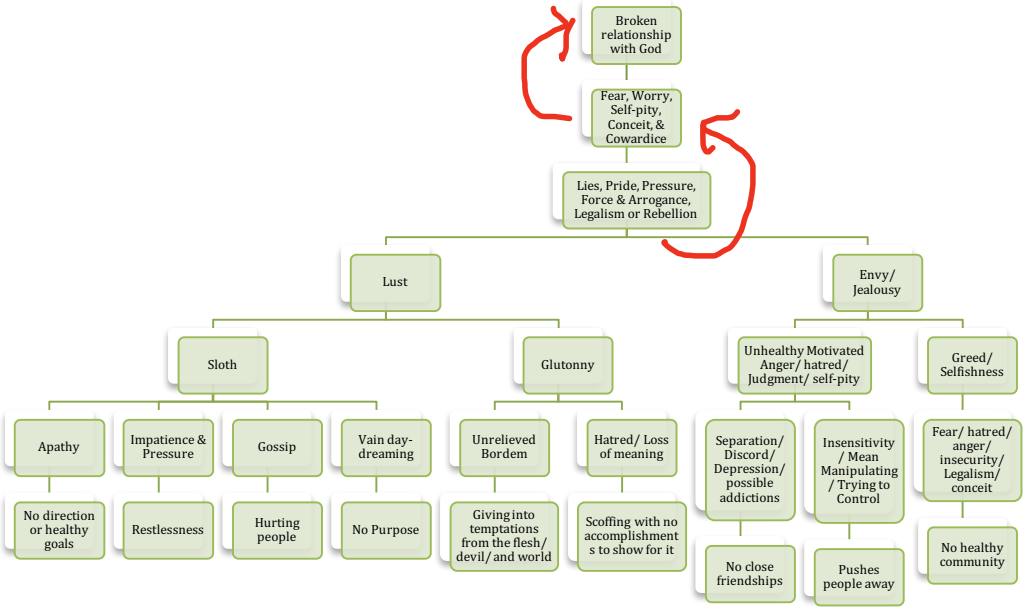
To work the tree diagram one does not have to start right at the bottom. Often we can be stuck in a certain part of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" and bear obsessive and compulsive fruit there, as in this example:

The situation:

One repeatedly falls into judging people when they do things that one's own moral compass says is gravely wrong or immoral. The think is: "I'm better than them" snicker, snicker, with drools of insensitivity. "They shouldn't be doing this. They are bad people and not only do shameful things, but are shameful. I reject them because I'm stronger and better than them!"

Getting One's Bearings:

Ask the Holy Spirit for healing. Trust Him in this process. Use "I"-statements to process the energy behind these thoughts. "I feel no love, no grace, no tolerance for 'such and such people' when they do "such" immoral things, because they deserve to die, therefore I have laughed at them, but rather I want them to be loved, and to be loved by them." Below is "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" and we pray it by following the red-arrow-lines:



Then I Begin to Pray:

Lord Jesus, I admit that I have loads of pride in this context. It is lethal. I "actually" want these people dead for what they have done, and in pride I have judged myself in arrogance to be better than them. I give these up with your help through faith, and I choose life, love, and tolerance instead. I admit that I see "only" them as worthy of rejection based on my flawed moral compass. I fear rejection, I fear the hurt of rejection, the ridicule, and the scoffing; so if I can't beat those I see as strong, I have chosen repeatedly to join the strong and fearless and take up arrogance as my shield believing the lie that I'm not like these supposedly weak and flawed "immoral" people.

Lord I see the error in my ways and thinking. I see my fears of rejection and being hurt, pretending to not feel hurt, and pretending to be strong where I feel I'm most vulnerable. I'm a wounded man. Hurting something fierce. I receive emotionally and intellectually your forgiveness and healing Lord God of my sin and wounds, and I invite you more deeply into my hurt, into my heart, and into my life with your anointing.

I admit that I expect rejection in so many situations, rejection for having done wrong or right. In fearing rejection, I have decided to reject people first so I won't be hurt by them. I have chosen to laugh at people instead of caring for them. I confess this all as sin, and I give this up with your help Jesus, and I change my expectations to positivity, to warmth, to believing the best about people instead, not the worst. I choose to wish them health, dignity, and peace. With your help Lord Jesus, Father God, and Holy Spirit I give up my fear of rejection for standing

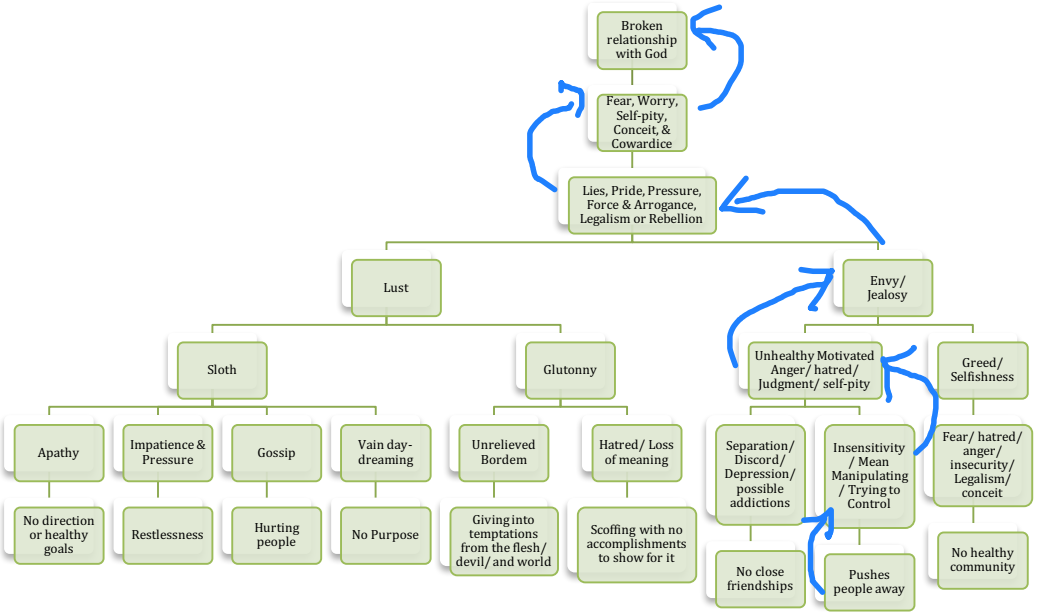
out, and for being singled out. I admit my cowardice, and I give it up too with your help Lord Jesus. Thank you for forgiving me, and starting the healing process.

Lord God, I thirst for your Holy Spirit. I hunger for your presence, and I rest in your love. Please help me to renew my mind with your truth in the next while so that I will know how good and pleasing your will really is. I submit to your will, and I renounce the devil and all his empty promises and lies. Jesus you are sufficient with grace upon grace. Amen!

Renewing the Mind:

When I have the attitude, and am committed to projecting that all is well even though it is not. When I pretend to others (God, and myself) that nothing happened, that I'm not wounded inside then I'm not open to reality or healing. In accepting my spiritual wound, or my weakness then God can heal it, and He just did. I feel connected inside after these truths allowed me to lower my wall, open up, and be healed by God! Thank you: Jesus, Father God, and Holy Spirit. I now have peace, consolation, and a stable mind. Amen!

EXAMPLE THREE



The Situation:

The situation is the same as the last one. Often when the hurt goes “really” deep, there are multiple roots that need to be dealt with from various angles. I deal with more roots in this example:

Praying:

a. Lord God I'm sorry for pushing people away, and refusing to connect with them in a caring way. I commit to giving this up, through faith in you Lord Jesus, and caring for them instead from now on from the ground up.
b. Lord God I admit that a wall of insensitivity rises within me that shows fleshly energy when my moral compass sees violations of any Law. Lord Jesus, I choose to lower this wall, and recalibrate my compass with your truth, light, and healing.
c. I have done so and do judge the people involved as convenient scape-goats, throwing condemnation hatred, and hurt at them. I give up in faith, with your help Lord Jesus, condemning people made in your image, I give up through faith in you Jesus, hurting people because of my hurt. I choose the love and forgiveness that comes from you.
d. I did so because I envied the strong, and have committed to being strong no matter what. I give this up now through faith in you Lord Jesus, choosing to be despised, rejected, hated, and uncared for so long as I love you the Living God, and my neighbor as myself.
e. Lord God, I have legalistically conformed to the "supposed" thinking of those who rejected me as "if" they were strong, following their "supposed" norms of conduct, not caring, and rebelling against your commands God, to care for my fellow-human beings. I give this up right now in faith, with your help, based on the blood and work that your only begotten Son Jesus did on the cross for each of us. Thank you.
f. Lord God I admit I have done all of this out of being hurt, and out of the fear of being hurt again. I give up this fear through faith in you the living God, and ask in faith that you heal me Lord Jesus from this broken structure within.
g. I invite you holy Trinity into my life more fully, and choose to live out the golden rule, lowering my walls and loving those I'm called to care about. I pray in Jesus' name. Thank you for forgiving me Father God. Amen.
h. Lord God, please help me to renew my mind with your truth relationally, and inwardly. I await your truth, seek your will, and resist devil, and reject his lies and empty promises. I pray in Jesus' Name. Amen!

Renewing My Mind:

Lord God in the past I tried to avoid hurt, by pretending, putting up walls, and trying to join the proud and strong. But it did not work. In trying to save my life I lost it along with rich communion with you and my fellow man. I now choose to embrace hurt when truth, love, justice, honor, respect, and caring for people is

the goal. Because when I am weak (in the world's eyes), then I am strong (in God's eyes), and your grace is sufficient Lord Jesus. Amen

Summary:

Prayer d. above was pivotal and the necessary truth that brought release and freedom to me here, as it moved me from cowardice to picking up my cross instead, and following Jesus more genuinely.

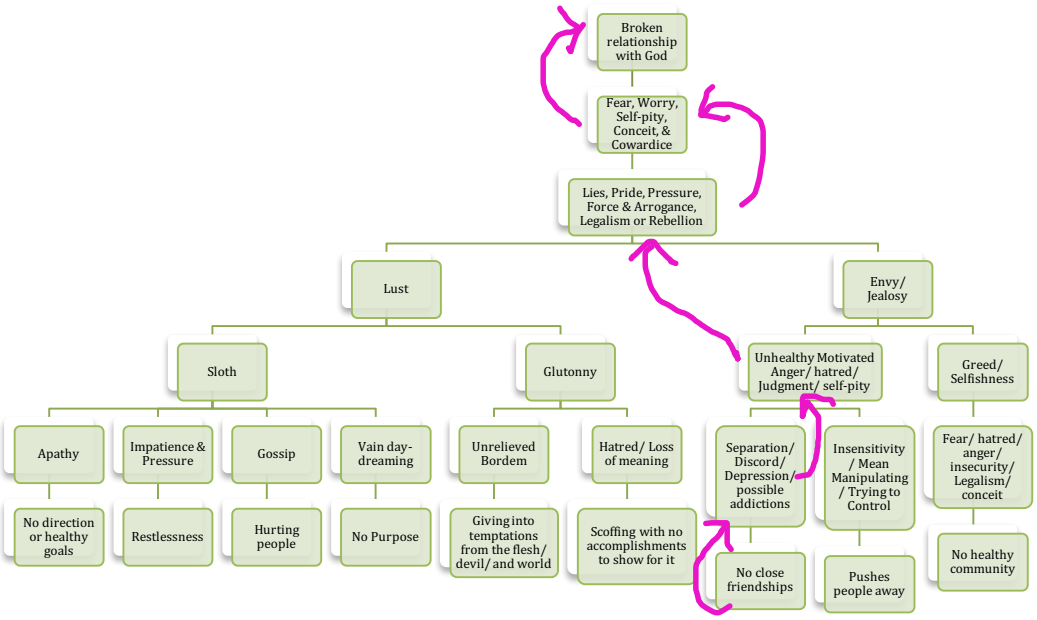
It is important to not copy idea for idea, or request after request made in the above prayers but to leave room for one's own uniqueness, story, and history, room for the leading of the Holy Spirit, and make the effort to dig in our hearts and minds for our truth to get our bearings so we can follow Jesus into the light. When we undertake to humble ourselves God grants His empowering presence and the desired freedom eventually comes.

EXAMPLE FOUR

Situation:

Imagine taking a risk, and losing the gamble like I did in grade school when I lied to try and be accepted by my peers, but got rejected. And then having the consequences wreak havoc on your spiritual life for 43-years. I've prayed into this area, but there is still that wound. Going deeper is what is needed. Note, I have skipped the (envy/ jealousy)-component in this situation because from this angle it is not an issue.

The tree:



Breaking down what happened:

I did the “bad deed” and was noticed and judged (this leads to fear). Leads to the lie: “I didn't do it” (pride). Leads to the Lie: “I did not sin” (God does not have anything on me; I'm in denial). Leads to the Lie: “I'm not guilty” (I therefore supposedly don't have shame!). Leads to the Lie: “It is not sin” (I therefore I called God a liar). I therefore judged my accusers: “You think you're f--ken special”. Leads to Pride: “I'm the really special one” (therefore my accusers have the shame not me!). This leads to me hurting people out of fear.

This structure within would get triggered every time someone put a flashlight on a shortcoming of mine, or on a wrong I committed and lead me being in denial about the shame I carried around with me and putting on a people pleasing smile on my face or mask.

Understanding what happened, confessing, and repenting in prayer:

I did the “bad deed”.

Response: yes I did

and I was/ am noticed and judged (this leads to fear).

Response: I admit that I am repeatedly noticed in my shortcomings, and that I do have fears surrounding them along with guilt, and pride. I give up my fears; fears of being found out, fears of being excluded and rejected, fears of being ostracized, scoffed at, hated, hurt, not having friends, not having someone who is special to love me, is loyal to me, cares for me. I forgive them for not being gentle with myself and judging me. I forgive myself for not being gentle with myself. I do all of this through faith in you Lord Jesus. Amen

Leads to lie: “I didn't do it” (pride).

Response: I admit honestly with your help Lord Jesus that I did do it...over and over again. I give up my pride, and choose to humble myself all with your help Lord Jesus! Amen and Amen!

Lie: “I did not sin” (God does not have anything on me; I'm in denial).

Response: I did sin, I am guilty of sin, you do have stuff on me Lord Jesus. I accept my sinner status, I give up my pious sainthood facade, I have faults, I choose to give up pretending through faith in you Lord Jesus.

Lie: “I'm not guilty” (I therefore supposedly don't have shame!).

Response: Lord Jesus, I confess that I have believed I'm not guilty, have suppressed my guilt all these years...and I ask forgiveness...and healing...and

receive them...I give up this acting, I give up the "I'm not guilty" plea when I'm found out and I choose to be honest from now on instead with your help.

Lie: “It is not sin” (therefore I called God a liar).

Response: I confess Lord Jesus that it is a sin, I do sin, I have sinned, and you aren't a liar. I give up my judgment, pride, and hard hearted ness and admit you are always the truth teller; not me.

I therefore Judged my accusers: “You think you're f--ken special”.

Response: I admit to thinking this, believing this, and arrogantly making this an attitude. I was wrong. I ask for your forgiveness Jesus, and healing. I give up thinking this way, having this attitude, and being arrogant, I give this all up through faith in you Lord Jesus! Amen!

Pride: I'm the really special one (therefore my accusers have the shame not me!).

Response: I admit I used to believe this deeply about myself and those who accused me. I'm sorry and ask for your forgiveness and your healing Lord Jesus. I give up, through faith in you Jesus, my accusations, my shooting from the hip, my knee jerk reactions, my pride, judging, and fears. Thank you Lord God! Amen and Amen!

This leads to me hurting many people out of my fear and wounded ness.

Response: I confess hurting “each so and so…” repeatedly since then throughout my life. I give up lying to people and myself; and hurting people and myself, all through faith in you the living God: Jesus, and receive your healing and forgiveness like you promised.

Revelation:

I can’t save myself through deception. I can't save myself through lies, through my own energy, through my pride, motivated by fears, and leaving my hurts unhealed. I give up, with your help Lord Jesus, my self-righteous attempts, proud struggles, fleshly energy, and rigid commitments to save myself by wearing a mask, that only ever landed up with me hurting people in my arrogance. I pray all this admitting my guilt and intellectually and emotionally receive your forgiveness and healing. Amen! The mask is coming off slowly as I process in prayer all the situations where I wore it as my protection or salvation. Jesus is my real Salvation.

The Affect:

Breaking down what happened back in the school yard, when I lied in an attempt to get favor with my peers, helped me to process all the deception involved; to become aware of my lies, pride, judging, insensitivity, shame, and the guilty way of trying to hide my shame. The confessing and repenting in prayer dismantled this

stronghold from “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” and brought back the ability to confess my faults more truthfully without fear of shame or ridicule.

Revelation:

Wearing a mask is a necessity when there is fear, unless one knows and experiences caring, gentle, deep, unconditional love. So, if we don't want a mask, then we must give up the fear and embrace the Love that can't be shaken: God. But how do we do this? We confront our fears and the beliefs behind them, so they lose their power.

DEALING WITH FEARS

There are four categories of fear: rejection, abandonment, confrontation, and death. As stated previously, one needs to process and confront them by attacking the beliefs behind them in prayer preferably by writing them out and then speaking them out loud. We simply list the fears, give them up in faith, and affirm good old common sense wisdom and biblical truth and promises about love. In doing this we will become less fear-motivated and more love-motivated. Everyone will have their own lists. Here are a few of mine:

I fear being without a mask. Lord Jesus, I know that the mask is an idol, that keeps me from real, wholesome, warm, caring, and loving salvation. To give it up completely I need to redirect and give my fear to you, as your perfect love casts out all fear. I do this now asking you to fill me with your love.

They saw through me and that put fear into me. Lord Jesus, I give up with your help this fear of being seen through. We all have a sin nature; and your grace is sufficient.

I fear people. Lord Jesus, I give up with your help through faith my fear of people. I choose to be courageous instead through your Spirit Almighty God.

I fear those close to me. Lord Jesus, I give up with your help through faith, my fears of honesty, intimacy, and vulnerability in my relating style. I choose instead to be honest, not anal, but caring, fun, humorous, and playful with your help Loving God. Amen!

I fear being hurt. Lord God, hurt is a part of life, I accept with your help through faith, that I will be hurt at times, but I choose to navigate that hurt with your love, with your caring, with your example Lord Jesus. Nothing is impossible for you the Living God.

I fear screwing up. Perfect love casts out all fear. I walk by faith, not sight, I accept and expect to screw up every now and then, but I choose to handle it with your grace Lord Jesus. I'm perfectly imperfect. I choose through faith in you Lord Jesus

to give up my fear of screwing up. Fear does not save, love saves. Fear is negative; whereas faith, love and hope are positive.

I fear being found out again. Lord God, here I am, you know everything about me...you who are most powerful choose to care for me, and love me anyways...so what can man do against me when you are for me.

Chapter Twelve

THE TREE OF LIFE

There were two trees in the garden of Eden as recorded in the first book of the Bible[11]. We have looked at one of them: "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" in depth and now we will look at the tree of life.

The tree of life is not man-made, it is not fabricated by angelic hands. This tree is Jesus. Jesus is the only foundation that can sustain healthy life, and if we reject Him we reject life. I have spoken a lot about little "t"-truths and how important they are, but without Jesus they become empty philosophies, devoid of power to heal, make strong, and give us freedom and peace.

The tree of life bears good fruit such as love, patience, joy, peace, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control through the Holy Spirit. We can belong, remain, and abide in this tree of life out of a humble faith in Jesus. Jesus is the foundation and the structure of the tree of life.

Jesus came that we might have life to the full. He came to show us that relationship with God through faith in Him that leads to love is the path to that life. Jesus died on a cross once for all to save and heal all. He did not come to condemn but came to restore in each of us health, holiness, justice, peace, love, and hope through faith in Him.

The first beatitude found in the Sermon on the Mount that Jesus taught is: "Blessed are the Poor in Spirit." In today's language, this means, "Blessed are the humble." That is what the Sermon on the Mount hinges on. That is what this book hinges on. Not a false humility, but one that is nurtured through relationship with God through Jesus Christ through faith and grace. Faith is not a force that we muster and exert, or a technique that gets God's attention and makes Him love us more. No! Faith is like opening a door that lets Jesus into our lives, so we can talk with him and He with us, so that we can have community, and touch one another in love and grow in fellowship. This allows Jesus to grow us in love and so become a blessing to others we know now and have still to meet.

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[11] Cf. Genesis 2:9

Jesus said that if one builds on the Rock (Jesus Himself-through a living faith relationship) with His guidance, empowering presence and teachings found in The Sermon on the Mount then one would weather any storm that threatens. Jesus is the structure for Life and blue print (or understanding or Wisdom) we ought to build our attitudes on through healthy prayer (relationship) that inspires healthy positive energy that bear healthy actions and supports life.

The parable of the Mustard Seed (Cf. Mark 4:31) is about a seed that is so tenacious that grows a tree/bush in the most difficult places (think of stony hearts) and when it is mature is able to support the birds of the air. The birds symbolize freedom, life, or people-delicately-dependent-on-plenty-of-patience because life is so often messy and difficult. This Wisdom or tree or understanding in us is able to support all of this to the glory of God. We need to be maintained, cared for, watered, pruned so we will grow. This book gives advice on how God the Father (Vinedresser) cares for the true Vine: Jesus and us the branches that remain in Him.

Connection, relationship, and fellowship with Jesus through faith, love, and hope are where life is at. If all we are focused on are principles, theology, rules, and laws we will miss Jesus and the grace and peace He wants to pour into our lives. What or who we care about is most important to us. Learning to distinguish Jesus voice from others, and to commit to caring for people with His Light (guidance) is critical. If we don't have Jesus, we don't have life.

There is the world (system), and devil that both seek to corrupt us together with the "sin nature". I have spoken much about the flesh and the strongholds of sin: "the tree of knowledge of good and evil", but very little about the devil and the world (system). The world and the devil both have voices that try to replace Jesus' voice, direction, care, love, and peace in our lives. But Jesus gives us a choice in the matter: do we want life or death? It does matter how we direct our hunger and thirst, what we enjoy, and entertain ourselves with, and why. Whatever we choose God will give us the fullness of in the end. The choices are ours!

Chapter Thirteen

THE CONCLUSION

The process to wholeness is a journey. It isn't a pit stop. I ask Jesus often what He wants me to do next. He often tells me to "hope" and I finally understood that He means for me to journey with Him, and as things, situations, and people come into my life and trigger stuff, then that is on my plate to deal with as an opportunity for spiritual growth, and I should count it all joy.

There are always new things to learn and to grow in the practice of doing; with hope, faith, and love showing the way.

I am realizing more that as healing comes into one's life, and things slowly get dealt with, then eventually the BIGGEST challenges to overcome involve "fear" and uncovering the "lies" in the many contexts of one's life that lead to bondage and sin strongholds. Doing this "really" helps to put to death those parts of "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" that are active within us in those areas. That doesn't mean we should just focus on our fears. In examining the other branches of the tree connected to different fears we learn how our fears operate, and that gives us insights on how to pray, see things, and what will set us free; God keeps His word and will bring freedom, one truth at a time as we persevere in caring enough to find ways to love.

None of us are perfect. Those interested in freedom, will usually have a minimum of five or six issues (I've had hundreds) they are aware of, that need healing. Working on the ones that Jesus points out is key to not getting negative or overwhelmed or discouraged. We need to always look back and see the work God has done in our lives when our faiths are challenged, and to not give up.

APPENDIX I

DIAGRAMS

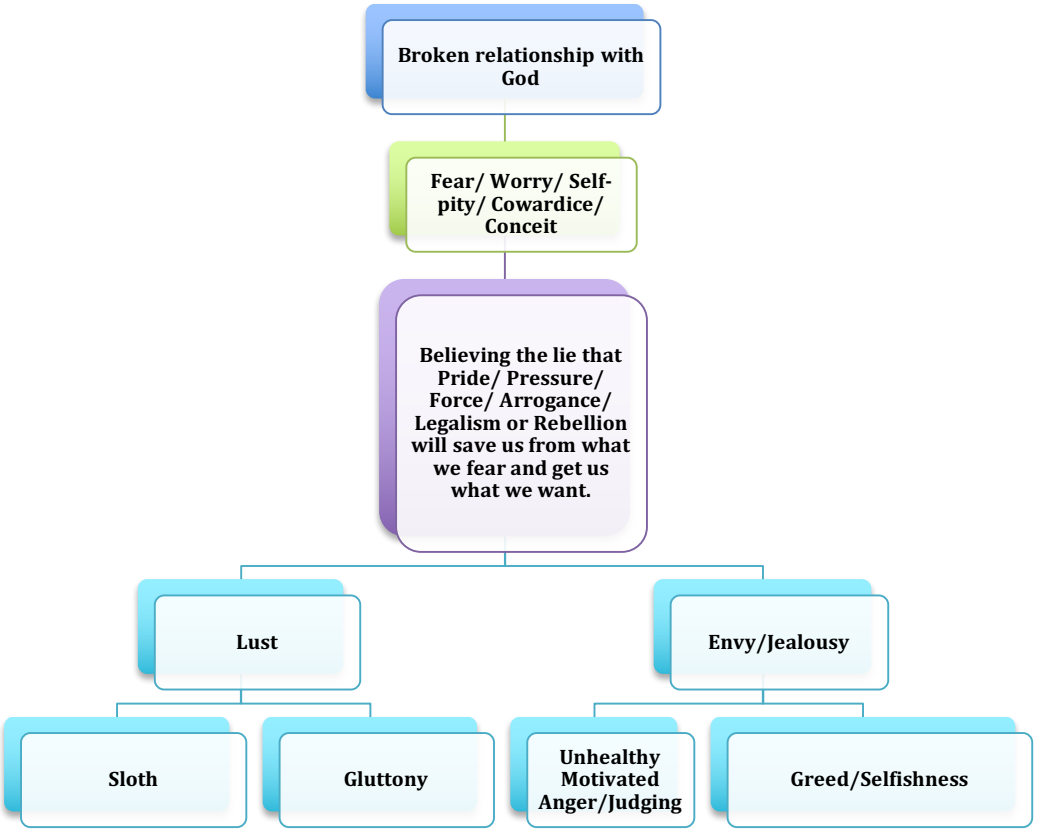
This first Appendix contains dissection diagrams from "the tree of knowledge of good and evil".

The first three-diagrams below summarizes different parts of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil.

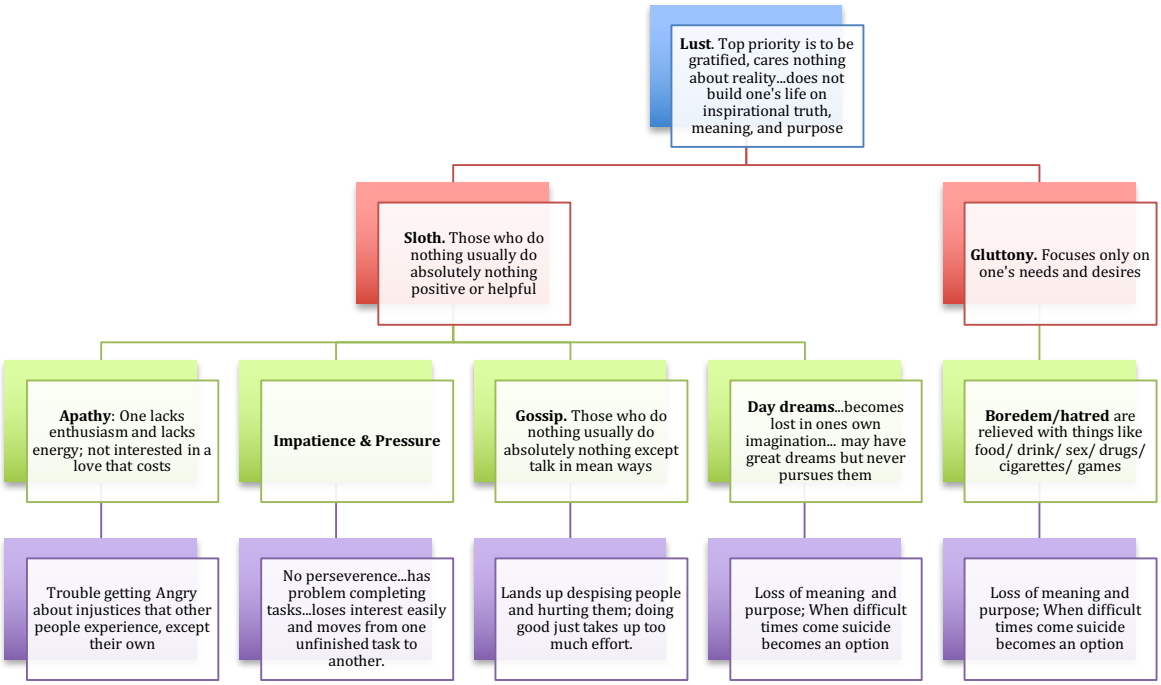
The first diagram below is a modification of a diagram I saw on an Orthodoxy and Recovery blog[12] that is now missing from it.

THE ROOT AND TRUNK DIAGRAM:

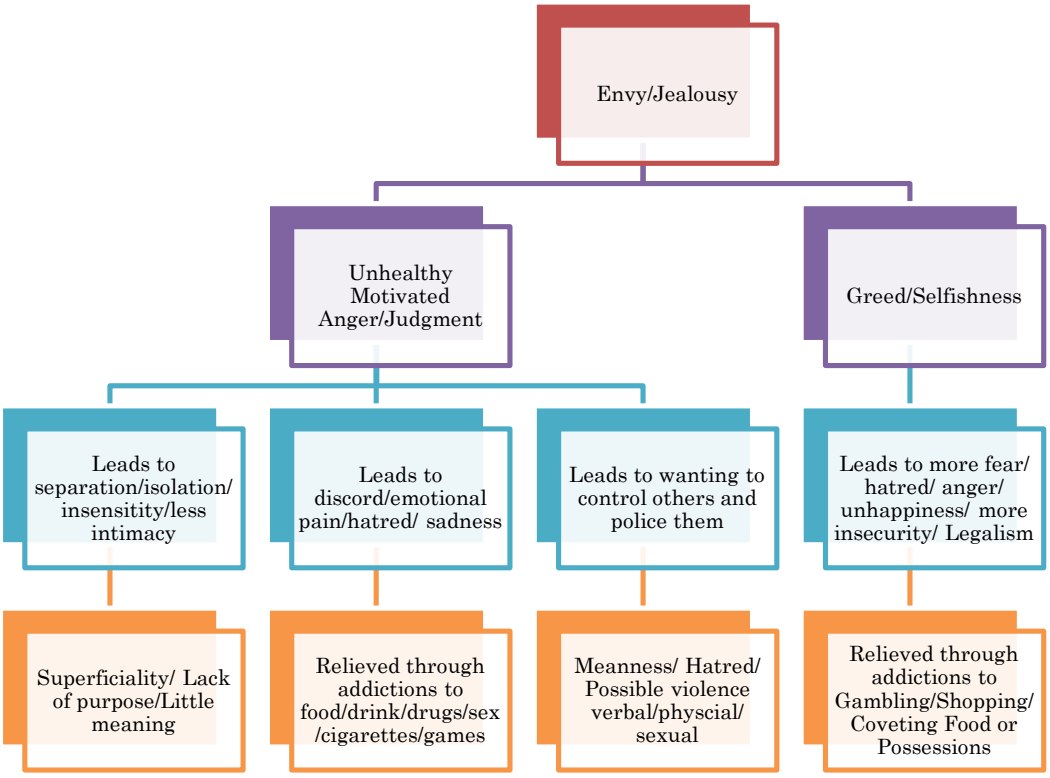
[12] http://orthodoxyandrecovery.blogspot.ca/2012/05/hedonism-and-addiction-lust-gluttony.html



THE LUST DIAGRAM:



THE ENVY DIAGRAM:



The Next three-diagrams summarize the strategies for dealing with the main strongholds diagrams discussed in the book:

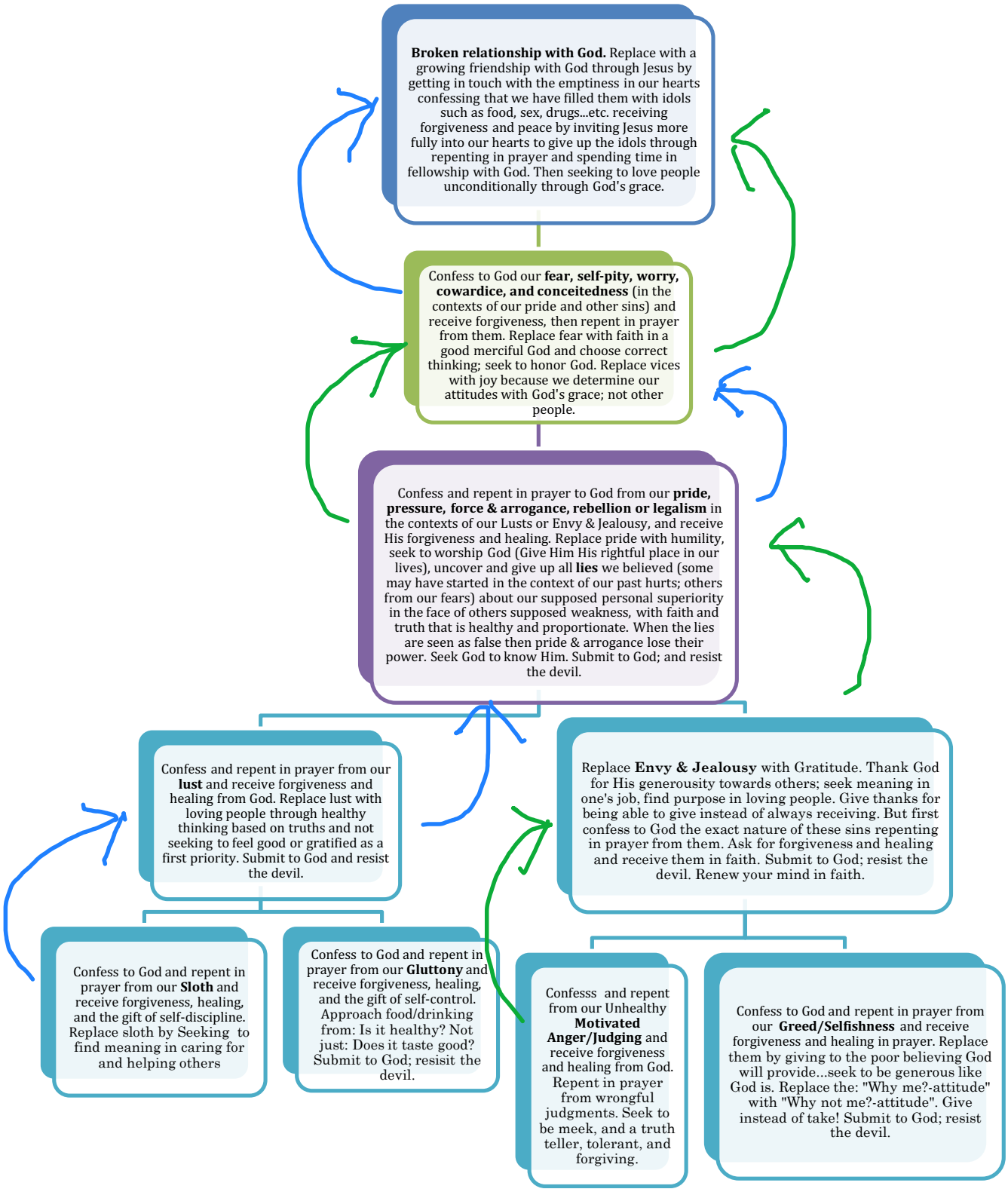
THE ROOT BRANCH HEALING DIAGRAM:

This Diagram roughly shows how to deal with the vices/ attitudes discussed in the book. We pray the diagram from the bottom upwards depending on what we struggle with

If we struggle with Judging and anger, then following the green-arrow-lines from the bottom to the top in prayer.

If we struggle with sloth, then we follow the blue-arrow-lines from the bottom to the top in prayer.

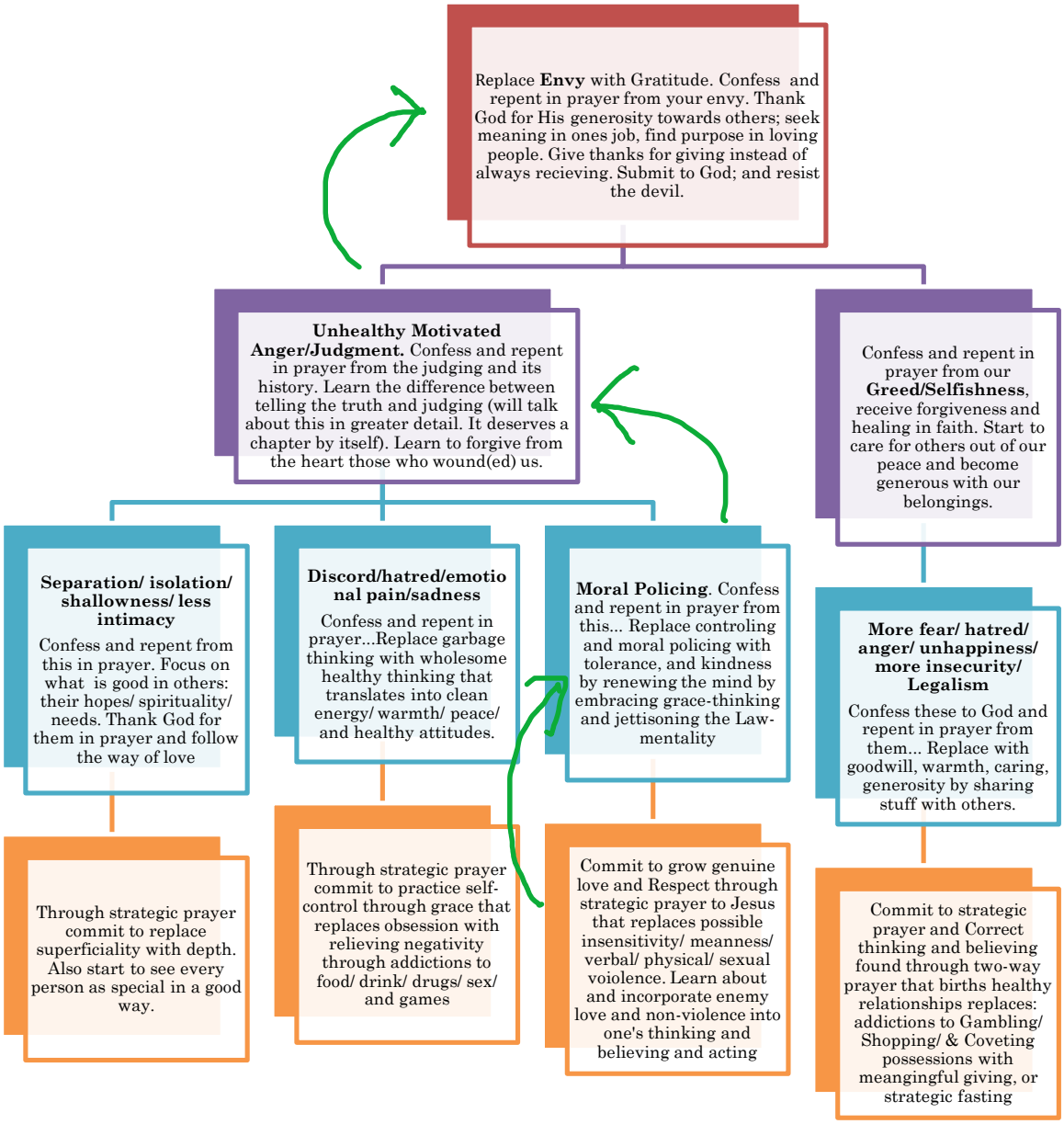
There is a lot of stuff to deal with and it can be overwhelming and seemingly repetitive, but after working them for a while they get streamlined and are quickly dealt with.

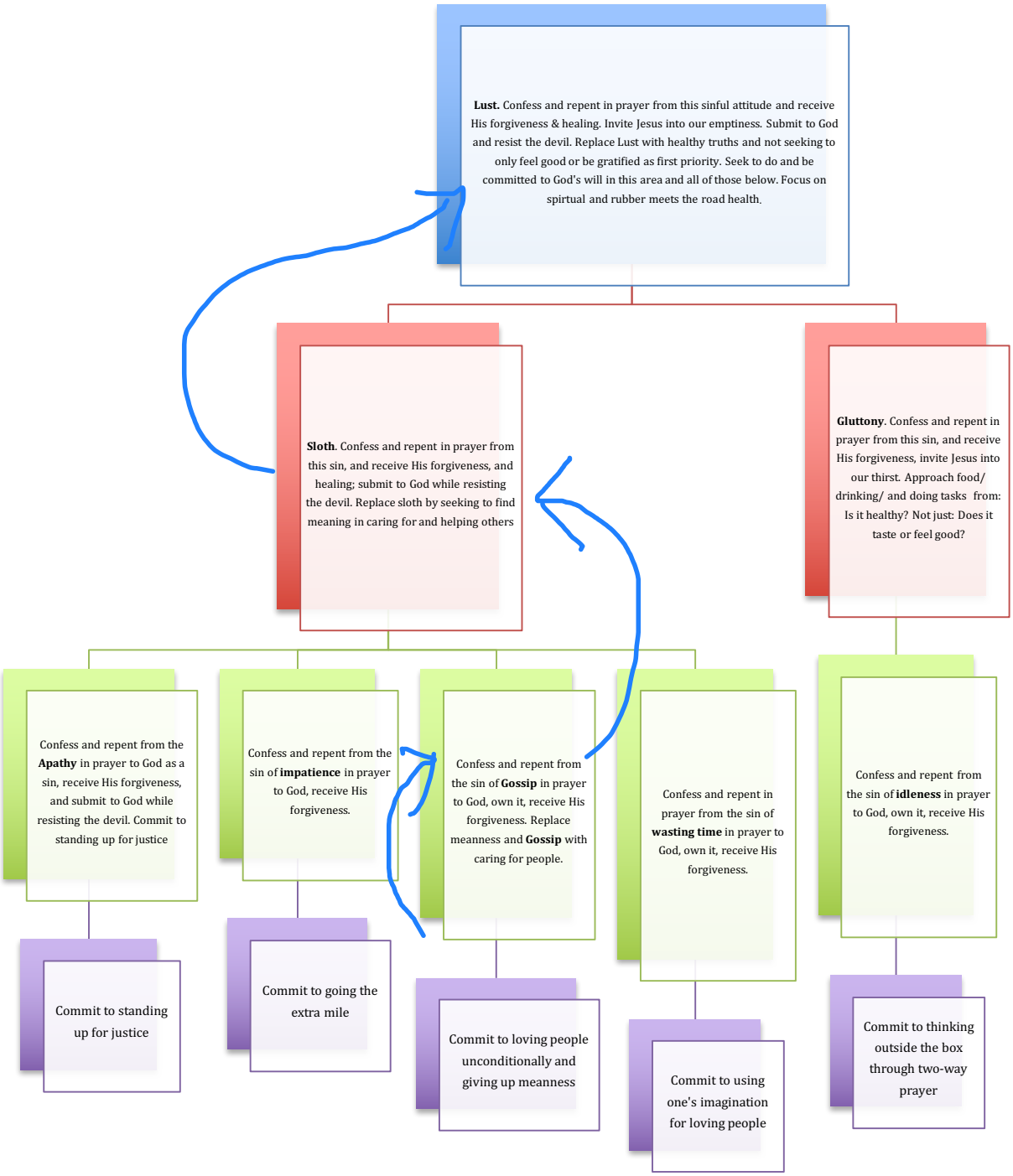

Broken relationship with God. Replace with a growing friendship with God through Jesus by getting in touch with the emptiness in our hearts confessing that we have filled them with idols such as food, sex, drugs...etc. receiving forgiveness and peace by inviting Jesus more fully into our hearts to give up the idols through repenting in prayer and spending time in fellowship with God. Then seeking to love people unconditionally through God's grace.
Confess to God our **fear, self-pity, worry, cowardice, and conceitedness** (in the contexts of our pride and other sins) and receive forgiveness, then repent in prayer from them. Replace fear with faith in a good merciful God and choose correct thinking; seek to honor God. Replace vices with joy because we determine our attitudes with God's grace; not other people.
Confess and repent in prayer to God from our **pride, pressure, force & arrogance, rebellion or legalism** in the contexts of our Lusts or Envy & Jealousy, and receive His forgiveness and healing. Replace pride with humility, seek to worship God (Give Him His rightful place in our lives), uncover and give up all **lies** we believed (some may have started in the context of our past hurts; others from our fears) about our supposed personal superiority in the face of others supposed weakness, with faith and truth that is healthy and proportionate. When the lies are seen as false then pride & arrogance lose their power. Seek God to know Him. Submit to God; and resist the devil.
Confess and repent in prayer from our **lust** and receive forgiveness and healing from God. Replace lust with loving people through healthy thinking based on truths and not seeking to feel good or gratified as a first priority. Submit to God and resist the devil.
Replace **Envy & Jealousy** with Gratitude. Thank God for His generousity towards others; seek meaning in one's job, find purpose in loving people. Give thanks for being able to give instead of always receiving. But first confess to God the exact nature of these sins repenting in prayer from them. Ask for forgiveness and healing and receive them in faith. Submit to God; resist the devil. Renew your mind in faith.
Confess to God and repent in prayer from our **Sloth** and receive forgiveness, healing, and the gift of self-discipline. Replace sloth by Seeking to find meaning in caring for and helping others
Confess to God and repent in prayer from our **Gluttony** and receive forgiveness, healing, and the gift of self-control. Approach food/drinking from: Is it healthy? Not just: Does it taste good? Submit to God; resisit the devil.
Confesss and repent from our Unhealthy **Motivated Anger/Judging** and receive forgiveness and healing from God. Repent in prayer from wrongful judgments. Seek to be meek, and a truth teller, tolerant, and forgiving.
Confess to God and repent in prayer from our **Greed/Selfishness** and receive forgiveness and healing in prayer. Replace them by giving to the poor believing God will provide...seek to be generous like God is. Replace the: "Why me?-attitude" with "Why not me?-attitude". Give instead of take! Submit to God; resist the devil.

THE ENVY HEALING DIAGRAM (BELOW):

We work next diagram from the bottom upwards too. For instance, if we have insensitivity in our attitudes/ actions we follow the green-arrow-lines as directed. We follow this strategy with all our observable sins in this context, and then proceed to praying Diagram above in the same context.

We persistently use "I"-statements, confession, repenting prayer, two-way-dialogue, journaling, and lean on Scriptures for support in our approach to praying the below sin/ attitude stronghold connections contextually to find healing. We will make progress as we stick to the strategy outlined in this book.





THE LUST HEALING DIAGRAM:

If we struggle with gossip, then we follow and pray the blue-arrow-lines upwards. Then we proceed to First Healing Diagram above and pray it contextually.

There is a lot of confessing, repenting in prayer, committing to renew the mind, and committing to replace bad fruit with practicing the golden rule that Jesus taught us to live out, in the above diagrams.

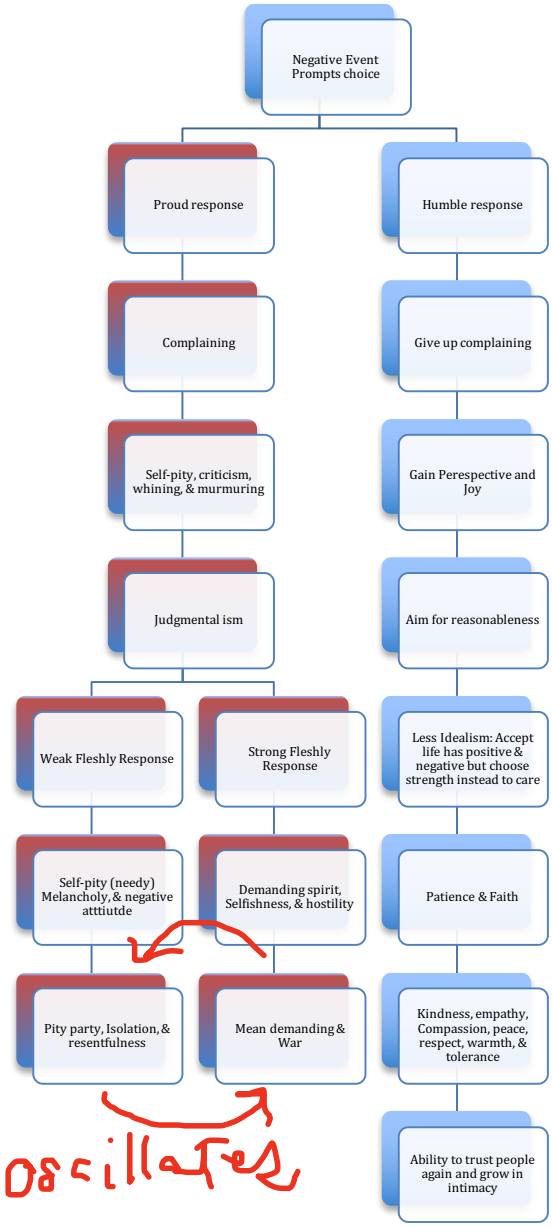
Appendix II

COMPLAINING

This Diagram (seen below) has its genesis from the OT when the Jews complained, whined, and criticized Moses and God, and what the Holy Spirit has been teaching me about this in myself. First off, I now know I can determine what I focus on and think about: both positive and negative. I don't have to be at the mercy of fallen angels' confusing lies, or anyone else's for that matter.

All the negativity/ fear/ anxiety/ and powerlessness we might feel are inspired by the thoughts we think which are inspired by the dark side: as malicious thoughts are often inserted into our minds by fallen angels and are often hurtful, and scary. We can tune into them, or away from them. All the positive warm and respectful thoughts inserted into our minds are from the Holy Spirit. We can tune into them, or away from them. All our feelings are triggered by the thoughts in our heads or from what we focus on. If we rid ourselves from certain thoughts, then the feelings we have from them will also go away provided we didn't believe any lie that was put forth in our thoughts.

I get to choose where I want to go in my mind: no one else can decide this for me unless I give them that power. I don't have to "own" the malicious codes the devils put into my mind unless I choose to agree with them and live them out. The Gateway to darkness is through "complaining," and the more often we go there the more it will accelerate into Judgmental ism which leads to selfishness until it becomes a "negative-stronghold" in our minds and hearts. The Gateway to positivity is saying I don't need to "complain," and this leads to love, and compassion as we choose to love others the way we would want to be loved as far as grace is concerned. The more we give up complaining the easier it will be to be positive and to love, to be warm, and to be kind until it becomes the "default attitude" in our hearts and minds. The struggle to think positively will get easier, but we will always have to choose between: should we complain, or should we give up complaining? The choice is ours! The fork in the road diagram in directly below:



Over time the connections on the left side of the diagram above accelerate into strongholds until they become blurred and we automatically fall into judgmental ism when something negative happens. And we might find ourselves oscillating or vacillating between {a resentful/ self-pitying attitude} and a {Mean demanding/ or War} attitude expecting our supposed rights. The former has the attitude of: “poor me” and the latter is about getting our “revenge”.

People who are judgmental may oscillate or vacillate between “poor me” and the “revenge” attitudes and in either case they will only measure out love less than or

equal to what other people measure out to them. They are insecure and choose to not love those who don't love them. They are insecure, motivated by fear of rejection, and have low self-esteem. They don't know their worth in God's eyes. They have believed lies that make them more like parasites than lovers. They are motivated by a selfish kind of love (lust). They hunger for power to control people, the present and the future. Therefore, they seek knowledge in these areas either from the occult or in prayer to God. Saving face is their goal. They often view God's love as conditional, God as hard to please, and God as someone who only loves you if you belong to Him, or if you got your theological ducks in a row. They may believe God only starts to love you once you give Him reign over your life. They also believe they ought only love others once they belong to their sect, cause or particular-denomination and have fulfilled all the initiation requirements and have a decent track record (whatever that means). The judgmental often feel they aren't respected when people don't always do as they please (they take it personal). Their efforts to get respect always fall short because they act from the flesh (weakly or strongly) and people sense this as inauthentic. Judgmental people blame, blame, and blame and are very weak at seeing the bright side of things and being thankful.

Either way, one has got to process the stuff that bothers oneself, instead of complaining. Not complaining means not complaining to God either. So, what gives? It comes down to using "I"-statements in expressing to God one's feelings, hurts, anger, and frustrations instead of judging, criticizing, and complaining. This way we aren't used by Satan to accuse people before God of doing vile and mean things. In speaking and listening to the Holy Spirit we lighten our loads, and He puts ideas, thoughts, and wisdom into our thoughts as we reason with Him in friendship...that helps us to process our stuff healthily!

The listening part might seem out of this world foolishness. But it will come naturally to followers of Jesus who are willing to learn and grow in their relationship with God. Books by Brad Jersak, and Mark Virkler are good places to start to grow in two-way prayer.

Non-judgmental people are stronger and love lavishly even those who treat them like shit. They are not insecure…they have hope…and believe the best about everyone else. They do not see themselves as being at the capricious or fickle mercy of others…there is no struggle for power in them. They are not motivated by fear. They are not motivated by fear of rejection. They aren't attempting to use God as a good luck charm or as someone with a crystal ball that predicts the future conveniently for them so they can safely navigate tricky relationships or economic uncertainty. They trust God with the future and live as much as possible in the present. They view God's love as unconditional (i.e. loving them whether or

not they do good, do bad, or have apathy), that He is merciful to both the righteous and the wicked; the knowledgeable and the ignorant; and the wise and the foolish. Non-judgmental people love, love, and love. You can be yourself with them.

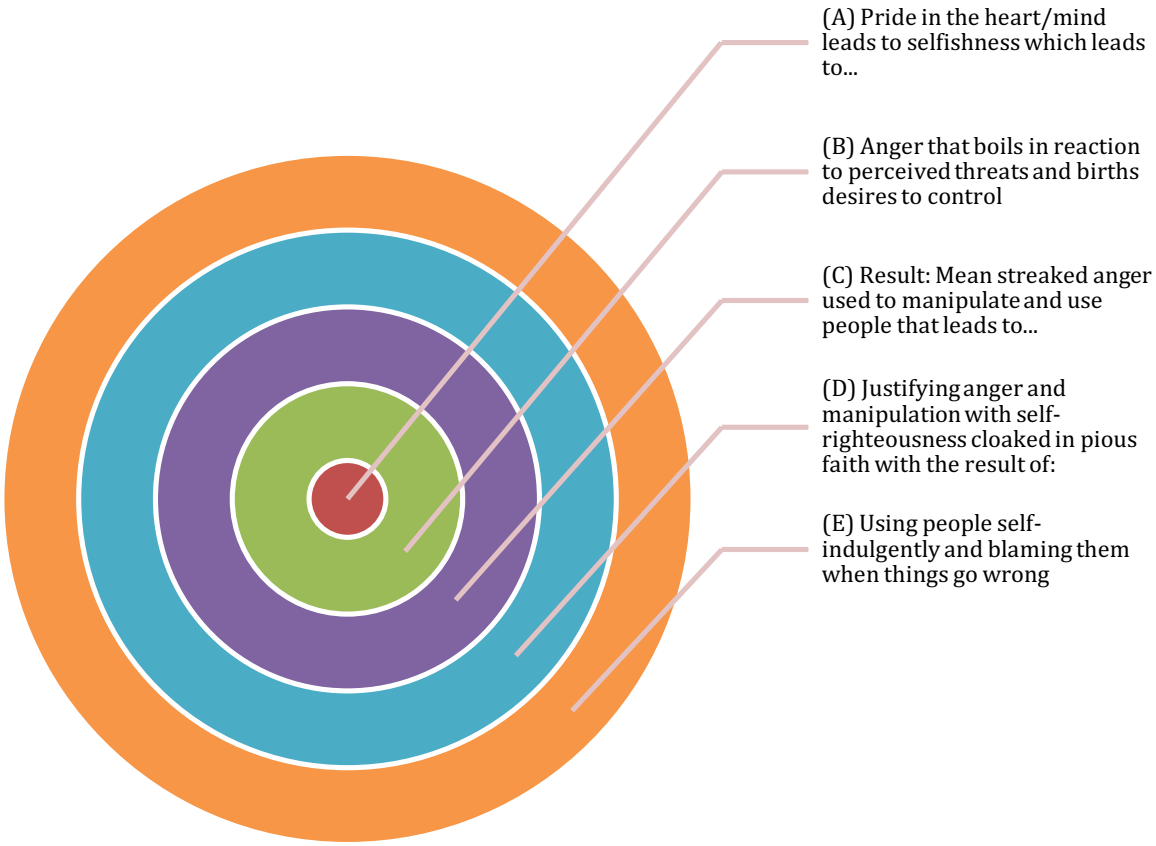
Not complaining leads to perspective, realism, non-idealism, patience and faith…and surprisingly trusting people instead of having fears growing out of insecurities because we no longer are looking for things to criticize and find wrong with people. So, where are we looking? We are looking to live out the "golden rule" in the context of "grace."

Not choosing whining gives us a feel for people so we have an intuition, connectedness, a trust, a fellowship, a roomy relationship that allows for ups and downs and the ability to forge deeper and deeper commitments to each other. Such is living life and that means growth. Grace means that God loves us unconditionally. Not as we deserve. Lavishly. Patiently. Caring. Forever.

When one is intolerant of, or judges harshly another person's conduct as "deeply sinful and unacceptable" (rightfully or wrongfully) that one happens to do one self (knowingly or unknowingly), then this is commonly known as hypocrisy. But the Bible says that if we have broken one command we have broken the whole Law. So, hypocrisy is more than having committed the exact same sin as the one we judged to be worse than us, but having committed any sin and still judged. Judging any person is always wrong. Telling the truth is different than judging. Our behaviors will not be repented from successfully/ removed/ healed/or cleaned up until we deal with our hypocrisy by repenting in prayer from it successfully and that means us stopping our judging of people. It is so easy to compartmentalize stuff, and when we do so, then we become blind and will hurt a lot of people when given the opportunity to do so.

Appendix III

DISMANTLING A SELF-RIGHTEOUS STRUCTURE WITHIN



This diagram shows how deceptive one's heart and mind can be. Many Christians frown when people say the word: "God" followed by, "damn", or "Jesus" followed by, "Christ", or if they just tell dirty jokes. Christians often think this is the worst one can do…but the heart and mind can be much more deceptive. The above structure which I see as worse in some ways was alive and well in me until the Holy Spirit pointed it out to me.

This structure is dismantled through prayer that is genuine deep and heartfelt, confesses the exact nature of the thoughts/ deeds/ desires/ and actions listed above, owning their history and telling God one is sorry with true contrition; and then receiving forgiveness (not just intellectually but emotionally), and then repenting in prayer from them/ committing with God's help to put an end to it all (and repeating such prayer when the behavior reasserts itself). This is very freeing. Such a dynamic can be alive in all facets of one's life: family, work, commuting, travel, friendships, shopping, and with strangers that do things that annoy us.

The reason for the shape of this diagram is that if this dynamic is active in one's life then it's like an onion…layered with only the outer layer discernible by oneself until the Holy Spirit points out what is underneath.

There are intuitive people whose spirits can read other people's energies, motives, attitudes and intentions and they will sense something is amiss even if they can't put it into words. People with this bad-dynamic may think they are being kind to others on the surface, but the structures beneath are anything but healthy. Intuitive people usually don't react to the surface interactions alone in their relationships, instead they react to what their guts or spirits are telling them.

This emotional intuition/ intelligence is built into all of us. But those who are wounded, or whose personalities are fractured or are not as connected within and will have problems listening to the warnings from their spirits; and are not able to feel the consolation that can come from their spirits that the Holy Spirit puts there.

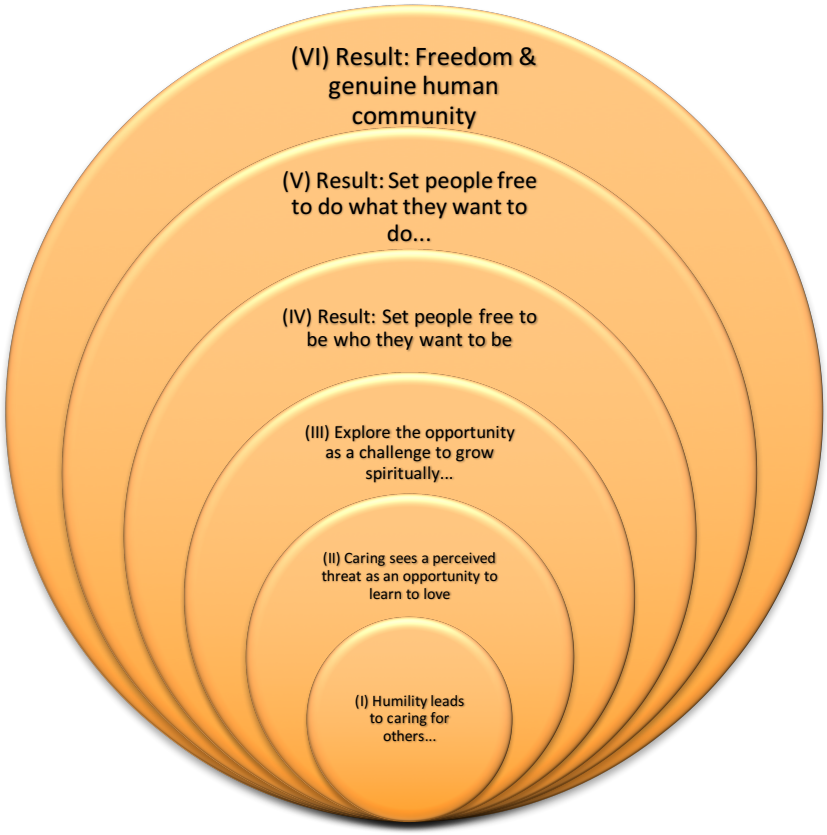
Not all knowledge comes from our five senses together with our reasoning, intellects, understandings and consciences. Our spirits also have knowledge…they sense things that the other sources miss out on and often are at odds with what fallen angels want us to believe, but are in sync with what the Holy Spirit wants us to know. Realizing this and confirming its witness to events through prayer will release us from many of the snares that the devil sets. Trying to trust people not using one's intuition from our spirits does not work well. Our spirits read other people's energies, intentions, and motives and when listened to will guide us together with the light of Christ on the path of faith. When we are open to listening to all these ways of knowing we will grow in wisdom, people sense (be good judges of character) and patience; and wild goose chases will become less frequent.

Going by faith alone can mean that we endure a kind of suffering when carrying the doubts that assail us especially when they are close to home and full of triggers and insecurities. But we don't have to navigate only by faith all the time. Yes, faith is important and helps us overcome much adversity through strength. But there is also intuitive-knowledge that God has endowed our spirits with; a kind of knowing; that leads us to trusting others deeply, consolingly, and refreshingly…or not at all in those places that don't merit it; and this intuition from our spirits cares for others and negates some of the doubts we encounter in our relationships that can otherwise torment us. This knowledge does give us rest… peace… joy… hope… patience, and solidifies our bonds and connections to people in relationships.

APPENDIX IV

BUILDING A HUMILITY STRUCTURE FROM THE GROUND UP

When the spirit's abilities are discounted, ignored, or negated by lies from the evil one then we become wounded (disconnected) and it stops us from being whole and intuitive. It makes us indecisive, confused a lot of the time and unassertive.



To conquer the self-righteous structure one needs to see it in action within oneself, confess it to God (receiving His forgiveness not just intellectually but emotionally), and in doing so repent in prayer from doing it anymore. Renew the mind with truthful thinking and healthy attitudes. Submit to God's will. And live the "golden rule" out in the context of "grace."

Pride says I am more important, indeed most important, and that everything moral or immoral I can do to get what I want I will do. Pride hates perceived threats. Humility sees perceived threats as challenges and opportunities to get healthy relationally, develop wholesome roots and good fruit…and pray to erect the structure above in our attitudes and desires instead of the self-righteous Structure spoken of before this one.

As for Floors IV- VI: The temptation for insecure people is that when their relationships are threatened i.e. seem to sour or they encounter relational difficulties they inwardly feel the pressure to demand, manipulate, and force stuff so they will somehow restore the relationship. But this very attempt pushes people away...and isn't a method at all because it is needy, negative, abrasive, cold, demanding, and not done from a place of warmth, friendship, kindness, and freedom. Love attracts; demanding pushes away. This darkness needs to be jettisoned through prayer. And leads to this revelation: One's friends have the right to choose their friends. Freedom and joy can come when one rejects being a jail keeper.

Appendix V

ATTITUDES

Luke 5:37-38 has Jesus saying:

> No one tears a piece of cloth from a new garment and puts it on an old garment; otherwise he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. "And no one puts new wine into old wineskins; otherwise the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled out, and the skins will be ruined. "But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins....

This parable is saying that when we have a bad attitude, then we need to pull it out by the roots otherwise it will re-assert itself leaving unbelief, doubt, confusion, and the expectation that we can't put to death this and any other passion of the flesh. This last result is worse than the first one.

Some feelings, and attitudes are so entrenched within us that we don't even know the thoughts that planted them. They can be so real, so powerful, and so agreeable that we would never think they are unhealthy, or we think they validate our current thinking and so are true. This should not be the case. It was like this for me for a long time in some areas in my personal/ emotional/ intellectual life. But working the material from this book, and the rest of the Website has brought much healing to me. This material comes from the Bible, my relationship with God as trinity, many people, books that stretched my thinking, many Websites visited, radio broadcasts, TV shows, and movies watched in conjunction with my personal struggles to love and break free from my pride, sinful attitudes, and to stop hurting those I claim to love.

Pride, envy, Judgmental ism, poor-me, bitterness, hatred, pleasure seeking, scoffing, arrogance, putting people down, and conceited ness are all attitudes that can grow up out of our hearts and minds and these attitudes are the ones that need to be dealt with. Realizing that these vices are attitudes can help us know

where to look to initiate real change of our minds. Hopefully the tools above and below will give the readers something to start with in cleaning up the inside of the cup so the outside will also become clean like Jesus directed us to do.

Being aware of the energy and/or attitudes within us, and knowing how to jettison the negative, and let the positive flow through us is key to spiritual growth, healthy relating, stability of mind, and acting out humility in love.

The good energy flows from the tree of life: Jesus, into our humble attitudes; whereas the bad energy flows from the flesh into “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” within us, and into our decisions unless we learn to put it to death slowly by dismantling it and replace it with positive attitudes. When Adam and Eve ate from “the tree of knowledge of good and evil” its seed got planted in each of us their descendants. So, we have the capacity to do both healthy and unhealthy relating because we are made in the image of God, but also have what is called a “sin nature”.

Loving concepts does not lead to love (like pope Francis said somewhere). Caring for people leads to love. Loving concepts distracts us from listening, respecting, embracing, caring for, and being gentle with people in unselfish ways.

It is not foremost seeking the truth that brings freedom or consolation. Seeking to love brings freedom and consolation; while little "t"-truths will come when they are needed as we seek to love. One grows in love, resolve, joy, patience, truth, peace, security, humility, perseverance, and gentleness by understanding and practicing how to rid oneself of negative attitudes and energy, and grow healthy attitudes within. This is done in one's relationship with God through Jesus Christ in prayer and meditation. What I have learned about this process I've included in all the books found in this Website. This book is only one small part of the puzzle on how to be free from sin. There are others who have contributed much to heal other areas of my life.

If one wants more information on what I think pride and Humility look like look at the book called: “Humility” from this Website by clicking the link:

http://www.brokenintofreedom.ca/PDFs/humility.pdf

or cutting and pasting it into your browser.

Appendix VI

SEEING THINGS DIFFERENTLY

The Penal Substitution Theory (PST) as a motivation of Jesus’ Passion robs those who believe it of wisdom and power. The PST view which is contrary to all of

Scripture taken in context says that Jesus was a substitute for each of us so He could undo the curse of the Law by taking the punishment that was our deserved wages, according to the Law on Himself through the awful infinite wrath of God the Father.

The correct view is that God in Jesus took onto Himself what we threw at Him: the cross, brutality, ridicule, and sport. This was how we fallen humanity welcomed Jesus. We pierced Him and He gushed forth love and life (symbolized by the blood and water that flowed from His side). The malice that was vented on Him came from us not God the Father. God the Father was not in agreement or behind the ridicule, mockery, sport and malice visited on Jesus in His pain. The insults were far more hurtful to Jesus than the crushing pain of His Passion and cross. Far from Jesus being our substitute for our deserved punishment… we are called by Jesus to carry our own crosses and to follow Him (hence no substitution). When Jesus died, He destroyed our death, when He rose He restored our life. When the Bible says, Jesus became sin so that we could become the righteousness of God it means that He was mutilated in the flesh so that we could be healed in our spirits.

I used to think that there was something "just" about Jesus being crucified because I got the word "flesh" confused with the word "body". I saw His "body" crucified on the cross as symbolic of our "flesh" or "sin nature", that needed (past and present (continuous tense)) to be killed so that we could somehow be done with the dark side of our humanity. So, I saw our bodies as evil. But the human body is good not evil. It is not responsible for our "flesh" or "sin nature" that seeks to corrupt us. Even though Jesus' body was crucified, it did not kill our "sin nature". Jesus did not have and has not a "sin nature" and His body was completely healthy. This bad theology leads to giving the "sin nature" more power and influence than it needs.

This carrying of our crosses means accepting the burdens of our "flesh" or "sin nature" (not letting it rule over us); saying we don't need it as our salvation or help in the present, because Jesus' peace satisfies us in the now. All we have is the present, and when the future gets here God will provide the grace and peace to carry our crosses then.

If we do happen to give into a temptation, then we can discuss it with God as we find our bearings, get clarity of mind and press into the Holy Spirit as we learn from Him how to put it to death for good through learning curves. Therefore, eventually a temptation can become lighter than Satan wants us to think possible. The devil wants us to see God as unfair, but we fight it off having tasted the goodness of the Lord.

Some people think they can fend off temptations with the "Thou shalt not…" commands from the Old Testament LAW. Such attempts are futile and are destined for failure. Quoting a "thou shall not" when we want to resist doing the "not" is not wise. The Law can only point out sin. Jesus is the only one who can save us from sin; not the Law. The Law is powerless to save. When we are tempted to sin then prayer and dependence on Jesus (along with His teaching/ commands/ grace/ and promises) is the key to overcoming it if not immediately, then gradually over time as the puzzles are figured out and healthy paths/ thought patterns come into focus so that we do obey Him.

Often the "puzzle pieces" are practical Pieces of wisdom or suggestions from those who have conquered the same sins; not those who only know it is wrong and have no clue how they "actually" cultivate or practice it. Setting someone free who is caught in a trespass is not just pointing out the wrongness of the fault, but also having the knowledge/ experience/ and understanding to communicate how to overcome it. Many Christians think that this command for the spiritual person to help the sinner out of sin amounts to correcting the law breakers' notions of sin. But if one has never conquered the same sin, then the advice can come across as judgmental shallow and empty of real grace and so is powerless to save. But after having helped another person out of a sin, we can give pride a foothold thinking: "Hey I'm 'pretty' smart, wise, spiritual, and clever in helping so and so out…" which is all pride-based. Therefore, giving the glory to Jesus is key to being saved from the sin of pride, and being empowered to love supernaturally.

Appendix VII

MASKS & BOUNDARIES

Masks are a reality (which is an oxymoron) in most of our lives. Some have BIG ones, others have more transparent ones, others have colorful ones, others have angry mean ones, others are like clown faces…others use them to protect or hide their fear and insecurity…others to save face…to be accepted and not be rejected…others to hide stuff they don't want others to see…others to suppress stuff…others to seem strong…others to seem normal. We all have masks that come on and off to serve our weaknesses depending on the moment. Admitting we have them is the first step to dealing with them. We deal with them by cleaning up our interior lives. If we don't we will not make progress in dealing with compensating for our weakness/ shame/ and fears (that battle with our consciences) with masks.

Masks and "the tree of knowledge of good and evil" go together. Adam and Eve also put on masks after they ate from this tree. They felt shame, and immediately

had fear so they tried to protect themselves with leaf coverings after their innocence was stolen. God knew that would not work, so He chose to shed blood to give them leather skin coverings to help remove their shame, and fears. This shedding is prophetic of Jesus' blood being spilt so that our masks (idols of protection) could also be washed away leaving us pure, clean, and able to enjoy rich community once again.

As for boundaries…yes they are terribly confusing most of the times. Many people don't respect them even in places where one would expect there to great respect. I think that how we handle our boundary violations shows how healthy our boundaries "really" are … yeah, some people are so in your face, disrespectful, hostile, angry, uncaring…and one needs to handle each person separately …one isn't strong (humble and in control) because one supposedly has clear boundaries that no one violates (think Darth Vader) … Who wants to be around him anyways? One is strong (healthy relationally) when one handles assaults on one's boundaries healthily … and that might look weak (humiliating) to some…but "actually" loving (and humble) to others…we can feel weak…because of self-pity (I know that I did…until I learned how to deal with my self-pity in healthy ways). But I must admit that I still wear masks…not as thick, not as suppressing, not as black, not as abrasive, not as disrespectful, not as people pleasing as before, and I'm not as fearful, not as insecure as before…so my masks are subtler, closer to who I am in Jesus, but still there. But I now know that self-pity is a root of so much evil (think unhealthy spiritual stuff) of feeling so weak (thinking we are powerless and stuck), right (in our cause), hurt (thinking unfairness has been visited on us), with anger (turned inwards), justified, and feeling guilty all at the same time in part.

It is amazing how the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" has grown so pervasively and invisibly within us fallen human beings. I hope and pray that the insights and tools mentioned in this book will form structures of understanding/ ways of wisdom/ attitudes of humility and peace within on the only sure foundation who is Christ Jesus, that will give forth life, hope, meaning, happiness, and purpose in the contexts of restorative justice, sacrificial and non-coercive love; and just plain having fun with celebrations mixed with curiosity, exploration and healthiness interiorly and relationally.

Seeking to love and not use people is so important for all these tools to work. Praying the suggested prayers only to "maybe" see the outcomes does not work. One must believe that God is good and a rewarder of those who seek Him when one prays these prayers. When at wits end, ask the Holy Spirit for healing, and don't be afraid to confess your lack of love, repent in prayer from it, and wait for healing, revelation, understanding, hope, and stability. The Holy Spirit values our

health more than we do. Giving the Holy Spirit access to our lives continually, and permanently is the healthy path to take.

A journey that does not lead to love is not worthy of us.

APPENDIX VIII

IMPORTANT BOOKS

Below is a list of Books that continue to be foundational to my spiritual growth, I learned plenty of stuff from them that I would be poorer for without. They have all left me with tools, or building blocks that are effective in my rubber meets the road life to this day:

(1) "Can You Hear Me?" by Brad Jersak (Ideal for two-way prayer),

(2) "How to Hear God's Voice" by Mark and Patti Virkler (Ideal for two-way prayer),

(3) "Battle Field of the Mind" by Joyce Meyer (Ideal for how to start thinking healthier, and maintaining it and keeping the devils from stealing our progress),

(4) "Imagine Heaven" by John Burke (Ideal for seeing God as love, non-judgmental; and gives glimpses of what Heaven and Hell are like),

(5) "Living Beyond Your Feelings" by Joyce Meyer,

(6) "The Root of Rejection" by Joyce Meyer,

(7) "Change Your Words Change Your Life" by Joyce Meyer,

(8) "Emotionally Free" by Dr. Grant Mullen,

(9) "Waking the Slumbering spirit" by John and Paula Sandford,

(10) "Tired of Trying to Measuring Up" by Jeff VanVonderen,

(11) "Soul Repair" by Jeff VanVonderen and Dale & Juanita Ryan

(12) "Healing the past Releasing the future" by Frank & Catherine Fabiano,

(13) "Unbound" by Neal Lozano,

(14) "The Pressure's Off" by Dr. Larry Crabb,

(15) "The Bondage Breaker" by Neil T. Anderson

(16) "Freedom from Addiction" by Neil T. Anderson

(17) "Breaking The Bondage of Legalism" by Neil T. Anderson

(18) "Winning The Battle Within" by Neil T. Anderson

(19) “Freedom from Fear” by Neil T. Anderson
(20) “Liberating Prayer” by Neil T. Anderson
(21) “Finding God’s Will” by Neil T. Anderson
(22) “When The Spirit Comes in Power” by Peter Herbeck,
(23) “The Twelve Steps: A Spiritual Journey, A Working Guide for Healing”,
(24) “Anger: Handling A Powerful Emotion in A Healthy Way” by Gary Chapman,
(25) “Boundaries” by Dr. Henry Cloud, & Dr. John Townsend,
(26) “Healing The Wounded Spirit” by John & Paula Sandford,
(27) “Becoming A Family That Heals” by Drs. Beverly and Tom Rodgers,
(28) “Inside Out” by Dr. Larry Crabb,
(29) “Finding God” by Dr. Larry Crabb.