

## CUT THE ROOT

Matthew 12:33-35 Jesus often uses this analogy because it is so easy to understand.

### Basic Truth

- The things we do (the fruit) are the reflection (manifestation) of the heart (the root).
- Change the heart if you want to change the behavior.

### Basic Lies (devastating lies)

- What we are doing is wrong, but we still have a good heart.
- Someone else or something else is responsible for our behavior.

This workshop is concerned with understanding the root cause behind the actions of our lives. Most often but not always, the cause is not evident. We experience the fruit but seldom understand what is behind the scenes driving us to behave as we do. Once we discover the root with the help of God, we want to cut the root, thereby really changing our lives.

Galatians 5:19-21 Succinctly outlines the deeds of the flesh (sins): immorality, impurity, sensuality, / idolatry, sorcery, / enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, / drunkenness, carousing, and things like these – such as lack of forgiveness, love of money, bitterness, hate, canvassing.

### Galatians 5:21

Those who practice (perform often), such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

If this fruit is in your life, then you must do what is necessary to eliminate it.

To get rid of the fruit, you must deal with the root. Cut the root to deal with the fruit. The way to find the root is to track the fruit.

## DESTROYING STRONGHOLDS

2 Corinthians 10:3

“...We walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh”

Ephesians 6:12

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world *forces* of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly *places*.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 A fortress or a stronghold, as is used in the Old Testament, is a fortified dwelling used as a means of protection from an enemy and a base of operation to engage in warfare. The use in Corinthians is to be understood as a spiritual fortress wherein Satan and his evil influences hide, are protected, and operate. These strongholds exist in the thought patterns and ideas that govern individuals. A stronghold can be a source of defense for the devil, where sinful or demonic activity is actually defended within us by our sympathetic thoughts toward evil.

2 Corinthians 10:5 A demonic stronghold is any type of thinking that exalts itself above the knowledge of God, and thereby it gives the devil a secure place of influence in an individual's thought life. The stronghold is not necessarily demonic possession but thought life that can allow demonic influence or occupation. The walls of this stronghold are made up of lies, self-deception, or false doctrines. We deal with the devil by dealing with the carnal thought systems, the strongholds that protect the enemy within us.

- 1) LIES – No one will ever love me because I am unlovable. I am stupid. I am ugly. I can't win; I will always be a loser. I am trapped, and there is no way out
- 2) SELF-DECEPTION – Everything is going to work out for my life; I can deal with it tomorrow. It is no big deal if I smoke a little pot. We can live together; we are married in the eyes of God.
- 3) FALSE DOCTRINES – God looks on the heart and doesn't see the flesh. Once saved, always saved. I have to do good works, or I will not be saved. I already know.

Habitual sin continues in our lives because we have built a fortress within our own minds to defend its existence – “I am not hurting anyone.” “I basically am a good guy.” “I love God; it is no big deal.” “God is gracious and merciful, so He will forgive me no matter what.” Habitual sin may lead to demon occupancies.

Mark 6:12-13 Jesus made it perfectly clear that demonic forces are at work in the world and can occupy individuals. It is difficult and profitless to cast demons out of a person without eliminating the evil stronghold. Most times, the end result is worse than if left alone. Repentance precedes deliverance from demons. Repentance is the changing of the mind.

We have strongholds when our thought life is in agreement with lies, self deceptions, and false doctrines. In this case, the enemy finds rest and protection within our minds and influences our lifestyle. These strongholds unknowingly become part of our personality; therefore, we function habitually without any conscious thought involved.

2 Corinthians 10:5 Taking every thought captive to Christ is how we tear down strongholds. When we accept Christ as our Lord, we begin a lifelong process of maturity. At first, we may experience great supernatural changes in our lives. However, much more work needs to be done if we are to stand for a lifetime, because the strongholds must be torn down. There are no instant answers, magical formulas, or easy solutions. If we are willing to do the work, God will work within us to will and do His good pleasure in a supernatural way.

#### DESTROYING STRONGHOLDS

When we tear down the walls – the lies, self-deception, and the false doctrines – there will no longer be a base of operation for evil in your mind

Again, a stronghold is a house made of thoughts. We must learn to look objectively at our thoughts or attitudes that fail to conform to the likeness and teaching of Christ. HE IS THE STANDARD by which we measure ourselves.

## FUNDAMENTALS FOR DESTROYING STRONGHOLDS

- 1) Deception and secrecy, primarily by means of lies, are the devil's main methods for assaulting humanity. Everyone is in a spiritual warfare; few know it; and those few often forget about it.
- 2) We are required by God to exercise our free will to gain His help.
- 3) The key to seeking God's help is for us to accept responsibility for our own lives.
- 4) Strongholds are demolished by supernatural means, and roots are cut by supernatural intervention.
- 5) Resolving a stronghold or a problem is never the cure-all for the three lifelong negative issues: 1) the flesh, 2) the world, and 3) the devil. The return of Christ is when these three problems will cease to influence us.

### 1) THE DEVIL WORKS IN SECRECY

Early in the Bible, in Genesis chapter 3, we learn that a diabolic spiritual force opposes the true God and His people. He is first called the serpent, which describes his crafty and deadly nature, not his appearance. Later in the Scriptures, we learn that the serpent is also called the devil, Satan, and the accuser. Throughout the ages, his evil influence is clearly evident and documented, but it is seldom recognized by those ill affected thereby. He functioned undercover and was cleverly camouflaged in secrecy until our Lord Jesus Christ exposed and defeated him for all to see.

Colossians 2:15

When He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him.

Luke 4:18 and 19 In the beginning days of Jesus' public ministry, he spoke in the Nazarene synagogue. He boldly pronounced a clear declaration regarding his ministry by quoting from the Prophet Isaiah. As our Lord's ministry developed, it becomes very apparent that satanic or demonic influences are the cause of much of the captivity, blindness, and oppression from which he set people free.

Matthew 4:23 and 24 His usual practice was teaching and preaching about the Kingdom along with healings and the casting out of demons.

When Jesus sent out the twelve disciples (recorded in Matthew 10), he gave them authority to cast out unclean spirits. His instruction to them was to preach regarding the Kingdom and to minister to people, including the casting out of demons. When he

sent out the seventy, two by two, he gave them similar authority and instructions. They returned from the mission filled with great joy saying, "Even the demons are subject to us in your name." The essence of Jesus' response to them was that they indeed did have authority over demons but more important was that their names were recorded in heaven (Luke 10:18-20).

Mark 16:17 and 18 In His final commission to the disciples before His ascension, again instruction was given regarding casting out of demons.

Today, people seem to have little understanding regarding demonization (that is those occupied by devil spirits or demons). Our society is inundated with thousands of psychological explanations to explain why people are afflicted with mental captivity, blindness, and oppression. In most circles of mental health, no consideration is given to the possibility of demonic influence. If individuals should believe thusly, they are considered candidates for their own psychological help. In our day, the devil and demons are considered to be fantasy, mythology, or something believed by weird, religious fanatics. (Unfortunately, there are some biblically ignorant, weird religious fanatics that give good reason to doubt.) Not all mental health issues are related to demon occupation. Many factors can be involved in mental illness, some of which are physical or biological. I am very thankful for those who work in the mental health field. There can be many different roots to problems and sometimes many roots to one problem. However, ignorance regarding the spiritual has been costly.

As was stated earlier, the devil functions effectively undercover and is cleverly camouflaged in secrecy. He does not want people to understand what the Bible clearly makes known about him – unclean spirits work with him and an unseen spiritual warfare is waging.

The subject is written about repeatedly – Matthew 4:23 and 24; 8:16 and 17, 28-34; 9:32-34; 10:1 and 8; 12:22, 43-45; 15:21-28; 17:14-21; Mark 1:21-28, 32; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 16:17; Luke 4:33-36; 6:17 and 18; 8:1 and 2, 24-39; 9:1, 37-43; 10:17-20; 11:14-23, 24-26; 13:10-13, 32; Acts 5:1-11, 16; 8:6 and 7; 16:16-18; 19:11-16.

The main way unclean spirits get into a person is by him or her believing lies. The lies we believe about God, others, and ourselves open us up to much sin and, in many situations, to demonic occupation. Unclean spirits do not just enter a person's life without the right to do so. The Scriptures reveal a number of ways evil spirits gain the right to enter, with the most prominent being the lies we believe about ourselves. If we want to eliminate spirit influence, we must deal with the lies first, or the demons will just return. Charles Kraft stated it this way – "If you want to get rid of the rats in your

house, get rid of the garbage they feed on.” The casting out of demons recorded in the Gospels and the book of Acts was preceded by teaching which revealed truth to offset the lies that the afflicted one had believed.

## 2) WE MUST EXERCISE FREE WILL

One of the major reasons we fail to exercise our free will to ask God for help is our unwillingness to accept responsibility for our own lives. We refuse to take responsibility because of our human nature which we inherited from Adam and because of improper parenting.

Genesis 3:1-7 The devil tempted her to believe lies, which she chose to do. If she had responded as Jesus did by declaring the truth and refusing the lie, she would not have sinned. The devil did not make her disobey; she chose to do so.

Genesis 3:8-13 They refused to accept responsibility for their own wrongdoing, which made it impossible for them to receive God’s help. You must admit that you need help, and then you must ask for help. Denial is a part of the nature we inherited from Adam. Accepting full responsibility for one’s own life is adult level functioning that most people never reach. As infants, we are completely dependant upon our parents. Proper parenting helps children to develop life skills to care for themselves and others. Controlling parents do for their children what the children should learn to do for themselves. Impatient parents do the same. Absent parents allow other children or adults to raise their children. Babysitters are seldom concerned about developing the child; rather, they are focused on just getting the work done. Children, therefore, grow up expecting others to care for them emotionally, financially, and so on. Our society is filled with such immature adults. We must learn to take responsibility for our behavior.

### God Will Help

- Be honest
- We must acknowledge the need for help
- Ask for help

Genesis 4:6-8 After Cain was informed by God of the problem, he should have asked for help, but he did not.

Matthew 7:7-12 God will never violate your free will; therefore, you must choose to ask, seek, and knock.

### 3) SUPERNATURAL SOLUTIONS

When we choose to discover our strongholds, we will do so by seeking the help of God and deeply considering our own lives. We must be willing to face our pain and search for the root. As God guides us to examine our history, we will discover or uncover the cause of our current problem. Every effect has a cause, and we are required to be specific in our asking, seeking, and knocking. Unless we acknowledge and correct vows, curses, childhood wounds, lies believed, etc., God cannot help us, since to do so would violate our free will. He will help us to find the cause if we seek His help. (Psalms 139:23 – “Search me, O God, and know my heart; Try me and know my anxious thoughts.”) Once we discover the root, we also realize our own inability to eliminate the problem. God, not human reasoning, can destroy fortresses and cut roots.

Acts 8:9-24 Simon believed and was baptized; yet, he was still, according to Peter, in the gall of bitterness and in the bondage of iniquity. When a person accepts Christ as Lord, a supernatural transformation takes place, but it is not a complete transformation. Otherwise, there would be no need for all the instruction regarding the renewed mind. A lie which many have believed and has caused much stumbling is that everything changes when we become a Christian and will remain so throughout life. Another lie is: “Once this one thing is managed or done, everything will be better.” Another lie is: “Once the problem is taken care of, it will never resurface.” These lies are suggested by Satan so that we will ultimately give up on God and not enter into the Kingdom.

### 4) NOT A CURE-ALL

Many people are looking for the one thing in life that is going to change everything. The reason lotto does so well is the appeal it has as based on this false belief. Advertisers understand this human weakness and make millions exploiting it. Christians also fall prey to this falsehood, so they constantly pursue “the” spiritual solution to all their problems. They may seek the teacher, the teaching, the right church, the right technique, and so on. We believe that if we learn how to pray effectively, everything will be better. As a result, we set out to pray more fervently, only to be disappointed in the end because we still have problems. We assume that if we can cast out the demons, then everything will be better. For this reason, we do so, and yet it does not change everything, and again we are disappointed. We suppose that if we can experience inner healing, then surely everything will be better.... We even conclude that if we can get the right doctrine such as the Kingdom of God, finally everything will change....

The fact is there are no cure-alls until the return of Christ. We can grow, mature, and experience freedom and deliverance thereby receiving some wholeness; yet, we will always have to contend with our flesh, the world, and the spiritual forces of wickedness. When Jesus returns, we will be given resurrected bodies, the devil will be cast into the lake of fire, and the earth will be transformed. Until then, we will struggle. We are in a war. Teachers must be careful to portray this correct perspective, or believers will be tempted to quit after they put their trust in “the” thing. When they continue to have problems, they will doubt God or their own faith and give up. Many people do not finish the race because of wrong expectations and disappointment. The aim should always be to finish the race well.

We need to avoid the extremes. Cutting the root most often requires self evaluation and exploration (which out of bounds can slip into being self-centered). Inner healing requires revisiting past experiences, but taken to an extreme, we can begin to psychoanalyze ourselves (which becomes another distraction from glorifying God and is not true deliverance). Casting out unclean spirits may be necessary, but when it is taken to extremes, the person can end up obsessing on the devil.

## LIES - SATAN'S METHOD

The first method the devil used to bait man to sin was enticing him to believe a lie about God and a lie about himself. The serpent said to the woman, "You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." Eve believed the lies and encouraged Adam to do the same; hence, the fall of mankind ensued. Jesus also was directly tempted by the devil, and again it was with lies about God and lies about himself. Unlike Adam and Eve, Jesus did not believe the lies.

Jesus said of the devil:

John 8:44

"He...does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies."

The primary way the devil operates is with lies. We have lies come at us through our flesh including memories, the world, and the demonic realm.

The Great Principle is:

What we believe determines who we are and what we do. When we believe lies, we produce the fruit of those lies in our lives. When we believe the truth, we produce the fruit of the truth in our lives.

Both spiritual powers try to influence what we believe based upon information we receive – God with the truth and Satan with lies. In this manner, free will is not violated.

Sincere Christians are deceived by a common wrong belief: that is if we learn to manage our anger, refocus our thinking, and control our behavior, we can be whole. Such discipline is indeed a vital part of our walk with God. However, true healing is only realized when the pain which causes the anger or wrong behavior is eliminated. The pain most often is connected to lies we believe. Most people are troubled with dark thoughts about themselves that are never talked about because they are too painful. Thoughts such as "I am no good; I am a loser, ugly, stupid, unlovable, undesirable, guilty, inferior, and such like" are prevalent with Christians and cause unspeakable pain. Unpleasant feelings such as sadness, loneliness, hopelessness, isolation, fear, apathy, aloofness, and others invade our minds and influence our behavior. We try to

ignore them or change our thinking, but they keep popping up. We are afraid to talk about these things because then others will find out what we are “really like” and label or discard us. This fear is prevalent among all people but for some insidious reason is intensified in the Church.

Biblically knowledgeable Christians are really torn by this inner turmoil because we know that Jesus Christ paid the price for our freedom; therefore, these things should not still live within us. Scriptures such as the following greatly challenge us because on one hand we acknowledge their truth; yet, on the other hand, we still harbor our contrary, dark beliefs.

Ephesians 1:4 and 5

Just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will

Someone who is deliberately chosen by Almighty God should feel very, very special; yet, these other thoughts still linger. How can this be so? In Christ, we have been made to be holy and without blame; nevertheless, we still feel unholy and guilty. Why do our beliefs about ourselves contradict the truth of the Scriptures? The answer is:

WHAT WE HAVE EXPERIENCED IS  
WHAT WE BELIEVE.

Jesus said, “If you continue in my word, *then* you are truly disciples of mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free.” The *knowing* Jesus referred to was by experience, not just intellectually. To “*continue in*” his word means to do his word, then we will know experientially the truth that sets us free. When we do his word, it becomes our experience, and that which we experience is what we believe. We struggle with the thoughts about ourselves that contradict the written Word because our feelings are based on our past experiences and what is written has not yet been our experience. The great principle to understand is:

WHAT WE BELIEVE IS BASED UPON WHAT WE EXPERIENCE,  
NOT JUST ON WHAT WE INTELLECTUALLY KNOW.

Most of what a person believes about himself is formulated in childhood and stays with him throughout life. Children think the world revolves around them, so they often misinterpret what they are experiencing. Therefore, they end up believing lies about themselves. The unholy beliefs and feelings are often the direct result of what we experienced as children and are based upon lies we believed.

When we learn the Scriptures which contradict these unholy beliefs, we struggle because of our experience. Until we experience the truth which overrides the lies, we will not be free.

By applying the Scriptures, we can develop new experiences that will override the lie-based experiences. Honesty regarding our negative feelings and seeking God's help in prayer are also necessary in order to change. God can provide supernatural inner transformation if we are willing to confront rather than to run from our negative thoughts and feelings.

Ed Smith's work on inner healing called Theophostic Prayer Ministry ([www.theophostic.com](http://www.theophostic.com)) offers great insight on this subject.

- IDENTIFY THE CURRENT ILL FEELING AND EMBRACE IT. Let yourself feel the full emotion of your pain. It is important to feel the pain so that you can use it to uncover the root of the pain. We follow the pain to discover the cause.
- PRAY TO REMEMBER THE ORIGIN OR SOURCE OF THE FEELING (WHICH MAY BE THE FIRST TIME YOU FELT IT).
- GO TO THE MEMORY, FEEL THE PAIN, AND ASK GOD TO HELP YOU IDENTIFY WHAT YOU BELIEVE WHICH CAUSES THE PAIN. What you believe is usually different than what you feel. Find what it is that you believe that is causing the pain.
- ASK GOD FOR THE TRUTH REGARDING THE LIE YOU BELIEVE.
- LET GOD COMMUNICATE TO YOU.
- LOOK AROUND IN THE MEMORY AGAIN TO SEE IF THERE IS PEACE AND NO PAIN. IF THERE IS NOT, IDENTIFY ANOTHER BELIEF, AND AGAIN ASK GOD FOR TRUTH.
- REVISIT THE CURRENT MEMORY TO SEE IF THE PAIN IS GONE.

## DEMON OCCUPATION

Demon occupation generally occurs because of the lies the individual believes. There are some other ways also, but the primary way is by our believing lies. We can have the problems described earlier without demon involvement. Most often the person with the problem thinks what is happening is just what has befallen him or her and never considers demons. Sometimes people know as is the case in the Gospels, but if people knew it was demons, they would do something about them. In this field, there are no hard, fast rules, and there are exceptions. Remember the fundamentals for destroying strongholds. The first principle is that deception and secrecy, primarily by means of lies, are the devil's main methods for assaulting humanity.

Mark 9:14-29 The spirit or demon was in the child, which is not unusual. However, the behavior of the demon in this particular incident was the exception and not the norm. Yet, for many uninstructed ones, they have made this type of deliverance the standard.

Matthew 17:19-21 The reason for the difficulty was not in their power and authority, rather in the faith of the father and the disciples. The man came looking for Jesus, not his disciples, which indicates his faith was in Jesus and not them. Verse 21 is not in early mss.

Matthew 8:14-16 The normal was for Jesus to teach concerning the Kingdom, people to repent, and then demons to leave. Having demons is not that uncommon and is easily dealt with once the garbage is gone.

### **RELEASE FROM DEMONS**

WHEN THE ROOT IS CUT OR THE WALLS ARE DOWN, DEMONS LEAVE. SPIRITS ARE NOT THE CAUSE, RATHER THE EFFECT.

1 Samuel 19:15-21 The record concerning King Saul illustrates how one allows demons to infiltrate. His first encounter with the Prophet Samuel reveals he did not hold himself in very high esteem. Samuel had received revelation that Saul was the one that God had selected to be the king of Israel; therefore, he spoke favorably to him. Saul replied:

1 Samuel 9:21

“Am I not a Benjamite, of the smallest of the tribes of Israel, and my family the least of all the families of the tribe of Benjamin? Why then do you speak to me in this way?”

Benjamin was the smallest tribe because years earlier, shortly after entering the Promised Land, they allowed horrific Sodom and Gomorrah like sin to be carried out in their midst. When confronted by the other tribes, they refused to repent. Therefore, Israel attacked Benjamin, which resulted in the death of 25,000 men in one day. Also, their cities and cattle were destroyed. From that time on, Benjamin was the smallest tribe and carried a “less than” or shameful stigma. Saul acknowledged that he was one of those Benjamites and that his father’s house was among the least in the tribe. He was not expressing just a humble attitude but a negative belief about himself. Later in his life, this opened him up to much sinfulness and to demon occupation.

1 Samuel 11:20-24 When all of Israel were gathered together, Samuel introduced their king as Saul; however, they could not find Saul because he was hiding. Samuel had already informed Saul that he was God’s anointed. He also foretold many supernatural signs that indeed took place, which confirmed the anointing. Yet, he was lacking confidence to the degree of hiding. Again, we can see he had some inner issues, emotional wounds, caused by things he believed about himself.

When a formidable Philistine army threatened Israel, everyone was afraid, and some people scattered. Saul became fearful himself and decided no longer to wait for Samuel to arrive. In contradiction to the Law of Moses, he offered a sacrifice that only the priest was allowed to offer. As the king over God’s people, he should have been extremely confident that God would provide. God had already emphatically demonstrated His involvement in Saul’s life. However, because Saul believed lies about himself, he was vulnerable to feelings of rejection and fear. When the Philistines threatened and the Israelites feared and ran, Saul began to believe the same old lies rather than God’s truth.

1 Samuel 15:13-17 Samuel gave Saul God’s orders to destroy completely the Amalekites, including all the men, women, children, and animals. Yet, he saved the king and some of the animals. When Samuel confronted him, it is interesting to note that he said the following.

1 Samuel 15:17

“Though you were little in your own eyes, you were *made* the head of the tribes of Israel? And the Lord anointed you king over Israel.”

Saul had an inferior attitude which prompted him to do things contrary to God's will. In response to Samuel's confrontation, he told why he had disobeyed.

1 Samuel 15:24

Then Saul said to Samuel, "I have sinned; I have indeed transgressed the command of the LORD and your words, because I feared the people and listened to their voice."

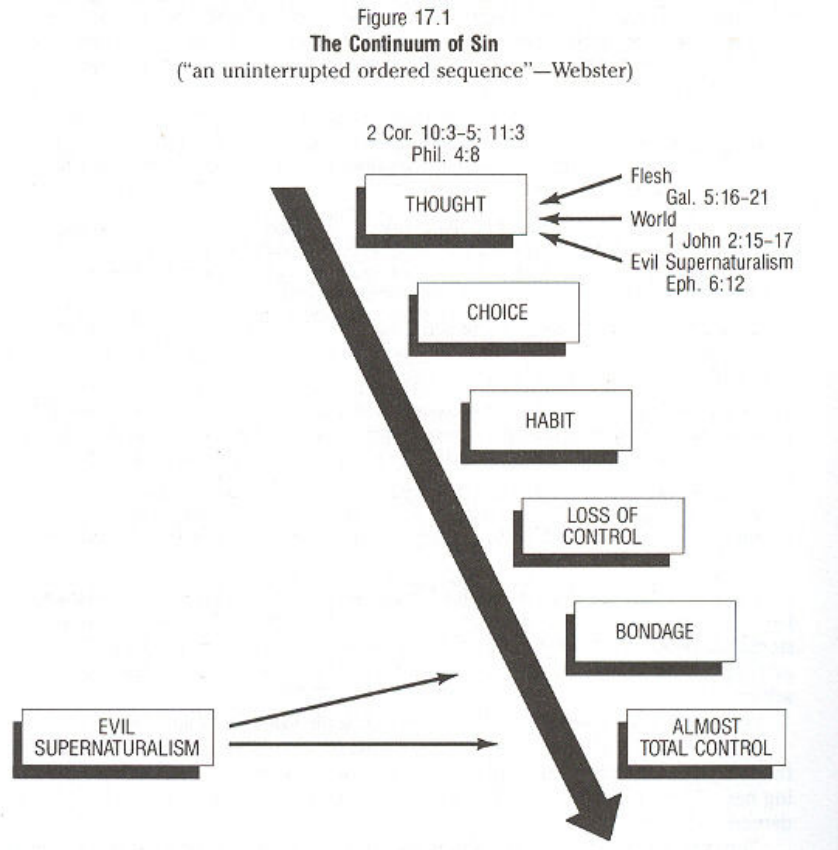
People who believe that they are inferior often project onto others their own lack of confidence and feelings of rejection. Whenever someone does something that is perceived as rejection, fear wells up, and the person reacts accordingly. With Saul, this is the second time recorded when he reacted to the people instead of obeying God. The truth that God spoke should have overridden anything Saul believed; however, the lies he embraced about himself overpowered God's truth. He rationalized his sin rather than repenting. Due to Saul's acts of indiscretion and disobedience, God decided to take the kingdom away from him and give it to his faithful servant David.

After David killed Goliath, he became an officer in Saul's army. God was with David, so he was very successful in his military campaigns. When the people embraced David, the same old feeling surfaced in Saul, but this time it opened him up to evil spirits.

1 Samuel 18:6-12 From this time until the end of Saul's life, he believed David was his enemy and needed to be destroyed. Ironically, of all the people in Saul's sovereignty, David was his most loyal subject. David absolutely refused to lift a finger against Saul, even when the opportunity presented itself. Saul believed lies which caused him to sin. The hate, bitterness, envy, jealousy, and murder that haunted Saul for the rest of his life were due to the lies that he believed about himself and projected onto David, who was a man after God's own heart.

The lies we believe about God, others, and ourselves open us up to much sin and, in many situations, to demon occupation. Unclean spirits do not just enter a person's life without the right to do so. The Scriptures reveal a number of ways evil spirits gain the right to enter a person, with the most prominent being what we see in Saul. He believed lies which opened him up to them. If we want to eliminate spirit influence, we must deal with the lies first, or they will just return. Dr. Charles Kraft stated it this way – "If you want to get rid of the rats in your house, get rid of the garbage they feed on." The casting out of demons recorded in the Gospels and the book of Acts was preceded by teaching which revealed truth to offset the lies that the afflicted one believed.

John 12:1-8 Judas had a problem with habitual sin which opened him up to spirit occupation (John 13:2). The following chart is taken from Dr. Ed Murphy's book The Handbook for Spiritual Warfare.



Luke 8:26-39 Jesus had and has absolute authority over the demons. Many times they would act foolish in his presence because they understood His authority over them. People may not know what is going on in the spiritual realm, but it seems that demons clearly understand. He cast a legion which means thousands with very little effort because he has authority.

Demons want to inhabit humans. The proper way to say it is that the person is "occupied" by demons or evil spirits and not "possessed," which implies ownership.

Matthew 10:1-ff The apostles were given the same authority, and in Luke 10, the seventy were given the authority.

Luke 10:17-20 Jesus provides prospective.

Mark 16:15-ff The Church has authority over spirits.

Acts 8:5-8 Demons do not just enter into someone in violation of free will. When people believe a lie or are given to habitual sin, they open themselves up to demon occupation. Casting out the demon without first dealing with the lie or habitual sin is pointless and many times more damaging.

<p style="text-align: center;">Deliverance Repentance precedes freedom from</p>
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Acts 8:9-24 Simon believed that Jesus was Lord but still had not changed the evil habit patterns of his life. Accepting Christ is the beginning of a lifelong maturing process.

Acts 19:11-13 Much confusion occurs in this area because much foolishness has gone on by those who are “want to bes” but are really “are nots.” Instead of bringing deliverance to suffering souls, they have made a mockery of the things of God and caused many to doubt them.

Acts 19:14-20 You cannot cast a spirit out of someone with your own ability or by copying someone else. To the name of Jesus Christ, every spirit must respond.

Demons are never happy just to control the person whom they occupy. They want to influence everyone in that person’s life. Many people try to control others for various reasons without the influence of spirits. Although not everyone who is controlling is occupied by demons, everyone who is occupied by demons is controlling.

We do not necessarily have the right to cast the unclean spirit out just because a person is demon influenced and we discern it to be so. We are not to violate a person’s free will. However, we can bind the spirit so that it does not ill effect us (Matthew 16:19; 18:18).

When we tear down the walls of lies, self deception, and false doctrines, evil spirits have no place to occupy in our minds. Cut the root, and the spirits have to leave. We have the authority in the name of Jesus Christ to cast spirits out of our own lives and of the lives of those who repent.

## MATURITY

One of the most common reasons we have negative roots and evil strongholds is improper parenting.

Matthew 5:38-48 Jesus commands us to do things that require highly developed, mature minds. Immature people react to that which happens to them rather than controlling their emotions and acting as instructed.

When we accept Christ, we are given a Christ like heart; however, we have been trained throughout life to behave entirely differently – the opposite. Therefore, we need training to become as Jesus instructs. The apostles learned at an accelerated rate because they had the perfect example with them all the time. The best way for people to learn is to observe others, just as children do with parents.

Matthew 16:24 and 25 We are to die to ourselves, which is very important considering we must operate from a Christ like heart and not our broken human heart. If we operate out of feelings of inferiority, superiority, guilt, shame, condemnation, and such like, our service as Christians will be self serving. Mature Christians serve as parents do with their children; that is with unconditional love. The children are not used to validate our worth in life. They are far too demanding and imperfect.

The aim of raising children is that they grow to be mature, which means they can completely take care of themselves and at least one if not two other people. Spiritual maturity is not much different than human maturity. In human development, whatever a person misses or receives in wrong training stays with them throughout life until they learn better from someone outside themselves.

1 Corinthians 2:6 Only a mature person can grasp the wisdom of God. Highly developed minds can accept what is truth about God without feeling threatened or disappointed. Mature minds can accept change and areas of gray. Immature minds resist change and hate the abstract because they are self-centered, not open-minded. Children function the best under clearly defined boundaries because their minds are not developed or disciplined enough to handle themselves outside defined limits. Children hold limited knowledge about life and interpret what they learn by their own world. Black and white, right and wrong, and other absolutes are placed on God because immature people cannot handle things that are not under their control. If God is not black and white, He becomes out of control.

1 Corinthians 14:20

Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be infants, but in your thinking be mature.

The context is self-centeredness. Children are all about themselves and must learn to be concerned about God, others, and the common good of the community by teaching from and observation of their parents.

Colossians 1:28 RSV

Him we proclaim, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man mature in Christ.

Ephesians 4:10-16 How is maturity achieved in a human family? Two ways are: 1) the person grows biologically and 2) receives training from his parents, most of which is by imitation

#### PARENTING/PERFORMANCE ORIENTATION

As parents, our underlying concern should be preparing our children for their walk with God and entrance into His coming Kingdom. One of the most difficult and important beliefs Christians must embrace is that God loves them. We love Him because He first loved us (according to 1 John). We love each other because we accept His love for us. If we struggle to believe His love for us, we will constantly fall short in our love for Him and others. The reason many people battle this fundamental truth is they have nothing in their experience that helps them accept such unconditional love. Many Scriptures declare God's love for an undeserving world, with none as popular as John 3:16. The love that God has for the world was demonstrated in giving His only begotten Son, and He did this so that we might receive the greatest gift of all – eternal life. "Why would God love me?" This question plagues the mind since we find no good reason within ourselves.

John and Paula Sanford in their book The Transformation of the Inner Man provide some helpful insight. I will quote and paraphrase below some of their writing to address what parents can do to help their children more readily accept God's love.

"Performance orientation is a term which refers not to the service we perform but to the false motives which impel us." Wrong motives can become a part of lives due to the unintentional ways our parents

communicated or disciplined us. "As little children we all in some degree accept lies and build them into our nature. The most pervasive, destructive lie corroding all our actions is, "If I don't do right, I won't be loved." "If I can't be like mommy and daddy wants, I won't belong." Sometimes even the conscious mind believes that error; more commonly it lodges secretly like a snake hidden in the grass slithering through all our efforts.

The lie becomes part of us through common daily acts, such as potty training. "Oh, you did good. Mommy loves you!" Of course, mommy would have loved us no matter how many times we messed our pants, but in our childish minds, we connect performing with love. Soon, we arrive at the inverse, "If I don't do right (on the potty or anywhere else), mommy won't love me." Performing may soon be so intertwined falsely with love that we cannot conceive of being loved unless we have performed rightly. Or worse, we come to the conclusion that not performing earns rejection. So, even if someone gives us love, we think we didn't deserve it, and either we won't receive love offered, or false guilt ensues.

Mothers normally don't intend to teach wrong things. It just happens, again. "Oh, you look great in your new dress; Mommy loves you" – the child may take home the message that good appearances earn love (and sloppiness or ugliness loses it). "You slept all night and didn't cry once. I'm proud of you, son: I love you." Right there we may slip the hand of love into the prickly glove of striving to please. So simply and easily our heart laminates what ought to be separated—behaving well and being loved. We learn to fish for love, every action a lure; no action, no fish (equals no love), and to our minds deservedly so. It all becomes a delusion.

Now let us add the many mistaken forms of correction most of us have endured. "Where did my little boy go? He was here a moment ago. This can't be my little boy who acts like this." We are directly told that what we actually are is unacceptable; only the doll image, someone else's picture for us to act out, can be our identity. Fear strikes the heart lest we fail to be that identity. We dread becoming lost, from others and ourselves, and so lock ourselves into performing. Ironically, to the degree that we succeed in acting out what is wanted, we do in fact become lost from what would have been us.

Children need to be nasty. That's what we are, rascals with angelic eyes and dirty skin. "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child; the rod of discipline will remove it far from him" (Proverbs 22:15). We need to be stopped by firm hands. And given our parameters, while being warmly held and accepted just when we have been our worst. That says love is unconditional. It writes into the heart that love is a gift fully given and not losable. It creates security.

But, the temptation so easily succumbed to by most of us parents is to use a child's need for love to try to control – "I can't love you when you act like that." How dreadfully damaging to a child! "Help! I must remember what I am supposed to be! What if I can't or won't do it? Oh, nobody can love me. I don't deserve it." If he could voice it, the child would say, "I'm angry. Why can't they just love me as I am?" So, out of dread, he sets himself to earn love.

We need to be wise in what we say to our children, both when they do the right things and when they do the wrong things. Either way, they should not be told that love is connected to their performance. We conduct ourselves the right way because it is the right way, not in order to be loved. We do what God commands because He loves us, not to get Him to love us. When behavior is wrong, follow God's Word on using the rod and deal with things quickly. Do not provide a temptation to think that love has been forfeited. Performance orientation is one of many problems adults have because they were not parented properly.

James Wilder along with James G. Friesen, Anne M. Bierling, Rick Koepcke, and Maribeth Poole in their book The Life Model: Living from the Heart Jesus Gave You provide detailed charts showing what a person should learn at the different stages of maturity. What a person does not get in the maturing process, they do not have as adults. Many adults are operating at infant or child age maturity which is why they struggle so much in life. (These charts have been used with permission from the author.)

### ***THE INFANT STAGE***

Ideal Age: Birth - Age 4

#### **Needs**

- Joy bonds with both parents that are strong, loving, caring, secure

- Important needs are met without asking
- Quiet together time
- Help regulating distress and emotions
- Be seen through the “eyes of heaven”
- Receive and give life
- Have others synchronize with him/her first

### **Tasks**

- Receive with joy
- Learn to synchronize with others
- Organize self into a person through imitation
- Learn to regulate emotions
- Learn to return to joy from every emotion
- Learn to be the same person over time
- Learn self-care skills
- Learn to rest

### ***THE CHILD STAGE***

Ideal Age: Ages 4 - 13

### **Needs**

- Weaning
- Help to do what he does not feel like doing
- Help sorting feelings, imaginations and reality
- Feedback on guesses, attempts and failures
- Be taught the family history
- Be taught the history of God’s family
- Be taught the “big picture” of life

### **Tasks**

- Take care of self (one is enough right now)
- Learn to ask for what he/she needs
- Learn self-expression
- Develop personal resources and talents
- Learn to make himself/herself understandable to others
- Learn to do hard things
- Learn what satisfies
- See self through the “eyes of heaven”

## ***THE ADULT STAGE***

Ideal Age: Age 13 - first child

### **Needs**

- A rite of passage
- Time to bond with peers and form a group identity
- Inclusion by the same-sex community
- Observing the same sex using their power fairly
- Being given important tasks by his/her community
- Guidance for the personal imprint they will make on history
- Opportunities to share life in partnership

### **Tasks**

- Take care of two or more at the same time
- Discover the main characteristics of his/her heart
- Proclaim and defend personal and community (group) identity
- Bring self and others back to joy simultaneously
- Develop a personal style that reflects his/her heart
- Learn to protect others from himself/herself
- Learn to diversify and blend roles
- Life-giving sexuality
- Mutual satisfaction in a relationship
- Partnership

## ***THE PARENT STAGE***

Ideal Age: From 1st child until youngest becomes an adult at 13

### **Needs**

- To give life
- An encouraging partner - Guidance from elders
- Peer review from other fathers or mothers
- A secure and orderly environment

### **Tasks**

- Giving without needing to receive in return
- Building a home
- Protecting his/her family
- Serving his/her family
- Enjoying his/her family

- Helping his/her children reach maturity
- Synchronizing with the developing needs of: children, spouse, family, work, & church

### ***THE ELDER STAGE***

Ideal Age: Youngest child is an adult.

#### **Needs**

- A community to call his/her own
- Recognition by his/her community
- A proper place in the community structure
- Have others trust them

#### **Tasks**

- Hospitality
- Giving life to those without families
- Parent and mature his/her community
- Build and maintain a community identity
- Act like himself/herself in the midst of difficulty
- Enjoy what God puts in each person in the community  
(Seeing each of them through 'eyes of heaven')
- Building the trust of others through the elder's own transparency and spontaneity

### **HOW DO WE HELP OURSELVES AND THE CHURCH MATURE?**

- 1) 1 Thessalonians 2:7-12 (1 Timothy 1:2; Philippians 2:22) We cannot go back and be parented again, but we can have elder believers parent us now.
- 2) People need to feel that they belong. Children grow best in a loving, safe environment where they know without doubt that they are loved unconditionally. The Church should provide a safe, caring, nonjudgmental atmosphere in which people can be honest and seek help. If people do not feel like they belong or are safe to open up, they may not stay around very long. The Church is not about judgment and labeling, rather acceptance and understanding.
- 3) We help people to receive and give. Believers are to receive good things from God and the family and must learn to give back the same. Everyone can pray for others, speak words that bless others, honor others with a compassionate concern for them, be compassionate towards others, and share the gospel with others.
- 4) Recover from captivity, blindness, and oppression by receiving inner healing and casting out of demons.

- 5) Through discipleship, mature.
- 6) Develop coherent identity.