



MAP ♦ P.O. Box 128 ♦ 575 U.S. Highway 250 ♦ Savannah, OH 44874 ♦ (419) 962-1515 ♦ May 2016

Who Is the Holy Spirit of God?

—Joe Keim

WHO IS THE HOLY SPIRIT?

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come (John 16:13).

INTRODUCTION

During one of his missionary trips, the Apostle Paul met up with some church members in Ephesus, and when the conversation turned to the Holy Spirit, they replied, *We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost (Acts 19:2).*

The reply of the Ephesian disciples concerning the Holy Spirit illustrates the sad and shameful treatment often given Him, even in our day. Far too often the Holy Spirit's existence has been ignored and His ministry misunderstood. Therefore it is my passionate desire to

shed some light on the Holy Spirit. Who is He, what does He do in our world, and

"And, [Jesus] being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, saith he, ye have heard of me. For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence." Acts 1:4-5



"And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost..." Acts 2:1-4

how does He fit in our everyday Christian lives? It is very important for us to

understand that whenever the Holy Spirit does something, it is God at work, creating, speaking, transforming us, living within us, and working in us. Although, the Holy Spirit can do this work without us knowing, it is helpful for us to know more. Otherwise, we end up in the same place Israel did: *My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge (Hosea 4:6).*

Whenever the Holy Spirit speaks, it is God speaking. Take for example Ananias when he lied to the Holy Spirit (Acts 5:3-4). Ananias was not lying to a representative of God; He was lying directly to God.

When a lost hell-bound sinner calls upon the name of the Lord to be saved (Rom. 10:9-13), many wonderful things take place. For example, that individual is instantly

forgiven of all his sins, translated from death

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to life, and removed from the kingdom of Satan and placed into God's kingdom. But here's the most amazing part of all of this: The Father and Son in the person of the Holy Spirit move in and dwell inside every believer. The moment we confess our sin and ask Jesus to come into our lives, we are born again, become members of God's family, and the Spirit immediately takes up residence inside of us. We become a living, walking, breathing temple. Jesus said, *...even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you* (John 14:17). Later the Apostle Paul wrote: *Know ye not that ye are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you* (1 Cor. 3:16)? In the Old Testament, the Spirit of God would come upon people and anoint them for service. He inspired the Old Testament prophets to write the Scriptures, but this was temporary.

In the New Testament, the Lord indwells people through the new birth, and they become His permanent abode.

THE EMBLEMS OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Most people think of the Holy Spirit as being an invisible force. They think of Him as being untouchable and some type of powerful energy that rules the universe. However, in Scripture the Holy Spirit is referred to as a Dove (Jn. 1:32), Fire (Acts 2:3), Oil (Lk. 4:18), Cloud (Ex. 33:9), Voice (Ps. 95:7, Mat. 10:20), Water (Jn. 7:37-39), Wind (Jn. 3:8) and

Breath (Jn. 20:21-23).

THE DEITY OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Holy Spirit is omnipresent, meaning He is everywhere at all times. David writes: *Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence* (Ps. 139:7)?

He is omniscient, meaning He is all-seeing and all-knowing. *But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God* (1 Cor. 2:10, 11).

He is omnipotent, meaning He is all-powerful and unstoppable. *And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was upon the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters* (Gen. 1:2).

He is eternal, meaning He has no beginning and has no end. *How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God* (Heb. 9:14)?

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS A PERSON AND HAS FEELINGS

The Holy Spirit can be grieved (Eph. 4:30), lied to (Act 5:3), and quenched by believers (1 Thess. 5:19). He can also be resisted (Acts 7:51), blasphemed (Matt. 12:31), and insulted by unbelievers (Heb. 10:29).

THE HOLY SPIRIT AUTHORED THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT

David wrote: *The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and his word was in my tongue* (2 Sam. 23:2). Jeremiah wrote: *Then the Lord put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the Lord said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth* (Jer. 1:9). Peter wrote: *For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* (2 Pet. 1:21). John wrote: *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches: To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God* (Rev. 2:7). Paul wrote: *Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual* (1 Cor. 2:13).

THE HOLY SPIRIT'S MINISTRY

The Holy Spirit was present and active during creation (Genesis 1:1-3). If you go to the very beginning of the Bible and start reading in Genesis, you will find that by the time you get to the second verse, the Holy Spirit shows up as being present and active in the work of creation. The truth is He played a very important part in all six days of creation.

The Holy Spirit was involved throughout Jesus' life on earth. The Spirit placed Jesus in Mary's womb (Matt. 1:20), He descended on Jesus at baptism (Matt. 3:16), led Jesus into the desert (Luke 4:1), and anointed Jesus to preach the gospel (Luke 4:18). It was through the

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Spirit of God that Jesus drove out demons (Matt. 12:28), and by that same Spirit, Jesus was raised from the dead (Romans 8:11).

The night Jesus met with Nicodemus, He taught Nicodemus that no man would enter the kingdom of God except he was born of water [first birth] and the Spirit [second birth] (John 3:5).

Jesus also taught: *If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*

He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water (John 7:37-38).

Concerning rivers of living water, John adds: *But this spake*

He of the Spirit, which they that believe on Him should receive.

The Holy Spirit took over when Jesus returned to the Father. At age thirty, Jesus went into full-time ministry. People began to follow Him and listen to His teachings. Many of His followers thought Jesus was the one who would deliver them from the Roman government and be their next king. What a surprise, when Jesus said in John 14:28: *Ye have heard how I said unto you, I go away. . . because I said, I go unto the Father* (John 14:28).

Jesus' disciples were dumbfounded. In one short moment, their whole world turned upside down. They had given up everything and followed Jesus. He had taught them for three years. They knew no other master. Peter said he would give his own life for Him. Thomas asked Jesus to let them go with Him.

I share all this to bring you to John 16:6-7, where Jesus makes a powerful statement about the coming Holy Spirit: *It is expedient for you* (meaning to your advantage or for your own gain) *that I go away: for if I go not away, the Comforter [Holy Spirit] will not come unto you; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.*

Jesus is telling His disciples: "Hey, it is

for your own gain that I leave, because as soon as I leave, I'll send the Holy Spirit in my place."

It was to our advantage that Jesus left and sent the Holy Spirit, because Jesus was fully human and could only be at one place at a time. However, the Spirit could be everywhere at the same time. Also, Jesus ministered to people from the outside in, whereas the Holy Spirit ministers to people from the inside out.

...the letter [law, rules] killeth, but the Spirit giveth life. —2 Cor. 3:6

When the Spirit finally showed up in Acts chapter 2, more happened in a few hours than happened in all of Jesus' three years of ministry. Since that time, tens of thousands of Holy Spirit empowered missionaries have been sent throughout the world. As a result, millions of lost souls have been brought into the kingdom of God.

The Holy Spirit was involved in the new birth. We are, by nature, children of wrath (Eph. 2:3). David says in Psalm 51:5, *Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me.* We come into the world, and from the beginning, are bent on being independent from God and running after the things of the world. Something has to happen to us if we are to be saved from the wrath of God (1 Thes. 1:10). We must be changed. *Therefore, the Holy Spirit reproves [convicts] the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment* (John 16:8).

The new birth is the result of the work of the Holy Spirit enabling us to see our sin as God sees it and to see our desperate need for a Savior. The work of the Holy Spirit quickens [makes alive] a spiritually dead person (John 6:63). Paul writes: *the letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life* (2 Cor. 3:6).

When a spiritually dead person is made alive (born again), the Holy Spirit: seals the believer (Eph. 1:13; 4:30; 2nd Tim. 2:19-21; Rom. 8:14-16; Gal. 4:6), empowers the believer (Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:2; 9-11; 12-13), is the earnest (guarantee) of the believer (Eph. 1:13-14), and becomes the believer's partner in prayer (Rom. 8:26-28).

The Holy Spirit gives supernatural gifts to every believer. Gifts of the Spirit are special abilities given by the Holy Spirit to believers for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. The list of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 includes wisdom, knowledge, faith, healing, miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, speaking in tongues, and interpretation of tongues. Similar lists appear in Ephesians 4:7-13 and Romans 12:3-8, and include apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers.

The gifts of the Spirit are simply God enabling believers to do what He has called us to do. Ephesians 4:12-14 says: *For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive.*

The supernatural gifts have long been the subject of controversy in Christian circles. They have caused family members to turn against each other and churches to divide. Some Christians believe and teach that certain gifts (speaking in tongues, interpretation of tongues, prophecy, healings and miracles) ceased after we received the New Testament in written

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form (1 Cor. 13:10). Others believe and teach that all the gifts are in operation, just like they were in the early church.

Some believers have become so caught up in the supernatural gifts that they have thrown out the foundational doctrines of the Bible. Additionally, they have made a religion out of the God-given gifts and become worshippers of the gifts rather than the Giver of the gifts. For these sad reasons, other believers have chosen to walk in the opposite direction and have quenched and suffocated the power and supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit. For that reason, let me add the following portion of scripture:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity [love], I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing (1 Cor. 13:1-3).

The Holy Spirit speaks directly to and through believers. It is quite clear from reading the scriptures that the Holy Spirit is able to speak like a human being. When He speaks, the Bible commands us to listen to His voice. Consider the following instances when the Holy Spirit shows up and speaks to mankind in the flesh:

Then the Spirit said unto Philip, go near, and join thyself to this chariot (Acts 8:29).

As they (the church) ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them,

they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2-4).

...take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate: but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Spirit (Mark 13:11).

The Holy Spirit adds a second nature. Before we were born again we had only one nature—the flesh nature. Our decisions and choices were based on our own flesh and desires. After the new birth we have two natures—flesh and Spirit. This simply means that as born-again

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. —Gal 5:16

believers, we wake up in the morning and have to choose which nature we want to walk in. If we choose to walk in the flesh nature, we will often appear to others as one who has never been born again. If we choose to walk in the Spirit, we will appear as one who has experienced the new birth.

This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would (Gal 5:16-17).

Walking in the Spirit means walking in harmony with God and others. We must guard our heart and tongue from bickering, bitterness, and conflict. We must learn to rest in Him, and let Him fight our battles.

Those who truly walk in the Spirit will find the following list of fruit appearing in their every-day life: *But the fruit of the*

Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law (Galatians 5:22-23). The fruit spoken of in these verses cannot be faked or manufactured by the believer. Our part is to yield and trust; God's part is to produce the fruit. (See John 15:4-5).

WHAT I WAS TAUGHT GROWING UP

In the next couple of paragraphs, I would like to share some of my background and how I understood the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I was born and raised in an Old Order Amish community in Ohio. My parents took me to church every other Sunday and there I learned a lot about the Father in heaven. By the time I reached 15 years of age, I knew a great deal about God the Father. In my mind, He was rigid and ruled from heaven with an iron hand. As far as I could tell, He never smiled, nor did anything slip through His fingers. I was taught to obey Him or else He would punish me like He did the children of Israel when they turned their backs on Him and went their own way.

I also learned about Jesus. I learned that He was God's only Son, and that He died on the cross, was buried, and rose from the grave three days later. To some degree, I was taught to believe that the Son was of lesser value and not to be held to the same level as the Father. For this reason, I focused more on the Father and who He was than I did the Son.

As for the Holy Spirit, He was hardly mentioned at home during prayer times or in church. Truthfully, about the only time I remember hearing about Him is the day I was baptized in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. As far as I was concerned, the Holy Spirit was of little to no value in our everyday lives. It

may have been because He is most often numbered as the third person in the line up.

Like most families in our community, we read our morning and evening prayers from a book, written by our forefathers. The German words, which were often difficult to understand, were spoken directly to the Father. And just like our church services, family prayer times seemed mostly boring and had little to no impact on my life. It was not until later in life, after I was born of the Spirit, that I realized the missing ingredient in many of our church services and family prayer times. It was the Holy Spirit and His power. I did not know that the Holy Spirit took Jesus' place at the end of Jesus' ministry. I did not know that the Holy Spirit played a very active role in one's second birth. I did not know that the Holy Spirit dwelt in the body of the believer, empowering and equipping the believer to overcome sin and lead him in all truth.

It was not until I became a born-again believer that I began to see my desperate need to understand who this Holy Spirit is and how He plays a huge role in my daily life as a Christian. After much seeking and praying, the Scriptures began to open up to me like never before.

Real prayer in the Spirit is getting with God and speaking from your heart, from the deepest parts of your soul, and not reading from a prayer book. *Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit* (Ephesians 6:18). *But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy*

Ghost (Jude 20).

Christians—those who have been born of the Spirit—have been given divine and supernatural power from above. You can feel the holy presence of God when you are around them. Consider the following words from Acts 4:31-33:

And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled together; and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul...with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all (Acts 4:31-33).

Today, many church-going people have given up the idea that anything like this could ever happen in our generation. That is the very reason it is not happening. Church-goers do not believe! In fact, it is my honest belief that there are two reasons why churches in America have never experienced Holy Ghost power and continued revival in their midst: they refrain from talking too much about the Holy Spirit and His power, lest someone in their denomination might mistake them as being part of the health, wealth, and prosperity crowds, and because God has blessed America with an abundance of financial gain, we have learned to run churches and ministries like businesses. In other words, why wait on the Spirit when we have money to get the job done our way?

As we come to the end of our study on the Holy Spirit, let's consider the situation that took place in Acts chapter 8, where a man named Simon tried to buy Holy Spirit power.

And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God (Acts 8:18-21).

Jim Cymbala once said, "Whatever God is doing in our world today, He is doing through the Holy Spirit. He has no other agent on this planet."

PRAYER

Dear Lord, thank you for sending the Holy Spirit to dwell in our bodies. Thank you for the many times he has comforted our hearts, led us in all truth, protected us from evil, and empowered us to do the ministry. We stand in awe!

My utmost and passionate prayer is that You, Oh God, would use this study to start a fire in the reader's soul. Awake the reader from his/her heavy slumber and dead religion and send a Holy Ghost revival.

In Jesus' name, amen.

—Joe Keim

END

The Amish Voice

P.O. Box 128
Savannah, OH 44805

(419) 962-1515

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2. If you enjoy the *Amish Voice* and would like to help us with the cost of printing and postage or if you know of others who might benefit from the *Amish Voice*, please contact us.
3. Please pray for us and with us that we would all grow nearer to God.

TIRED OF YOUR OLD LIFE?

Did you ever come to the realization that you didn't like the direction your life was headed? Maybe you decided that you needed to change for the better, perhaps by getting rid of certain habits in your life or attending church. Whatever the case, you felt the need to straighten out your life. Perhaps recently you have realized you don't like the way things are in your life, and you want to change. How successful have you been in this endeavor? Has it been frustrating? How does God look at your attempts? How good does God want you to live? Today we will find the answers for a life of true freedom, joy, and peace. So let us get on with it!

TRYING TO DO RIGHT

Imagine coming upon an old, rather ugly looking garbage can. With great reluctance you ever so slowly open its lid. Immediately you are hit with the most nauseating stench; it causes your entire body to recoil. Now picture an artist painting the most astoundingly beautiful picture onto the outside of this trash can. Would you open the lid now? "Oh, yeah, right! Not in a thousand years!" you respond.



Lydia Chorpening

This is what so many of us have been trying to do with our own lives. The garbage in the trash can represents the sin

in our lives. The painting of the garbage can represents our attempt to better ourselves. I trust you see that this is a failure on a grand scale. For in no wise is the all-knowing God going to be fooled by a little spray paint. Indeed, the stench of sin can easily be sensed through that beautifully painted shell. No wonder our Creator says, *...all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags* (Isaiah 64:6). No doubt, this is a blow to the human ego.

GOD IS HOLY

Therefore I ask, how close to this garbage can would you like to be, painted or not? "Ah," you say, "I want nothing at all to do with it!" This is just how God sees your sin. From the beginning of time God said, *of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, thou shalt not eat of it: for in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die* (Genesis 2:17). This death speaks of separation—separation between humans and God. We know that the first man and woman God created did in fact disobey their Creator-God and eat from this tree. Therefore, all of mankind was plunged into sin and ruin. For we read, *Wherefore, as by one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned* (Romans 5:12). Indeed, God recoils at the stench of sin in our lives and must separate Himself from it, for He is holy.

We must come to understand that God is one hundred per cent holy. It is written of Jesus Christ that He is holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens (Hebrews 7:26). Just like there is a separation between you and the trash can, so there is a separation between our holy God and sinful humanity. We must conclude that we are like a stinking trash can! We can do nothing to make ourselves attractive to our Creator-God from whom we have been separated because of our stinking sin.

We find in Exodus 20:3-17 things that are sinful, things that are like the filth in the trash can, things like using God's name as a swear word, bowing to other gods, murder, adultery, stealing, coveting. In Matthew 5:21-22 and 27-28, Jesus expands on this by saying that even if we entertain the thought of wanting to murder, we are guilty as if we had done the sin. Even if we lust after another in an inappropriate way, we are already guilty as if we had done it. There is no doubt about it; our lives are filled with sin, with filthy trash.

NO ROOM FOR PRIDE

We must understand that we are filthy, stinking sinners, and are utterly incapable of saving ourselves. We can do nothing to beautify ourselves before God. Adam and Eve attempted to beautify themselves with fig leaf garments. God did not accept their efforts, for they still stank of sin. Therefore, God provided the remedy—animal skins—to clothe them. From this point on in the Scriptures, we see our Creator-God constantly using animals, especially lambs, as a most striking visual illustration. Time and time again, God shows that there must be death as a consequence of our sin. Time and time again, an animal, in particular a lamb, dies in place of the guilty one who sinned; yet the Holy Bible says that it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins (Hebrews 10:4).

Elsewhere in Scripture we read of a group of people who made it their supreme goal in life to better themselves by following the Ten Commandments plus many other man-made rules. Jesus had this to say to them, *Woe to you... hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which OUTWARDLY APPEAR BEAUTIFUL, BUT WITHIN ARE FULL OF DEAD PEOPLE'S BONES AND ALL UNCLEANSSES. SO YOU OUTWARDLY APPEAR RIGHTEOUS TO OTHERS, BUT WITHIN ARE FULL OF HYPOCRISY AND LAWLESSNESS*

(Matthew 23:27-28) (emphasis mine). Indeed, this is the danger with self-improvement. We can pretty ourselves up by making ourselves appear beautiful outwardly, and yet inside we are still like a trash can full of putrefying filth. No wonder God had such words for these religious ones. For it is also written, *For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do* (Heb. 4:12-13). *For the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart* (1 Samuel 16:7b). You may fool man by looking all spiritual, but you won't trick God!

A GOD OF MERCY

So then, if fig leaves, animal sacrifices, and efforts to change ourselves are of no use whatsoever, then what are we to do? How are we to be reconciled to God if we have been estranged from Him by our sin? For we must understand the severity of the penalty of our sin. The Bible says, *Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints, To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him* (Jude 14-15). It is written, *And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire* (Revelation 20:15).

We have come to see that we deserve the judgement of God for our sinfulness. However, our God is also a merciful and loving God. *The Lord is...longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance* (2 Peter 3:9). As we saw

earlier, God provided the remedy for Adam and Eve. However, it was not for them alone, but for many throughout the Scriptures, that He Himself was going to supply the remedy. This mercy is offered to us so that we can be reconciled to God once and for all.

At last we come to this Scripture: *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* (John 1:29). Like Adam and Eve and the religious hypocrites, all we can do is try to cover up our sin. However, Jesus came as the Lamb of God to take away our sin. So what did Jesus do? He went to the cross to die. Why did He have to die? The Bible says, *The wages of sin is death* (Romans 6:23). Jesus went to the cross to pay the full penalty for our sin. In fact, He endured the complete wrath of God for all our sin that we may be pardoned. For it is written, *Without shedding of blood there is no remission [forgiveness]* (Hebrews 9:22b). This is what Jesus does for all those who place their trust in Him as their Savior, and not themselves. *As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions [sins] from us* (Psalm 103:12). This is good news! Jesus said, *I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me* (John 14:6). We understand then that none can become Christians by trying to clean up their lives, because their sin has not been dealt with. This is why we need to trust Jesus to be the one who can take care of all our sin and sinful habits. He not only removes our sin from us by paying its penalty by death on the cross, but He also liberates us from being slaves to sin. For it is written, *our old man is crucified with Him [Jesus], that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin. For he that is dead is freed from sin* (Romans 6:6-7).

EVERYONE WHO CALLS

Let's briefly sum this up. You need to see that trying to clean up your own life won't work, for even your best attempts

at being good are "*filthy rags*" in God's sight. You need to admit that you are still a sinner in need of God's cleansing. The Bible says, *But God commendeth his love toward us in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us* (Romans 5:8). Don't pretend to be righteous or good enough, for God will never be fooled by your fig leaves. Instead, acknowledge to Him that you have failed. Simply do as this verse instructs: *For WHOSOEVER calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved* (Romans 10:13). Then relax, trusting that what Jesus has done is enough to save you. For God's Word says of Jesus, *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them* (Hebrews 7:25). Remember also, Jesus did not stay in the grave, but rose the third day as was prophesied. When we trust Him as our Savior, He comes to take up permanent residence in us by His Spirit. He comes to live the Christian life we could not live. He says that He is the vine and we are the branches. *I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing* (John 15:5). So then, trust Jesus to cancel your sin-debt, give you victory in your Christian life over sin, and save you from the very presence of sin in Heaven in the future.

So, there's the good news! You don't have to try and be a Christian. Rather you actually become one when you trust Jesus, and not yourself, to save you from your sins. You don't have to try and paint up the garbage can filled with filth. You trust that Jesus will get rid of the garbage and stench. Then, most amazingly, Jesus comes to live in you by His Spirit. This makes you beautiful inside and out. This is amazing grace! Stop trying to better yourself, and let Jesus save you and transform you from a sinner to a saint. Remember, **FOR WHOSOEVER CALLS UPON THE NAME OF THE LORD, SHALL BE SAVED.** You can count on Him.

END



Part 7

AND IT SHALL COME TO PASS

As the world continues to turn its back on God, we want to take a look at what the future holds according to the One who is the Beginning and the End—God! We hope you enjoy and benefit from this series, courtesy of Middletown Bible Church. Follow along, fill in the blanks, and look up! May we all be ready for the return of Jesus Christ!

The Nation That Cannot Be Destroyed

The continued existence of the nation of Israel is quite remarkable. Suppose a man is being bothered by a mosquito. This man slaps the mosquito, but it doesn't die. He then smacks it with a newspaper, but it doesn't die. He then strikes it with a fly swatter, but that does not kill the pest. He tries spraying it with bug killer, but it still lives. He captures it in a jar and takes the jar 25 miles away from his home and buries it in the ground. One week later this same mosquito is back on the man's arm! The mosquito cannot be destroyed!

There is a nation that is like this imaginary mosquito. It is a nation that cannot be killed or destroyed. Many attempts have been made to destroy this nation, but all these attempts have failed. This nation lives on. It is a miracle nation! It is the most amazing nation on the face of the earth. It is the nation of ISRAEL—the JEWISH NATION.

The survival of the nation of Israel is remarkable, especially when we consider many of the other ancient nations who have not survived and who have lost their national identity. Consider, for example, the seven nations mentioned in Deuteronomy 7:1. Are any of these nations in existence today? What about the Philistines? What about the Assyrians or the Babylonians? Certainly there are individuals who have descended from these nations who are alive today, but these nations have not maintained their national identity.

What other nation or people has been scattered among the nations and yet has maintained its national identity and distinctiveness?

The fact that Israel has maintained its national identity after having its people scattered throughout the world for almost 1,900 years demonstrates the providential hand and the loving care of Israel's God.

The Birth Of This Nation

This nation has not always existed. This nation did not exist in the days of Adam or in the days of Noah. How did this nation begin?

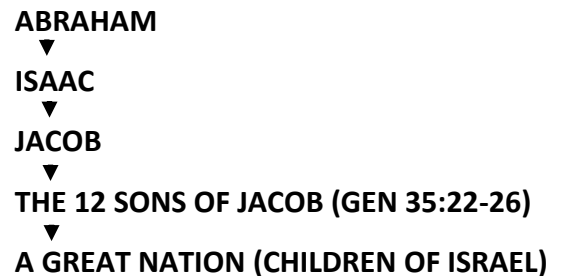
This amazing nation began with one man. What was this man's name (Genesis 12:1)? _____

Later he would be called by what name (Genesis 17:5)? _____

God gave this man a wonderful promise in Genesis 12:2: "I will make of thee a G _____ N _____."

Out of Abraham would come Isaac, and out of Isaac would come Jacob who was also called I _____ (see Genesis 32:28).

Out of Jacob would come 12 sons and out of these 12 sons would come a great nation.



God did not choose Egypt or the Arab people to be His special nation. God did not choose Russia or China to be His special nation. God chose the nation Israel: "For thou art an holy people unto the LORD thy God: the LORD thy God hath chosen thee to be a SPECIAL P _____ unto Himself, above all people that are upon the face of the earth" (Deuteronomy 7:6).

Continued on next page

True/False Peace, continued

Did God choose the nation Israel because they were a large and mighty nation (Deut. 7:7)? _____

Why did God choose Israel to be His special nation and to be a people for His very own? (see Deut. 7:8 and circle the correct answer):

- Because God hated the other nations.
- Because God knew that the children of Israel were righteous people and the people from other nations were sinful people.
- Because God loved Israel and wanted to keep His promises to them.
- Because God liked the children of Israel better than He liked the Egyptians.

The Egyptians Try To Destroy Israel

Do you have any Jewish friends? These are the people who have descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We call them Jews. The Bible usually calls them the children of Jacob or the children of Israel. **[Note: A person can also become a Jew by embracing the Jewish faith. Such a person is called a proselyte, or a convert to Judaism.]**

Long ago, God made a promise to Abraham. God told Abraham that he would have many, many descendants, just as there are many, many stars and just as there are many, many grains of sand at the sea shore (see Genesis 22:17).

Can you count the number of stars that can be seen on a clear, starry night? _____

Can you count the number of grains of sand there are at the beach? _____

God was telling Abraham that he would have so many children (descendants) that people would not even be able to count them. God kept His promise, because today there are MILLIONS of Jews in the world.

When the children of Israel went into the land of Egypt, there were only 70 of them (Exodus 1:5). Did they INCREASE in number (have more and more people) or did they DECREASE in number (have less and less people)? To find the answer read Exodus 1:7, 9)? _____ God blessed this nation and they multiplied greatly. The nation of Israel came to Egypt with only 70 people, but they grew and grew and grew!

The Egyptians were beginning to get worried (see Exodus 1:9)! They tried to think of ways to keep the children of Israel from becoming a great nation:

Plan Number 1: Make them do hard work as slaves (Exodus 1:10-11). But when the Egyptians made them work harder, what happened to the children of Israel (Exodus 1:12)? _____ Did this Egyptian plan work? _____

Plan Number 2: Destroy every male baby (Exodus 1:15-16). The midwives were ladies who helped deliver babies. The king of Egypt told the Jewish midwives to kill every male Jew that was born. Did these ladies obey the king (Exodus 1:17-18)? _____ Did this Egyptian plan work? _____

Plan Number 3: Throw every male baby into the Nile River (Exodus 1:22). Moses was one of the babies who was born at that time. Pharaoh the king had said that every male baby should be thrown into the river to die. Did the parents of Moses let this happen to their son (Exodus 2:1-10 and Hebrews 11:23)? _____

Moses grew up and became the great leader of the Jewish people! The Egyptians tried again and again to destroy the Jewish people, but did God let their plans succeed? _____

Plan Number 4: Destroy them at the Red Sea (Exodus 14:10-12). Many years later it was time for the children of Israel to leave the land of Egypt. Moses was now a grown up man (about 80 years old). He was leading the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but suddenly it looked as if the Jews would be destroyed. The Red Sea was in front of them and the Egyptian army was chasing after them from behind (Exodus 14:10).

Did the children of Israel think that they would be destroyed (Exodus 14:11-12)? _____ What did God do (Exodus 14:21)? _____ Who was really destroyed: the Jews or the Egyptians (Exodus 14:30)? _____

Can a Nation Live 40 Years in a Barren Desert?

There were about two million Jews who crossed the Red Sea and entered the wilderness that was on the other side. They would stay in this desert for about 40 years. How can this many people survive in a desert wilderness for so long?

Were there times when the children of Israel thought that they would die in this wilderness (Exodus 16:3; 17:3)? _____

Did God take care of them in this desert all these 40 years and provide them with food and water and everything they needed (Deut. 1:31; 2:7)? _____

Their clothes and their shoes did not even wear out or get old (Deuteronomy 29:5)!

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Page...

What if you were to wear the same shoes for 40 years. Do you think they would last for that long? _____

God was taking care of His chosen nation all these years.

Enemies Attempt to Destroy Israel

After the children of Israel were in the wilderness, they came into the land of Canaan. Moses was dead and Joshua was their new leader. Now the nation faced another problem. Other nations were already living in the land of Canaan (see Deut. 7:1). Were these nations stronger or weaker than Israel (Deut. 7:1)? _____ Do you think that these nations were going to be very happy when the children of Israel come into the land and claim the land for themselves? _____ Israel was in for a fight! Would this tiny nation of Israel be destroyed?

As we read the book of Joshua, we learn that the children of Israel conquered all of these nations and they won their battles! How could they conquer nations that were stronger and mightier than they were?

What was their secret weapon (Deuteronomy 3:22)? _____

When we face problems that are too big for us, we need to remember that God can be our secret weapon, too!

Many years later the Philistine army tried to destroy the children of Israel. Their hero was Goliath — perhaps the strongest and tallest man on earth at that time.

Were the Philistines able to destroy the children of Israel (1 Samuel chapter 17)? _____

Israel is Captured by the Enemy

Remember that mosquito pest we talked about at the beginning of this lesson? Finally, the man captured the mosquito in a jar and carried it away. It seemed like that would be the end of Mr. Mosquito.

As time went on, the children of Israel turned away from the Lord and did what was evil in God's sight. They served other gods and worshipped idols. Because of their sins, God allowed the enemy to capture them and to carry them away into a foreign land. First the Assyrians came and carried away many Jews into captivity. Later, the Babylonian army came into Judah and destroyed the city of Jerusalem and captured the Jewish people and carried them away into the land of Babylon. We read about this in 2 Chronicles 36:19-20. It seemed like this would be the end for the nation.

But 70 years later, God worked in the heart of a king named Cyrus, and he allowed the Jewish people to return to their land (2 Chronicles 36:19-26). About 50,000 people returned (Ezra 2:64-65). The nation survived.

God's Promises to Israel

God promised Abraham that out of him would come a great nation. God is not going to let that nation be destroyed. In Jeremiah 31:35-37, God said something very important about the nation of Israel. In this passage, God tells us that one of three things must happen if the nation of Israel is to be destroyed. If none of these three things happens, then the nation of Israel will never be destroyed and will never stop being a nation. Let's see what these three things are:

1) The day-night cycle must be stopped (Jeremiah 31:35-36). God is saying, "If you want the nation of Israel to stop being a nation, then you must find a way to stop the day from coming after the night and stop the night from coming after the day."

2) The heavens must be measured (Jeremiah 31:37). God is saying, "If you want the nation of Israel to stop being a nation, then you must be able to tell Me how many stars there are in My Universe."

3) The foundations of the earth must be searched out (Jeremiah 31:37). God is saying, "If you want the nation of Israel to stop being a nation, then you must be able to dig a hole to the center of the earth." Will man ever be able to do this?

God will not break these promises to Israel! If the enemies of Israel want to be successful, then they need to find some way to stop the sun from rising, they need to start building much better telescopes, and they need to get busy digging to the center of the earth! The Jews do not need to worry. Their future is quite safe!

Haman's Wicked Plan

In the days of Esther, a proud and wicked man named Haman hated the Jewish people and wanted to destroy them. He was able to get the king to pass a law (an unalterable decree) which said that on a certain day all of the Jews (men, women, and children) in the whole kingdom would be destroyed (Esther 3:13).

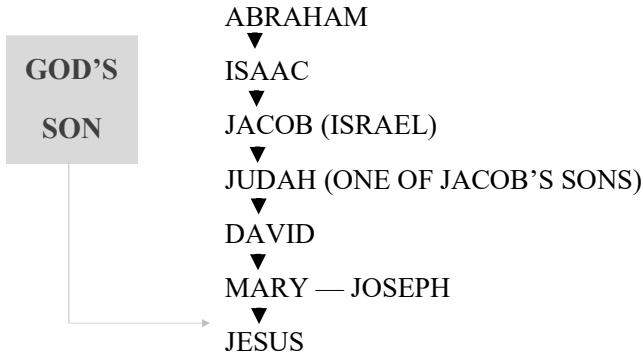
If you were living in the days of Esther, it would seem as if the nation of Israel would be destroyed and would cease from being a nation. It looked like there was no hope. It seemed like the Jews would be killed and the nation would come to an end. But remember, God promised that this would never happen (see Jeremiah 31:35-37). WHAT DID HAPPEN? Who did perish and die (Esther 7:10)? _____

The nation Israel did not perish, but Haman did! The one who wanted to destroy Israel was destroyed! The nation of Israel lived on!

Continued on next page

The Jewish Nation Rejects Christ

When Jesus Christ became a man, He was born as a Jew. The Bible says that He was "the son of D _____, the son of A _____" (Matthew 1:1).



In the days of Christ, the Romans ruled the world, but they allowed the Jewish nation to have a home in Israel. Jesus came into the world to save the Jewish people from their _____ (Matthew 1:21).

Did the Jewish people receive Christ or did they reject Christ (John 1:11)? _____

Did they say, "CROWN HIM!" or did they say, "CRUCIFY HIM!" (see John 19:6,15)? _____

Not all the Jews rejected Christ. There were some like Peter, John, Paul, and Matthew who believed in Christ and followed Him. But most of the Jews rejected Him. The Jews rejected the very One who came down from heaven to save them!

Even though most of the Jews rejected Christ, what does God want you to do (John 1:12)? _____

If you receive Christ, the Bible says that you become a son (child) of G _____ (John 1:12).

Today all those who receive Christ and believe on Him are God's special people! Have you done this? Are you a child of God? Most of the Jews said "NO" to their Savior and so God reached out to all men and said, "Would you like to be saved? Would you like to become a child of God? Would you like to receive Christ as your Savior and Lord?" The Jews said, "NO!" What have you said to God's offer?

God's Punishment

Rejecting Christ was a very great sin and God would have to judge the Jewish nation for this. About 40 years after the death of Christ, the Roman soldiers came into the city of Jerusalem and destroyed it. The Jews had to leave their homeland and they were scattered throughout the world. They had to live in other countries, and in some of those countries they were persecuted and treated very badly. Would this be the end of the Jewish nation?

Suppose you have a pile of 500 pennies in the middle of a large field. If those pennies are all together it is easy to pick them all up and keep them together. But suppose you were to take each penny and throw it as far as you could and in a different direction. Would it be very easy to get all the pennies back together again? _____

So it is with the nation of Israel. The Jews have been "thrown" or scattered all over the world. How is the nation ever going to get back together again? Will the nation ever live again?

The New State of Israel

In modern times something very remarkable has happened! Jews have been returning to the land of Israel. In 1948, the new nation of Israel was born. Thousands of Jews have been returning to their ancient homeland.

The nation of Israel is still alive! Do you ever hear about the nation of Israel on the news? _____

Does the nation of Israel still have enemies today who would like to see Israel be destroyed? _____

Difficult Days Ahead

The Jewish people have not had an easy road to travel on. For example, it is estimated that during World War II, Hitler, the German leader, had about six million Jews put to death. This man tried to destroy the Jewish people, but today Hitler is dead and the

Jewish nation is still alive!

There is coming a future day when the Jews will have even more trouble. This will be "the time _____ of _____ Jacob's _____" (Jeremiah 30:7).

This time of trouble is also known as the



Turn Page...

time of tribulation. Many will die in this day of trouble (Zechariah 13:8-9). Once again Israel's enemies will try to destroy this nation. This time of trouble is seen in Revelation chapter 12 where the "WOMAN" refers to the nation of Israel and the "DRAGON" refers to Satan.

Does Satan try to destroy the nation? _____

Does he succeed? _____

The Messiah Comes!

When Christ came the first time, the Jewish people rejected Him. When Christ comes the second time, the Jewish people will receive Him (see Romans 11:26-27)! At the end of the tribulation things will look very hopeless for the Jewish people. They will be surrounded by their enemies and once again it will look as though they will be destroyed; but in the darkest hour, the Messiah will return and the nation will be delivered.

We read about Christ's coming in Zechariah 12:9-12. Will the Jewish people be sorry for the way they treated Christ when He came the first time? _____

The Greatest Nation On Earth

After Christ returns, He will set up His kingdom on the earth. During this kingdom, the nation of Israel will be the greatest kingdom on earth and the Jews will be looked up to and respected more than any other people (see Zechariah 8:23).

Christ will not set up His throne from Washington D.C. or from Moscow, but from the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be the capital of the world (Isaiah 2:1-3). God told Abraham that a great nation would come out of him.

God Has a Wonderful Future for Israel

The Bible, in both the Old and New Testaments, reveals that God has promised a wonderful future to the nation Israel. God will keep all His promises and all His covenants which He made with His chosen people. Christians everywhere should have a great love in their hearts for the Jewish people.

God's Word is True

We have seen that God kept His promise concerning the nation of Israel. God promised that this nation would never be destroyed! Even though nation after nation tried to destroy it, they all failed!!

What has God promised you if you are a believer in Christ? **An inheritance *incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you, Who [believers] are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time*** (1 Peter 1:4-5).

- ◆ Will you ever perish (John 10:28)? _____
- ◆ Will you ever be cast out (John 6:37)? _____
- ◆ Will you ever be lost (John 6:39)? _____
- ◆ Will Christ ever leave you (Hebrews 13:5)? _____
- ◆ Will you ever be separated from the love of God (Romans 8:38-39)? _____
- ◆ Will God keep all of these promises? _____ Why (Titus 1:2)? _____

God keeps the believer SAFE FOREVER!

END

A Firm Grip

—Lois Ewing

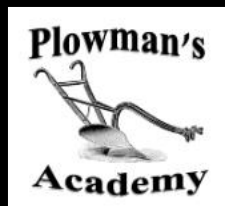
And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? Genesis 3:8-9

Just like Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, when our relationship with God seems distant, it is not God who has left us, but we who have left Him. He is there—always—waiting for us to turn back to Him. We sometimes leave Him, but He promises that He will never leave us.

As I was walking with Jesus, our hands were firmly gripped.
We walked, talked, laughed, and cried together,
And still there was the firm grip.
Then, as years passed by, I let the world slip in a little at a time.
Soon, I wasn't walking and talking as often with our Lord.
I realized that I missed His firm grip.
I knelt down in prayer and asked why He had let go.
Jesus answered and said, "I still have a firm grip."
"It is you who was losing your grip."

As I was with Moses, so I will be with thee: I will not fail thee, nor forsake thee.
Joshua 1:5

I will give them a heart to know Me, for I am the LORD; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with their whole heart.
Jeremiah 24:7



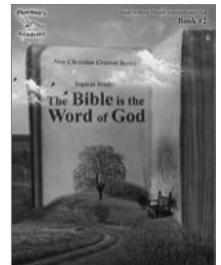
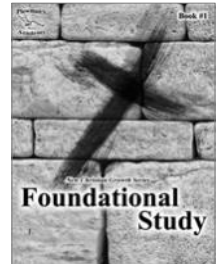
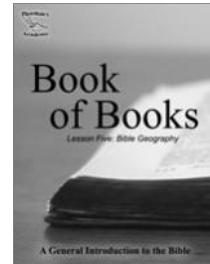
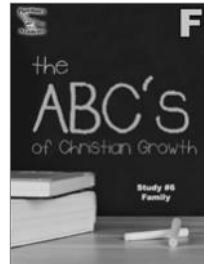
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A hardened heart can cause a lot of pain. Here are three reasons why bitterness should be removed from your heart as soon as possible:

1. Bitterness harbors unforgiveness. You may feel justified in your anger. You may think that your spouse doesn't deserve your forgiveness until he or she straightens out. But have you forgotten the mercy that Jesus had for you?

Romans 5:8 tells us that Christ died for us while we were yet sinners. By God's grace, He didn't wait for us to "get our act together" before He provided a way for forgiveness. He gave it to us freely even when we didn't deserve it. At Golgotha as the soldiers gambled for Jesus' clothing, the dying innocent Christ prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do" (Luke 23:34). If forgiveness is given freely to us, how much more should we give it to our spouses?

Not only should you desire forgiveness simply because it was given so freely to you, but also, the Bible tells us that there are consequences for unforgiveness. Jesus said, "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14-15). Seek forgiveness not only for the sake of your spouse, but also for yourself.

The other day, I found that my disappointment in my friend was turning into its own form of bitterness. So I

sought the Scriptures for guidance. As always, the Word of God shone brilliant light on my own darkness. I was so moved by the verse I read that I wrote it down over and over until there was no more room left on the page. "For he shall have judgment without mercy, that hath shewed no mercy; and mercy rejoiceth against judgment." (James 2:13).

I wonder how many hurting marriages would be healed if Christian husbands and wives learned to love mercy as much as they love justice?

2. Bitterness doesn't give your spouse a chance to repent. If you've been holding in your hurt, your spouse may not even know he or she has offended you. Bitterness often comes from hurt that has been suppressed without communication, like filling up a bottle with pressure. Eventually that bottle will explode. In the same way, the outburst in your heart can result in a broken marriage, and your spouse never even saw it coming. In this case, go ahead and tell him or her what's been bothering you. Sit down and try to work it out.

Perhaps your spouse does know of your unhappiness, but chooses to continue in the same patterns. This does not negate your responsibility to remove the bitterness from your heart. You still need to give your spouse the chance to repent, although stronger measures, such as marriage counseling, may need to take place.

You may ask, "How many times does my spouse have to do something before I'm justified in my bitterness?" Peter had a similar question in Matthew 18:21. He

asked, "Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?"

Jesus replied in verse 22, "I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

No matter how many times your spouse may do something, you are still responsible for forgiving him or her.

(Note: If your spouse is physically abusing you, get out of your house and do not stay there. A person who is physically abusive needs extensive counseling and rehabilitation. However, no matter how the situation ends, you can still work on forgiveness from the heart.)

3. Bitterness spreads. Have you ever seen a piece of moldy bread? It appears that there is only one ruined area, but if you were to look at the bread through a microscope, you would see long roots spreading throughout the slice. What appears on the surface doesn't reflect what's really happening below.

Bitterness grows the same way. One little bit of bitterness can start to spread throughout your heart and contaminate your whole body. It will start to manifest itself in your attitude, demeanor, and even your health.

In addition, the spreading can also affect your children and your family. Have you ever noticed how one person's criticism makes everyone else critical, too? It's the same with bitterness. Paul compares it to yeast when he writes, "A little leaven, leavens the whole lump" (Galatians 5:6). When you allow bitterness into your life,

continued next page

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Bitterness, Continued

it extends to your family, your church body, and everyone else involved in your life.

Getting rid of bitterness

You may feel like there is little hope left for your marriage relationship. You may be so full of bitterness that you've convinced yourself that your marriage could never be healed, but let me assure you that the healing begins with yourself. *With God, all things are possible* (Matthew 19:26).

Here are four steps to take to begin healing from bitterness:

1. Confess your bitterness as a sin. It's so easy to justify our attitude when we've been hurt, but the Bible teaches that bitterness is a sin. Hebrews 12:14-15 says, *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled..."* You must seek peace with your spouse and the grace to forgive.

2. Ask for God's strength to forgive your spouse and diligently seek that forgiveness. In Ephesians 4:31-32, Paul exhorts us to *"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: And be ye kind one to another,*

tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."

It's hard to be tender-hearted to a spouse who has hurt you, but it is possible. We have the power to forgive because Christ forgave us, and He gives us strength through the Holy Spirit.

3. Make a list of your hurts and find a time to talk to your spouse about it.

After you've made your list, pray about which things you can let go and which need to be resolved. If you can let them go, then do so. You may want to physically scratch off each one that you can forgive as an act of faith. Then for those transgressions that are left, ask God to give you the strength to talk to your spouse about them.

Before talking to your spouse, let him or her know that you plan to set aside some undistracted time for you to talk about some issues. As you talk, keep the discussion productive. Start by confessing your own sins to your spouse. Then talk about your hurts. Don't just dump all your irritations and criticisms on your spouse, but speak in love, rationally and gently.

If you feel like you can't talk to your spouse alone, then ask a pastor or mentor couple to join you in the discussion. Make sure your spouse knows that someone else will be there. Once you begin, your spouse may deny the

behavior or even become irritated, but the object of the discussion is to expose the wounds, not to accuse. Keep love the main motivator of your communication.

4. Worry about changing yourself, not your spouse.

You cannot change your spouse—only God can. But what you can do is allow God to change your heart. If you have a log of bitterness in your own eye, how can you take the speck out of your spouse's eye? (Matthew 7:3). You, too, have made choices in this relationship that have hurt your spouse and need to be mended. Even though your spouse's sin goes unresolved for now, he or she will answer for it one day before God (Matthew 10:26). In the same way, God will hold you responsible for the bitterness in your heart.

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FamilyLife is a donor-supported ministry offering practical and biblical resources and events to help you build a godly marriage and family.

Footnotes:

1. "Beethoven Was Poisoned", Thursday, 19 October 2000, *News in Science*.

Next Step

Attend a Weekend to Remember®. For more details on a Weekend to Remember near you, call: (800) 358-6329. Learn how to build intimacy, improve communication, and take your marriage to the next level!

END

Live Conference Calls

Option #1

Join us for a live conference call on the first Sunday of every month at 8:00 p.m. EST.

Simply dial (302) 202-1110, and then enter the conference code 409703. Join us in discussion or just listen to the call!

UPCOMING Conference Calls:

May 01: Should we take the gospel to others?

June 05: When will Jesus Christ return?

July 03: What is biblical separation?

Conference Recordings

Option #2

Call in anytime, day or night, and listen to past conference recordings. Simply dial (641) 715-3800, and enter pin # 89752.

PAST Conference Calls:

- | | |
|------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Lord's Supper | 4. Obedience |
| 2. Missions | 5. Prayer |
| 3. The New Birth | 6. Jesus Christ |

Press: # to go to another extension ♦ 2 to rewind 30 seconds
3 to skip forward 30 seconds ♦ 8 to pause ♦ and 8 again to resume

Sermons and Testimonies

Option #3

Call in anytime, day or night, and listen to testimonies and powerful sermons. New testimonies and sermons are switched out at the beginning of each month and stay there for the entire month.

Simply dial (641) 715-3800, and enter pin # 478499.

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**Phone ministries
listed on page 15!**

Don't Let Bitterness Poison Your Marriage

—Sabrina Beasley McDonald

Over time, repeated hurts can build up to destroy a relationship, but these suggestions can help you heal before the damage is done.

For nearly two centuries, Beethoven's death was a mystery. The famous musician suffered from irritability, depression, and abdominal pain. His dying wish was that his illness would be discovered so that "the world may be reconciled to me after my death."

In 1994, two Americans launched a study to determine the cause of Beethoven's end. Chemical analysis of a strand of his hair showed his killer—lead poisoning!

More than likely, it was a little poison in everyday activities that took his life. It could have come from drinking out of lead-lined cups or having dinner on a lead-lined plate—both common household items in that day. Or perhaps it came from eating contaminated fish or even the extensive consumption of wine. It didn't come in one lump sum, but the lead killed him slowly and quietly—one little bit of poison at a time.

That's also how bitterness destroys a marriage. It stores itself in the soul and slowly poisons the one who carries it. It's a blade meant for another that eventually severs the hand that tightly conceals it.

Recently, I have witnessed what a bitter wife does to a relationship. The problems with her husband are real, and her anger is justified. However, what keeps their marriage from healing is not only the problems that he has to overcome, but also the prideful bitterness she guards in her heart.

Little by little, day by day, she has allowed this bitterness to poison her. Her husband will do something disappointing, and instead of confronting the problem, she silently holds it against him. He continues to make the same mistakes, and she continues to harbor her resentment.

This pattern has gone on for years, and now the love she once felt has numbed and hardened her heart. Recently she walked out on their marriage wearing a list of her husband's transgressions as her

armor. Reflecting back on his behavior, she nurses her wounds with words that assure her that their marriage was a mistake—"I knew it all along," she says.

What causes bitterness?

In every marriage, a husband or wife does something that hurts the other. It's bound to happen because none of us is perfect. And in some cases, a spouse has a habit of doing the same thing over and over again, even after the behavior is confronted.

Bitterness comes when you hold onto hurt and refuse to forgive the person who hurt you. Most of the time, this comes as a result of ongoing actions of a small nature—lack of understanding, misuse of finances, harsh comments—that build up over time. Each offense takes residence in the heart, and at some point there is no more room left. That's when bitterness is manifested and causes the most damage.

What's wrong with bitterness?

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