

Bridges To Healing - Africa

Journeying across the rivers of combat-related trauma
to a place of strength and stability



Rev. Chris Adsit



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This book is not a substitute for appropriate medical or psychological care for those experiencing significant emotional pain or whose ability to function at home, school or work is impaired. Chronic or extreme stress may cause a wide assortment of physical and psychological problems. Some may require evaluation and treatment by medical or mental health professionals. When in doubt, seek advice from a professional.

*“Bear one another’s burdens
and so fulfill the law of Christ.”*

– Galatians 6:2

*“And they came, bringing to Him a paralytic, carried by four men.
And Jesus seeing their faith said to the paralytic, ‘Son, your sins are forgiven . . .
Get up, pick up your pallet and go home.’”*

– Mark 2:1-12



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Thanks

Many thanks to **Susan McLain** for her crucial input and feedback regarding cultural issues in Africa, as well as her theological, practical and editorial insights! Sue worked with Wycliffe International and Global Teams for eight years in Rwanda, Zaire (now Congo) and Kenya. She currently works for BEE World training church leaders in closed and restricted-access countries in discipleship, editing courses, managing translation and facilitating adult literacy.

Introduction: There is a way . . .

Most nights, Samuel has horrible nightmares. They jerk him from his sleep and he looks around wildly, trying to see who is about to attack him. He grabs the heavy stick he keeps handy and raises it high over his head to strike. His wife Imani runs from their bed as fast as she can, in case he mistakes her for an enemy. Samuel's heart is beating like a drum, his breath coming in rapid gasps, his eyes frantically searching the darkness for the rebel soldiers who have come to kill him . . .

But after several minutes, Samuel comes to his senses and realizes he is alone. There are no enemy soldiers, no threats, just a great sadness replacing the panic that was in his heart moments earlier.

He slumps down on his bed and can't keep from weeping. His wife hesitantly re-enters the room and then sits beside him and puts a comforting arm on his shoulder. Samuel thinks about how life was – before the soldiers came . . .

"We are lost," he cries. "We are so far away from the peaceful home and town we used to live in. I can't work. I can't sleep. I'm always afraid someone is coming to kill us. I'm a terrible husband to you Imani, a useless father to my children. And I can't seem to do anything about it!" With that, he kicks the chair next to the bed, sending it flying across the room

He looks at his wife through his angry tears. "I'm sorry, Imani. I just want to go back. I want to go *back* to how things were before the fighting began, before our parents were killed and I was shot, before God forgot about us. But I don't know how to get back there. There are too many rivers in the way that are too wide to cross. If I could only find the way back . . ."

Imani wept with Samuel, because she felt the same sadness, the same hopelessness, and she had no idea what she could say to her husband to take away his pain..



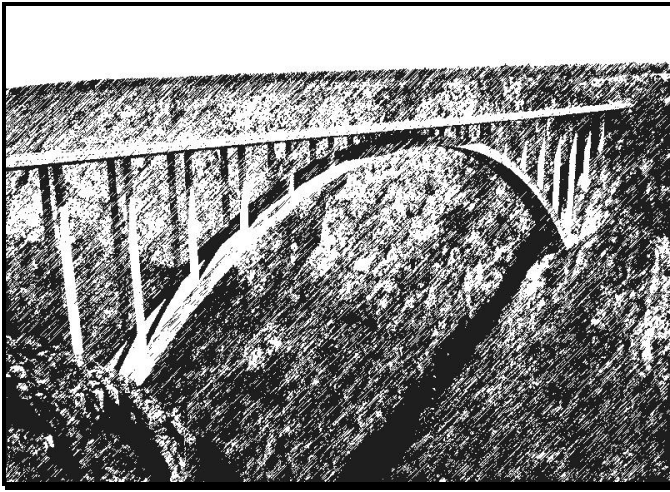
Samuel and Imani – like millions of others across Africa – are experiencing the devastating trauma of war, skirmishes and civil strife. You are probably reading this because you have experienced it too. With the way things are across the African continent today, it's unlikely you will ever be able to go back to the way things were before war disrupted your life. But don't despair – you *can* make a journey to a *new* place of healing, strength, stability and peace. **There is a way.**

The traumas you have experienced may have robbed you of your peace, your joy, your ability to love, your hope and many other things. But despite your circumstances, you *can* find these things again! Like Samuel in the story above, you may think God has abandoned you. He has not! We know it must seem like it sometimes, but as you will read in the first chapter, God has been walking with you through all of the fires you have encountered. He's with you now, and He wants to help you make that journey to the place of healing.

We see nine rivers that could be keeping you from where you want to go. In this book, we will lead you to Nine Bridges that will help you cross those rivers and complete your journey. It won't be easy. It will require you to make decisions, to take action, and to trust God to bring you home. You will be asked to touch places in your heart, soul and mind that may cause you anxiety at first, but will lead to your strengthening and healing. There will be refreshing springs of encouragement along the way, moments of bright understanding, and triumphant crossings of streams that have denied your progress for a long time. It will also be hard work sometimes – but it will be worth it!

Our brothers and sisters, we grieve with you over all you have lost – physically, emotionally and spiritually. But take courage. Many people are praying for you as you read this book. And the Spirit of God is also sitting beside you right now, eager to walk with you to your place of healing.





Bridge 1:

UNDERSTANDING

... what happened

Crossing the River of Confusion,
Pain and Doubt

Why am I like this?

Jomo had always been strong and confident. As a boy and as a young man he had always been a standout in every sport he tried. He did well in school, was well-liked by the other students and the teachers, and he had plans to become a teacher himself.

When he was old enough he joined the National Army. He took to his training enthusiastically, advanced quickly, and was given a position as a platoon leader. He was eager to fight the men who were destroying the peace of his country. He knew his cause was right, and that God would protect him.

There was no warning when the rebels hit. They seemed to come from everywhere. Jomo shouted orders to his men in an attempt to set up a defensive perimeter, but there were just too many. He watched in horror as many of his men were killed by AK-47s, grenades, RPGs. He fired his weapon until he ran out of ammunition, but then there was nothing to do but run. Live to fight another day. He was chased, was hit by a bullet in his shoulder, knocked down by the impact, and caught.

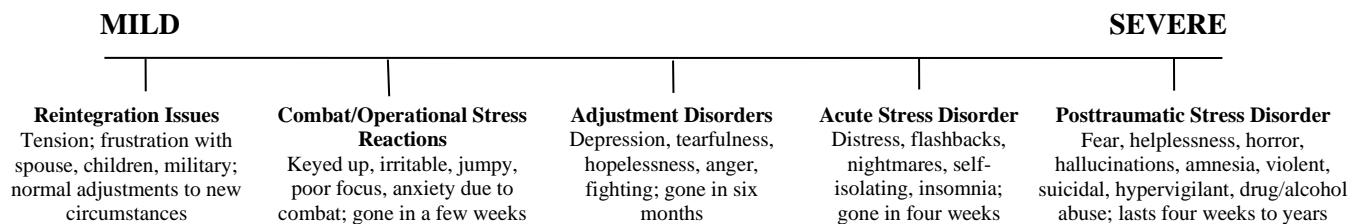
They tortured him the rest of that day, trying to find out more information about his unit's movements. That night, when the man who was supposed to be guarding him fell asleep, he escaped, and made his way back to safety.

That was more than three years ago. Jomo had been courageous and resourceful. He had fought hard and done his best. He survived. And yet, why does he feel so guilty? Why does he see his men being killed by enemy fire every time he closes his eyes? Why does he still have nightmares and flashbacks? Why is he always angry and afraid that once again rebels will find him, chase him, shoot him and torture him? He doesn't want to spend time with his old football friends, he has stopped going to church – all he wants to do is to stay home and listen to his music. But any loud noise outside sends him flying to the floor, clawing to get under his bed. Depression, stress and loneliness are his constant companions.

Jomo is suffering from a condition known as **Combat Trauma**.

"Combat Trauma" describes a spectrum of disorders seen in those who have been exposed to a traumatic combat-related event (or series of events) which involves actual or threatened death or serious injury and causes an emotional reaction involving intense fear, panic, helplessness or horror.

The following graphic presents the **spectrum of Combat Trauma**:



Each person responds differently to the traumas of war due to a variety of reasons. Jomo had a particularly severe reaction, while others who went through the exact same event might end up more to the Mild end of the spectrum. Still others might be even more severely affected than Jomo.

Combat Trauma sufferers toward the left end of the spectrum will usually show fewer symptoms, and they typically will improve without significant treatment. Sufferers at the right end of the spectrum exhibit very strong symptoms which will persist for at least a month, maybe years, and – if untreated – a lifetime. These symptoms may not begin to surface for months or even years after the traumatic event(s).

At the Severe end of the spectrum, you will notice the term **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**. This is a condition that has been observed in soldiers and victims of war and described by doctors for centuries, but has only been defined and recognized in medical books since 1980. This shows that it is not unique to modern wars, but common to *all* wars.

If you are struggling with Combat Trauma or PTSD, you should know . . .

- PTSD is not rare or unusual. It's a *common* reaction to an *uncommon* event.
- Hundreds of thousands of men and women are struggling with it just as you are.
- It is *normal* to be affected negatively by combat, pain, atrocity and horror.
- Facing death changes a person – it would be *abnormal* if you were not affected. It shows that you are human and that what happens in war matters to you.
- You are not weak, crazy or strange – you are very literally *wounded*.
- PTSD has been called a wound of the soul and a wound of the identity.
- If a person was shot in the foot, you wouldn't expect him to be able to run and jump any time soon. In the same way, a person with a wound to his or her *soul* will also be out of action for a while.

What Causes PTSD?

A psychological shock or any kind of horrific event that makes a person think that they could be severely injured or killed can trigger PTSD. In other words, PTSD can be produced in a number of ways besides combat:

- Physical assault; carjacking
- Sexual abuse; rape
- Kidnapping; being held hostage
- Terrorism
- Torture
- Natural and man-made disasters
- Accidents
- Receiving devastating news, such as a diagnosis of a life-threatening illness
- Witnessing threatening, mutilating or deadly events

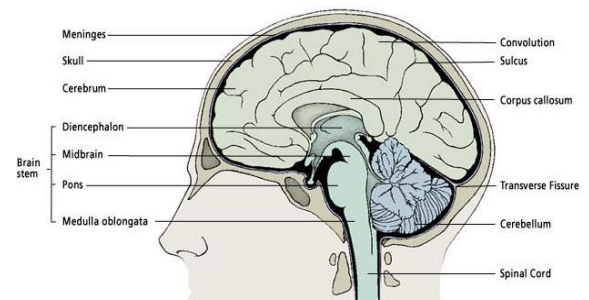
PTSD can become especially severe or long-lasting when the trauma comes from an intentional human act, rather than from an accident or a natural disaster. In addition, enduring several traumatic events can have a building-up effect. For instance, if a person was abused as a child, then witnessed a sibling being murdered or was involved in a bad car accident, and then found himself in a combat situation, it's more likely that person will develop PTSD and it could be more severe than others who endure the same combat situation.

A God-designed defense mechanism.

One of God's top plans when He created us was that we would be equipped to defend ourselves and survive in a wide variety of dangerous situations. To this end, He equipped us with an amazing set of danger-response mechanisms.

There is a place in our brain called the brain stem or lower brain. This part of our brain controls all automatic life functions, such as our breathing, digestion and heartbeat. The brain stem will always override our higher brain – the part of our brain that we think with, make decisions with, etc. For instance, it doesn't matter how badly you might want to do it, you can't make your heart stop beating just by thinking about it. You can hold your breath for a little while, but before long your lower brain once again takes over and *makes* you breathe.

When we encounter something that we feel threatens our life, a flood of hormones is dumped into our blood stream. Our lower brain commands our heart to beat faster, our lungs to pump harder, and gets the rest of our body ready to either fight or run. Thousands of small muscles in our arms and legs tighten up, sending blood away from



our skin and into our muscles for endurance and quick movement – and so that if our extremities are wounded, we won't bleed as badly. We get a surge of energy, strength and quickness and suddenly we can run, jump, kick or punch like we never have before.

But something else happens deep inside our brains, too. It's like an alarm goes off, and drowns out our normal tendency to analyze what's happening or to get emotional about it. It screams, "*Less thinking, more action!*" Our brain starts recording very strong and clear memories of what is happening, probably so that we will remember this event and avoid it in the future.

If the danger continues to threaten us, our brain stem takes over. It's live-or-die time. With this part of our brain in control, nothing else matters. It automatically directs the rest of the body in very complex but focused ways to do whatever it takes to survive – sometimes in ways that the trauma sufferer may be ashamed about later. But no matter who you are, it's important to know two things:

1. God gave you this reactive pathway so that you would be able to do whatever was necessary to survive. It kept you alive. God knows that when our lives are threatened this behavior needs to come out or we could die. At that point, all the analysis, dignity, intelligence and politeness in the world is absolutely useless.
2. No matter how hard you might have tried, you couldn't have stopped this reaction. Can you stop your heartbeat? No. Neither are we able to control ourselves when our brains have clicked into this mode.



Can you remember having one (or more) of these "automatic" reactions while you were in a traumatic, life-threatening situation? If so, place an "X" on the line below indicating how severe it was.

Mild ----- Severe

Have you had any of these reactions since you came back to a safe area, in the form of a flashback? If so, indicate again how severe it was on the line below.

Mild -----Severe



Getting stuck in crisis-alert mode.

You might be saying, "*OK, the crisis is over now. God's danger-response mechanism worked, and I survived. So why can't I move on? Why do I keep reliving what happened?*"

Often, a trauma survivor can go through a short period of recovery time, and return pretty close to "normal." But if the traumatizing event was very violent and life-threatening, or if there were multiple events, the brain doesn't want to leave this crisis-alert mode. Your brain knows that it just had a very close call, and it is determined to be ready to react if the danger comes by again. Good idea – except if it gets stuck in that mode, which is essentially what PTSD is.

Whenever your brain senses that it's getting near the "scene of the crime" via some sensory trigger (such as a smell, a sound, a sight, a memory), it quickly opens up the photo album it created during the earlier traumatic event and puts on an intense show to remind you that you don't want to go there again! "Are you *nuts*!?? We almost *died* when we were there last time! Get away!"

If one doesn't process the traumatic event later in a safe place by talking about it with someone, allowing the emotions that were suppressed to come up and be experienced, analyzing it, getting angry about the injustice of the experience, but then releasing that anger and bitterness, they will stay stuck in this condition indefinitely.

PTSD Symptoms

Medical experts on trauma have identified three major categories of symptoms for PTSD. Go through the list below and put a check-mark next to any symptoms that you are currently experiencing.

1. **Re-experiencing Symptoms.** Memories and images of the traumatic events may suddenly push their way into the minds of those with PTSD. They are often accompanied by intense emotions such as grief, guilt, fear or anger. Sometimes the memories are so vivid it seems like they are actually reoccurring.
 - ☐ Nightmares
 - ☐ Sleepwalking, sleep fighting
 - ☐ Unwanted daytime memories, images, thoughts, daydreams

- ☐ Flashbacks, feeling like you're reliving the traumatic event
- ☐ Somatic flashbacks (physical pain or a medical condition emerges, linked to the feelings or bodily states associated with the traumatic event)
- ☐ Fixated on war experience, living in the past
- ☐ Spontaneous psychotic episodes (the world vanishes, and it seems like you're suddenly somewhere else, experiencing some sort of trauma)
- ☐ Panic attacks, undefined dread or fear; phobias of different sorts

2. Avoidance Symptoms. Traumatized individuals attempt to avoid situations, people or events that remind them of their trauma. They feel numb, emotionless, withdrawing into themselves trying to shut out the painful memories and feelings.

- ☐ Physical/emotional reaction and avoidance of things that remind you of the traumatic event
- ☐ Self-isolating, dread of social interaction
- ☐ Anxiety in crowds, traffic
- ☐ Despair, depression, sadness, emptiness, loneliness
- ☐ Inability to trust others
- ☐ Very reluctant to talk about your traumatic event
- ☐ Lack of interest or motivation regarding employment, recreation, former hobbies, sex, exercise
- ☐ Relationships that were once close and even intimate are now strained, cold, distant, requiring too much energy to maintain
- ☐ Emotional numbness, flat, can't get happy or sad, "dead" inside
- ☐ Substance abuse to "un-numb" yourself (drugs, alcohol, food)
- ☐ Suicidal thoughts; suicidal attempts
- ☐ Physical fatigue
- ☐ Neglect/abandon personal care, hygiene, nutrition, exercise

3. Arousal Symptoms. Fearing further trauma, PTSD sufferers are always on the alert, on guard, jumpy, unable to sleep, angry, irritable. Many also have concentration and memory problems.

- ☐ Anger, irritability, "short fuse," fits of rage
- ☐ Hypervigilance (always on guard), always need to be armed with knife or gun; could also include "emotional" hypervigilance
- ☐ Easily startled, react to loud noises, jumpy
- ☐ Substance abuse to "numb" yourself (drugs, alcohol, food)
- ☐ Reduced cognitive ability (slow thinking, confusion, problem-solving, concentration)
- ☐ Poor memory
- ☐ Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, insomnia
- ☐ Night sweats
- ☐ Accelerated heart rate, rapid breathing, heart palpitations for no good reason
- ☐ Question/abandon faith, feeling of being betrayed or abandoned by God, mad at God
- ☐ Fear of becoming violent
- ☐ Becoming violent, provoking fights
- ☐ Homicidal thoughts; homicidal attempts
- ☐ Anniversary reaction (become anxious nearing the monthly or yearly anniversary of the traumatic event)
- ☐ Adrenalin junkie (taking risks, getting hyped-up)
- ☐ Self-mutilation, cutting, excessive tattooing

A Combat Trauma sufferer won't experience *all* of these symptoms by any means. He or she might have some of them from the first category, one or two from the second, four from the third – the set of symptoms will be as unique as the individual suffering from them.

If you are currently experiencing Combat Trauma or PTSD, there are many reasons to take hope! For *years* people who have studied victims of overwhelming stress have been amazed by the resiliency of these survivors. Refugee camp occupants, prisoners of war freed from years of captivity, terrorized hostages – so many are seen as

coping and being victorious, rather than spiraling into a pattern of defeat. Many war trauma survivors have actually used their experiences to strengthen and enrich their lives. God can enable you to rebuild your shattered life, career and family – even as you wrestle with the bitterest of memories.

But where was God?

Samuel's words in the Introduction were, "... when God forgot about us." When a person experiences a horrible event, when evil triumphs, when the innocent are harmed, when a random, unexpected incident results in destruction and death, it is a natural human tendency to ask, "Where was God? Why didn't He prevent this?" It's natural and *normal*.

Some of the most godly, faith-filled men and women in history have done the same, more or less. Even the Son of God – Jesus Christ – cried out from the murderous cross . . .

"My God! My God! Why have You forsaken Me?" – Matthew 27:46

What do you know about God? Those who have walked with God very closely for a long, long time tell us that He is "supremely-good" and "supremely-powerful." But wait a minute. If God is supremely-good, He certainly wouldn't want bad things to happen. And if He's supremely-powerful, He certainly would be able to do what He wants – and keep bad things from happening.

So . . . why do so many bad things happen in a world ruled by a God who is so good and so powerful?

Here's why . . .

"For God so loved the world . . ." (John 3:16). God loves the whole world – and God loves *you* – at a depth and with an intensity that we can't even imagine. His love isn't the sentimental, syrupy love that we see in the movies or daydream about. It's a love that is wise, self-less and freeing. It has eternity in mind, not just the present.

Because of His love for you, He's not going to force you to do anything. He's not interested in a planet full of puppets who will do what He says when He pulls the right strings. He *loves* you, and what He wants more than anything in all the universe is *your* love, sent back to Him of your own free will. If we are forced, it's not love at all. It's just action and reaction – like in physics or chemistry.

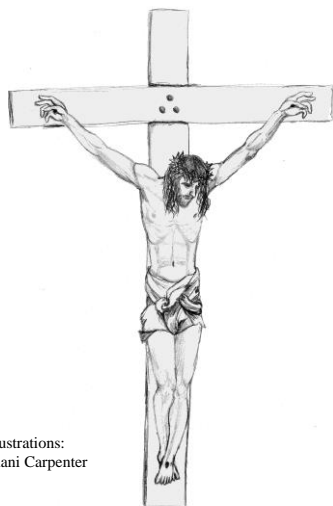
So God – from the very beginning – has deeply desired that we'll decide on our own to respond positively to His loving overtures. Love cannot be forced or commanded.



Put an "X" on the line below that describes best how you feel toward God right now.



I don't believe God exists	I hate God	I'm angry and disappointed with God	I'm neutral toward God	I like God but I'm hesitant	I'm growing in my faith and love of God	I love and trust God perfectly



"We do not want this man to reign over us!" That was Jesus telling a story in Luke 19 about how He was going to be rejected as King.

The story came true a few days later. **"Away with Him! Crucify Him! We have no king but Caesar!"** The people didn't want God – or His Son – as their ruler, so they killed Him. But this was nothing new. People have been rejecting God's rule in their affairs since the time of Adam and Eve. Mankind said "No" to God at the first opportunity and we've been saying "No" ever since – as a species, as nations, as individuals. God reaches out in love and says, "May I be your Covering, your Guide, your Sustainer, your Companion, your Comforter?" And every one of us at one time or another has said, "No, You may not. I would prefer to be the Captain of my own soul. Leave me alone. I'll do as I please."

God didn't change His mind about respecting our free will. He granted our wish. He backed off. But not very far. He's always there, ready to respond, reaching out – but out of our way. "We don't need God – we can handle things just fine by ourselves."

Illustrations:
Shani Carpenter

But obviously, we humans are doing a very bad job of “handling things by ourselves.” That’s why you are in the distress that you are right now, and perhaps why you are reading this book. According to historian Will Durant, in more than 5,000 years of recorded history, there have only been 29 years when there wasn’t a war raging somewhere on our planet.

As one man in a German prison camp during World War Two said to his friend: “Where is God?” The other man, thinking about their cruel guards and a world that would not help them, replied, “Where is man?” This is important to understand:

YOUR CONDITION IS DUE TO THE SINFUL ACTIONS OF EVIL MEN – NOT GOD.

God is not the author of evil. He has been right there with you as you walked through your traumatic experiences. He has helped you in ways you might not have known. He has wept over your dead family members and friends just as He wept at the tomb of His friend Lazarus (John 11:35). He is biding His time until the day He will judge and eliminate all evil and those who practice it. But in the meantime, He is walking beside you and in great sadness about the pain you are experiencing. He is ready to come to your aid if you will let Him.

Knowing your enemies, knowing your allies.

You have seen your human enemies. You may know that they are influenced and strengthened by spiritual enemies who hate God, hate you, and because God loves you, desire nothing more than to defeat and kill you. Like a roaring lion, their objective is to devour you (1 Peter 5:8). They will use any weakness we have, any experience we’ve gone through, any vulnerability they can discover to fulfill their mission for us. They will use your traumatic experiences to find the open spots in your armor, and shoot their arrows there.

They are our enemies. Not God.

Have you ever watched a bunch of chicks with their mother hen? When danger comes, they instantly scurry toward their mother, who lifts her wings and gathers them underneath for protection. Could you imagine a hyena bounding into the chicken yard and one of the chicks running *away* from the hen and *toward* the hyena? That would be one very stupid – or confused – chick. And one very happy hyena.

And yet so many humans, when problems bound into their lives, decide to run away from the Supreme Problem Solver of the universe, rather than toward Him.



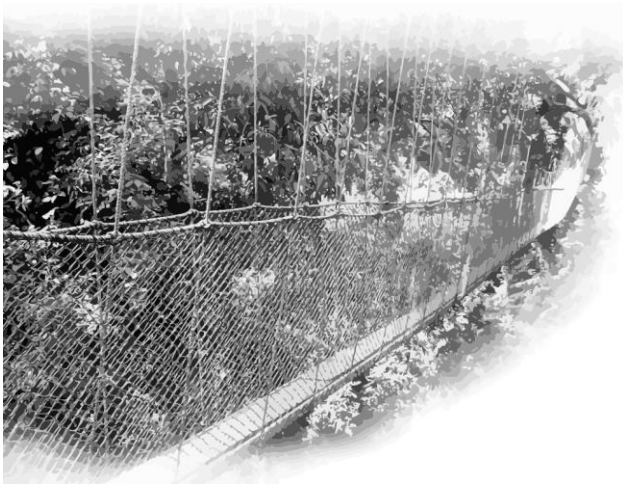
Why do you think that is?

In which direction are you running right now – toward God or away from Him? Why?

Conclusions:

- Combat Trauma and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder are physiological, emotional and spiritual reactions to a life-threatening event involving extreme distress, pain and horror. God designed those reactions to help you survive – but not processing that trauma (stuffing it down, not talking about it, denying it happened or saying that it was not very significant) can cause a person to get “stuck” in this crisis-alert mode.
- The ultimate source of this trauma is not God, but man’s inhumanity to man, influenced by Satan and his demonic forces. God is there with you now, standing ready to help you in this crisis.
- God was with you when you walked through the fire of your traumatic event(s). He allowed it for eternal purposes and in a way that would not compromise human freedom of will.

If you **UNDERSTAND** these things, it will help clear up your confusion, give meaning to the pain you are experiencing, and dispel your doubt with faith – moving you toward strength and stability.



Bridge 2:

CONNECTING

...with the Healer

Crossing the River of Separation From
Your Creator

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world: and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith. Who is the one who overcomes the world but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?

– 1 John 5:4,5

The Healer.

Kamanga was a very proud man. You would understand why if you lived in his village. He had more than fifty cattle, dozens of goats, a big farm, a beautiful wife, five healthy children and lots of money. He was independent and self-sufficient. Kamanga took care of himself and did not need anybody's help.

He didn't even need God's help. What more could God do for him that he had not already done for himself? He believed in God's existence, but saw no point in paying much attention to Him. *A waste of time*, he thought to himself. *I'm too busy with more important things.*

Kamanga never thought about how quickly war, skirmishes and civil strife can sweep away a man's fortunes. The fighting lines eventually got to his village. While his property was in government territory, he was protected from harm – but the army kept taking his cattle and millet for their troops. When the rebels advanced, they swept through his farm and took everything he had left, raped his wife, beat his children, and took his oldest son with them to make him one of their soldiers. As a parting gift, they broke both of his legs so he couldn't chase after them. At least they didn't kill him.

As you can imagine, Kamanga was very angry and sad. His neighbors took him to the doctor – a man who had been his family's doctor since Kamanga was a child.

"Can you fix my legs, Mbere?" Then he added bitterly, "And while you're at it, can you fix my heart?" Kamanga began to cry.

Mbere put his hand on the young man's shoulder. "No, I'm so sorry, Kamanga. I cannot fix either your heart or your legs. I don't know how."

Kamanga looked at the doctor in shock. "What do you mean? I was just kidding about my heart – of course you can't really fix that. But certainly you can fix my legs. Aren't you a doctor?"

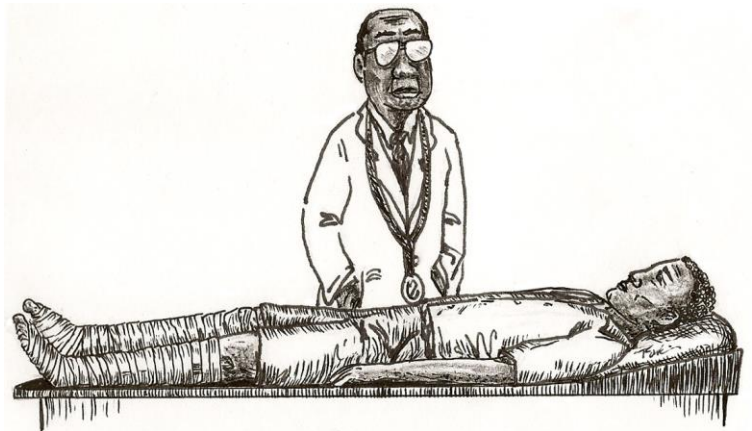


Illustration: Tamra Sheline

"Yes, I am. But I can't fix anybody. However, I *do* know how both your legs *and* your heart can be fixed."

Kamanga was confused, but he said, "Then tell me – how can they be fixed?"

"When I was in medical school, they taught me a very important lesson: Doctors don't heal anybody. Medicines and surgeries don't heal. What they *actually* do is remove destructive conditions from our bodies. They also adjust the environment of the sickness or injury so that the normal healing process that God has put within every person can work unhindered. Ultimately, God is our Healer, Kamanga. Sometimes a person is healed

instantly by a miraculous touch from God. But more often they are healed when they are lined up with the life-giving principles God has put within us which enable us to heal.”

This made sense to Kamanga. He said, “So today you can straighten and set the bones of my legs, but they will need God’s healing – which He is ready to start as soon as you’re done.”

“Exactly right. But the same is true of your heart, Kamanga. You have had a terrible shock, and your heart is broken. God wants to heal that too – but it will be necessary for you to have your heart lined up with God’s healing principles also.”

Kamanga thought about this for a moment, and then said quietly, “When you are done with my legs, Mbere, please tell me how to do this.”

“We’ve spoken of it many times over the years, but you’ve never been interested because you always felt you didn’t need God’s help. But I’ll tell you again – now that He has your undivided attention.”

What Mbere told Kamanga after that is very similar to what you’ll be reading in this chapter. One of the rivers that may be keeping you from journeying to your place of healing is the River of Separation From Your Creator. Many people reading this may already have a relationship with God through His Son Jesus Christ – they’ve already crossed this bridge. But if you have never invited Christ to be your Savior, this is the first and most important step in getting your heart lined up with God’s healing principles.

Would you like to know God personally?

Yes, you *can* know God personally, as presumptuous as that may sound. God is so eager to establish a personal, loving relationship with you that He has already made all the arrangements. He is patiently waiting for you to respond to His invitation. You can receive forgiveness of your sins and assurance of eternal life through faith in His only Son, Jesus Christ.

The major barrier that prevents us from knowing God personally is ignorance of who God is and what He has done for us. Read on and discover for yourself how you can begin a life-changing relationship with God.



The following **four principles** will help you discover how to know God and experience the abundant life He promised.

I GOD LOVES YOU AND CREATED YOU TO KNOW HIM PERSONALLY.

God’s Love

God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. – John 3:16

God’s Plan

Now this is eternal life: that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent. – John 17:3

What prevents us from knowing God personally?

2 MAN IS SINFUL AND SEPARATED FROM GOD, SO WE CANNOT KNOW HIM PERSONALLY OR EXPERIENCE HIS LOVE.

Man is Sinful

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.
– Romans 3:23

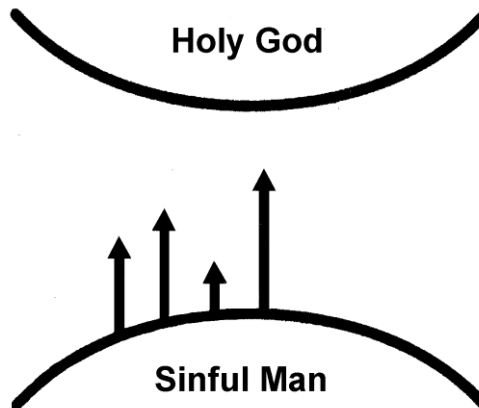
All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way.
– Isaiah 53:6

Man was created to have fellowship with God. Because of his own stubborn self-will, he chose to go his own independent way and fellowship with God was broken. This self-will, characterized by an attitude of active rebellion or passive indifference, is an evidence of what the Bible calls sin.

Man is Separated

But your iniquities have made a separation between you and your God, and your sins have hidden His face from you so that He does not hear.
– Isaiah 59:2

The wages of sin is death.
[spiritual separation from God]
– Romans 6:23a



The above diagram illustrates that God is holy and man is sinful. A great gulf separates the two. The arrows illustrate that man is continually trying to reach God and establish a personal relationship with Him through his own efforts. These efforts take many forms, such as living a good life, philosophy, or religion – but he inevitably fails.

The third principle explains the only way to bridge this gulf...

3 JESUS CHRIST IS GOD'S ONLY PROVISION FOR MAN'S SIN. THROUGH HIM ALONE WE CAN KNOW GOD PERSONALLY AND EXPERIENCE GOD'S LOVE.

He Died in Our Place

God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.
– Romans 5:8

He Rose From the Dead

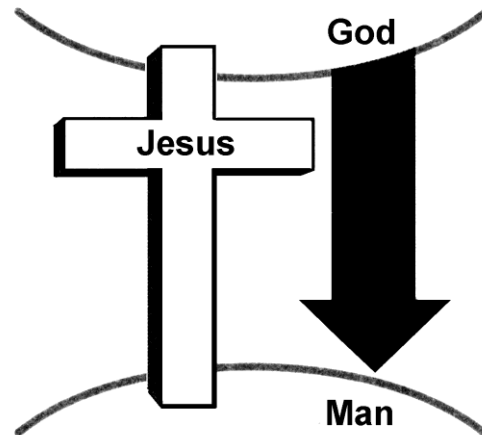
Christ died for our sins ... He was buried ... He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures ... He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred ...
– 1 Corinthians 15:3-6

He is the Only Way to God

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."

– John 14:6

This diagram illustrates that God has bridged the gulf that separates us from Him.. He did this by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross in our place to pay the penalty for our sins.



Just *knowing* these three truths is not enough . . .

4

WE MUST INDIVIDUALLY RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND LORD; THEN WE CAN KNOW GOD PERSONALLY AND EXPERIENCE HIS LOVE.

We Must Receive Christ

As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.

– John 1:12

We Receive Christ Through Faith

By grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast.

– Ephesians 2:8,9

When We Receive Christ, We Experience A New Birth

Jesus answered and said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."

– John 3:3

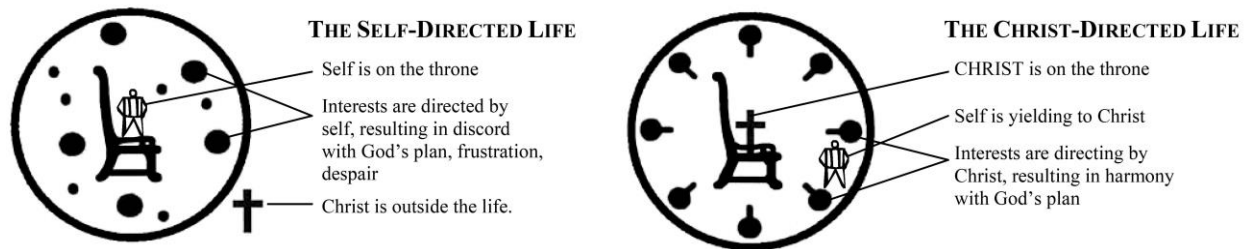
We Receive Christ Through Faith

[Christ speaking] Behold I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him.

– Revelation 3:20

Receiving Christ involves turning to God from self (repentance) and trusting Christ to come into our lives to forgive us of our sins and to make us what He wants us to be. Just to agree intellectually that Jesus Christ is the Son of God and that He died on the cross for our sins is not enough. Nor is it enough to have only an emotional experience. We receive Jesus Christ by faith, as an act of our will.

These two circles represent two kinds of lives:



- Which circle best represents your life?
- Which circle would you like to have represent your life?

The following explains how you can receive Christ:

YOU CAN RECEIVE CHRIST RIGHT NOW BY FAITH THROUGH PRAYER

(Prayer is simply talking with God)

God knows your heart and is not so concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. The following is a suggested prayer:

"Lord Jesus, I want to know You personally. Thank you for dying on the cross for my sins. I open the door of my life and receive You as my Savior and Lord. Thank You for forgiving me of my sins and giving me eternal life. Take control of the throne of my life. Make me the kind of person You want me to be."

Does this prayer express the desire of your heart?

If it does, pray this prayer right now, and Christ will come into your life, as He promised.

HOW TO KNOW THAT CHRIST IS IN YOUR LIFE

Did you receive Christ into your life? According to His promise in Revelation 3:20, where is Christ right now in relation to you? Christ said that He would come into your life and be your friend so that you can know Him personally. Would He mislead you? On what authority do you know that God has answered your prayer? (The trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word.)

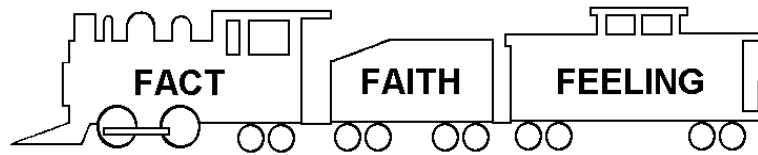
The Bible Promises Eternal Life to All Who Receive Christ

Thank God often that Christ is in your life and that He will never leave you (Hebrews 13:5). You can know on the basis of His promise that Christ lives in you and that you have eternal life from the very moment you invite Him into your life. He will not deceive you.

An important reminder...

DO NOT DEPEND ON FEELINGS

The promise of God's Word, the Bible – not our feelings – is our authority. The Christian lives by faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God Himself and His Word. This train diagram illustrates the relationship among **fact** (God and His Word), **faith** (our trust in God and His Word), and **feeling** (the result of our faith and obedience) (John 14:21).



The train will run with or without the last car. However, it cannot run without the engine – the last car has no power to do that job. In the same way, we as Christians do not depend on feelings or emotions, but we place our faith (trust) in the trustworthiness of God and the promises of His Word.

NOW THAT YOU HAVE ENTERED INTO A PERSONAL RELATIONSHIP WITH CHRIST...

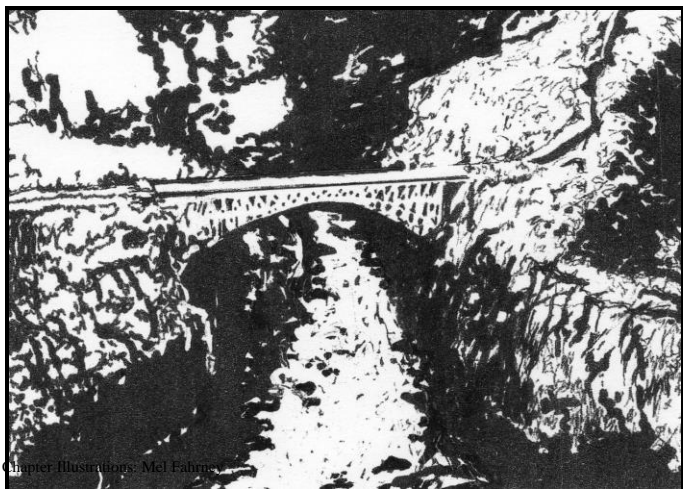
The moment you received Christ by faith, as an act of your will, many things happened, including the following:

1. Christ came into your life (Revelation 3:20 and Colossians 1:27).
2. Your sins were forgiven (Colossians 1:14).
3. You became a child of God (John 1:12).
4. You received eternal life (John 5:24).
5. You began the great adventure for which God created you (John 10:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17 and 1 Thessalonians 5:18).



Conclusions:

- God is the Healer of all sickness and injury – whether it is of the body, mind or spirit.
- If you desire to receive His healing, then you must align your heart with His heart. In this position, God will have unhindered access to your body, mind and spirit for the purpose of healing you.
- The first and most important step over this bridge is to **CONNECT** with your Creator. He is the one who made you, who knows everything about you, and He deeply desires to heal you in every way.
- By asking God's Son Jesus Christ to come into your life and by beginning a relationship with Him, you are connecting with God. He forgives all your sins – no matter how bad they are. He cleanses you. He declares you righteous in His eyes. He brings you out of the kingdom of darkness into His kingdom of light. He gives you His Holy Spirit. He adopts you as His son or daughter. And He now walks with you as you journey to your place of healing.
- This doesn't mean that your life is now going to become easy and problem-free. You will still face many problems. But the difference is that now you have the Supreme-Problem-Solver of the Universe living right inside of you! He will be there to help you every step of the way.



Chapter Illustration: McI Fabrics

Bridge 3:

FILLING

... of the Holy Spirit

Crossing the River of Powerlessness

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you ... – Acts 1:8

When you need strength beyond your own ...

As soon as he heard the explosion, Mukunzi dropped everything and ran as fast as he could toward it. You would think he would run the *opposite* way, but Mukunzi could tell the blast occurred in his neighborhood. He didn't think twice – he just ran. His wife Emma and their infant daughter Mariam were at home, and he *had* to see if they were alright.

His heart sank as he rounded the corner onto his street. His building was demolished; huge sheets of concrete stood in a jumbled pile where his apartment used to be. He ran to the mountain of rubble. "Emma! Emma! Where are you?! Are you in there? Say something!"

Mukunzi heard groans and crying. He couldn't tell if it was his Emma and Mariam, but he dove into the work of trying to free them – whoever they were. He removed some of the blocks and timbers without too much difficulty, but Mukunzi quickly saw that the huge pieces of concrete were going to be too much for him.

Then he looked across the street and hope sprang into his heart. A front-end loader was sitting at the construction site there – and Mukunzi knew how to operate one! It could easily lift the concrete pieces! He sprinted over to it, jumped up in the seat and tried to start it. It cranked and cranked, but it would not catch. It was out of petrol! Mobuto began hitting the dashboard in frustration. *How can I rescue Emma and Mariam? I'm not strong enough by myself!*

Just then he looked to his left, and heading right toward him through the smoke and the growing, frantic crowd, was a petrol supply truck! Mukunzi waved his arms frantically, and the driver stopped right next to the front-end loader.

"It's out of petrol!" Mukunzi yelled. "Can you help us?"

"Of course!" the driver replied. Within minutes they had filled the loader's petrol tank. This time when Mukunzi hit the starter, it cranked for a few moments then roared to life. He drove the big machine across the street, and many other rescuers began to work with Mukunzi and the loader to carefully lift up the big pieces of rubble.

It took more than five hours that day, but Mukunzi and his powerful machine were able to pull many people from the collapsed building alive that day – including Emma and Mariam.



Mukunzi was desperate to rescue his wife and daughter from the building that had been blown up by terrorists. But it didn't matter how strong he was, he was no match for the heavy concrete slabs. The front-end loader could



certainly do the job, but even if it was brand-new, the top-of-the-line, the most powerful model and in perfect working order, without petrol it could do nothing.

But what happened when the petrol filled its tank? *Power!* Suddenly Mukunzi – and that front-end loader – could accomplish amazing feats of strength, beyond anything he could have done by himself.

This is similar to the relationship between a Christian and the Holy Spirit. He is our power source! We may be very capable, strong and impressive people. But without the Holy Spirit empowering us, we cannot accomplish anything that will be of any significance or of any eternal use.

Who is the Holy Spirit?

Here are some facts about the Holy Spirit that you should know, *many* of which will have direct bearing on the Combat Trauma you are struggling with (please feel free to read the verses noted in your own Bible):

- The Bible presents God as a “Trinity” – three-in-one. God is the one-and-only God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 43:10), and yet He shows Himself as three distinct “persons:”
 - God the Father (John 6:27)
 - God the Son – Jesus Christ (John 20:26-28)
 - God the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 3:16)
- The Holy Spirit guides us – John 16:13.
- The Holy Spirit teaches us “all things” – John 14:26.
- The Holy Spirit gives us freedom – 2 Corinthians 3:17.
- The Holy Spirit gives us power – Acts 1:8.
- The Holy Spirit is God’s seal – His signature on us – showing that we belong to Him, and that He will make sure we are safely delivered to heaven – Ephesians 1:13,14.
- The Holy Spirit is like streams of living water flowing from inside us – John 7:37-40.
- The Holy Spirit helps our weaknesses and prays for us – Romans 8:26, 27.
- The Holy Spirit produces godly character qualities in us such as love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control – Galatians 5:22,23.
- Anyone who has asked Jesus Christ to come into his or her life now has the Holy Spirit living inside of them. This is called the “Indwelling of the Holy Spirit,” and it is a permanent condition. He will never, ever, under any circumstances leave you (forever means *forever!*) - John 14:16,17.

But for a person to be “Filled” with the Holy Spirit is different from being “Indwelt.” As you will learn in this chapter, to be *filled* is to be “controlled, guided and empowered” by Him. This condition depends on the desire and obedience of the Christian, so sometimes we are filled, sometimes not. It depends on us. As one Bible teacher puts it, “We leak.” So like a cracked pot that must continually be re-filled, so we too need to be careful to maintain our “filled” condition.



The Filling of the Holy Spirit



In Ephesians 5:18, God gives us two commands, one positive and one negative. What are they?

1. _____

2. _____

Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.

– Ephesians 5:18

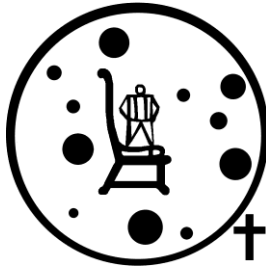
The point of this verse is that, just as alcohol can control us (in destructive ways), the Holy Spirit – if we allow Him to – can control us in positive, constructive ways.



THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE . . .

THE NATURAL MAN – “CAPTAIN OF MY OWN SOUL!”

1 Corinthians 2:14



S = Self, sitting on the throne or control center of his or her life.

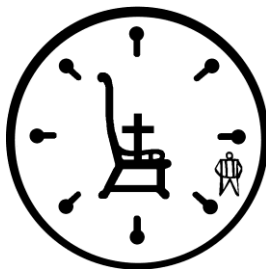
† = Christ, outside the life.

Circles = Activities, interests, priorities and plans in discord with God's.

This represents the **non-Christian** who doesn't have a relationship with God. He tries to direct his own life in his limited and usually self-interested way. However this often results in frustration, despair and discord with God's perfect plans for him.

THE SPIRITUAL MAN – “WALKING IN FAITH AND OBEDIENCE.”

1 Corinthians 2:15,16



S = Self dethroned, yielding to Christ's Lordship in his or her life.

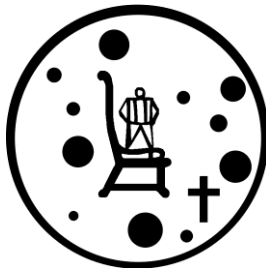
† = Christ on the throne, guiding and empowering the Christian.

Circles = Activities, interests, priorities and plans in harmony with God's.

This represents a **Spirit-filled Christian** walking closely with God. Since Christ is all-powerful and all-knowing, He can ensure the Christian's life will harmonize with God's plans for him. This results in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control – among other things! No guarantee of a problem-free life, only one that is in harmony with God's plans for him or her.

THE WORLDLY MAN – “I’LL TAKE IT FROM HERE, THANKS.”

1 Corinthians 3:1-3



S = Self back on the throne, trying to direct his or her life again without God's input.

† = Christ still in the life, but dethroned and not allowed to be Lord.

Circles = Activities, interests, priorities and plans in discord with God's.

This represents a **Fleshly or Worldly Christian** who isn't walking with God. As he ignores or disobeys God's directions, his life falls into disarray. When the Worldly Christian's life is compared with the non-Christian's life, there is not much difference in the level of frustration, despair, and lack of opportunities.



Study the three diagrams and descriptions above.
Which one would you say currently represents your life?

Which one would you like to have represent your life?



Five Steps to receiving the filling of the Holy Spirit . . .

I Desire

Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be filled.

– Matthew 5:6



In Matthew 5:6, what does Jesus say is required to be “filled”?

What would this “desire” look or feel like in your life?

Search your heart. Do you “hunger and thirst for righteousness”? Do you truly *want* Jesus Christ as your Lord, and the Holy Spirit as your Guide? Are you willing to obey what God tells you to do? Don’t expect His power to flow unhindered if you’re simply “going through the motions.” God looks at the heart, and He knows your heart completely.

2 Confess

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

– 1 John 1:9

When you throw water on a fire, you “quench” it, and it will no longer cook your food or keep you warm. The Holy Spirit can be quenched too. He may be quenched in your life right now because of sin – saying “No” to God and “Yes” to your unrighteous desires. In prayer, ask God to reveal the sins that have been disconnecting you from His plan and power. As He brings them to mind, agree with Him that those choices were wrong (that’s the essence of confession). Ask Him to forgive you for each one.

We’ll be taking a much more in-depth look at forgiveness at Bridge 4 – Forgiving.

3 Yield



The “yielding” (or presenting or offering) of ourselves spoken of in this passage – do you think it involves a passive attitude or a purposeful commitment?

Do not let any part of your body become an instrument of evil to serve sin. Instead, present yourselves completely to God, for you were dead, but now you have new life. So use your whole body as an instrument to do what is right for the glory of God. Previously, you let yourselves be slaves to impurity and lawlessness, which led ever deeper into sin. Now you must present yourselves to be slaves to righteous living so that you will become holy.

– Romans 6:13,19

Most people consider slavery to be demeaning oppression – and in most cases it is. In the spiritual realm, Satan desires to enslave you to his will, which will lead to destruction. But God wants you to be “enslaved” to *His* will for your *benefit*, leading to freedom from the things that tear you down, and a strong connection to the things that will build you up and bring you satisfaction, fulfillment and joy.

An important insight is found in **Romans 6:16-18 (THE MESSAGE)**:

You know well enough from your own experience that there are some acts of so-called freedom that destroy freedom. Offer yourselves to sin, for instance, and it’s your last free act. But offer yourselves to the ways of God and the freedom never quits. All your lives you’ve let sin tell you what to do. But thank God you’ve started listening to a new master, one whose commands set you free to live openly in his freedom!

4 Ask



When some people come to God with their needs, they think they may need to perform some amazing act of faith or strength in order to make Him more willing to listen to them and grant their request. But what attitude does this Bible passage say that God holds toward us when we have needs and desires? What does He invite us to do?

So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened. Now suppose one of your fathers is asked by his son for a fish; he will not give him a snake instead of a fish, will he? Or if he is asked for an egg, he will not give him a scorpion, will he? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?

– Luke 11:9-13

Remember what was said earlier about our free will? God won't take away your privilege of choosing. Since you (and all of us) made a willful choice to depart from His will, you need to make a willful choice to get "reconnected." When you *ask*, you are exercising your free will in a positive way – just what God is looking for!

5 Thank Him In Faith



Notice that this verse says "...believe you *have* received it..." This is something that has actually already occurred. So what will happen if you truly believe that you have already received what you prayed for?

Therefore I tell you, whatever you ask for in prayer, believe that you have received it, and it will be yours.

– Mark 11:24

If you ask for something and believe you have received it, the normal thing to do next would be to say thank you! Saying thanks is always a sign that you have faith that God has heard and answered your prayer.



Asking to be filled

When you pray to God, He isn't as concerned with your words as He is with the attitude of your heart. But sometimes it helps to express what is in your heart if someone else supplies the words for you. Here is a suggested prayer:

Dear Father, I need You. I hunger and thirst for Your righteousness, rather than for the garbage of the world. I want You to be my King and my Guide. But I confess that I have taken the throne of my life from Your control and have sinned against You. I've made many wrong choices. Please forgive me for this. I yield myself to You in obedience, desiring to serve You rather than myself or my enemy, the devil. Please fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I step down from the throne of my life and give it back to You. Based on Your promise, I have faith that You have heard my prayer and have filled me with Your Holy Spirit. Thank you! Amen.



Does this prayer express the desire of your heart? Would you like to pray it right now?

If you prayed the above prayer, or something similar, write today's date in here: _____



How do I know the Holy Spirit has filled me?

We can be sure that when we ask the Spirit of God to fill us, He will do it immediately based on two things: His **command** and His **promise**. You already read his command earlier in this chapter:

*Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life.
Instead, be filled with the Holy Spirit.* – Ephesians 5:18

If God commands us to do something, you can be absolutely certain that it is within His will. Now let's read the **promise** concerning what happens when we ask God for something that we know is within His will:

This is the confidence which we have before Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him.
– 1 John 5:14,15

Asking to be filled with the Holy Spirit is definitely within His will for every believer, so you can be *positive* that if you ask to be filled, you should begin thanking Him immediately for it – because it's already happened!

Spiritual Breathing

It's an unfortunate but natural tendency for us humans to re-take the throne of our lives from time to time. We decide we want what we want when we want it, and we ignore what God wants. And so God gives us what we want: He steps down from our throne, and lets us have a seat. This doesn't mean we are no longer saved or that the Holy Spirit has left us. It simply means that we have slipped into that "Worldly Man" condition. He'll wait patiently until we "take a spiritual breath."

Exhale. When you exhale, you rid your body of harmful carbon dioxide. When you become aware of sin in your life, you must first exhale by **confessing** your sin to God. The Holy Spirit tells you something is wrong, and you simply agree with Him – that's confession. And if you truly agree with Him about it, you'll not only say so, you'll also quit doing the thing He has pointed out to you. That's **repentance**: to stop, turn around and go back the other way.

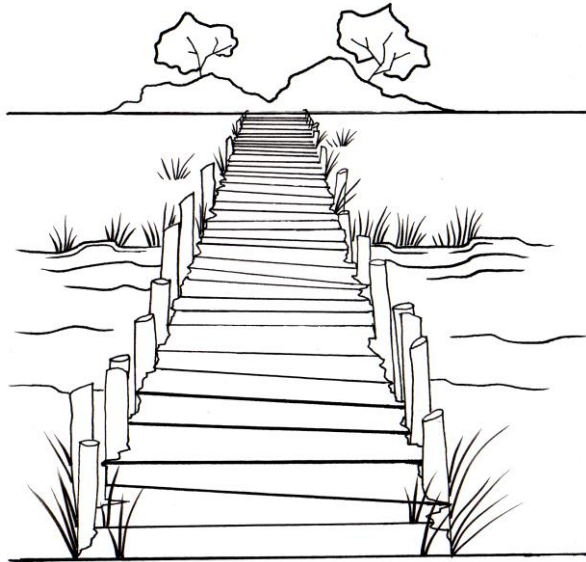
Inhale. When you inhale, you draw life-giving oxygen back into your body. Out with the bad, in with the good. That's breathing! After you have exhaled spiritually, breath in the life of the Holy Spirit by asking Him to once again take the throne of your life. By faith, ask Him to control, guide and empower you.

How often do I do this? As often as you need to. It may be once a week, once a day, once an hour or even once every few minutes! The important thing is not to lose heart and give up in defeat. As a drowning man will struggle frantically to clear his lungs of water and breathe in air, so we need to recognize the critical need to keep the Holy Spirit on the throne of our lives – confessing our sins and seeking His filling.



Conclusions:

- In our own strength we cannot live the kind of life that is pleasing to God or satisfying to ourselves. We need the supernatural petrol of the Holy Spirit in our tanks!
- The Holy Spirit's filling – His controlling, guiding and empowering influence in our lives – depends on our willingness to allow Him this freedom with us.
- We can deny Him and live lives that look very similar to someone who has no relationship at all with God. Or we can ask for His filling and live the kind of abundant, meaningful, joy-filled lives He wants for us.
- This kind of life requires that we actively make *choices* to keep God on the throne of our lives, and quickly re-enthroned Him whenever we realize we've pulled off a coup d'état by our sins.
- His **FILLING** will give you the power, wisdom and endurance to make your journey to your place of healing.



Bridge 4:

FORGIVING

...received and given

Crossing the River of Anger and Revenge

*Though your sins are as scarlet,
they will be as white as snow;
though they are red like crimson,
they will be like wool.*

– Isaiah 1:18

The root of bitterness

Semogera was only eight years old when the trucks full of crazed killers roared in to his village. There was little warning – everyone just ran. Some of the men of the village grabbed machetes and clubs and tried to defend themselves and their families, but there were just too many bad men.

The young boy hid among some baskets and watched in horror as his father was hacked to death by three men. His mother was dragged off into the jungle by several others. Semogera could hear her screaming, but couldn't see what was happening to her. After a while, she was silent. He couldn't see his brothers and sisters anywhere.

There was so much blood. So many people screaming. Fire. Smoke. Explosions. Semogera was frozen, not knowing what to do. Suddenly he felt a hand on his shoulder. He didn't dare look to see who it was, but finally his friend Tugeni whispered urgently in his ear.

“Semogera! We must get out of here! Come with me – quickly!” Tugeni waited until none of the bad men were nearby, then he grabbed Semogera's hand and they ran into the jungle.

For many months, Semogera and Tugeni wandered. They met up with other children who had escaped from villages hit by the raiders, and they did the best they could to survive. And though Semogera's body was alive as he and the other children roamed in search of food, his heart felt like a dead stone. He could think of nothing all day, every day, but the horrible morning his family was murdered, his village burned, and his life destroyed. Hatred for the bad men and an unquenchable desire for revenge dominated his every waking thought as he walked endlessly.

Now Semogera is a grown man. He has meditated for years about how he would kill those who killed his family. He joined the army, eager for an opportunity to do so. Nothing else matters to him. He's not interested in a career, a wife, raising his own family, making a home, having fun. There is only one thing he desires: vengeance. It is his life.



The horrible atrocities which Semogera experienced should not have happened to anyone. His pain, his loss and his grief are beyond what any human can endure. It's understandable that Semogera feels as he does.

But think for a moment. Even though the raiders never touched Semogera with a machete or club, they did wound him severely – in his heart, mind and spirit. People could have easily seen a physical wound in Semogera



and given him aid. But his unseen anger, bitterness and unforgiveness are killing him just as surely as the weapons of his family's murderers.

What about you? What atrocities have you witnessed or experienced? What atrocities have you committed? If the anger, bitterness, guilt and despair which these events have produced in you are not met with forgiveness – either given or received – your journey to a place of healing will not be possible.

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God; that no root of bitterness springing up causes trouble, and by it many be defiled.

– Hebrews 12:15

This fourth bridge will help you find the way to seek forgiveness from God and/or from people you have hurt. It will also help you learn how to forgive those who have hurt you, thereby releasing your anger and bitterness.

seeking forgiveness from God

Most people are prompted to seek God's forgiveness because they feel *guilty*. But there are two kinds of guilt, one that needs forgiveness and another which *doesn't*. You need to know which kind you are feeling.

FALSE GUILT

Guilt is good, created by God. Its purpose is to let us know when we are doing something that will hurt others or ourselves, and it prompts us to go back to God for forgiveness and restoration. But Satan likes to give us guilt feelings that have nothing to do with God's laws. His guilt does nothing but produce frustration and depression.

This happens because there is no way to rid ourselves of the effects of false guilt – unless we recognize it for what it is: *false*. Following are some examples of false guilt – put a checkmark next to any that you recognize in yourself:

- ☐ **Survivor's Guilt** – “I shouldn't have survived when others died.” “If I'd suffered more, others would have suffered less.” “If I had died, others might have lived.”
- ☐ **Guilt Over Survivor's Joy** – “I feel so ashamed about it, but I can't help thinking, ‘I'm so glad I didn't get killed!’ How can I feel *good* when others died?”
- ☐ **Guilt Over Involuntary Flight/Fight/Freeze Response** – “I always thought I was so brave, but I just froze in my tracks! I couldn't move!” “When that man jumped me and nearly killed me, I went crazy. I killed him, but couldn't stop beating him until his face was like chopped meat.”
- ☐ **Guilt By Association** – “I'm a soldier; soldiers sometimes commit atrocities; I am among the atrocity-committers.”
- ☐ **Competency Guilt** – “If only I had acted quicker, more skillfully or smarter, people wouldn't have suffered and died.”
- ☐ **Impossible Choice Guilt** – “The woman looked like she had a bomb under her burqa. We kept yelling at her to stop, but she kept coming. If I didn't shoot her, she could blow up all my mates. I shot her – but she had no bomb. How am I supposed to live with that?”
- ☐ **Helplessness Guilt** – “I wanted so badly to get my comrade out of the line of fire, but they had him pinned down. If only I could have gotten to him, he'd still be alive today.”
- ☐ **Role and Responsibility Guilt** – “It was my responsibility to keep my men safe. Some of them died, so obviously I didn't do my job. It's all my fault.”

In each case listed above, there is *no guilt* as far as God and His laws are concerned – each is based on a false idea. Of course, it's normal to feel sad, angry and frustrated about how things turned out – but don't turn that emotion in on yourself. You weren't meant to bear the responsibility for those unfair and unfortunate events – so don't take it. Remember that you have a spiritual enemy who will try to manipulate the memories of those events in order to weaken and destroy you. Also remember what you heard all the time growing up: “Life isn't fair.” It won't be fair until we get to heaven.

The only way to deal with false guilt is to recognize its false basis, shine a spotlight on its source (Satan), and ask God to remove it from you. The guilt feelings may or may not lift immediately, but keep bringing it before God and let Him take that burden off your shoulders. It's not accomplishing anything. God doesn't mean for you to carry it – and *no one else* wants you to either.



REAL GUILT

As you consider the combat and other traumatic experiences you've been involved in over the years, you may have done some things that were definite sins. These are not like the false ones listed above. You may have broken some or all of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). **Here are two bits of good news you need to hear:**

1. If you are feeling guilty about *those* sins, then it's because right now you are *not* ignoring the Holy Spirit; you're sensitive to His conviction – that's *good!*
2. You are not alone – *all* of us have sinned; *every one of us* has done things that have set up separations between us and God. It's a fact of the human condition. And it *can* be fixed.

No matter how bad your sins are, even “red like crimson” (Isaiah 1:18), God can forgive them, and will no longer hold you accountable for them. This is because Jesus was willing to be held accountable for them on the cross in your place. He was willing to replace our sins with His perfect righteousness. He took them upon Himself, and then suffered the ultimate punishment for them: death. But then, to demonstrate His power over death and His eternal nature as God the Son, He rose again from the grave in strength and victory.

In order to have Jesus' sacrificial death apply to *your* sins, you need to take two steps:

1. CONFESS

In Greek (the original language of the New Testament) the word “confess” is from a word that means, “to say the same thing as.” God has told you what you did wrong, as in, “John, you stole that money.” You confess by saying the same thing: “Yes, it's true. I stole that money and I agree it was wrong. Please forgive me.” The Bible gives us a great promise concerning this:

*If we **confess** our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.*

– 1 John 1:9

Memorial Project

Find a glass jar with a lid that can be screwed on tightly. Take a few minutes alone and present yourself before God. Ask Him to reveal to you any sins that are creating a separation between you and Him. Ask Him to be very specific about it. On a separate piece of paper (*not* in this manual), make a list of all the sins that He tells you about.

When you're done with this, take your list and agree with Him regarding each thing you wrote down. Then write “1 John 1:9” across the top of it in big, bold writing.

Stuff the paper in the jar. Take it to a safe place and light the paper on fire. Watch it burn and thank God as it symbolizes what He has done to the list of sins that were being held against you.

After the fire is out and cooled down, screw the lid on, and put a piece of tape on the front. Write “1 John 1:9” and the date on the tape. Then put the jar of ashes somewhere to remind you of God's forgiveness. Whenever Satan tries to remind you of your sinfulness, bring out the “Memorial Jar” and remind *him* of what Jesus Christ did with your sins.

If you have been struggling with false guilt, write those issues on a list as well and burn them at the same time. Tell Satan he can't use those false accusations against you any more.

2. REPENT

The word “repent” comes from the Greek word that means, “to turn around and go the other direction.” While “confess” has to do with an agreement between you and God that takes place in the spiritual realm, “repent” has to do with an action that needs to take place in the physical world. It's not enough to say, “Oops, sorry. I blew it. Forgive me,” and then repeat the same sinful act again and again. That's not true confession anyway, because if you were really agreeing with God that it was wrong, you would at least make the attempt to stop doing it.

Here's the point: God is not merely looking for your agreement with Him about your sins. He's interested in changed *action*. Your actions will show what you really think. When repentance happens, it clears the way for God to bring His healing unhindered.

Therefore repent and return, so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.

– Acts 3:19

Confession and repentance won't be a once-and-for-all thing. The Memorial Jar you made memorializes one day when you took a stand and said, "From today on, I *know* that my sins are forgiven, and I am clean before God." This will make it easier for you to keep Christ on the throne of your life through regular "spiritual breathing" as needed.

Restitution. In some cases, you may need to make restitution as part of your repentance. If you stole something, you need to return it or reimburse the victim for their loss. If you told a lie that damaged someone's reputation, you need to try to fix it. If you fathered a child through adultery, you need to support that child. If you broke a law, you may need to talk with God about turning yourself in to the authorities. Forgiveness doesn't mean you are released from all responsibility attached to your sin. It means that it no longer separates you from God and clears the way for Him to work in your life. But part of your healing process may involve taking steps to make things right with other people.

"BUT YOU DON'T KNOW WHAT I'VE DONE..."

Some people look at their sins and come to the conclusion that they are unforgivable. They live under a load of shame and self-condemnation that will eventually crush them. They are under that load *not* because God wants them there, but because their enemy does – more false guilt. Don't misunderstand – there is sin and therefore there is guilt, but the lie that it is *unforgivable* sin is what makes that guilt crushingly false.

For someone to think that God is not willing or able to forgive their particular sin is very bold and foolish. They are deciding what God can or cannot do. He has already told us in Isaiah 1:18 (paraphrased): "*No matter how bad your sins are, I can make you pure. No matter how low you have gone, I can go there and get you.*" Do you really feel tough enough to say to the Almighty God of the universe, "Oh no You can't!"? I don't recommend it.

The Apostle Paul (through whom God wrote a large part of the New Testament) referred to himself as "chief among sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15). Here's why: Before he became a Christian, he had broken many of God's commandments. He had threatened, chased, kidnapped, imprisoned, tortured and killed Christians, just because they were Christians. If he'd had the opportunity, he would have considered it a great honor to do the same to Jesus Christ Himself. But then he met Christ, and everything changed. That's why he could write with confidence:

*Because of the sacrifice of the Messiah,
His blood poured out on the altar of the
Cross, we are a free people – free of
penalties and punishments chalked up by
all our misdeeds. And not just barely
free, either. Abundantly free!*
– Ephesians 1:7,8 (The Message)

If God could forgive Paul, the world record holder of sinners, He can certainly forgive *you*! If you haven't done the Memorial Jar exercise yet, do it now with the "unforgivable sins" that have been weighing you down. Thank Him for setting you "abundantly free!"



seeking forgiveness from others

In order to heal, each of us needs to experience both forgiveness from God and forgiveness from those whom we have hurt. For some people, the idea of admitting a wrong to another person and asking for their forgiveness is very difficult. But Jesus makes the point that this issue is so important that you should even put worshipping God on hold until you settle things:

This is how I want you to conduct yourself in these matters. If you enter your place of worship and, about to make an offering, you suddenly remember a grudge a friend has against you, abandon your offering, leave immediately, go to this friend and make things right. Then and only then, come back and work things out with God

Here are six steps you can take to help you in the process of seeking forgiveness from another.

1. ASK GOD TO SHOW YOU WHO YOU HAVE HURT.

Consider praying the prayer that David prayed:

Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life.

— Psalm 139:23,24 (NLT)

If you're filled with the Holy Spirit, and if there *is* someone you've hurt, God will bring it to your mind pretty quickly. Be open to whatever He has to say to you.



Has God brought one or more people to your mind? Write their name(s) here (or use another paper):

2. ASK GOD TO FORGIVE YOU FOR THE PAIN YOU CAUSED.

This is like a “double sin.” You’ve sinned against the person, but also against God for breaking one of His laws. Go through the process of confession and repentance regarding this incident. Get right with God first. *[Note: By the way, you don’t have to fire up a Memorial Jar every time you confess a sin! That was a one-time symbolic act that shows an on-going process in your life.]*

3. PRAY FOR THE ONE YOU’VE HURT.

Spend some time praying for the person that you have hurt physically or emotionally. Ask God to heal the wound you caused. Ask Him to perform a miracle: that the hard feelings your wounded acquaintance probably holds toward you would be overcome by God’s supernatural love. Ask God to make a way for you to meet with him or her. And ask God to make him or her receptive to your request for forgiveness.

4. TAKE THE INITIATIVE AND GO TO THE ONE YOU’VE HURT.

This part will not be easy, but God will be right by your side in this, because He will be *very* pleased about what you’re doing. It might start with a phone call, or a letter. Let them know you want to talk to them about something, and try to get an appointment with them. If you can’t get face-to-face, you’ll have to deal with it over the phone, but talking in person is the best way to go. They’ll probably know from the tone of your voice what it’s about and that you feel bad about it.



When will you take steps to contact each person whose name you wrote above?

5. IN HUMILITY, RECOUNT TO THE PERSON WHAT YOU DID AND ASK FOR FORGIVENESS.

You could say something along these lines: “Albert, remember that time that ... Well, I’ve thought a lot about what happened since then, and I want to tell you that I’m sorry for what I did. I was wrong. Do you think you could forgive me?” Don’t try to make yourself look good or try to explain or defend your actions. Just take responsibility for what you did. Go to them totally unarmed.

6. WORK ON REBUILDING TRUST WITH THAT PERSON

They may or may not say they forgive you at that time. Regardless, you can’t expect your relationship to go immediately back to how it was before. You broke trust with that person. It’s going to take some time to re-build it. And it’s going to take some initiative on your part to demonstrate that you meant what you said, and that you’ve changed. Ask God to give you some creative ideas about how to do that.



Forgiving those who have wounded you

“FIGHT FIRE WITH FIRE!”

In some cultures, this expression suggests that we should fight evil with evil. This is the strategy that Semogera was committed to in this chapter's opening story. But the best method of fighting fire is with the *opposite* of fire, which is *water*. When it comes to how people relate to each other, fighting fire with fire never works – we only end up with more fire – and Satan loves that.

God gives us a different strategy in His Word: —————→

Within the Kingdom of God, we have been given a strategy for dealing with the fires lit by trauma in a way that will lead to our healing: and it is the *opposite* of evil.

*Do not be overcome by evil,
but overcome evil with good.*

– Romans 12:21

WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE THEM?

1. For your own good.

In many parts of the world a plant known as poison ivy grows abundantly. If you touch it, you will get a very bad rash that will spread on your body and itch for more than a week. The only way to kill the plant is to pull it out, roots and all. If you leave any roots in the ground, they will spread secretly and take over an entire field within only a few years. This is like the “root of bitterness” spoken of in Hebrews 12:15.

*See to it that no one comes
short of the grace of God; that
no root of bitterness springing
up causes trouble, and by it
many be defiled.*

– Hebrews 12:15

When we have been wounded (physically, emotionally, spiritually) and feel helpless against the consequences, conditions are ideal for bitterness to grow. Our hatred for our attacker deepens, our frustration increases, which makes us more angry and hate-filled. The final result is that nobody wants to be around us any more. The bitterness spreads, just like the poison ivy. The sad part is that all this anger and poison does absolutely nothing to the guilty one – only to the one who was wounded. It makes him or her worse and worse.

The only way to deal with it is to pull out its root – and that can only be done by forgiving the offender. When we remove that bitter root with God's help, the harmful increase of hatred and anger toward the one who hurt us stops, allowing us to move on to more constructive pursuits.

Spend a few minutes alone in prayer. Ask God to reveal to you whether or not you have a “root of bitterness” in your heart toward those who hurt you and helped bring about your Combat Trauma. If the answer is “yes,” ask Him to let you know what you can do about it. Listen to Him. He may give you an immediate answer, or the solution may become apparent over the next few days or weeks. Once you have an action plan from God about this, write it down here (or on page 30, if you need more room):

2. It is a God-like characteristic.

We are the sons and daughters of a forgiving God – and His desire is that we grow up to be like Him.

*He has not dealt with us according to our sins, nor
rewarded us according to our iniquities. For as
high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is
His lovingkindness toward those who fear Him.*

– Psalm 103:10,11

The main point in the verse to the left is that God doesn't treat us the way we deserve. He forgives. When you forgive, you're acting like God. The next time you decide to demand your rights, realize that you *really don't want* your rights. If you got your rights, you'd be in hell today! Instead, as God has done for us, He's asking us to do the same for others: to not count their sins against them:

For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself, no longer counting people's sins against them. And He gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation.

– 2 Corinthians 5:19 (NLT)



What is your level of confidence that God can perform a miracle in your heart and enable you to forgive your attacker(s)? (Circle the number that best applies.)

I'm absolutely
sure God can
do this.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Absolutely
no way
ever.

PRAYER ASSIGNMENT. It could take a miracle for you to come to the point of being able to forgive the ones who've hurt you. This level of love and mercy is indeed "supernatural." If you placed your X's toward the "10" end of the scale above, begin asking God for that miracle. You won't be able to generate it on your own – but He can build it into you, if you're open to it.

3. It allows God to bring perfect justice.

The Bible presents a great number of God-given laws that are meant to protect people from abuse. They address issues such as murder, rape, assault, theft, etc. When people break these laws, God gives the civil and religious authorities instructions about how they should punish the offenders and force them to pay back the victim for his or her loss. This is the normal way we deal with injustice. But what if we can't find the offenders? What if they operate outside the laws of society, and no one can touch them? What if they *are* the civil and religious authorities?

Then, in effect, Jesus Christ says to us, "I know you have been sinned against, and you are entitled to justice. But why not let Me handle it personally? If you will step aside, give up your right to repayment and vengeance, I'll take care of your enemy *perfectly*. Vengeance is Mine, I will repay. But I'll do it in a way that will free you of your bitterness, bring your attacker to justice, and move *both* of you closer to My righteousness. What do you say?"

Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. – Romans 12:19

STEPS TO FORGIVING THOSE WHO HAVE WOUNDED YOU.

1. Ask God to give you His supernatural mindset for this.

Satan wants you to add more fire to the fire. However, God has a higher road for you – and it's harder. But by making the decision to forgive, you are *not* excusing their sin or minimizing what happened to you. You are making a direct assault against your true enemy (Satan) who wants to use your bitterness to destroy you. Your mindset should be: "I know there is evil here, and I choose to break the cycle of pain and violence. Rather than add to the evil, I will contain it, starve it out, and kill it – with good." God can give you that mindset.

2. Make a list of your traumatic experiences and who caused each one.

Put them all down – not just the big ones. Don't say, "Oh, that one doesn't matter."

3. Make an act-of-your-will pronouncement of forgiveness for each person.

This is an act of obedience, and may or may not involve your emotions. You might pray something like this:

"Lord, as an act of obedience I choose to forgive _____. I don't feel like it, but I love You, and I know You love me, and I want to obey You. So today I release _____ from my judgment. Forgive me for the ways I may have hindered Your work in me and in him/her by my unforgiveness. Now I step out of the way so that Your will may be done for _____ and for me."

Conclusions:

- Injustice and trauma always create anger in victims and guilt in abusers. If the anger and guilt are not dealt with, they will eventually become a "root of bitterness" and have a deeply negative effect on you.
- Dealing with your sins requires both **confession** (work between you and God in your heart) and **repentance** (work between you and those you've hurt in the physical world).

As you seek **FORGIVING** between you and God, between you and those you have hurt, and between you and those who have hurt you, you will experience God's pleasure, release and progress toward your place of healing.



Chapter Illustrations: Paul Boggs

Bridge 5:

BUILDING

...a house of healing

Crossing the River of Spiritual Poverty

*Unless the Lord builds the house,
they labor in vain that build it . . .*

– Psalm 127:1

Building a proper house

Enos went to visit his friend who was building a new house – his first one ever. He drove for more than an hour, but he finally reached Akili's home site, beautifully situated on the bank of a river.

"Jambo, Akili! This looks like a great place to build your house!"

"Enos! I'm so glad you could make it! Yes, as you can see, I've been working hard on it. It's almost done – my family and I should be able to move into it next week. Isn't it fantastic?"

Enos was confused as he looked where Akili was pointing. All he could see were a few branches pushed into the soft ground, some freshly dug holes, about fifty stones which apparently traced the outer walls of the house, and an umbrella tied to a tree that was growing in the center.

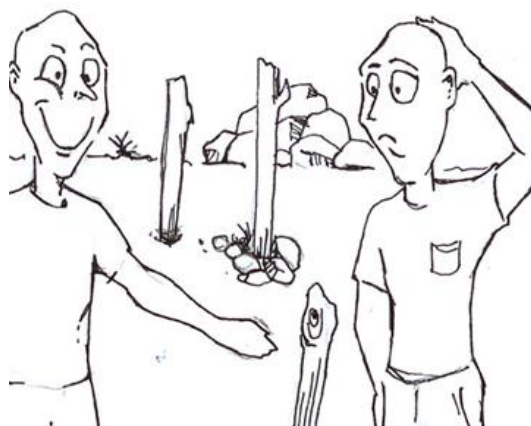
"Akili, this doesn't look like a house. There's nothing to it. How can you expect to shelter your family here?"

Akili looked offended. "Well, I'm sorry that it's not a grand house like *you* live in, but I think it's just fine. My family will be able to tell where their rooms are – the sticks – where the outer walls are – the stones – and the holes will provide excellent storage places. And if it begins to rain, we can all seek shelter under the umbrella there."

Enos didn't know whether to laugh or take his friend to a doctor. "Akili, my friend, you need a *real* house with *real* walls and a roof and doors and windows. This one won't protect you. The river will rise and wash it all away anyway – you've built too close to it."

"Well, Enos, you can see that I have used very inexpensive building materials. If the river *does* take it, it won't cost much to rebuild."

Enos felt sorry for his friend. Maybe he didn't know how to build a house, or perhaps he didn't have money for the building materials. "Akili, I think today must be your lucky day. Because today you and I are going to go into town, and I'm going to find a man who can help you build your house, and I'm going to help you buy the materials you need to make a *good* house!"



If you are struggling with the effects of Trauma, you need to build a house too – a house of healing. Without it, you will continue to live in homeless spiritual poverty, at the mercy of the various forces that whip into your life. In order for it to be a *good* house, it must contain certain elements that will help you to stay connected to God. This will allow Him to have unhindered access to your body, mind and spirit so that He can work on you. It won't do to use just *any* "building materials." They must be high quality, durable and eternal.

There are many elements needed to build a house of healing, but in this chapter we will concentrate on four crucial elements which will help you lay a strong foundation:

- **Prayer**
- **God's Word**
- **The Christian Community**
- **Counseling**

I Prayer: Vital Communication with your divine commander

If you've ever been involved in any kind of military operation, then you know that communication is *absolutely crucial* for a successful outcome. It doesn't matter what kind of communication you use, if you aren't connected to the rest of your unit – and especially to your commanders – things could go very wrong very quickly.

Could you imagine a platoon of soldiers outnumbered and pinned down in a firefight, and the sergeant not even thinking about getting in touch with his commander and asking for backup? Every soldier knows that if he gets into trouble he can rely on the team back at headquarters to instantly do everything they can to provide support for them.

But it's strange how so few Christians take advantage of the incredible communication system we have with God. Imagine: instant contact with our Creator and Savior by simply talking or thinking!



Why do you think the majority of Christians don't pray very much? _____

Could it be that people don't have a clear idea of what prayer is for? Though God loves to answer the requests we make of Him in prayer, this isn't its only purpose. We must never forget that Christianity is not just a religion or a philosophy of life. It is a *relationship* with our heavenly Father. And in any relationship, there must be communication. We don't always benefit directly from the communication itself, but the communication produces a deeper relationship, which opens the door to *all kinds* of benefits.

I talk to my wife every day – because she's my best friend and I love her. We talk about *everything*. Sometimes I talk and she listens, sometimes it's the other way around. Sometimes we don't even need words to communicate. Because of this, our relationship is very deep and satisfying for both of us.

But how would it be if the only time I ever spoke to her was to tell her what I wanted? Our relationship would be very shallow. Good communication involves a wide variety of techniques and styles, not just demands!

WHAT DOES GOD WANT YOU TO PRAY ABOUT?

Here are a few verses from Scripture and a brief summary of what the pray-er was praying about, or what is encouraged in the verse. These and other verses can give you examples for your own prayers:

- | | |
|---|--|
| • <i>Give us this day our daily bread.</i> – Matthew 6:11 | A request for help with our physical needs. |
| • <i>I love You, O Lord, my strength. The Lord is my rock and my fortress and my deliverer, my God, my rock, in whom I take refuge; my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold.</i> – Psalm 18:1-3 | Worship; expressing love for God, praising God for His help; rejoicing over what a great resource He is. |
| • <i>In everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.</i> – 1 Thessalonians 5:18 | Thanking God for all He has done for us. |
| • <i>My God, my God, why have you abandoned me? Why are you so far away when I groan for help?</i> – Psalm 22:1,2 | An honest expression of fear and doubt; a plea for help. |
| • <i>If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.</i> – 1 John 1:9 | Confessing our sins to God for the purpose of receiving forgiveness and cleansing. |
| • <i>Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.</i> – Matthew 6:13 | Requesting God's help to keep us safe from sin and from the influences of Satan. |
| • <i>Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.</i> – Philippians 4:6 | Pray about anything you want; mix your prayers with thankfulness. |

“I WANT ANSWERS!”

God will answer *every* prayer that you pray in faith. Every one. But the thing to keep in mind is that, if we have submitted ourselves to Him as our King and Guide, He gets to decide *how* to answer our prayers. His answers will always be what’s best for us and for His Kingdom. And since He’s all-knowing, all-powerful and timeless, He ought to know what’s best!

- Sometimes He might answer our prayer “**No**. It wouldn’t be good for you.” Like the good father saying no to the young child who wants to play with the nice, round hand grenade that looks like a ball.

For deeper study: Examples of God saying “No” (even to His Son!): 2 Samuel 12:15-18; Mathew 26:37-42; 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

- Sometimes He might answer our prayer “**Wait**. This would be a good thing for you, but not right now. Be patient. Soon the conditions will be right.” Like what I said to my friend who wanted to cross the street as a truck was speeding toward us.

For deeper study: Examples of God saying “Wait”: Genesis 15:2-5; Genesis 50:24,25; Exodus 5:22,23; 6:6-8. In each case, the fulfillment of the promise happened many years later.

- Sometimes God might answer our prayer “**Yes!** This will be a good thing for you!” Like what I said to my wife when she asked, “Would you like to go to the park with me today?”

For deeper study: Examples of God saying “Yes”: Psalm 32:5; 1 Samuel 1:11,19,20; 1 Chronicles 4:9,10; 2 Kings 6:15-18. In each case, God said “Yes” to their request.

Obviously, we would like to increase the number of “Yes” answers we get. Psalm 37:4 gives us some great insight on how to do this: —————→

Delight yourself in the LORD; and He will give you the desires of your heart.

– Psalm 37:4

What can we do to give the Lord unhindered access to our spirits so that our desires *will* align themselves with His before we even begin to pray? We need to make Him our delight, to have an attitude toward Him of love, acceptance and submission.

We can cultivate a quiet confidence that He always knows what is best for us. We should be willing to allow His will to be done over ours.

Then we’ll be able to pray boldly the way Jesus prayed: —————→

Nevertheless, not as I will, but as You will.

PERSONAL COMMITMENT

I will commit to a period of personal prayer – either by myself or with others – lasting no less than _____ minutes, _____ days a week, for the next _____ weeks, beginning on _____ (date). I will ask _____ to check up on me, give me encouragement, and help me find answers to questions I come up with.

2 The Word of God – your divine food and weapon

You know that your body needs food, so you go to great trouble to make sure it has what it needs. Hunger pains remind us when we aren’t giving it enough, or when it’s time to give it more. Now that you have been born spiritually, you have become a spiritual being who needs spiritual food. As the Bible teaches:

Man does not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God.

– Matthew 4:4

As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow by it.

– 1 Peter 2:2

A Christian who doesn’t get a regular diet of God’s Word will end up with a starved, weak and sickly spirit. Perhaps you have spent time in a refugee camp, or have seen photos of people who have. It’s very disturbing to see how dreadfully thin under-fed refugees can become. If we could take photos of the *spirits* of some Christians today, they would probably look very similar to the physical bodies of those poor men and women who had been deprived of proper nourishment for so long. Don’t let this happen to you! Be sure that you’re getting a steady diet of God’s *spiritual* corn and chicken!

BENEFITS OF READING, STUDYING AND APPLYING THE BIBLE:

The following passages describe the benefits of regularly including God's Word in your life. Write at least one benefit you observe in each passage:

<p>God speaking to Joshua: "Study this Book of Instruction continually. Meditate on it day and night so you will be sure to obey everything written in it. Only then will you prosper and succeed in all you do." – Joshua 1:8</p>	
<p>King David writing: "The law of his God is in his heart; his feet do not slip." – Psalm 37:31</p>	
<p>King David writing: "How can a young man keep his way pure? By living according to Your word... I have hidden Your word in my heart that I might not sin against You." – Psalm 119:9,11</p>	
<p>Jesus speaking: "If you remain in Me and My words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you." – John 15:7</p>	
<p>Jesus speaking: "If you hold to My teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." – John 8:31,32</p>	

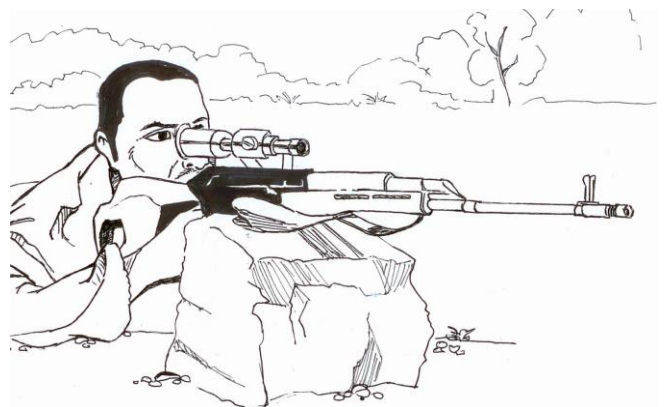
TAKING THE SWORD

God's Word has another function: it's a **weapon**. In Ephesians 6:14-17, the Bible talks about the spiritual armor that is available to every believer: belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, sandals of the preparation of the gospel, shield of faith, helmet of salvation... these are all defensive tools of war. But the final item mentioned is "the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God." This is *both* a defensive *and* an offensive weapon.

You can read a great story of how Jesus used God's Word in a battle with Satan in Matthew 4:1-11. Twice Satan launched an attack on Jesus. Twice He countered with a verse of Scripture – defensive moves. With the third attack, Jesus not only repelled the devil's assault, but sent him into a quick retreat with a counterattack using the sword of the Word. Hebrews 4:12 tells us that "The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword..."

Learn how to use it.

A rifleman is intimately acquainted with every square millimeter of his weapon. Now it's time to begin a new training program to become as familiar with your new weapon – God's Word – as you were with your old one. It will keep you alive.



PERSONAL COMMITMENT

I will commit to a period of personal Bible reading lasting no less than _____ minutes, _____ days a week, for the next _____ weeks, beginning on _____ (date). I will ask _____ to check up on me, give me encouragement, and help me find answers to questions I come up with.

3 The Christian Community – Divine Base Camp

God created the church to be like a military base camp. It's a place where His soldiers can come in from the battle, rest, get training, hear the latest intelligence, spend time with their mates, receive healing, and get ready to go out again. And who is supposed to provide all these beneficial services? The Spirit-filled Christians who occupy the church. God has designed us to be gifted and able to minister to each other as His Spirit directs us.

We're not necessarily talking about a building here – though that is often where “the Church” will be found. The Church is a vast, living thing made up of Christians all over the world. The Bible refers to it as “The Body of Christ.” Christ is the head, and we are like His hands and feet, accomplishing His work on earth. His desire is that we work together – and in so doing it is much more likely we will accomplish His purposes.

The way God designed our bodies is a model for understanding our lives together as a church: every part dependent on every other part, the parts we mention and the parts we don't, the parts we see and the parts we don't. If one part hurts, every other part is involved in the hurt, and in the healing. If one part flourishes, every other part enters into the exuberance.
– 1 Corinthians 12:25,26 (THE MESSAGE)

“Church” is simply a community of Christians. It could be a formal congregation based in a building, or it could simply be a collection of Christian friends who are looking out for each other in love, motivated and directed by the Holy Spirit. Whatever it looks like, it is very important that you are closely connected with a group of believers who know and love you.

Here are a few verses that describe what is supposed to happen when Christians form a community that makes a place where God can help and heal. Write down what you observe in each verse:

<i>Iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.</i> – Proverbs 27:17	
<i>Laugh with your happy friends when they're happy; share tears when they're down. Get along with each other; don't be stuck-up. Make friends with nobodies; don't be the great somebody.</i> – Romans 12:15,16 (THE MESSAGE)	
<i>Those of us who are strong and able in the faith need to step in and lend a hand to those who falter, and not just do what is most convenient for us. Strength is for service, not status. Each one of us needs to look after the good of the people around us, asking ourselves, “How can I help?”</i> – Romans 15:1,2 (THE MESSAGE)	
<i>But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called “Today,” so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.</i> – Hebrews 3:13	
<i>Let's not merely say that we love each other; let us show the truth by our actions</i> – 1 John 3:18(NLT)	

PTSD, SELF-ISOLATION AND CHURCH

If you are struggling with Combat Trauma or PTSD, you probably don't feel very comfortable being with groups of people you don't know. It makes you nervous to think that there could be someone there who might want to harm you or others. For this reason, you may be tempted to stay away from church as a “safety measure.”

Social isolation may seem like your best option. It feels more comfortable at first, and it's easier than trying to deal with people who don't understand. But it's one of the worst moves you can make. Isolating yourself...

- severely diminishes your support network, which God will often use to supply what you need
- robs you of emotional closeness to people you like and who care about you
- gives you more time to worry and feel lonely, helpless and depressed
- causes you to play into Satan's key tactic – isolate the prey, eliminate all avenues of support, turn up the heat, then offer destructive ways to “fix” problems (drugs, alcohol, sex, crime, etc.)
- keeps you from experiencing the *good* relationships that are energizing and healing
- makes the world around you “encouragement neutral” – nothing negative but nothing positive either

In addition, isolating yourself goes against the basic plan for us from our Creator. He made us to be a communal species – like a herd. The network of fellow Christians was designed specifically *for* this kind of situation. There is strength and safety in numbers . . .

Two people are better off than one, for they can help each other succeed. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble. Likewise, two people lying close together can keep each other warm. But how can one be warm alone? A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.
– Ecclesiastes 4:9-12 (NLT)

4 Christian counseling

One of the things you probably remember from Bridge 1 in this book is that when you experienced your traumatic events, the self-defense mechanism God created in you took over. Part of this mechanism is that you were able to suppress your normal emotional and analytical reactions so that you could focus on the threat at hand. But God did not intend for you to *keep* these reactions suppressed. He expects you to bring them up again and “process” them in a safe place – with His help. He wants you to talk about them with someone who is a good listener.

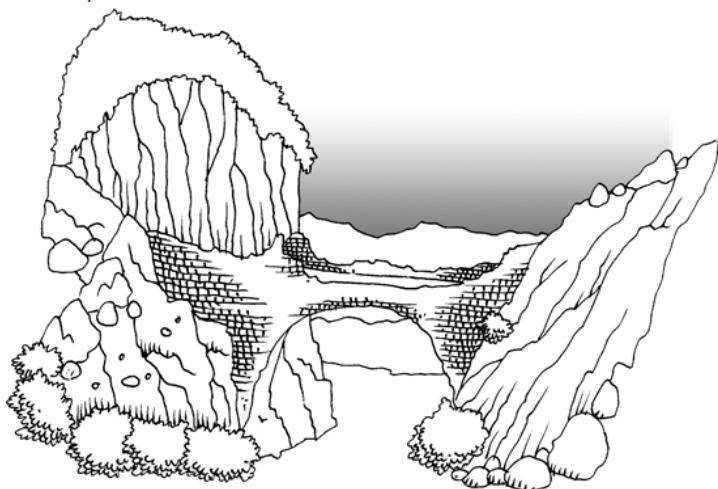
Researchers have learned that if you can do this within three days of your traumatic episode, you are far less likely to develop PTSD. The longer you wait after three days, the more likely it is that you will struggle with it. If you experienced multiple or long-lasting traumatic events, and simply didn't have the opportunity to process your trauma within three days, or if it happened quite a while ago, it will still be very beneficial for you to talk about what happened to you.

They may have some encouraging words for you, some good advice, and some helpful direction. But the most valuable thing they can give you is a time and a place for you to *talk*. You need to allow the emotions that you suppressed to come up and be experienced and thought about. It's OK for you to get angry about the injustice of your experience, so that you can then release that anger and bitterness. There may be tears, shouting, fear, anxiety and it may even be hard for you to talk. But if you can push through, it will be one of the most helpful elements of your house of healing.



Conclusions:

- **BUILDING** this house of healing will counter any spiritual poverty you are currently living in.
- If you are serious about creating an environment of healing . . .
 - Make a plan about communicating with God in **prayer** regularly – about anything and everything. He wants to hear from you!
 - Commit to reading and applying **God's Word** regularly – every day if possible. It is your spiritual food, and it is your weapon.
 - Make an effort to be involved in **fellowship** with other Christians. It may feel uncomfortable at first, but it will become a source of strength for you.
 - Seek out a **counselor** who will help you process your trauma. It may be difficult for you to remember and talk about your trauma, but it will help you cross this bridge.



Bridge 6: **REMEMBERING** ...what happened to you

Crossing the River of Painful Memories

*These things I remember,
and I pour out my soul within me.*
– Psalm 42:4

How small problems become big problems

Hamisi's fever was getting worse. He was exhausted, all his joints hurt, he couldn't eat and his stomach ached. But he desperately wanted to keep his appointment with his pastor. Hamisi had been involved in the conflict between two rival factions in his country, and he was struggling with severe Posttraumatic Stress Disorder. His nightmares, his explosive anger, his alcohol abuse, his fears that someone was going to break into his house at any moment – all these made his wife so jumpy that she demanded that he leave the house. Hamisi didn't know what to do. He hoped his pastor could give him some advice about how to get his wife to let him back into the house.

"Hamisi! Come in!" Pastor Onyango said as he opened the door. "Brother, you do not look well. What has happened to you – do you have malaria?"

"No, Pastor. It doesn't feel like that. I don't know what it is, but I can't let it stop me. I still need you to help me with my wife."

Pastor Onyango looked at him with pity. He thought about sending him back to where he was staying to get some rest. But there was some important counseling work they needed to do regarding his PTSD. "Well, Hamisi, if you feel up to it, come in and sit down."

They had been meeting for several weeks, but they hadn't gotten very far. Each time Pastor Onyango asked Hamisi to tell him about some of his combat experiences, he would get very angry and fearful and refuse to say anything. "Pastor – those things are in the past. I want to *forget* them. It hurts to even think about them, and to talk about them makes it worse. No. Let's talk about something else."

Hamisi sat in the chair. Pastor Onyango saw that he was sweating very badly, and his brow was furrowed with pain. "Hamisi, you seem very sick to me. Perhaps you should go and see a doctor, rather than me today."

"No, Pastor. I'm sure this is nothing. It's more important that we talk about my marriage, and my wife."

Just then, Pastor Onyango noticed that his hand was bandaged. "What happened to your hand, Hamisi?"

"It's nothing. I was working with some old wood the other day, and I got a splinter. I think it must be a little infected."

"Let me take a look at it." Hamisi unwrapped his hand, and Pastor Onyango was shocked by what he saw. The finger that had the splinter in it was severely infected. It was badly swollen, and green puss was oozing from where the splinter was. A red line was working its way up his arm under his skin. Blood poisoning!

"Hamisi! I have two things to say to you. First of all, you can see that this splinter is going to kill you if you don't take care of it right away! I'm going to take you to hospital as soon as I tell you the second thing. And that is this: your memories from the war are like this



splinter. The splinter seemed small and of no importance when you first got it. It would have hurt trying to take it out, so you left it alone and tried not to think about it. You were hoping that it would just take care of itself. But this has caused you much worse trouble.

“Hamisi, it will be painful for you to bring out your war memories. But if you don’t, you will never get better – you will get worse. I am here to listen. You can tell me everything, and I will not be shocked or judge you. But you must decide to do it. Now, let’s go take care of that splinter.”

On the way to hospital, Hamisi thought about his pastor’s words. It was going to hurt to get this splinter taken out – more now than if he’d taken it out right after it had happened. It was also going to hurt to open up about the traumatic things he experienced in combat. In his heart, he knew his pastor was right. Despite the pain, both things would need to come out – so that he could heal.



Numbness.
Not thinking about what happened.
Putting it out of your mind.
Stuffing it.
Turning it off with alcohol or drugs.

These actions are more comfortable than remembering. Easier. Remembering what happened while you were at war is painful, harder, and stress-producing. So why do it?

Because it is something you can *do*. It requires you to make a decision and take action. It is courageous. It is vital for your healing. If you don’t, you will continue to get worse.

When you experienced the horrors of war, your brain slipped into a defensive stance in order to keep you alive. Many traumatic events that needed to be processed in your mind were temporarily suppressed. These things *now* need to be thought about, judged, responded to, connected to your emotions, mourned and filed away properly in your mind and your life. Your brain took those picture-memories of what was happening, and they’re in your mind, along with all the soul-ripping emotions that went along with them. But they weren’t meant to stay there. They’re like an infection, making you sick at the most inconvenient times, affecting your whole life. If the infection isn’t discovered and dealt with, it will get worse, not better. As King David, who probably suffered from PTSD, wrote:

When I kept it all inside, my bones turned to powder, my words became daylong groans.
– Psalm 32:3 (THE MESSAGE)

It’s as simple as this: if your traumatic memories are exposed to God’s light, their power over you can be weakened and removed.

We have no secrets from the all-knowing God. But sometimes one part of our mind tries to keep a secret from another part. We know what happened. And yet, in some kind of deep, self-defensive, self-deceiving plan, we try to keep the painful truth from our conscious self – and also from the rest of the world. But this plan is no longer helping –it’s hurting. As David Grossman, author of *On Killing*, wrote, **“You are only as sick as your secrets.”**

Getting the secrets out

God has written your story – you *are* His story. The Bible says,

For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.
– Ephesians 2:10

In Greek (the original language of the New Testament) the word for “workmanship” is *poiema*, from which we get our English word “poem.” You are a piece of God’s creative writing – even all your trauma, pain and difficulties.

God isn’t the author of evil, as we learned when we crossed the first Bridge. But as He wrote your life and saw the waves of evil that would hit you, He prepared for them all ahead of time. He knew how He was going to keep you alive, He has planned how He is going to restore you, and He is eager to see you walking in strength and confidence once again. He won’t erase the pain – at least not immediately – but He will blend it into your body, soul and spirit and use it to make you more like Jesus Christ than ever before.

To help you cross this Bridge, we would like you to write about your traumatic experience(s). If you are already a person who likes to write, you are probably looking forward to this exercise. If you don't like to write, you may be dreading it. In either case, you need to see it for what it is: healing *work* – not *play*. There is something very useful about the process of putting your thoughts into words and then going through the physical action of writing them down on paper. It helps a person remember and organize his or her thoughts. If you can't write, and someone is reading this manual to you, perhaps you could simply craft an oral version. Just tell us the story . . .

BEFORE WE START, HERE ARE A FEW “RULES:”

- Before you begin to write, spend a few moments in prayer, asking God to direct your thoughts and your writing. Ask Him to reveal any memories that will be useful in your healing process.
- If this exercise seems especially difficult for you, tell God that He will need to help you with it. He will. *The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.* (Psalm 34:18).
- Spend a few minutes getting relaxed and “focused.” This means concentrating on eliminating thoughts and concerns that might crowd into your mind and keep you from thinking deeply about your past experiences. Take a few, deep, calming breaths, close your eyes, and let your thoughts drift back to that traumatic place and time.
- Imagine you are watching a television show or movie about your traumatic experience.
- Don't get upset if you can't remember all the details. Memory loss is a common symptom of PTSD; so just do your best and don't worry about the rest. It could be that God knows that you're not quite ready to deal with certain memories.
- Think about the following comforting facts from Dr. Aphrodite Matsakis' book, *I Can't Get Over It*:
 - You will not die, explode, disintegrate, or stop functioning if you dare to remember.
 - Remembering will not result in the memories actually re-occurring as real-life events.
 - The memories will eventually become less intense.
- You don't have to try to do this all in one sitting. If you feel overwhelmed, take a break.
- We would like to help you better grasp your trauma – not cause *more* trauma. So if you start experiencing any of the following feelings or urges, it's time to STOP for a while:
 - Feeling like you are going to faint
 - Taking fast, shallow breaths (hyperventilating)
 - Uncontrollable shivers
 - Irregular heartbeat
 - Losing touch with reality, flashbacks, hallucinations
 - Disoriented, not sure where you are
 - Nausea, diarrhea, unexplainable pains
 - Rage, violent behavior
 - Desire to cut or hurt yourself in some way
 - Thoughts of suicide or killing someone
- Don't worry about the things your teachers in school worried about – such as spelling, punctuation, penmanship, grammar, etc. Just write. You will not be graded.
- Consider holding an object that might help trigger some of your memories. These can be things such as photos, objects you carried with you in battle, your uniform, your medals, letters you received while you were there, a souvenir you brought home, music you listened to while there, etc.
- If you don't think you are capable of writing your story, consider recording it on a tape recorder, or simply telling it to a trusted friend who will write down the main outline of your story for you.

Writing your story

This exercise will have three parts: before, during and after your trauma. Each part is very important to the recounting of your story, so don't skip any of it! In **Part 1**, we'd like you to spend some time writing about what life was like before you went to war. Read over the following questions to stimulate your thinking about what to write (no need to answer *all* of them – just the ones that you would like to write about – perhaps three or four):

- Where were you brought up?
- What did you like or not like about yourself?
- What did you look like?
- What did you believe about God then?
- How did you get along with your family?
- What were you realistic about? Naïve about?

- What did you enjoy most when you were young? What made you happy?
- What was your biggest struggle then?
- What were your friends like?
- What were your goals or dreams for yourself then?
- Can you think of a “theme” word or sentence for your life before combat?

OK - now, on a separate piece of paper, begin writing the first part of your story. Across the top of your paper you could write this title:

Part 1: My Life Before My Trauma

Now you can start writing . . .



That wasn’t too difficult, was it? But now, **Part 2** will be a little harder. In this assignment, we want you to write about your traumatic experience – or experiences – related to your time at war. If you’re like most who have been in a war zone, you probably have many incidents that contributed to your current condition. Write about a few of the most painful. Or if you can’t remember any particular traumatic incident, just describe how and when your PTSD symptoms began to bother you, how you responded, and how they increased. The accumulation of minor events over a long period of time can add up to a mountain of pain.

In your writing, don’t just recount the facts of the incident(s). Let your mind go back and remember the sensory and emotional details as well. What did you smell? What did you hear? What did you taste? Describe the heat, cold, sand. How did the experiences make you feel? What were your emotional reactions to the trauma? Dr. Aphrodite Matsakis writes about the necessity of “feeling” to your recovery:

For you to heal completely, the trauma must be reworked not only on the mental level, but on the emotional level as well. This requires two further processes:

- First, the *feelings* generated by the trauma that were not felt at the time need to be identified.
- Second, and more difficult, the feelings must be *experienced*, at least in part, on an emotional level.

The feelings trauma generates are perhaps the most powerful feelings known to human beings, among them are fear, anger, grief and guilt. If you think you don’t have these feelings, think again. Do you still have PTSD symptoms? Are you struggling with an addiction? Do you have headaches, backaches, stomach problems or other physical symptoms of unexplained origin?

If so, this suggests that even though you may not want to deal with your feelings, your feelings are dealing with you.

You and your feelings need to get to know each other again. After the nation of Israel had been conquered by the Babylonians and taken in chains to Babylon, their emotions were obviously quite high. But they didn’t hold them back. They experienced and expressed them through their weeping, mourning and writing this lament:

*Beside the rivers of Babylon, we sat and wept
as we thought of Jerusalem.
We put away our harps,
hanging them on the branches of poplar trees.
For our captors demanded a song from us.
Our tormentors insisted on a joyful hymn:
“Sing us one of those songs of Jerusalem!”*
— Psalm 137:1-3 (NLT)

As we mentioned, this won’t be easy. Emotions that emerge due to loss or trauma are seldom pleasant. It will be uncomfortable and may even be painful. This is why you are to be *commended* for your willingness to do this hard work. You have made many sacrifices up to this point and we’re asking you to make yet another one. But this sacrifice will be for your own sake, for your family, for your friends and for the sake of the Kingdom of God. Please remember: you’ll receive from it only what you put into it.

PART 2: WHAT HAPPENED TO ME DURING THE FIGHTING

Please begin writing now . . .



Sometimes remembering – especially remembering our times of crisis – can be painful, but it is an emotionally healing experience. It's a lot like setting a broken bone: the procedure hurts, but it's necessary for proper healing. Sorry to put you through that. But as any surgeon will tell you, there'll be no healing without the pain first.

Part 3 shouldn't be as difficult. In this section, we would like for you to write a realistic account of your life at present – both the good stuff and the bad. You may be pretty satisfied with your current situation, if so, write down why. On the other hand, if you're suffering from PTSD, your life probably isn't exactly a sweet walk down a flower-covered path. Be open and honest – not only about the facts concerning your current status, but *also how you feel about them*. Here are some questions that may stimulate your thinking:

- In what ways are you different from your pre-war self?
- What kind of work are you doing now, if any? Is this work satisfying or frustrating? Is it what you expected to be doing?
- How is your relationship with your spouse? Your children? Parents? Brothers and sisters?
- How is your relationship with your non-military pre-war friends?
- Do you still have contact with your battle buddies? If so, how is it when you get together?
- Can you remember any recent incidents that really show your current level of frustration, anger and pain since you returned from war?
- What are your most frustrating symptoms?
- What triggers your symptoms and what happens when they are triggered? How often does it happen?
- What makes you want to weep, pound the table, kick the wall?
- What is the significance of your combat experience to you? Can you find any meaning in it?
- How different is your life now than how you thought it would be when you first joined the military? How does that make you feel?
- What are some *positive* things that are in your life at present? What gives you joy, hope, energy? What's fun for you? What do you look forward to doing?

Again, don't try to answer *all* the questions, just the ones you feel motivated to write about. But we would *definitely* like for you to include that last item above.

PART 3: MY LIFE SINCE THE FIGHTING

Please begin writing now . . .



Inviting Jesus into your pain

Jesus Christ wants to come in to every area of your life – not to force Himself in and dominate you, but to bring healing and victory. Like a patrol in a battle zone searching from house to house, checking every room, corner and shadow for terrorists, He wants to enter even your darkest, most terrifying corners in order to conquer your enemies hiding there – whether they are physical, emotional or spiritual.

He uncovers deep things out of darkness, and brings the shadow of death to light. — Job 12:22 (NKJV)

This Bridge was designed to help you remember and see the trauma you experienced with your mind's eye – perhaps deeper than you have ever done before. We know it was probably painful and stirred up a lot of emotions in you. As we've emphasized before, that's not all bad. This would be a perfect time for you to talk with God about

how you feel right now, how you felt about what happened to you, and what you would like for Him to do for you. This would be a good time for you to bring Jesus into those dim, shadowy areas of your story, so that He might spotlight your enemies and bring His healing light to work for you.

*Even the darkness is not dark to You,
And the night is as bright as the day.
Darkness and light are alike to You.*

– Psalm 139:12

*He reveals deep and hidden things;
He knows what lies in darkness,
And light dwells with Him.*

– Daniel 2:22 (NIV)

When you experienced your traumatic events, you were surrounded by chaos. You may have thought you were about to die and it was difficult for you to think clearly. Your brain would allow you to think of only one thing: staying alive. You probably had no thought about where God was in the midst of the storm you were experiencing – but Jesus Christ was there, right at your side. Take a few moments alone and invite Him into your pain – He’s not afraid of it. Ask Him to open your eyes, ears, heart and mind. Then visualize what you wrote in Part 2 above, and *see Him there*. Where is He standing?

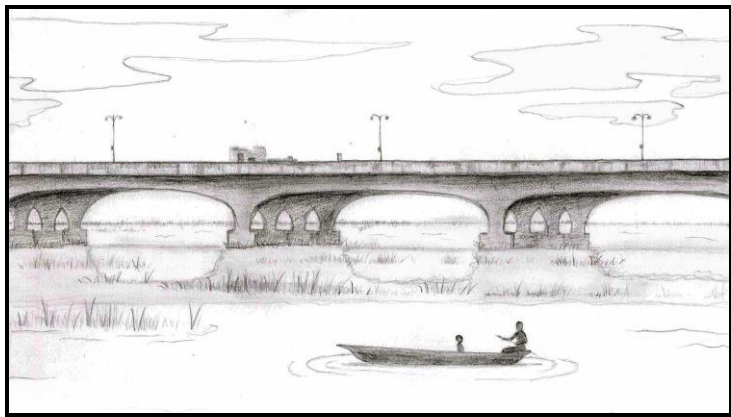
- Where is He looking?
- What do you see Him doing?
- Is He touching you?
- Is He saying anything to you?
- Can you hear anything else?
- Is He giving you any smells or tastes?
- What does He want you to do?

“Inviting Jesus into your pain” (also called “healing of memories”) is a spiritual exercise that you should engage in frequently, if you can deal with it. It requires courage, making a firm decision to do it, and keeping a positive attitude as you do. It also requires practice. You may or may not have “seen” Jesus very clearly on your first attempt at this, but as you develop your spiritual muscles, you will experience a stronger connection with Him. Don’t neglect the principles you learned as you crossed Bridge 5 about your House of Healing. Those principles form the foundation for your deepening relationship with Him. And never forget that it is indeed a *relationship*. The story God is writing about you not only says that you know *about* Him, but that you *know Him*.



Conclusions:

- Your traumatic experiences generated memories that have strong emotions attached to them. Your brain allowed you to suppress those memories and emotions during the trauma in order to help you concentrate on the job of staying alive.
- But keeping those memories and emotions suppressed for long will be harmful to you. It is necessary for you to **REMEMBER** them and re-experience them in a safe place. If you don’t you will continue to struggle with your Combat Trauma and PTSD.
- As you bring Jesus into that traumatic experience, it overpowers the fear-based, pain-filled memories and opens the door for God’s healing to occur.
- “You are only as sick as your secrets.” So bring those secrets out into God’s healing light.



Chapter Illustrations: Jessica Adsit

Bridge 7:

GRIEVING

...your loss

Crossing the River of Dark Sadness

*Blessed are those who mourn, for
they shall be comforted.*

– Matthew 5:4

Denying grief

“I am fine. Just fine,” Sentwali said with a strange half-smile. Then he looked at the ground. “There is no need for you to be concerned about me, Grandfather.”

But Grandfather Léon *was* concerned. When the rebellion against the government started and the rebels began to commit atrocities, Sentwali joined the army. He had just returned after a year of fighting. He wasn’t the same young man. He was emotionally distant, cold. He wasn’t eating much, wasn’t sleeping much, wasn’t talking much. When he *did* talk, Grandfather Léon could tell he was just putting on a mask, trying to look strong.

“Sentwali, I don’t think everything is just fine with you. I can tell that you are carrying many wounds – besides the physical ones you have. Your soul is wounded, and it has not healed. Tell me about those wounds.”

Sentwali sighed. He didn’t want to talk about these things, but he wanted to show respect to his grandfather. He shrugged his shoulders. “You know, Grandfather. It was war. Horrible things happen in war. Many of my friends died.” Sentwali hesitated, then said quietly, “Gahigi – he was captured, and was tortured before he was finally killed.”

“You mean your neighbor, little Gahigi, who you played with since you were both babies?”

“Yes. The same. But as I said, it was war. We must move on.” Sentwali’s face became like stone again.

Grandfather Léon put his hand on Sentwali’s knee and said gently, “You have not grieved for your friends yet, have you, son?”

“They were soldiers, Grandfather. I’m a soldier. Death is part of our job – we knew it when we joined the army. We can’t make a big deal about it every time one of our comrades is killed.”

“Who told you that?” Grandfather Léon said with a hint of anger in his voice. “Who said you can’t ‘make a big deal’ about your friends dying?”

Sentwali was a little hesitant to reply. “Well, I don’t know. No one actually commanded us. It’s kind of an unwritten law. When your mates are killed, you can’t get all emotional about it – you must keep marching.”

“I can understand that – while you are in battle. But once the battle is over, Sentwali, you *must* take some time to mourn your friends.”

“Grandfather, believe me, I would like to. But I am afraid that if I allow myself to do this, it will be like a great dam breaking, and I will never be able to stop my tears! So I am just trying not to think about it.”

The wise old man thought for a moment. “Sentwali, you’re like that old village tractor. Remember that spring when everyone was wondering why it kept smoking and running so rough and then shutting down? Abasi was supposed to put the oil in it, but he forgot. Without the oil, it could not function. As soon as he remembered, and went to the trouble of putting the oil in, it worked just fine.

“You are not ‘just fine’ right now, my dear boy. Your soul needs the oil of your tears, or you will shut down just like that old tractor. You think your tears will never end once they start, but I guarantee you they will.” Grandfather Léon got up from his chair. “Come walk with me, Sentwali. I will teach you about grieving. I am very experienced.”

understanding Grief – a “sacred sorrow”

Whenever we experience any sort of loss in any relationship, it is part of the normal and natural process for us to feel a wide range of negative emotions. Please note carefully: the process is *normal and natural*. It is built into us. God created it. God experienced it. *Everybody* experiences it.

The English word for “grief” comes from the Latin verb meaning “to burden.” That’s exactly what grief feels like, doesn’t it? A heavy load that you wish you could set down – but you can’t.

Grief is always triggered by a **loss** of some sort – losing someone or something we had an attachment to. Grief has different levels and intensities. We grieve a little when our favorite shirt is ruined and we have to throw it away. We grieve a little more when our favorite sport team has its hopes dashed for championship glory. But much more profound grief comes when someone we love dies.

But, as grief and trauma counselor Dr. H. Norman Wright tells us “Loss is not the enemy. Not facing its existence is.” And as Dr. Gerald May writes: “Grief is neither a problem to be solved nor a problem to be overcome. It is a sacred expression of love ... a sacred sorrow.”

NAME YOUR LOSS

You have suffered many losses throughout your life – as we all have. But your time in war probably brought you some new “lifetime lows” which you may have found difficult to deal with. As you crossed the Sixth Bridge, you did some hard work putting into words what happened to you. For this exercise, narrow your focus a bit, and write about what you *lost*, specifically. You could write about physical injuries that resulted in lost capabilities, lost friends, plans, dreams, self-identity, faith, love – whatever comes to your mind. By naming your loss, you’ll be better able to accomplish the difficult work of grieving over it.





THE PURPOSE OF GRIEF

God built the grief response into us for the purpose of mentally, emotionally and spiritually *processing* loss-producing events, mixing those events into our changed world, and helping us move on to a state of greater strength, resourcefulness and faith. If we are not willing to face the grieving process, or if we try a short-cut, we’re left adrift in our sea of pain, never reaching the shores of strengthening that the Lord intends for us.

As some drill sergeants love to shout at new recruits, “*Pain is simply weakness leaving the body!*” In a similar fashion, the writers of *Healing The Wounds of Trauma* write, “Tears are a way God has provided for sadness to leave our body.” If we resist this mechanism, our sorrow may never lose its intensity.

WHEN WE GRIEVE:

- We’re honestly linking up with the emotions that come with loss – rather than suppressing or denying them. As many grief experts say, “You can’t heal what you can’t feel.”
- We’re protesting the injustice of the loss, which we are truly convinced of – rather than acting like it was OK with us.
- We’re expressing that we deeply wish that the loss had never occurred – rather than minimizing it.
- We’re facing the devastating impact of the loss head on, absorbing it and eventually mastering it – rather than running from it, or pretending it didn’t happen, only to have its effects hit us again and again.
- We are allowing our brain to replay the tapes of our traumatic event memories in a safe environment, which robs them of their terror and allows us to include them in our post-trauma life.
- We’re inviting Jesus to enter the dark jungle of our pain, experience it with us, comfort us in the midst of it and walk us out the other side of it – rather than sitting passively alone and paralyzed at the edge.

WHEN WE REFUSE TO GRIEVE:

- Unresolved grief has been found to be a factor in the development of a wide range of psychological problems, including outbursts of rage, restlessness, depression, addiction, compulsion, anxiety and panic disorders.
- Unexpressed grief can lead to medical problems or make current problems worse, such as diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, cancer, asthma and a variety of allergies, rashes, aches and pains.
- We are at odds with our body's built-in physical processes to deal with a traumatic event.
- We are at odds with God's desire to meet us in the midst of the fire of our trauma, missing out on His plans to deepen our faith and strengthen our relationship with Him.

HOW NOT TO GRIEVE

Some people will do *anything* rather than to undertake the hard work of grief – and think they are accomplishing something. These actions may make us feel a little better temporarily, but it doesn't move us out of our sad state. Following is a list of ways people try to cope with their situation without actually facing their grief. Check any that you think you might do from time to time.

- ☐ **Act out** – giving in to the pressure to misbehave or engage in destructive behavior.
- ☐ **Aim low** – to what seems more achievable; avoid challenging yourself to excel.
- ☐ **Attack** – beat down whatever is threatening you.
- ☐ **Avoid** – stay away from anything that may cause you stress.
- ☐ **Compensate** – make up for weakness in one area by trying to gain strength in another.
- ☐ **Deny** – refusing to admit that the event even occurred.
- ☐ **Displace** – shifting an intended negative action to a safer target (like kicking the dog).
- ☐ **Fantasize** – escaping reality to a false world of unachievable wishes.
- ☐ **Idealize** – overstating the good points of a desired action and ignoring downsides.
- ☐ **Identify** – copying others to take on their desirable characteristics.
- ☐ **Intellectualize** – avoiding emotions by focusing only on facts and logic.
- ☐ **Passive aggression** – getting your way by acting meek and unresponsive.
- ☐ **Project** – seeing your own undesirable characteristics in others.
- ☐ **Rationalize** – creating logical reasons for bad behavior.
- ☐ **Regress** – returning to a childlike state to avoid problems or responsibility.
- ☐ **Suppress** – consciously holding back unwanted urges while ignoring the root cause.
- ☐ **Trivialize** – making something minor when it is really something important.

If you recognize any of these behavior patterns in yourself, you first need to see them for what they are: hoped-for shortcuts to restoration which won't get you there at all. **Suggestion:** show this list to a friend and ask them if they see you engaging in any of these behaviors.

Then, make it a matter of prayer. Ask God to help you realize when you're avoiding your grief work by falling into these habits. Then ask Him to help you partner with Him in the process of grieving.

HOW TO GRIEVE

BE AWARE OF THE PROCESS. It is a process, for sure. But it's not a *precise* process. Everyone will process their grief a bit differently than the next person. However, there are some general descriptions that are useful – kind of like milestones along a journey – to let you know that you are making progress (Or *not* making progress).

Elizabeth Kübler-Ross was a Swiss doctor who studied the subject of grief for many years. In her book *On Death and Dying* she reports that there is a general pattern that most people experience when they encounter a life changing trauma or crisis. Here are the seven stages she describes:

- **Immobilization stage** – Shock; feeling paralyzed after being exposed to the crisis or trauma; can't decide what to do next.
- **Denial stage** – Trying to avoid the truth. *No! This can't be happening! Or, It didn't affect me; it wasn't that bad.* Or even, *It never happened. You just imagined it.*
- **Anger stage** – Frustrated outpouring of bottled-up emotion. *Life is horrible!!* Rage seething below the surface at all times; lashing out at anyone for the slightest reason; blaming others.
- **Bargaining stage** – Seeking in vain for a way out. Promising God that you'll perform a certain action if He'll fix things; setting conditions for healing, like: *When the civil war stops, then I'll get well.*
- **Depression stage** – Final realization of the truth. A very sad time, but also the turning point, because the griever finally understands that he or she won't be able to restore life to the way it was.
- **Testing stage** – Seeking realistic solutions. *Maybe I should try getting out more. Maybe I should talk with someone about my situation. Maybe I should join that Bible study I heard about.*
- **Acceptance stage** – Finally finding the way forward. They are now fully acknowledging the trauma or crisis. *It was bad – real bad – but I survived. I'm going to make it. My world changed, but I can live in this new world. I could even prosper.*



As you think about the trauma you have experienced, and the grief you feel now over your loss, which of the above stages best describes your current state of mind?

A few words about the process. As mentioned before, it's not precise. You may not hit all of these stages. You may skip a stage and then go back to experience it later. You may go through one stage quickly and easily and sit in another stage for a long time. You may find yourself going back and forth between a couple of stages, or looping around to various stages randomly. No one can say for sure how you will deal with your unique trauma.

Therefore, don't give in to the temptation to compare your grief process with someone else's. If you will keep your connections with God strong during this process, He will take you through it in a way that will maximize every stage and bring you through to the final stage as soon as possible.

How long will it take? Honestly, probably a lot longer than you will like. In fact, if the trauma you experienced is very severe, the grief will always be there. It won't be dominating your life like it currently is, but there will always be that hole where the lost person or thing or dream used to be. That ache won't go away. But that's not all bad – consider it a memorial to the depth of the love and value it (or they) held before the loss. And God will use it:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our affliction so that we will be able to comfort those who are in any affliction with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God.

– 2 Corinthians 1:3,4

How to have a good mourning

When we've experienced a traumatic event, grief is what we *feel*. Mourning is *what we do about it*. It is the action side of grief, the externalizing of our internal pain. And Jesus Christ – who knows *everything* – says that when we do it we are blessed and *will be* comforted (Matthew 5:4). Here are a few principles to keep in mind as you work out your grief through mourning.

❖ REMEMBER WHERE GOD IS

Because of your wound, you hold a special attraction to the Lord. You've got His attention. He is a loving and merciful God, ready to aid anyone who will let Him. *Count on that!* You can expect Him to be present and responsive to your needs during this time. He is like your best friend who says, "If you need anything, don't hesitate to ask!" And He means it.

The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit.

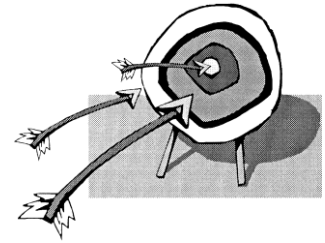
– Psalm 34:18

Ask Jesus to enter your pain with you. Close your eyes and feel Him coming up behind you, wrapping His big arms around you and holding on tight. Let Him pull the pain out of your body, soul and spirit into His.

❖ AIM STEADILY AT FAITH'S TARGET

Ask yourself this question: "What do I have faith in?" How did you answer? Assuming you didn't say, "Nothing," perhaps your answer was like one of these:

- "That God will bring me out of this depression."
- "That my leg will heal."
- "That my husband won't leave me."
- "That I could quit drinking so much."
- "That I can get past my anger."



These are all great faith *goals* and excellent requests to make to God, but they aren't what you should put your faith in. If you do – and they don't come about – what happens to your faith? The only answer to the question, "What do I have faith in?" should be "God." Whenever we tie our faith to our circumstances or to a particular desire, we take God off the throne of our life and set ourselves up for great disappointment.

Our real hope is not in something we want to see happen, but in God, who is making something *good* out of our situation even though we can't see it. A person of mature faith will boldly express his strong desires to God, and then leave them in His wise and loving hands – no matter what. He'll always do what's best. Sometimes we may be trying very hard to get God to change our circumstances, while He is using our circumstances to change *us*!

❖ DON'T TRY TO DO IT ALONE

Grief is hard on a person and mourning is difficult work. Effective grief work is not done alone. Don't try to be the pillar of strength to everyone around you. You'll crumble. Be sure to find a few people that you know you can count on to be there for you when you need them.

When you are grieving, it's like you have fallen down into a cistern. You can't get out by yourself – you need a friend to throw you a rope. Be sure you have friends around you who can pull you up.

❖ DO SOMETHING WITH YOUR ANGER

When anger is bottled up it changes into bitterness. And, as we learned earlier, that bitterness will spread beyond the borders of your life. It's OK to be angry. It is a normal, reasonable emotion when we are confronted with unjust, hurtful or grievous events. It is recorded in the Bible that Jesus Himself became angry on a few occasions (Mark 3:1-5; Mark 10:14; John 2:13-16). But it's what we *do* with that anger that can lead to sin.

The Bible says in Ephesians 4:26, "*In your anger do not sin.*" When you feel the anger rising up within you, first remove yourself from the physical cause of your anger if you can. For instance, if it's a person, leave the room; if it's your location, go somewhere else. It's like removing wood from the fire. No wood, the fire soon goes out. Go out for a run; do push-ups and sit-ups, dig a garden; chop down a tree; plant a tree; ride a bike. Or if you're able, do something truly constructive: go help someone who needs it; build something; go down to the church and see if they need help with anything.

❖ GO WITH THE FLOW (OF TEARS)

Men normally find this harder than women. They seem to be reluctant to engage the strong emotions associated with grief. It has a lot to do with society's programming: "Big boys don't cry." Maybe not – but big men *should* when it comes to grief and mourning.

King David beat a three-meter tall giant in a fair fight, killed a lion and a bear in hand-to-hand combat as a boy, and took the foreskins of two hundred Philistines as a dowry for his bride. He had a man under his command who single-handedly killed eight hundred men in one battle (that's in the days before automatic weapons, by the way). He had another who successfully defended a strategic position against the entire Philistine army and another who killed three hundred men in one battle with a *spear*. And David was *their* boss. We can rightfully assume he was "all man."

And yet, David did not hesitate to fully engage his emotions during times of grief:

I am worn out from groaning; all night long I flood my bed with weeping and drench my couch with tears. (Psalm 6:6)

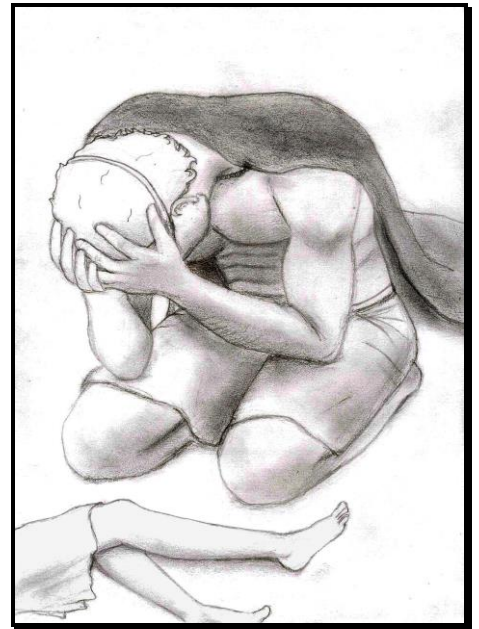
I went about mourning as though for my friend or brother. I bowed my head in grief as though weeping for my mother. (Psalm 35:14)

I am exhausted from crying for help; my throat is parched. My eyes are swollen with weeping, waiting for my God to help me. (Psalm 69:3)

❖ MAKE A GRIEF MEMORIAL

Researchers in the field of grief and mourning have learned that memorials play a very important role in starting the grief process and bringing healing. That's why we have funerals and memorial services. That's why we have gravestones. These things are meaningful experiences and symbols of our grief. We need them.

How can you memorialize the grief that is attached to your trauma? What can you do or construct that will provide a physical expression of your pain, something that will symbolize your loss? This needs to be a personal gesture that you and God decide upon. It could be as simple as a smooth stone in your pocket from the battleground, a poem that you write and put up on the wall, or as obvious as a brick tower in your yard. You and God decide.



Signs that your mourning is working

As the consequences of your trauma and its effects sink in, a person in crisis asks a lot of “Why” questions. *Why did this happen? Why to me? Why now? Why did I do that? Why did she do that? Why did God let this happen? Why won't this pain stop? Why must I suffer so deeply?* These questions are all normal, typical and expected. No one faults you for asking them.



What were (or are) some of the “Why” questions you’ve asked? _____

The frustration of the “Why” questions is that most of them will never be answered this side of heaven. We are serious when we ask them and we really do want answers. But the answers just don’t come.

When you start asking the “How” questions, that will be a good sign that you are making progress. *How can I build new dreams? How can I move on? How should I deal with my pain and loss? How do I get back into normal life again? How can I learn through what I’ve experienced?* These are all questions that *can* be answered. They look to the future, rather than the past. They spark action, rather than only thoughts. They invite help from God and from others.

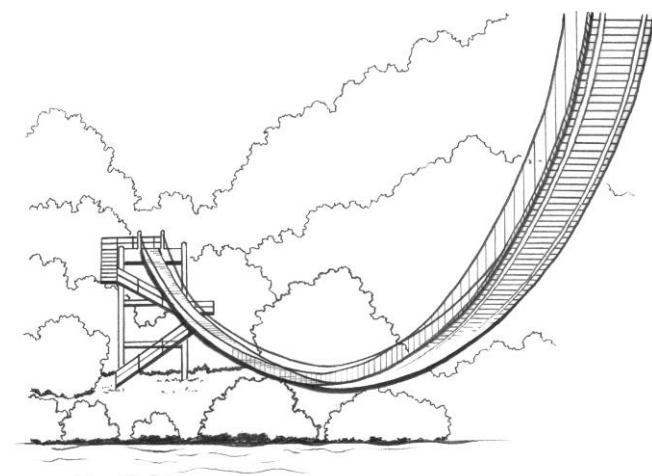


How can you change some of those “Why” questions you wrote above into “How” questions? What other “How” questions should you be asking? _____

Conclusions:

- When you encounter a traumatic situation which involves any kind of loss, if you don’t allow yourself to fully experience the emotional grief of that loss, you will make it impossible to move past your sadness.
- It does no good to deny that the trauma happened or to act like it was a minor thing.

God wants to walk with you through your time of grief. There are specific attitudes and actions that you can engage in that will help you in **GRIEVING** your loss and move you further along in your journey toward your place of healing.



Chapter Illustrations: Bryan Duddles

Bridge 8:

DEFENDING

...yourself spiritually

Crossing the River of Spiritual Vulnerability

Submit therefore to God.

Resist the devil and he will flee from you.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.

– James 4:7, 8

Resistance = Victory

“You are a *soldier*, Ojo. You are stronger. You need it more. You *deserve* it more than that fat, lazy Bonsu. Go on – take it!”

Ojo was looking at the roll of currency that he had accidentally found hidden in his host’s storage shed. He needed the money – very badly. Since he had come back from the war, things had not gone well for him. He had missed so many days of work, his employer had fired him. He couldn’t help it – he just couldn’t make himself go into work some days. He felt vulnerable, exposed, suspicious that some of his co-workers were planning to kill him.

“Take it, Ojo!” The voice in his head was clear and urgent.

“And what do I do if I am discovered having stolen from a man who has shown me kindness, and taken me in?”

“You can just kill him if he finds out. People are murdered around here all the time – there’s a war going on! Who would notice? Who would care? Who would connect you with the crime?”

Ojo mumbled, “It would certainly buy a lot of beer . . .”

“Yes, that’s right! And beer is the one thing that calms you down. It’s medicine for you! Certainly there isn’t anything wrong with you getting medicine, is there?”

“And there are so many people I owe money to. It could solve a lot of my problems.”

“So why do you hesitate? It’s *yours*. Take it and let’s go!”

Ojo felt the weight of the roll of bills in his hand. It was more money than he had seen in a long time. He *should* take it. He had sacrificed enough as a soldier – now it was time to be paid back.

Then another voice came to his mind. *You shall not steal. You shall not murder.*

There was a struggle in his heart, a fight. Finally it was like Ojo woke up from a dream. “What am I doing? This is wrong! Satan! Now I recognize your voice! You act like you’re giving me good advice, but you’re trying to *kill* me! You are tempting me to go against my friend and against God’s law. It is written: *You shall not steal*. So I command you in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ, shut your mouth and *leave me!*”

“You’re a *fool!*” Satan muttered as he left. Immediately Ojo felt better, stronger, happier.

“Jesus, thank you for helping me. I’m sorry I even *considered* stealing Bonsu’s money. But I am blessed that You walk with me all of the time, and direct my steps away from the pits my enemy sets for me. Now, I’m going to take this money to Bonsu and tell him to find a better hiding place!”



Know your enemy

There is an ancient Chinese warrior named Sun Tzu whom military commanders have studied for centuries, because his wisdom concerning how to successfully defeat an enemy is so effective. One of his sayings is: **“Know the enemy and know yourself. In a hundred battles you will never be in peril.”** The Apostle Paul expressed the same idea regarding our need for preparing to defend ourselves against our spiritual enemy in 2 Corinthians 2:11: *“We are not ignorant of his schemes.”*

We must always remember that – whether we are on a physical battlefield or not – we are locked in a desperate war against a deadly enemy: Satan. It may not seem like it sometimes, because the devil is a master of deception. The spiritual war our souls are engaged in is as real as the ones that use bullets and bombs. But many soldiers of God’s Kingdom don’t know their enemy, and don’t even know there is a war! May this not be true of you.

His Tactics

You can notice many of Satan’s tactics in this chapter’s opening story. Most of them have to do with deception. As Sun Tzu also said, **“All war is based on deception.”** See if you can find an example of each in the story.

- Sometimes Satan will appeal to your pride to get you to sin. (Matthew 4:8,9)
- Sometimes he will focus on your needs, and appeal to the logical conclusion that you should have your needs met. *After all, God wouldn’t want you to suffer, would He? He wants you always happy, right?* (Matthew 4:3) Satan loves to hit you when you are down – sick, depressed, in pain.
- Sometimes he will offer his temptations disguised as a suggestion for improvement. *If you do this, you will be better off, more successful.* (Genesis 3:4,5)
- He will never seem terribly evil to you, he will make himself appear like “an angel of light.” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)
- He will always seek out your areas of vulnerability, your weaknesses, areas of your life where you frequently have trouble, places where your spiritual armor has slipped. (Ephesians 6:13) If you are struggling with Combat Trauma your symptoms show your vulnerable places – so these must be especially defended. Be aware that a smart enemy will always attack the place that is the least protected. He won’t come at you in your areas of strength.
- He will try to get you alone, where no other Christians are available to help you. (Matthew 4:1)
- He will try to snatch away or drown out God’s voice and His Word in your heart. (Luke 8:11,12)

Satan’s Primary Tactic – Doorways and Footholds

DOORWAYS

Genesis 4:1-12 records the birth of Adam and Eve’s first two sons, Cain and Abel. Unfortunately, it also records the first murder in history – inspired by The Murderer himself. Cain and Abel had made offerings to God, and for some reason Cain’s was not acceptable. We’re not sure why – perhaps it had to do with Cain’s heart attitude as he presented it. Cain became very angry and resentful. God could see what was in Cain’s heart and told him about it, giving him some very valuable advice – which Cain didn’t take. In verse 7, God tells Cain,

*You will be accepted if you do what is right. But if you refuse to do what is right, then watch out! Sin is crouching at the **door**, eager to control you. But you must subdue it and be its master.* – Genesis 4:7

What? Control? I thought Satan was offering us freedom! Anyone who has given in to the “freeing” temptations of Satan knows they all eventually lead to bondage. It’s interesting that in the last book of the Bible, Jesus also talks about standing at the door: *Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with Me.* (Revelation 3:20)



The door that is being spoken of at both ends of the Bible represents our **will**. Whatever we allow to come through that door will influence our choices, our life and our destiny – for good or for evil. And in both verses, *we* have control of the door. We decide who comes in, and who doesn't.

God describes sin (Satan) as crouching just outside the door of your will, trying to convince you hold it open for him – because he wants to master you, little by little. You've got two options. You can slam that door shut, sending a loud and clear message to both him and God that you're not interested in his suggestions, or you can leave it open a crack. By doing that, you're saying, "Satan – I'm open to suggestions. How would you meet my needs?" He'll make his proposals. And if you're foolish you'll listen to them. He makes them sound *very* good and smart. So after a short period, you may find yourself opening the door to him.



FOOTHOLDS

The same principle is presented again in Ephesians 4:26,27 (NIV).

*In your anger do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a **foothold**.*

– Ephesians 4:26, 27

Anger is not sin. But what we *do* when angry *can* be sin, or our anger can eventually *lead* us to sin if we don't deal with it soon. If we let negative attitudes – sinful or not – stay in our minds, we run the risk of giving the devil a "foothold."

When climbing up a steep cliff, you need to find a series of footholds to make progress. One foothold will not take you to the top – each one enables you to make it to the next. This is a key point to remember about how Satan will try to influence your life. He won't blast in and take over all at once. He can't – you would notice such an obvious move. But if he can gain a little foothold – get you to agree to letting him have just a tiny bit of control in a small area, he's gotten just a little closer to conquering you in larger areas. God's advice to you: Don't give him even the first foothold! Once you've given it to him, it will be difficult to get it back!

One other important point: How does Satan get a foothold? **We give it to him.** He cannot seize it by force. He can't control our will. But he can deceive us into thinking that we will benefit by agreeing to his suggestions. So we give him that tiny foothold in exchange for something we think will be of more value. We are always wrong.

DEFENDING OUR AREAS OF WEAKNESS



Each of us has areas of weakness, and poorly-defended places in our lives. Satan is aware of them, and *that's* where he waits. He won't waste time in your areas of strength – he's a skilled strategist patiently seeking out your soft spots and looking for an opportunity to strike. You will do a better job of setting up a good defense if you will take the time to figure out where your weak places are. Spend a few moments right now and ask the Lord to reveal to you where they might be. Where are your areas of frequent defeat? Which temptations are difficult for you to handle? Where have you fallen before?

POSSIBLE DOORWAYS AND FOOTHOLDS

Please keep in mind that this list represents *possible* doorways. Just because you have experienced one of the occurrences listed below, it doesn't mean that you have opened a doorway or provided a foothold for the enemy. But you *may* have. Ask God if one of these represents an open door in your life.

1. Listening to occult (Satanic) music.
2. Possessing occult pictures, charms, books, games.
3. Holding on to grudges or bitterness against God and others.
4. Rebellion against authority.
5. Dating relationships or close friendships with demonized people.
6. Sexual immorality with demonized people.
7. Participating in sexual immorality with anyone.
8. Sexual involvement with a prostitute, even once.

9. Ancestors or dead relatives who accepted Satanic influence.
10. Parents, relatives or other close authority figures who have accepted Satanic influence, i.e. witch, spirit healer.
11. Going to a fortune teller, having an astrological chart or forecast made.
12. Involvement in psychic phenomenon, such as astral projection, levitation, spells, magic, fortune telling, séances, channeling.
13. Involvement in or attending occultic rituals, festivals, masses, sacrifices, etc.
14. Rejection of what you known to be true.
15. Participation in false religions or cults.
16. Wrong use of drugs and/or alcohol
17. Wrong use of herbs.
18. Hedonism; an absorbing pursuit of entertainment and/or body pleasure.
19. Fascination with violence and death.
20. Killing people or animals for “fun.”
21. Long-lasting jealousy or anger.
22. Pornography.
23. Going without sleep for a long period.
24. Meditation on anything other than God’s revealed truth.
25. Chanting or other cultic/occultic forms of worship.
26. Rape/incest (whether victim or victimizer)

CLOSING DOORWAYS

“*You must subdue it and be its master.*” (Genesis 4:7) Whenever you become aware of an open door in your life, there are three steps you need to take in order to shut it:

1. **Confess and repent of opening the door.** If it was due to a willful choice on your part, this step is obvious. Go back to Bridge 4 for a review on confession and repentance. But some doorways may have been opened when you were in a passive state, and not disobeying God at all – like when you were under anesthesia or traumatized in a battle. It may be that you later made a willful choice due to something that began then. It could be something like becoming addicted to pain medicine after surgery, or a strong urge to kill that developed sometime after your war experiences. In those cases, you should confess the sin, but also make the decision to close the original door.
2. **Take action to demonstrate repentance and purify your life.**
 - Release resentment, anger and bitterness.
 - Seek forgiveness of anyone you offended or hurt.
 - Restore anything that you stole or destroyed.
 - Renounce occultic (Satanic, non-Christian religious) involvement.
 - Destroy any offending objects (fetishes, occultic charms and games, pornography, books, Satanic music, drugs, alcohol, etc.).
 - Break off any harmful relationships (prostitutes, drug dealers, lovers outside of marriage, criminals)
 - Put yourself back under God’s authority (re-filling of the Holy Spirit).
3. **Once again ask for the filling of the Holy Spirit.** (Bridge 3) **SUGGESTED PRAYER:**

Father, I confess that I have opened a door to my enemy. I have given him a foothold. I was vulnerable and deceived when I made the decision, but I’m still responsible for it. I confess to You that I [describe what you did to open the door]. I agree with You that it was sin, and I’m sorry for it. Please forgive me. On the basis of Your promise in Your Word, I accept our forgiveness of my sins. Thank You.

And now, Father, before You and before all the forces of darkness, I renounce my decision and renounce my opening of that door. I shut that door and take back that foothold. Satan, I remove your authority and ability to influence me in that area any longer. I bind you back from it in the name of Jesus Christ, who is my Lord, Savior and King.

Father, please strengthen that area of vulnerability. May it no longer be an undefended place. I commit to taking any further action You tell me to regarding this matter.

I give the throne of my life back to You once again. Please fill me, control me, guide me and empower me with Your Holy Spirit. Amen.



Our Weapons

The weapons of our warfare are not physical weapons of flesh and blood, but they are mighty before God for the overthrow and destruction of strongholds.
– 2 Corinthians 10:4

WEAPON #1: AUTHORITY

Being one of the most powerful beings God ever created, and perfecting his warfare skills for centuries, Satan is an enemy more powerful and deadly than anything we can imagine. If we had to go head-to-head with him in our own strength, he would squash us like bugs.

But the Bible talks about the authority we have been given as servants and soldiers of Jesus Christ. The Greek word for it is:

EXOUSIA: “Right, power, authority, ruling power, a bearer of authority.”

It’s more than *just* power – it’s power *plus* authority. It’s like in rugby. There are thirty men on the field with awesome power. They are strong, fast, and can cause pain in many, many ways. But they are not in authority. There are five or six other guys down on the field with different-colored shirts and whistles who have *exousia* – called referees. The rugby players can put people *down*, but the referees can put people *out*. That’s *exousia*!

Ephesians 1:19-23 has much to say about Jesus Christ’s *exousia*.

That power is like the working of His [the Father’s] mighty strength, which He exerted in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority (exousia), power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under His feet and appointed Him to be head over everything for the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.



Colossians 2:9,10 states that someone else besides Christ *also* has this same fullness and *exousia*. Circle who that is in the passage:

For in Christ all the fullness of God lives in bodily form, and you have been given this fullness in Christ, who is the head over every power and authority (exousia).

YOUR PLACE OF WARRING:

There is no authority in the universe higher than Jesus Christ’s. No king, no general, no president, no demon, no angel – not even Satan himself can stand before Christ’s *exousia*. And since we are now His children, God has equipped us to operate in that same authority as we deal with the forces of darkness. And we have this authority because of Christ’s willingness to die on the cross and rise again, thereby defeating Satan, sin and death once and for all. We fight from a place of victory and authority, seated with Christ in His heavenly command center (Ephesians 2:6).

WEAPON #2: OUR SPIRITUAL ARMOR

In rugby, football and war, we have learned that without a good defense, we have no offense. In the heat of a military battle, it doesn’t matter how skillful we are with our offensive weapons, if we take a bullet in the chest, we’re done. That’s why men invented armor. But God created *spiritual* armor long before that for our spiritual battles.

*Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. Stand firm then, with the **belt of truth** buckled around your waist, with the **breastplate of righteousness** in place, and with your **feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace**. In addition to all this, take up the **shield of faith**, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. Take the **helmet of salvation** and the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God.*

– Ephesians 6:13-17

Consider briefly each element of the armor God has given us:

Belt of Truth. Satan's chief tactic is deceit. Our only counter move is truth. As we strap on this Belt of Truth, it alerts us to the lies and deceitful tactics of the enemy and helps us fight with efficiency.

Breastplate of Righteousness. The breastplate's main function is to protect the organs that are vital to your life. You can function without a hand or a leg, but if you lose a heart – that's it. Our hearts are guarded by the righteousness of Jesus Christ that was given to us when we were saved.

Sandals of the Gospel of Peace. Sandals protect your feet and give you traction and stability. Without them those who haven't walked barefoot a lot would move too slowly and fearfully – an easy target in battle. Since we have responded to God's "good news," He gives us peace even in the midst of the battle.

Shield of Faith. As we believe in and count on His power and authority to protect us, our shield will stay solid and we will be protected. If we shift our focus to our enemy and his strength, our faith can waiver.

Helmet of Salvation. As the breastplate protects our body's vital organs, the helmet protects our other vital organ and the command center of our lives: our brain. If the head is injured, the rest of the body will not work. Satan's *main* attacks will focus on our *minds*. God's salvation protects us from Satan's influence.

Sword of the Spirit. This is a unique element, because it can be both a defensive *and* an offensive weapon. The sword is the Word of God. When Jesus was attacked by Satan in the wilderness (Matthew 4:1-11), He turned aside every thrust of His adversary with a verse of Scripture, and defeated him.

WEAPON #3: THE WORD OF GOD

The way things are accomplished in the spiritual realm is not through muscle-power, electricity, computers, bulldozers or bombs. They are accomplished by *the spoken word*. For an interesting study on this, look up the following verses and see how God, Jesus and His disciples used the spoken word to accomplish spiritual work:

Genesis 1:3	Mark 1:25, 26	Acts 3:6-8
Matthew 4:10	Mark 4:39	Acts 13:8-11
Matthew 9:6	John 11:43, 44	Acts 16:18
Matthew 12:13		

In the listing of your spiritual armor, the Sword of the Spirit is clearly equated with God's Word. When God wanted to create, He commanded matter into existence. When Jesus wanted to defeat Satan, heal, calm a storm, raise the dead or control a demon, He spoke a word of commandment. When Jesus' disciples needed to heal or do spiritual warfare, they followed His example and spoke commands as representatives of their Master.

This is also how Jesus wants *you* to fight your enemy. You occupy the high ground, you have superior fire power, righteous authority and spiritual allies (angels). You accomplish spiritual war by *speaking* your commands to your enemy, just as Jesus did when He fought Satan in the wilderness in Matthew 4.

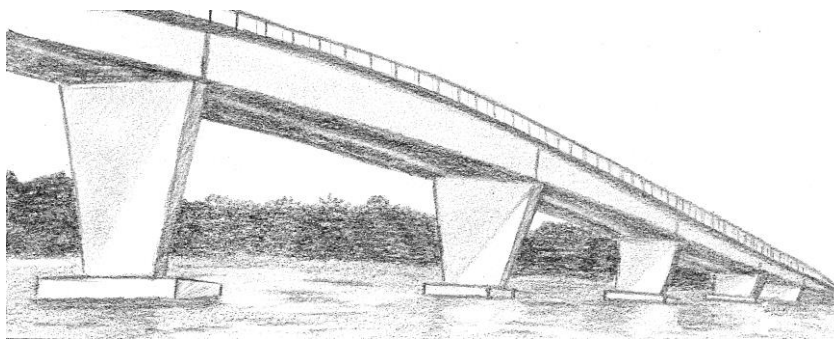
Re-read this chapter's opening story and see how Ojo addressed his enemy when he realized he was being attacked. Here are the main principles he used:

1. He spoke to Satan directly.
2. He resisted him, using the authority he had been given as a child of God.
3. He got out his sword – he used the Word of God as the legal basis of his resistance.
4. He verbally commanded Satan to be silent and to leave.
5. Immediately afterward he spent time talking to God and worshipping Him.

Conclusions:

- Satan, like a roaring lion, is seeking to devour you (1 Peter 5:8). He doesn't want to trip you up, make you feel bad, embarrass you or injure you. He wants to *destroy* you. Take this *very seriously*.
- But God is on your side. He has provided you with a vast array of defensive and offensive weapons that – if used properly – will keep you safe from the influences of your enemy.
- Be sure that Satan has not already wounded you, by checking for Doorways and Footholds.

As you become more aware of the tactics of your enemy and more skilled at **DEFENDING** yourself, you will move ever-closer to your place of healing.



Chapter Illustrations: Angela Gia

Bridge 9:

SEEING

... who you really are

Crossing the River of
Self-Hatred

Forgetting the truth

Lunda was walking down the main street of his town, on his way to visit a friend. As he crossed a street, he glanced down the sidewalk to his right and saw a man sitting on the ground staring straight ahead. His clothes were dirty and torn, his hair had not been groomed for quite a while, and there were a couple of empty beer bottles on the ground next to him. There was something familiar about him, so Lunda slowed down and looked harder at the man.

Finally he recognized him. “Adama? Is it you?”

The man slowly turned his head, looked Lunda in the eyes, and then looked away again. “No, you’ve got the wrong guy.”

Lunda walked over to him. “Adama it’s me, Lunda. From your district – I remember you from school. We played football together. Don’t you remember me?”

Adama looked down at his hands. “Yes, I remember you Lunda. It’s good to see you. But I’m not who you remember me to be.”

“The last I heard, Adama, you had gone off to military training school. They had made you an officer, and everyone was very proud of you! Something . . . something must have happened. How have you come to this?”

Adama squinted up at Lunda. “You don’t want to know. Nice seeing you – now go away.”

Despite his nice clothes, Lunda sat down next to Adama and said, “Sorry, it appears my legs won’t hold me up any longer. I must sit down. So while I’m here, tell me what happened, and why you are sitting here like this.”

Adama put his hands over his bloodshot eyes, shielding them from the sun. “Lunda, you shouldn’t waste your time here with me. You were going somewhere, I’m not. So go. I’m not worth your concern.”

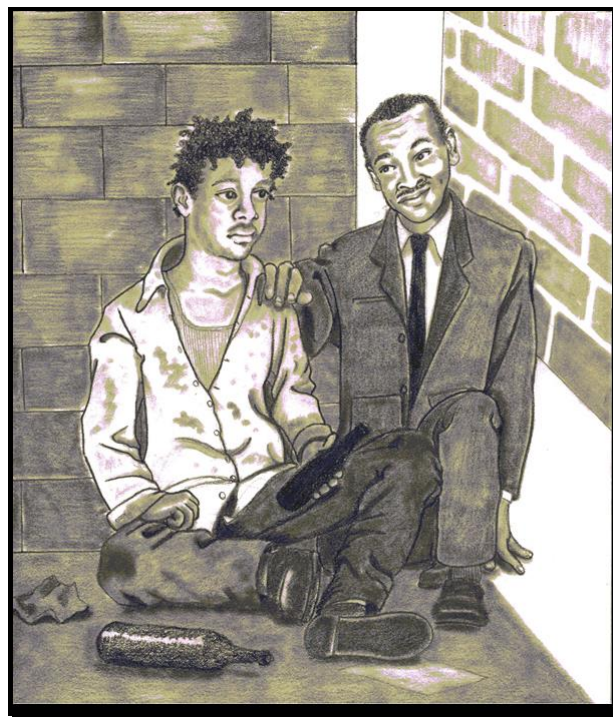
“Adama, my friend, I don’t believe that for a moment. We are friends. We were teammates. We grew up together. I *am* concerned about you, and I want to hear your story.”

Adama looked over at Lunda and smiled a crooked smile. “Do-gooder. You always were a do-gooder.”

“And you always were the best player on our football team. The fastest, the strongest, the craziest – we had a great team, didn’t we?”

Adama put his hands back over his eyes. “Well, those days are gone. I’m nothing now. Lunda, my body and my mind are broken. I am a drunk, a cripple, I can’t keep a job, my wife has left me and taken the children, and I don’t know how I’m going to keep alive. The war did this to me. There is no hope for me now. I am a worthless nobody.”

“No. I don’t accept that. I know you, and God knows you – even if you have forgotten who you are. Yes, you are broken, but you’re not dead yet. Let’s go get some chai. I’m going to remind you who you are.”



Combat Trauma and self-hatred

Call it what you want – it has many names. Low self-esteem, negative self-image, broken self-identity, poor opinion of yourself, pessimistic self-view . . . but it all comes down to this: *self-hatred*. If Satan can get you to be overly critical of yourself and to judge yourself so harshly that you hate yourself, it's only a short walk from there to suicide, which is your enemy's ultimate objective for you.

When a person experiences severe trauma, how they see themselves is often shaken to the core. While they used to see themselves as clear-thinking, self-sufficient, capable, strong and worthy, those characteristics are replaced by feelings of fear, confusion, powerlessness and helplessness.

The effects of this negative self-image bleed into your behavior too – destroying your plans, activities, priorities, reactions, values, hopes, dreams, ambition, social interaction . . . the list goes on and on.

While trauma may have begun the fire of your self-hatred, there are three other factors that continue to add fuel to that fire: **Satan, the world around you and negative self-talk**. These three work together to make you believe in yourself less and less and rob you of your hope for a good future. We must expose these three enemies, see the damage they have already done, and recognize their attacks as they come in the future.

SELF-PERCEPTION ASSESSMENT – How you see yourself

Dr. Steven Stosney, an international authority on trauma and victimization, has developed a very useful tool that will help assess your current self-perception – how positively or negatively you see yourself. Dr. Stosney's normal approach goes much deeper than we'll be able to apply in this manual, but some of the parts will be very useful here. There are eight types of self-perception listed below – the positive side and the negative side. Place an "X" somewhere on each line that indicates how you currently see yourself.

Respected	-----	Not Respected
Important	-----	Unimportant
Forgiven	-----	Accused/Guilty
Valued	-----	Not Valued
Accepted	-----	Rejected
Powerful	-----	Powerless
Lovable	-----	Unlovable
Connected	-----	Separated

Obviously, your enemies want your "X's" as far to the right side as possible, which keeps you in a defenseless position. If that's where your X's are today, it's because you have been fed **LIES!** Here's what the Son of God says about Satan:

He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies. – John 8:44

At this moment, you are probably not on a physical battlefield, but you *are* in a war. And, as you learned as you crossed Bridge 8, all war is based on deception. Satan has been perfecting his deceptive tactics for thousands of years. In this Chapter, we're going to expose as many of Satan's lies as we can. When deception is exposed, the ones who *used to be* deceived now have an advantage. We want you to be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "We are not ignorant of his schemes." (2 Corinthians 2:11)

These lies were created by Satan himself. He'll whisper them in your subconscious at your weakest moments. You'll be reminded of incidents in your childhood that "prove" them. He'll tell you how your current traumatized condition also "proves" his lies. He'll reinforce them with messages coming at you from the world system that surrounds you. He'll be sure you're listening when your friends echo the same lies either accidentally or on purpose. And before long, he'll have you telling *yourself* the lies. And we all know how closely we listen to our own opinions.

But why should you believe the lies of your enemies? Instead, you should feel confident about believing the truths that come from the One who created you and who loves you enough to send His Son to die for you. Following are **eight deceptive traps** Satan and the world have laid for you. Consider whether or not you've heard them before. Each lie will be followed by the countering **TRUTH** that God wants you to hear and believe.

DECEPTION #1: NOT RESPECTED

Lies of the enemy:

- You are a nobody.
- No one cares about you. Why should they?
- No one wants to know you.
- You don't deserve the respect that others get receive.
- Who do you think you are, anyway?

Have you heard any of those comments before? Have you made them to yourself? Maybe those exact words weren't used, but after their world has been turned upside down, many combat trauma victims hear and believe that satanic message. "You've proven to be someone who should and must not be respected." You hear that, you look at your situation, you look at how people respond to you, and you believe in the "truth" of those lies.

Spiritual IEDs (Improvised Explosive Device – like a hidden roadside bomb). To be effective, every lie must have an element of truth. No good deception ever *looks* like a deception. The IEDs that are so effective at wounding and killing people look harmless: a tuft of grass beside the road, a bit of trash, a little rubble. That's why they work. If we don't have some information to the contrary, we assume that the lies we see and hear are the truth.

Well, God wants to give you *true* information that counters Satan's deceptions. Your trauma has changed you – that's the element of truth. But to say, "Because I have changed and I am not functioning as I used to, I am not worthy of respect" is an absolute lie and needs to be opposed by God's truth.

Not only is God's Word *true*, it is *living and active* according to Hebrews 4:12. That means that it's not just words that some ancient prophet scribbled on paper several centuries ago. It continues to live today. And as you read those words, and as the Holy Spirit energizes and breathes life into them, they become the words of God spoken directly to *you*, right here in the twenty-first century.

The above facts hold true for all eight of the lie-countering truths that we'll be examining below . . .

YOUR TRUE IDENTITY: RESPECTED

After each verse, answer the questions. These verses tell the truth about who you *really* are.

[Jesus speaking:] *I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from My Father I have made known to you. – John 15:15*

- Jesus Christ, the Son of God, calls you His _____

So now Jesus and the ones He makes holy have the same Father. That is why Jesus is not ashamed to call them His brothers and sisters. – Hebrews 2:11

- Jesus Christ is not ashamed to call you His _____

Even before He made the world, God loved us and chose us in Christ to be holy and without fault in His eyes. – Ephesians 1:4

- You were known, loved and chosen by God how long ago? _____

Now you are no longer a slave but God's own child. And since you are His child, God has made you His heir. – Galatians 4:7

- You are God's child and also His _____.

The above Scriptures describe *you* as a friend, brother (or sister), child and heir of the King of the Universe! He has had plans for you even since before He created Adam and Eve. And you can be sure He's *really* excited that you finally showed up! You are *loved* and *highly respected*!

DECEPTION #2: NOT IMPORTANT

Lies of the enemy:

- No one wants to hear your opinions.
- You're a little fish in a big lake.
- Go sit on the sidelines.
- Don't call us, we'll call you.
- What have you *ever* accomplished?

YOUR TRUE IDENTITY: IMPORTANT

After each verse, answer the questions which tell who you *really* are.

But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name. – John 1:12

- Since you have received Christ, you have rightly been named as what? _____
- When you consider all of eternity and all the other animals and angels that God created, how important would you say *that* was? _____

You are the salt of the earth. – Matthew 5:13

- God has made you His _____ on the earth. As such, what will your influence be? _____

You are the light of the world. – Matthew 5:14

- God has made you His _____ in the world. How will this help the world? _____

Not only do you hold important positions as an eternal child of God, His seasoning and His light, you have been trained and qualified for unique future leadership in Christ's Kingdom on earth. He was wounded, and all those who follow Him also receive wounds, as you have. You've been through the refiner's fire. The Bible predicts that in the end times society will crumble and treacherous times will come – and those times may be very close. Who better to lead us through those traumatic times than someone like you? You've been to hell and back. It is hated but familiar territory for you. You are *important* now, but in the coming years you will be *extremely valuable*.



DECEPTION #3: ACCUSED/GUILTY

Lies of the enemy:

- You did a really terrible thing.
- You're unforgivable.
- You need to be punished.
- You can't be trusted.
- Everyone knows what a hypocrite you are.

YOUR TRUE IDENTITY: FORGIVEN

You already learned a lot about this when you crossed over Bridge 4, but a little more input shouldn't hurt. After each verse, write what each says about who you *really* are.

Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. – Romans 8:1

- Assuming you're a Christian, what will you *not* experience? _____

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. – Romans 5:1

- You have been _____ by faith, which means "declared not guilty."
So you are no longer at war with God, now you have _____ with Him. The war is over. You and God are no longer enemies. Your war crimes are no longer being held against you.

Their sins and lawless acts I will remember no more. – Hebrews 10:17

- What does God think about your sins and lawless acts?

DECEPTION #4: NOT VALUED

Lies of the enemy:

- We don't need you.
- You're not good enough.
- You don't have what it takes.
- You are absolutely worthless.
- We'll find someone better than you.

YOUR TRUE IDENTITY: VALUED

After each verse, see why your true designation is "Valued By God":

The Lord appeared to us in the past, saying: "I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with loving-kindness." – Jeremiah 31:3 (NIV)

- Who loves you? _____ How long has this been going on? _____
- How valuable do you think being loved eternally by God and brought into an everlasting love relationship with Him makes you? _____

Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body. – 1 Corinthians 6:19, 20 (NLT)

- What has your physical body become? _____
- When Israel was strong, and before Christ came, the Temple in Jerusalem was the one place on earth where God met with mankind. It was the most magnificent and expensive building on the planet at the time for that reason. Since Christ's resurrection, *we* have become the Temple of God. Now *we* are where God is manifested and represented. So, would you say we are valuable or not valuable? _____
- Additionally, this verse says we were bought with a high price. What was the price that God the Father paid to buy us? _____



DECEPTION #5: REJECTED

Lies of the enemy:

- You are a failure.
- Please leave.
- No one wants you.
- You're not qualified.
- Everyone else is better than you.

YOUR TRUE IDENTITY: ACCEPTED

After each verse, observe why your true designation is "Accepted By God":

To the praise of the glory of His grace, by which He made us accepted in the Beloved. – Ephesians 1:6

- God's grace made you *what* in the Beloved (Christ)? _____

As you come to Him, the living Stone – rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to Him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. – 1 Peter 2:4,5

- The "living Stone" is Jesus Christ, who was rejected by mankind (when He was crucified), but chosen and precious to the Father. In the same way, you were selected by the Master Stonemason to be part of His spiritual house, and you are therefore shown to be *what* to God through Jesus Christ? _____

Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. – Hebrews 4:16

- Since we are allowed to approach God's throne "boldly", would this indicate that we are barely acceptable or totally acceptable to God? (Circle one.)

DECEPTION #6: POWERLESS

Lies of the enemy:

- You are weak.
- You are damaged goods.
- Can't you do *anything* right?
- How helpless can one person be?
- Someone's always got to take care of you.

YOUR TRUE IDENTITY: POWERFUL

After each verse, answer the questions which indicate your power as a son or daughter of the King.

For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind. – 2 Timothy 1:7

- What kind of a “spirit” has God given us? _____

You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. – 1 John 4:4

- “He who is in the world” refers to Satan and his allies. Between us and them, which one is the more powerful? _____

For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world? Only he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God. – 1 John 5:4,5

- As a Christian, you are “born of God.” “The world” referred to is the world system that is ruled over by Satan. When you and the world have a fight, who has the power to win? _____



DECEPTION #7: UNLOVABLE

Lies of the enemy:

- Who would ever love *you*?
- You're so ugly and boring.
- You really have no good qualities.
- You are beyond being loved, by God or by people.

YOUR TRUE IDENTITY: LOVABLE

You are of infinite worth. God was so much in love with you that He was willing to sacrifice His Son to redeem you from your sins. Even if you were the only person on earth, He would have done it for you. Obviously, there is *something* about you that is *infinitely* lovable!

For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord. – Romans 8:38,39

- Make a list from the above verse of the things that God would fight through in order to get to you because of His love for you: _____

Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. – John 15:13

- Jesus made this statement shortly before He was crucified. Who were the “friends” He was referring to, for whom He was about to lay down His life? _____

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. – Romans 5:8

How much love would it take for you to be willing to die for someone else? Would you do it for your mother? Your child? Your best friend? You may have had an experience in battle where someone got in harm's way so that you could live. *That* was a supremely unselfish, loving act. But could you imagine being willing to die for someone who had betrayed you the night before, spit in your face, punched you in the stomach, stole your wallet, your car and your wife? You would have to hold incredible love and forgiveness to die for *that* person. And yet, that's who we were, when Christ died on the cross for us. That's how much He loves us.

DECEPTION #8: SEPARATED

Lies of the enemy:

- You are alone and you should stay that way.
- No one wants you on their team.
- You shouldn't bother other people so much.
- People wish you weren't here.
- You don't need anybody else anyway.

YOUR TRUE IDENTITY: CONNECTED

YOU ARE CONNECTED TO GOD:

[Jesus speaking:] *I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing. – John 15:5*

- What picture of “connectedness” did Jesus use to show how attached we are to Him? _____

For you are all children of God through faith in Christ Jesus. – Galatians 3:26

- What are some deep, meaningful ways that children and parents are connected? _____

I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. – Galatians 2:20

- This verse indicates that Christ lives *where*? _____ Can you imagine being any closer than *that*?

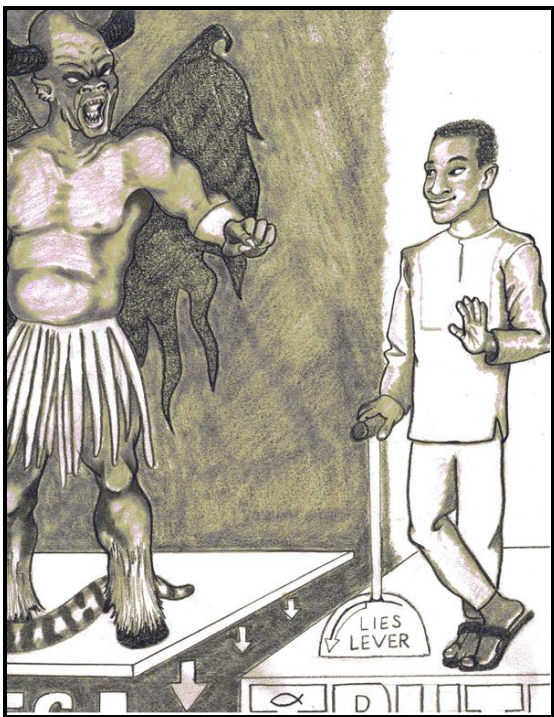
YOU ARE CONNECTED TO THE BODY OF CHRIST – OTHER CHRISTIANS:

All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. – 1 Corinthians 12:27

- What are all Christians a part of? _____
- How connected are the various cells and organs of your body? _____

You are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household. – Ephesians 2:19 (NIV)

- This verse gives us two pictures of our “connectedness” with other people. What are they? _____



As you work through the difficulties of your Combat Trauma, there will be times when you feel alone, rejected, unlovable, devalued and unimportant. That's when Satan will do all he can to affirm and magnify those thoughts. It's at that time that you need to recognize his tactics. He's using deception to move you closer to defeat. He is **lying**. How can you tell when Satan is lying? Whenever you hear his voice! Counter his lies with the truth from God's Word.

On the next page is a proclamation that declares the truth about who you really are, opposing the lies of Satan. Make this proclamation out loud if possible, based on what you just learned about yourself from God's Word . . .

THIS IS WHO I AM:

Respected

I am a friend of the Almighty God of heaven and earth. (John 15:15)
Jesus is not ashamed to call me His brother (sister). (Hebrews 2:11)
I am chosen by God, holy and without fault in His eyes. (Ephesians 1:4)
I am an heir to the riches of the Creator of the universe. (Galatians 4:7)

Important

I have been rightly called a child of God. (John 1:12)
God has made me His salt and light in the world. (Matthew 5:13,14)
I am an eternal being. (John 3:16)

Forgiven

I am no longer condemned. (Romans 8:1)
I have been justified before the righteous Judge. (Romans 5:1)
I am at peace with God. (Romans 5:1)
God no longer remembers my sins. (Hebrews 10:17)

Valued

God loves me with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3)
I am God's temple, bought at a great price. (1 Corinthians 6:19,20)
God knows, chose, called, justified and glorified me. (Romans. 8:29,30)

Accepted

I am accepted in Christ. (Ephesians 1:6 NKJV)
I am a chosen, costly, living stone in God's building. (1 Peter 2:4,5)
I have bold, unrestricted access to God's throne of grace. (Hebrews 4:16)

Powerful

God has given me the spirit of power, love and a sound mind. (2 Timothy 1:7)
God's Spirit in me is greater than any unholy spirits in the world. (1 John 4:4)
I am born of God and believe in Jesus – I'm a world-overcomer. (1 John 5:4,5)

Lovable

I am loved by God and *nothing* will keep us apart. (Romans 8:38,39)
I am loved supremely – enough for God to die for me. (John 15:13)
I am loved unconditionally, *even* when I sin. – (Romans 5:8)

Connected

I am intimately attached to Christ and bearing fruit. (John 15:5)
Christ is as close to me as my heart and lungs. (Galatians 2:20)
I am a member of God's eternal family. (Galatians 3:26)
I am part of Christ's body with millions of brothers and sisters. (1 Cor. 12:27)
I am an eternal member of God's Kingdom and household. (Ephesians 2:19)

Follow-up:

Write today's date here: _____ One month from today, re-take the "Self-Perception Assessment" that you completed at the beginning of this Chapter. If you have been regularly thinking about and proclaiming the above truths concerning your true identity, you should notice that your "Xs" have traveled a lot farther to the left!

Conclusions:

- Satan and the world are constantly telling you lies about yourself. His objective is to cause you to hate yourself and become so depressed that you no longer want to live. Rather than believe the lies from the Father of All Lies, you should believe what the One who is the Way, the Truth and the Life says about you.
- How you see yourself is very important. It will affect a great number of important areas of your life. Be sure that your self-perception is lined up with how God sees you.
- When you are **SEEING** yourself the way God sees you, you will cross this bridge. As long as you aren't going back over the other bridges the wrong way, you will be in a place where your healing can proceed rapidly, and you will be moving toward a place of every-strengthening stability in Christ!



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