

“Whether you believe you can, or whether you believe you can’t, you’re absolutely right.”

The above quote seems like an oxymoron. In reviewing lesson 2, how would you reconcile these seemingly contradictory phrases? In what way can they both be true? (If you aren’t sure, copy out again verses John 15:5b and Philippians 4:13.)

Things to Remember

1. Learn from mistakes – and then don't focus so much on looking back and on the "whys" as much as **how do I go on from here.**
2. Tune into your conscience - recognize genuine guilt or promptings that God may be sending your way and making changes accordingly. But don't get caught up in "false guilt" or beating yourself up over things that you have processed with God's help.
3. We can fall prey to a type of legalism, and we can suffer with demeaning guilt when focus on the "shoulds": I should have done this; I should do that; they should, etc. Instead ask self and/or another party, "What would it take to go on from here?"
4. Remember the "glass half empty or half full" illustration. Choose to pay attention to the half full and ask God to supply what is missing. Remember the good things about a relationship or what someone has done for you. Don't let those be cancelled out by the heart aches.
5. Examine your expectations. So often our disappointments or hurts surface when reality does not meet our expectations. The gap between the two can bring separation in relationships. Sometimes we have to lower our expectations, realizing that people will not always meet them. Only God will be totally consistent and faithful.
6. Short texts and e-mails may not be effective in communicating about deep things. They work fine for short messages, conveying points of information, or asking questions that can be answered briefly. **BUT**, there are pitfalls when we don't have visual cues, cannot hear the tone of voice, and don't have the opportunity for rapid clarification and interaction.
7. Along with the above, allow for differences between the generations in words used in communication. For example, a currently and commonly used response to an apology or a thank you is "no problem." Read one reader's comments from an "Ask Amy" column:

You may not be accustomed to this expression as a substitute for “you’re welcome” or as a genuine “I forgive you.” On the other hand, avoid using this expression if things **really AREN’T OK**. You don’t want to go down the road of suppression or acting like there is no problem if there is one. It can result in smoldering resentment, withdrawal from a relationship, and/or losing the opportunity for clearing the air and clarifying miscommunication. You might miss an opportunity for forgiveness.

8. There is only so much you can do in asking for forgiveness. The choice on whether to forgive is in the hands of the person you have offended. However, there are things you **can do** to increase the likelihood of a person’s forgiving you. We will be talking about **apologies** and possible **amends** as the class proceeds.
9. As long as the party or parties involved are living, there is potential for forgiveness to occur. It is never too late. Even if a person has died, you can experience healing in your attitude toward that person. And if you didn’t get the opportunity to ask for forgiveness of someone, God can soothe, sustain, and empower you to go forward.
10. God also promises that He can make up for time that has been lost. If we have been estranged from someone and time has passed, if there is reconciliation, He can help us fill in gaps. (See Joel 2:25)

Class Notes – Week 3

Forms

Our Part and God's Part

I. Review

Last week we discussed human weakness and God's strength. Acknowledging weakness and need can be a stumbling block to living the Christian life; we don't like to think of being weak. We human beings have a tendency toward futile attempts to be independent and self-sufficient. Particularly in western culture, individualism is a strong value. In other cultures, mutual interdependence is more highly valued. People comfortable with this way of relating may have an easier time grasping the concepts of personal weakness and the necessity of support from each other and for divine help. We western Christians find the concepts of weakness and dependence distasteful. Seeing them as healthy traits, especially spiritually, is a challenge. God's word constantly reminds us of our need to depend on Him, of our helplessness. Knowing and believing this bring freedom and relief. And it is one of the foundational truths in understanding forgiveness.

II. "FORMS"

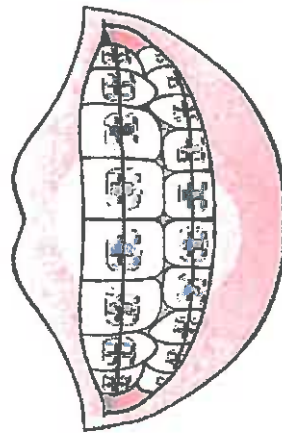
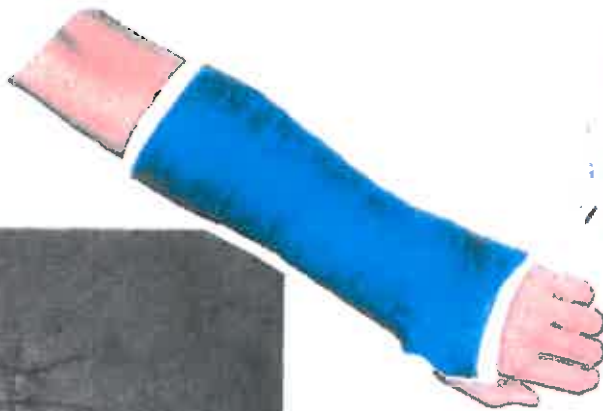
In our Christian walk, we must grasp the distinction between what God provides and what He asks us to do. Weakness does not mean passivity or inactivity. The illustration of **forms in concrete work** provides a useful word picture. When a mason is planning to construct new steps at a house or pour concrete for a driveway, he first sets up forms with right angles and accurate measurements to provide an enclosure into which concrete can be poured to harden. These forms are sturdy and functional, but made with rough metal or wood with signs of wear from repeated use. They are held together by joints, providing a framework.

Once set up, the wet concrete is poured in and allowed to set. Without the forms, this wet, runny substance would spread and dry in a heap and not be contained in a functional way. The forms are then removed, leaving the finished, functional step or driveway. The forms served a purpose, but the hardened concrete is the lasting substance that can withstand pressure, use, weather, and time.

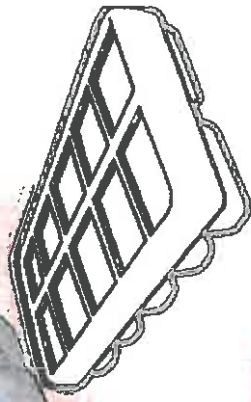
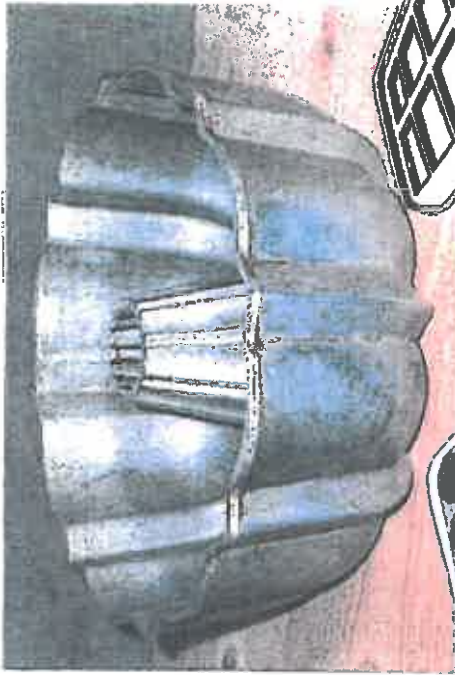


'FORMS' Used in Daily Life

What do these images have in common?



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III. Our Part and God's Part

Our part in cooperating with God's powerful work and provision in our lives is comparable to setting forms in place. We are asked to set up practices and disciplines that put us in the position to receive the substance of God's power and direction. Without them, He can offer His help, but there may be no willing receptacle to contain it.

Look up the following verses and write down the "form" that we are directed to set up.

1. **EXAMPLE: Psalm 119:105, 130; Colossians 3:16 reading the Bible**

List some things God's Word can do in us:

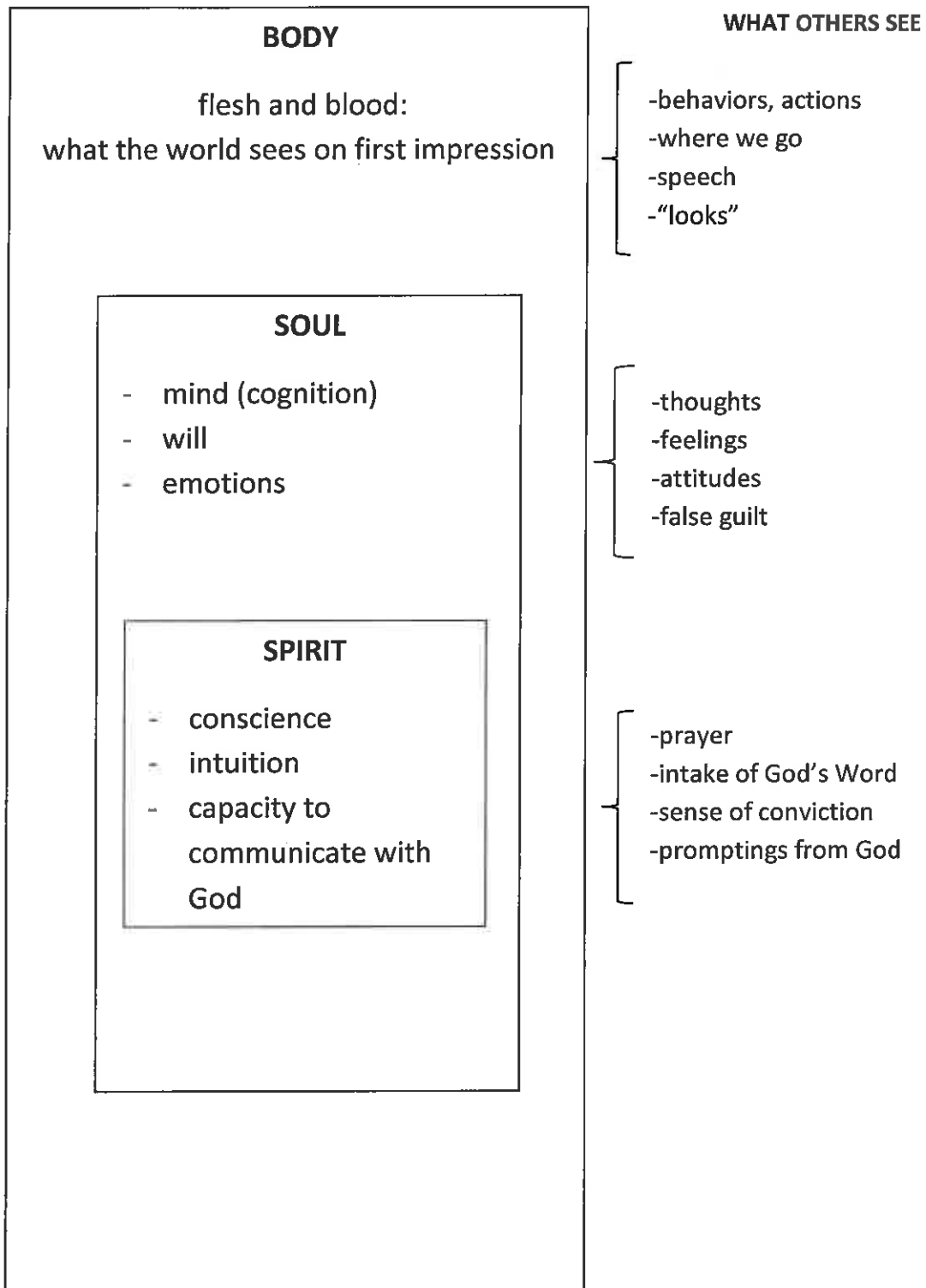
II Timothy 3:16 (5 things listed)

Hebrews 4:12 (2 things listed)

2. **Psalm 119:9-11**

(God's Word can actually help us see which level we are acting on: soul, spirit, or body. See the diagram on the next page. Being made aware can help us in our next steps of action. We will be talking a lot about this in our study on forgiveness.)

3. **Philippians 4:6-7 _____**
4. **I Corinthians 9:24-27; I Timothy 4:8; Daniel 10:12**
5. **Colossians 3:16 (3 things)**
6. **Hebrews 10:25; Matthew 18:20**
7. **Proverbs 27:17**



8. II Corinthians 10:5

9. Acts 13:2; 14:23

10. Psalm 119: 17; James 1:22-25, 4:17

11. Psalm 119:37

12. Philippians 4:8

IV. To Think about: write out ideas to share in your group

1. When looking at this list of “forms”, how do we prevent it from turning into a legalistic list of “Do’s and Don’ts”? What is the role of the form? Does a form in itself have power?

2. How does the discussion of form and substance apply to our study on forgiveness?

3. Give some examples of forms we might be called on the set up ad we grapple with forgiveness.
 - a. Proactive or preventive forms that will reduce incidence of situations needing forgiveness. In other words, they might keep us from getting into trouble in the first place!!

 - b. Protective forms that can reduce our sensitivity to actions of others toward us or reduce our tendency to judge and hurt others.

 - c. Healing forms that can help us deal with things that have already happened.