

Class Notes

Date: _____

BODY

flesh and blood:
what the world sees on first impression

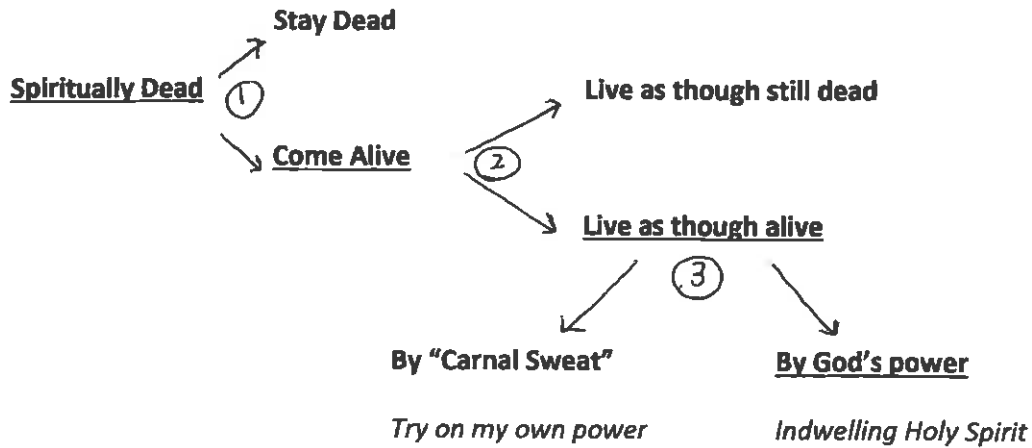
SOUL

- mind (cognition)
- will
- emotions

SPIRIT

- conscience
- intuition
- capacity to
communicate with
God

Four Choices We Make in Response to God's Outreach to Us



(Carnal sweat is futile in

both Justification

(being made alive)

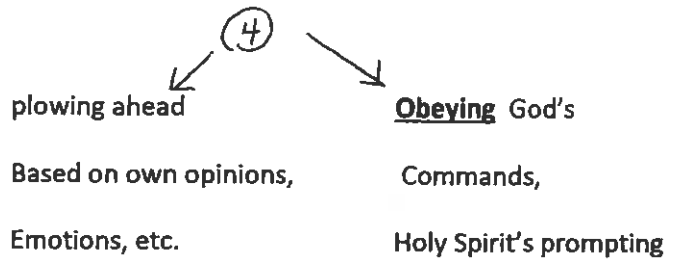
AND

Sanctification

(growing in Christ likeness;

Christian walk)

Specific situation



In order to forgive or be forgiven, I might need an

Attitude Adjustment!

As we consider asking for forgiveness from people we have hurt or responding with forgiveness to others who have hurt us, we often find ourselves stumped by an attitude problem. Our hurt or our sense of being right can put us in a position of stubbornness and/or self righteousness. I have found that trying to change my attitude can be a pretty big call – usually impossible on my own. I might succeed in partially hiding it, but that bad attitude lurks in the background, negatively affecting any desire, willingness, or capacity to move forward. When I sense my attitude changing, I see it as a miracle from God.

The following are essential in handling an attitude problem:

1. Recognizing the attitude is there – ask God to show you
2. Admitting it IS a problem and asking God to soften your heart
3. Obeying His commands, using the tools He provides that set the stage for Him to pour in healing - He asks us to cooperate in His work. This is an example of “forms”

God calls us to action. He tells us to “put off” and “put on” certain things, often using the analogy of dressing. In His word, He gives us lots of clear practical advice and commands. We tend to take it or leave it, looking at His wisdom and guidance as mere suggestions. If we get serious about our role in cooperating with His work, we will find His directions helpful to our forgiveness journey. Instead of being stuck in a position where we are just hanging on by our finger tips, gritting our teeth and enduring with no sign of relief, or being at a standoff with no peace – we can actually experience growth and change. Even if no resolution or satisfaction comes, He will help us live with the loose ends. If we do our part, we can entrust the results into His hands.

Clothing

In our daily lives, we choose what clothing to wear on the basis of what we will be doing, where we will be going, etc. List as many other factors you can think of that determine what we put on.

What our **body** displays to the world in appearance, speech, and behaviors reflects what is inside. A Bible note on Romans 13:14 comments that “Paul exhorts believers to display outwardly what has already taken place inwardly – including practicing all the virtues associated with Christ.” As the Holy

Spirit lives in us and continues to bring growth, we are called to obedience and discipline in our lives. We are not passive puppets whose strings God pulls. Mysteriously and wonderfully God invites us to cooperate with His work. It is a dance where He leads, and we are to follow – with a beautiful complementarity emerging.

We are all familiar with the statement, “Clothing makes the man.” While that observation can be shallow and short sighted, there is some truth to it. Appearance is what makes a first impression, and clothing is part of that picture. In addition, our actions often reflect what we are wearing. Children often act – at least for a time – more sedate and reserved when dressed up. A bride clad in beautiful white attire makes a statement of presumed purity.

Jot down some other examples where clothing makes a statement – positive or negative – about a person.

On the next pages you will find a chart to complete. Look up the passages and fill in the squares, thinking of how the verses could have application to forgiveness.

Protective Clothing

When you have finished the chart, read Ephesians 6:10-18 (this passage is also listed on the chart, so if you have already completed it, you can skip the section below or use it for additional notes) and list the elements of your “bullet-proof vest.” By each item, write any comment on how it would be applicable in a tough forgiveness situation.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

We are also told in verse 18 to _____ and _____. Why would this be important in forgiveness challenges?

Put Off..... Put On



Dictionary Definitions:

Put On: to clothe or adorn oneself with

Put Off: to discard

Clothe: to dress, to cover as with a garment; to invest as a hero "clothed in glory".

Fill in the chart on the next two pages:

1. Looking for what God asks us to "put on" or "put off".
2. Note any promise made in each passage.
3. In last column, make note of how these verses might apply to our study of forgiveness.

Reference	Put Off Or Avoid	Put On or Cultivate
1. <i>Romans</i> 13:9-14 (esp. 12-14)		
2. <i>Galatians</i> 3:27		
3. <i>Ephesians</i> 4:22-5:2		
4. <i>Ephesians</i> 6:10-18		
5. <i>Colossians</i> 3:5-14		
6. <i>1 Peter</i> 2:1-3		
7. <i>1 Peter</i> 3:3-4		
8. <i>1 Peter</i> 5:5-8		

Promises	Anything in these verses that would make forgiving easier?

To Read and Complete as part of home assignment for Class 5. These are topics to be discussed in your small group.

Responses When Hurt

Variables that Affect How We Respond

Hurts take many forms. A person may have had a bad day and just be feeling touchy, taking things as offenses that ordinarily would be handled in stride. Personalities vary in sensitivity, and one may be more easily hurt while another has "tough skin." As moms, we can be so protective of our children and can over-identify with a hurt one of them has experienced. We are like mother bears with their cubs! A family member is often so close that something that hurts them automatically hurts us. Another scenario involves taking offense at an issue or situation that does not involve us directly; rather we might be struggling with how to react to a friend's hurtful life choices.

There are times when we take up another's hurt in a way that is neither healthy nor helpful. We can be most supportive to a friend if we are supportive and encouraging. While we identify and share each other's burdens, we need to try to maintain boundaries and to avoid becoming "co-dependent", sharing as if it were our own issue.

How we are going to respond in a tough situation will be affected by many factors. Read through the following and jot down comments on how you fit in each category.

1. Relationship with the other party involved. How close are we to the person who offended us?

See the chart on the next page. It gives several types of relationships with varying degrees of closeness. Fill that out. How does the type of relationship affect your reaction to a slight or wrong?

2. Severity of offense: as you think about your application sheet that you filled out the first week on page 1-3, note below how serious the situation is.

Types of Relationships and Level of Potential for Hurt

Implications	Stranger	Casual Acquaintance	Close Friend	Family Member	Someone in Real or Perceived Authority
How Met? (How Connected)					
Topics of Conversation					
Depth of Relationship					
Level of Trust; Vulnerability					
Expectations you might have from this relationship					
Boundaries with this person that you do or should have in place					
Freedom to "take it or leave it" (re. their input into life)					

3. **Our individual make up:** physical health, emotional sensitivity, family support, experiences of loss, relationships, sensitivity, spiritual health, and other factors vary from person to person. Each affects our resiliency- ability to handle challenges.

4. **Intent of the offender:** Is the person even aware you are hurt? Might their perspective be totally different? If they don't realize you are hurt, you might not be in position to expect an acknowledgement or apology.

5. **Other factors to add to list?**

It is helpful to be aware of these things in order to better understand your reaction and to be able to proceed with healthy coping.

Specific Ways We Respond to Offenses

Given the above variables, there are many ways we might respond to an offense after the initial anger, amazement, confusion, and hurt. As you read through these, star ones that are typical for you.

1. **Just shrugging it off.** Letting it "run like water off a duck's back" may be an easy response for some. If it is a minor offense, and you are in pretty good shape emotionally and spiritually, this is the quickest and least painful choice. The expression, "Choose your battles" fits here. Perhaps you decide to "consider the source" and dismiss the encounter or report. The offense may be quickly forgotten. It is helpful to find ways to increase your resilience and "toughen up" if you are an extremely sensitive person. Certainly when we talk about "building forms", we will address this kind of strengthening. In any case, if this option is chosen, you wouldn't be caught up in resentment and alienation. You might not choose to spend considerable time with a person who routinely slights you in this way. .

A couple familiar verses comment on the option of dismissing an offense, especially with someone with whom we are very close:

"...love each other deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins." I Peter 4:8

"He who covers an offense promotes love, but whoever repeats the matter separates close friends." Proverbs 17:9

"A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense." Proverbs 19:11

2. **Keep short accounts.** Overlooking an offense might be a good option if the slight or hurt is minor and not worth pursuing. On the other hand, if you have a valuable relationship, it is best to address things that need clarification before they develop into an ongoing irritant or barrier.
3. **Suppression** differs from easily dropping an issue or keeping short accounts. Rather than deal with the discomfort, a person tries to just put it out of mind. There is no resolution but rather ongoing unrest. It may fester and develop into bitterness or avoidance.
4. **Repression** goes deeper than suppression in that an experience or issues is shoved back so far that it actually is not readily available for conscious processing. A person does not actively choose to repress and by definition, is unaware that it has happened. This happens at times when someone is struggling with extremely traumatic, uncontrollable events or history. The dictionary defines repression, in the psychiatric sense, as "forcing painful ideas, impulses, experiences, etc. into the unconscious" so a person does not have to deal with them. This may be temporarily protective for an individual but generally is not considered a healthy, long term solution. Nothing is really resolved, and troubling symptoms may develop.
5. **Triangling:** Involving a third party in the situation can complicate matters. Seeing a counselor or seeking counseling is not considered triangling. A person brings in an uninvolved peer and attempts to turn what should be a situation involving two parties into a "three ring circus", or so it can become.
6. **"Cheap" or insincere "forgiveness":** This occurs when a person prematurely or insincerely says, "Forget it; it's nothing," if that is not really true. The wound continues to fester, and often a person is vulnerable to continued pain. Dismissing an incident of abuse rather than dealing with the dynamics involved and getting help, would be an example. This choice is not an honest nor an effective response. A person who feels he or she deserves what has happened and who has weak coping skills and/or little spiritual encouragement can easily fall into this position.
7. **Starting over:** there are times when dissecting what has gone wrong proves futile, and there just doesn't seem to be a meeting of the minds. However, the relationship is important enough that the two might decide it's not worth it to try to pursue an evasive agreement. Rather they decide to learn what they can from what's happened, chose to "start over" – to "delete" what just was said or done and go forward. This might occur nonverbally; actions may change and a new sense of good will might come – without any words being offered. That can be a gift in itself; as the old adage goes, "Actions speak louder than words."
8. **Refusing to forgive:** this is always a possible choice. She might believe that the offense is too severe to ever be forgiven. Painful consequences such as a buildup of resentment, bitterness,

alienation from family, health problems, and general unhappiness can result. Sometimes the offender is not even aware of the ongoing battle the other person is experiencing; the result is more pain for the one struggling with the offense. It can feel like walking around with a ball and chain that cannot be shed. **Refusing** to forgive is a more willful choice than feeling **unable** to forgive. It may seem like a fine distinction, but the will is more forcefully involved – and how we deal with “can’t” versus “won’t” is different. We will continue to discuss the difference between hardening our will versus coping with our weakness.

9. **Forgiveness:** coming to a place of freedom from the effects of another’s behavior in a way that gives a peace and ability to move forward, leaving the consequences and justice to God. Although anyone can choose forgiveness, a Christian has access to powerful resources God provides that can make this real, meaningful, and growth producing. It can become a force that draws others to Christ. It has been mentioned that **forgiveness does not necessarily mean reconciliation or the resumption of a relationship** that might be fraught with risk or deep ongoing hurt. You can be freed from the painful emotions of hate or fury but finds it unhealthy to “go back for more.”

10. **Acceptance of Ambiguity:** It is possible **to choose** to live with unresolvable issues and to find comfort and the ability to move forward without the oppression of overwhelmingly painful emotions. Until Christ returns, there is going to be trouble in the world; there is going to be difficulty in relationships. A person who has offended us might never apologize, might never change course. With the power of the Holy Spirit living in us and with the surrender of the will to Him, He is fully able to guide us and to bring us peace in the midst of unrest. There can come a point where we have done all we can, and there is no comfortable resolution in sight. Then we hang on tightly and go forward. This is not the same as reluctant resignation; it is a surrender of our situation to our loving God whose strength and power can be stronger than what drags us down.

Among the above 9 options, where do you see yourself typically operating?

What kinds of changes do you need to ask God to help you make?

Look at the next page and do some evaluating of the **Prodigal Son Story** and imagine various ways it might have ended.

Example of the Prodigal Son

Read Luke 15:1-31 and look for hurts and possible resolutions.

Who are the three characters in this drama? _____
_____, and _____.

Complete the following chart:

	<u>Father</u>	<u>Prodigal</u>	<u>Brother</u>
<u>Situation</u>			
<u>At start</u>			
<u>Chain of</u>			
<u>Behaviors</u>			
<u>And feelings</u>			

Think of possible scenarios on how this story ended. Jot down options and what you think most likely to have happened and why.

Between the Father and the Prodigal Son: Do you think his repentance was genuine or more an opportunity to return to a good life with no consequences? Was he once again an opportunist? How might the father or brother find out?

Between Father and His Older Son: What kind of resentment might older son have harbored toward father? Would he be justified? What could father do to help? What would be best scenario? Worst?

Between Brothers: What issues might they face in terms of sibling rivalry, perceived parental favoritism? What could help/hinder relationship? Emotions of anger, jealous, resentment, competition could easily enter in. Imagine worst and best case scenarios. What could help re-establish healthy relationship?