

Part Two

Setting People Free

Chapter 10

For Freedom's Sake

In Galatians 5:1 we read that it was for freedom that Christ set you free. Where the Spirit of the Lord is there is liberty (2 Corinthians 3:17). Because Christ has set you free, I'd like to declare the following to you in the strongest, clearest terms possible. If anyone presents any gospel to you which he proclaims to be the gospel of Jesus Christ, and in it he takes away your freedom or your liberty, he's not speaking from the Holy Spirit.

"Freedom" and "Liberty" what are we talking about in these two terms? Very simply this: Jesus said that His sheep hear His voice and a stranger's voice they will not follow. Freedom is the absolutely unfettered right to hear Jesus for yourself. Even if you hear Him say things that other people are not hearing Him say, you are only free if you have the right to hear Him for yourself. This is true even when you are wrong about what He is saying. Liberty is the absolutely unfettered right to choose to follow or not to follow what you have heard Jesus say to you. With it goes the right and responsibility to enjoy or endure the consequences of doing what you have heard Him say.

Relationships become manipulative when the relationship is conditional. Relationships seek to destroy freedom and/or liberty when either explicitly or implicitly they are conditioned upon agreement about what Jesus may say or how one may respond to what Jesus is saying.

I was speaking about this issue of liberty and freedom when I visited India. I was addressing a congregation of Pentecostal preachers. You won't find a more legalistic group of Pentecostal preachers than those in India where religion and bondage have been developed to a fine art. It's a nation that is clearly the most religious nation on the face of the earth. It's apparent that many have just exchanged one form of bondage for another.

I was speaking about freedom when one elderly Pentecostal minister caught the revelation. Suddenly, he burst out with exuberance and said, "We are so free, we are even free to sin!"

How do you think I responded to that?

I said, "That's EXACTLY correct!" and then I proceeded to explain that if you're not free to sin, you're not free to live in righteousness either. You're either free or you're not free and if you're not free to sin, then you're not free at all.

Though it comes as a shock to many, it's a rather simple truth. The scriptures say that everything is lawful for you (1 Corinthians 6:12). Having grown up in the world of religious teaching, this is extremely difficult for us to accept because we've been taught that sin is a big problem.

God is not concerned about your sin. Your sin was already covered by the blood of Jesus. It was nailed to the cross 2,000 years ago. He doesn't care about your sin, but he cares a great deal about your relationships. He's concerned about the intimacy between the Bridegroom, Jesus,

and we who are becoming the Bride of Christ. He's looking for intimacy throughout his body and concerned about your relationship to him and to the other members of the Body.

He's interested in how we treat one another and unfortunately, we've begun to see a terrible heresy raise its ugly head once again in the church. We've seen it 3 previous times in our generation and we must deal with it again for a season before it's eradicated. It's the cruel and vicious concept that men must take control of other men. It comes in all sorts of inviting religious phrases with words like accountability and "Who is over you in the Lord." It's presented in terms like "Who is your covering?" or "To whom do you give an account?"

Regardless of how it may be couched in the most loving and gentle terms, it really comes down to this. Men are saying, "Because I love you, I need to control you a bit so that you'll turn out to be all right with God." The implication is that if you love God, you'll let someone else control you a bit so that you'll be pleasing to God. What an abomination! It's an outrage and a disgraceful lie. If Jesus set you free and he, the King of kings has relinquished all control over you, what right does any one of your brothers or sisters have to exercise control over you?

The word of God says that he has given you the spirit of love, power and a sound mind. The Greek word for a "sound mind" actually translates into self-control or self-discipline. When you are led of the Holy Spirit your natural inclination is to exercise self-control over your own life.

Years ago, you may remember, there was a kind of cute, saying that was popular. Whenever anything went wrong we would say, "Well, let's just praise the Lord anyhow!" During the next generation, whenever anything went wrong, they'd smile a really big smile and say, "Ah well, God is in Control."

As I sat in my law office one day, still being the smug religious guy that I was, one of my staff people came in and described another catastrophe that had come upon us. We talked and decided what to do. As he was leaving, he stood at the door made one final comment "I'm really sorry."

I smiled back at him and said, "It's all right. God is in control."

As he stepped out and closed the door, the Holy Spirit interrupted me unexpectedly and said, "I don't want to be in control."

"Wait a minute," I said, "You are God; you have to be in control!"

He said, "I know who I am, but I don't want to be in control."

"Well what do you want then?" I asked.

I can never forget what God said next. "I want you to stop living a self-directed life that runs out to the limits of my controls and start living a self-controlled life that stays within the limits of my direction."

Stop living a self-directed life that runs out to the limits of God's controls and start living a self-controlled life that stays within the limits of God's direction. That's what God wants of you. The fruit of the Spirit is self-control (Galatians 5:9). You're not to be controlled by God but SELF-controlled. He says that he has given us the Spirit of a sound mind through self-control. What's the fundamental difference between being filled with the Holy Spirit and being possessed by an evil Spirit? The difference is that the Holy Spirit brings us self-control while the evil Spirit seeks to take control of us.

Stop living a self-directed life that runs out to the limits of God's controls and start living a self-controlled life that stays within the limits of His direction.

When people are possessed by an evil spirit, there's some specific area of their life in which that evil spirit controls and they no longer can control their own impulses in that area. The surest natural evidence that someone is under demonic influence is that they no longer have a choice about what they are doing. They just keep doing it and no longer have any control over their own actions. They keep going back to the pornography on the Internet even though they are determined to change. They have one more dessert regardless of the fact that they have vowed to control their diet. Whatever the problem, they reach a point at which they allow the demonic force to take control over their behavior.

Fullness with the Holy Spirit is about being restored to actually have control of ourselves. Therefore, any doctrine that teaches you to surrender yourself to the control of another is truly an abomination. It's the very thing from which the Holy Spirit came to free us. It's throwing out the very fruit that the Holy Spirit is producing in us.

While it's true that Jesus told us to make disciples, that doesn't mean that we have authority over them. When he instructed us to make disciples, it was right after he said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me" (Matthew 28:18). "Therefore, you go and make disciples of all nations." Our commission is to make disciples without exercising authority over the ones who look to us for leadership; no authority at all!

The one leading is not over his disciple but rather, he is under him. The responsibility of the one who disciples is to serve those whom he disciples. That's precisely why Jesus said, "He who would be greatest in the kingdom of God must be your servant" (Matthew 23:11). If you disciple someone, you must realize that you are his servant. You are there to attend to his needs. He's not there to fulfill your wishes.

Jesus said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them! It's not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant. And whoever would be chief among you let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:25-27). Much heresy in the Church has been based on the idea that the Kingdom of God is some sort of hierarchy. It's time we understood that there is only one authority in our lives and his name is Jesus.

All authority belongs to Jesus.

While all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to him, Jesus refrains from exercising any of it. Instead he says, “Your FREE!” and what an extreme form of freedom it is. You’re told that all things are lawful for you. They may not all be profitable but they’re all lawful. In God’s Kingdom there are no rules; only right relationships. How really radical is this freedom? He said, “My grace is sufficient for you.” He said it to Paul and He’s not a respecter of persons so it applies to you as well. Now exactly what did he mean when he said, “My grace is sufficient for you?”

At that time, Paul was the world’s greatest expert on the nature of grace. Since we cannot earn grace, how do we receive his grace? We get it by faith. He understood that we only receive grace from God by having faith. In Romans 5:2 he clearly states that we have access into the grace of God by faith and in Ephesians 2:8 he says that we are saved by grace through faith and not by our own works. If it’s by faith, how do get this faith? By his grace! The only way to get grace is by faith and the only way to get faith is by grace.

He said that his grace is sufficient so let’s also understand the profound depth of Jesus’ commitment to the sufficiency of his grace toward us. He accepted total responsibility for you, He offers complete assurance that you have enough grace to receive the amount of faith necessary to do what He’s asked you to do.

As an example, when you walk into a situation and you sin, what has actually happened? You just didn’t have enough grace to handle it. All you had to do was turn to God believing he would give you the grace to handle it. Since you didn’t, you probably lacked enough faith to trust him for the grace that you needed to handle it. Since grace comes by faith, all you had to do was receive grace to get the faith to have the grace to deal with it, knowing that his grace is sufficient for that situation.

What, then, is the real problem when you sin? Jesus took all the responsibility to ensure that His grace is sufficient for you. Therefore, you can look the Father right in the eye and say, “God, it’s not my fault. Jesus promised he’d give me enough grace and he didn’t do it. It’s his fault. Jesus took the blame for me and it’s not my responsibility. I’ve been set free from the guilt of sin because Jesus took the responsibility for me.” Jesus is that committed to your freedom.

My grace is enough for you.

My wife, Joy, is the most beautiful and the most wonderful woman in the world. However, there once came a time when there was real stress in our marriage relationship. In an effort to alleviate the tension, I invited an older brother to sit down and talk to us about this strain on our marriage. During the course of our conversation this older brother turned to her and asked, “Joy, how do you show Stuart that you love him?”

Now at the time I was much younger, my hair was still brown and my broad shoulders had not yet traded places with my narrow waist. Upon hearing his question, I was immediately filled with ideas about how she might answer. I had just started thinking all those answers in my vivid imagination when she just blurted out her answer.

Joy said, “I wash his socks.”

She washes my socks? What kind of loving is that? Before I was married I washed my own socks. They didn’t smell so bad. When I travel on business I still wash my own socks. In fact, in my whole life I’ve never asked her to wash my socks even once.

That’s exactly it! She washed my socks in response to my laying down my life for her. She never had to wash my socks. She chose to wash my socks. We’ve been married for 40 years. For 40 years Joy has faithfully washed my socks week in and week out, month after month, year after year. I could walk into my closet and I could find a pile of black socks or brown socks or white socks. That’s black love, brown love and white love. When I’m traveling and I open my suit case, I know that I can just reach in and pull out a pair of socks folded just the way I like them and each time, I’m assured of her love.

How much of a fool would I be if I went home and told my wife that she had to wash my socks every week and if she didn’t, she wouldn’t be doing her job? Forever after, all I’d find in my closet is duty, duty, duty; piles of duty. She’s a faithful wife and she would dutifully wash my socks every week but who wants duty when he can have love?

Well, if I’m smart enough to want love instead of duty, how much smarter is the greatest lover in the universe? Jesus is looking for love and intimacy, he’s not looking for duty. He knows better than I, that the only way he can get it is to say, “No rules; you’re free. I give you the power and the right of self-control to make your own decisions. I will neither control you nor manipulate you in any way. Neither will I give anyone else the authority and power to control and manipulation you.”

So then, why is Jesus so committed to your freedom and why hasn’t he imposed a neat set of rules on you to keep you in line? Jesus wants your love, not dutiful adherence to a prescribed set of regulations. He will not control or manipulate you on any level. If your relationship with anyone involves control and manipulation, that influence doesn’t come from the Spirit of God, it comes from the enemy. It was for freedom that Christ set you free.

It was for freedom that Christ set you free.

Have no doubt about it; Jesus is deeply committed about you retaining total freedom in your life. He really wants his people free. Nevertheless, at this point you may be asking, “How does this freedom correlate to the teachings on discipleship that are the main thrust of this book?” You may have thought that discipleship meant relinquishing your freedom and submitting to the control of another but that certainly is not the case. We never allow the one who is discipling us to have rule over us. We have only one Lord. His name is Jesus.

Just as Jesus takes complete responsibility for you even when you're wrong, you must take responsibility for the people that you disciple when they're wrong. Watch over those whom you disciple and lovingly counsel them but never attempt to control what they do. There's a young man that I have watched over for some years during which I've periodically tried to point him in the right direction. In a discipleship relationship, the responsibility to watch over another's soul literally means to be willing to lose sleep over the one you disciple. It doesn't mean to exercise control over him but to observe what is happening in his life with the intention of providing guidance that will help him avoid some dangerous pitfalls. Effectively, the one you are disciplining is in control in that he determines how much sleep you get. To be a servant to your disciple means to put him in control thereby guaranteeing his freedom of choice.

Though things have changed tremendously in the past few years with this young man in particular, he was quite a mess before. For years, he would lie to me when it would have been easier and less painful to tell me the truth. He would climb two tall trees to tell a lie when he could have stood flatfooted and simply told the truth and it wouldn't have been a problem. He was caught up in pornography and was emotionally abusive to his wife.

**...take responsibility for the people
that you disciple.**

At any time, I could have used the power that God has given me. By my ability with words along with my insight into human behavior, I could have verbally brutalized him. Undoubtedly, his behavior would have changed dramatically. But he would have changed out of fear of me rather than for the right reasons. In the end, he would have exchanged one demon for another. He would have made a successful but fruitless transition from being possessed by a deceiving, lying spirit and a demon of lust to being possessed by a religious spirit. That one is much harder to cast out. As soon as I was away and he no longer had to fear my wrath, he would have succumbed to them all: the lying, deceiving, lusting and religious spirits. His end would have been worse than before I met him.

If verbally controlling him was not the way, what was I to do? I spoke lovingly to him and encouraged him in the right direction. I spoke gentle words of life to him and I prayed for him. I talked to his Father and his Father disciplined him.

Every son whom the Father loves he disciplines. There is no scriptural basis to support the idea that a big brother should discipline the one whom the Father loves. Brotherly discipline is not Biblical and only the Father has the right to discipline those in the Kingdom of God. It's most unfortunate that the word disciple has been confused with the word discipline in the English language. Consequently, God-loving men of the church have destroyed relationships and missed opportunities to teach their followers the ways of the Kingdom because they mistakenly thought they were called to discipline their disciples. This has been the result of deception promoted by the greatest of all deceivers. Your responsibility is to disciple but not to discipline.

Understanding that it was not my place to chastise this young man, I grieved before the Father for him. I appealed to our heavenly Father to bring the man to the end of himself. All the while I continued to be as supportive and encouraging as the man would permit me to be.

As I watch and prayed, God permitted this young man to endure the fruits of his own behavior. He is a very strong man. He could endure much pain. His life became increasingly more difficult. After several years this man's family suffered a tragic and catastrophic accident. That got his attention. He looked around and realized that he'd been on the wrong track and had to make some serious changes in his life.

Every son whom the Father loves he disciplines.

Does a loving Father desire that for his son? Of course, not!! But every son whom the Father loves, He will discipline. Whether you like it or not, he will discipline you. Discipline does not belong in the hands of a man; it belongs in the hands of God. Discipline does not belong in the hands of the elders of the church either. There's no such thing as church discipline, only church government and Paul shows us in I Timothy 2:1-4 that the function of government is preserving peace and good order so that all men might hear God and know the truth.

➤ **Submit One to Another**

Within the liberty we enjoy and the freedom that we are assured in Christ, there is another form of submission that helps us understand the differences between dominance and servitude. The Bible tells us, masters and servants, parents and children, husbands and wives, submit one to another (Colossians 3:18:22). The husband is servant to his wife and not the other way around.

How about children and servants? What does scripture teach us in it reference to these relationships? If you have children of your own, you must have had to get up at 2:00 in the morning to attend to your child. That is the time we learn about "projectile vomiting!" I've had that experience. Remembering what it was like, do you think that your role in that relationship indicates that you are the master or the servant? We don't rule over our children, we're servants to them. Our Children are commanded to honor us but we're not commanded to demand honor from them. We're instructed to not provoke or exasperate them because that will lead to their discouragement (Colossians 3:21).

Also, the relationship between master and slave reveals the true nature of servant-hood as well. One who owns a slave is completely responsible for all of the needs of his slave. Although slaves are required to work, their master had to provide for all of their necessities whether the work is profitable or not.

The way of manipulative people is to view submission in a totally upside down fashion. The man's idea of submission is completely opposite of God's teaching. In the Kingdom of God, the one who appears to be in authority is really the servant. When you disciple someone and he

submits to you, he should derive a servant's heart from your example. In every relationship, someone is serving, and the one being served is learning to serve.

Jesus said that he sent you into the world in the same way that the Father sent him. What was the first thing that Jesus did? He took the form of a servant: a servant who was willing to be obedient even unto his own death. If you are going to follow Jesus, begin by taking on the form of a servant and not one of a master. Jesus told his disciples, "I'm not calling you servants, but I'm calling you friends and everything that I've heard from my Father I've made known to you" (John 15:15). Yet all the time that he was with them, he was being their servant. He was serving them in all that he did. Even now he continues to serve as he is seated at the right hand of the Father making intercession for us.

Abandon the idea that one man has authority over or presides over another in the church. You have no authority over another's time, talent, energy or money. It was for freedom that Christ set you free and set them free too! Where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty and in Christ, there is no bondage.

In the Kingdom of God the one who appears to be in authority is really the servant.

The Kingdom of God is all about relationships. Jesus wants an intimate relationship with you and he relentlessly offers his unwavering service and his servant's heart. Your behavior is of less concern to him than the intimacy of your relationship with him and with every other believer. Jesus said, "If you love me you will keep my commandments" (John 14:15-21). In other words, if you love him the natural result of an intimate-love relationship with him is that you will do whatever you can to please him. You will wash His socks without ever being asked.

Though your relationship with him and his acceptance or approval of you is not dependent upon your performance, you will try your utmost to honor him by keeping his commandments because you genuinely love him. Furthermore, if you fail to keep them, there's no condemnation for you because the Spirit of God in you will fulfill every righteous requirement of the law (Romans 8:4).

Throughout the history of the church those who sought to control and manipulate have focused attention on behavior. Many manipulated through guilt, fear and condemnation but we've come to realize that the Kingdom of God is not about our performance. The establishment of the Kingdom of God is all based on what the King has already done.

The purpose of the marital relationship is to be a living illustration of the nature of the relationship between Jesus and his bride. I've never found a man who will argue with the following statement: What a man desires more than anything else from his wife is to know that he is wanted. He needs to know that she wants to be with him in the most intimate way: that she wants to be associated with him and with all that he does. More than anything else, the one thing that is intrinsic to the very nature of God is also built into a man. He wants to be wanted. He wants to be loved.

God wants us to seek intimacy with him and he told us how much he desires it. He said, there's going to be many of you who come and say that you cast out demons in my name, you've prophesied in my name, and you've healed the sick in my name but I'm going to say to you get out of my face! Go away; depart from me because I never knew you! What does it mean when he says, "I never knew you?" (Matthew 7:23). Scripture says that every hair on your head is counted. He knows what you think, how you feel and everything else about you. So how can he say "I never knew you?" In order to answer that question you must understand the meaning of this Greek word "to know." This word is a Jewish idiom for the way a man knows a woman. It's the same Greek word used to describe the Virgin Mary's response to the angel who brought her the news that she was to have a child. She said "How can this be when I've not known a man?"

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In that day Jesus will say to them, "You never allowed me to be intimate with you." It's only through an intimate relationship with him wherein you are spiritually impregnated with the Holy Spirit of God that you can be literally transformed.

Chapter 11

Understanding the Traps – Part A

So, in Part One we discussed these three foundational legs to the stable life of a follower of Jesus. 1. Jesus is Lord; whatever He says I will do. 2. The Holy Spirit has taken up residence in me; He builds in me the character of Christ, the power of God, and my understanding of the Father's heart and will. And, 3. I openly receive the Father's unconditional love for me; He loves me because He has adopted me into His family and He keeps on loving me regardless of my performance great or shabby.

However, any of us who have spent time around the church have met people who obviously were not really walking like followers of Jesus. Many times these are people who want Jesus to be their authority. They are folks filled with the Holy Spirit who surely must know that they are loved. But

Oh yes, the big "But...."

But, they never seem to grow into Godly maturity. They keep starting out with good intentions but getting side tracked into old patterns of behavior. Sometimes we think they never were saved. Sometimes we call them "backslidden" or "carnal Christians". What is going on with these people?

An old apostle I knew would quip: "A man who has not been reconciled with his past can not live in the present; so, he has no future." What is happening with these people is that they remain in bondage, imprisoned, in things from the past which exert powerful influences in their lives. If we are to disciple people so that they can fulfill their God given functions in the Body of Christ we must set them free. Jesus proclaimed that He had received the Holy Spirit so that He might set the captives free, empower the lame to walk and enable the blind to see. These are the reasons we also receive the Holy Spirit.

Many believers are still living in an entangled mess. They're still tied to and caught up in their past. These entanglements involve ties to their past that are from their own lives and ties to their past that are from past generations (Exodus 20:5-6). These chains from their past have become a smothering blanket over their lives and prevent them from truly developing and maturing in their Christian walk. An important responsibility in discipling anyone is freeing them from their past. There are five (5) things that must be understood and pursued in the process of setting people free from their pasts.

The first is that every believer needs to learn forgive those who have hurt him. Second, each must learn to release from judgment those whom he has judged. Third we need to be set free from the distorted tendencies passed on to us from the sins of past generations. Fourth, if he has become entangled in ungodly soul ties with others, those bonds need to be severed. Fifth, many need to be set free from the demons that have been tormenting or dominating them.

To understand these things it is helpful to grasp a basic spiritual law of the universe. This principle is not a law of behavior like a speed limit or commandment. Rather it is a principle affecting all of life like the law of gravity.

The law of gravity affects every body that has mass. It doesn't matter whether you're six days old, six years old or 60 years old with a PhD in Physics. If you roll off the 20th story windowsill you will go SPLAT upon hitting the ground. That has to do with the law of gravity and it's a universal law, which applies to all bodies in the natural universe. In the same way spiritual laws apply to all of us.

A basic fundamental spiritual law is called the law of reaping and sowing. The scripture says, "Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for what a man sows that he shall also reap" (Galatians 6:7). If you sow wheat you will not get back apples you will get wheat.

Jesus gave us a very specific application of the law of reaping and sowing when he said, "With the same judgment that you judge others you shall be judged..." (Matthew 7:1-2). So what happens in this?

...spiritual laws apply to all of us.

You look at a two-year-old whose Father screams and shouts at the children and beats his wife. The two-year-old says, "My father is an angry man." You don't have to be mature, wise and understanding in order to judge someone. It's a normal human reaction for those of us who have not allowed Christ to come and change our hearts. He says, "My father is an angry man." Probably by the time he's ten or twelve, he swears that he will never treat his children the way he has been treated as a child. About the time that he's 28 and has a two-year-old running around the house, he screams and shouts at his children and beats his wife. What happens? His two-year-old looks at him and says, "My father is an angry man."

Look at the statistics of our society. You will see that is an accurate reflection of a pattern that is consistently repeating itself in many families. Children who suffer abuse almost always become abusive parents. The exceptions to that scenario are the places where the intervening grace of God has come.

Forgiving and Releasing Judgments -- However, there's a special case in the arena of unforgiveness if I have received Jesus. If I sow unforgiveness, I can't reap unforgiveness because my forgiveness was all completed 2,000 years ago at the cross. So what do I reap? Jesus told the parable about the master who had two servants: one would not forgive the other and as you may remember, he was turned over to the tormentors (Matthew 18:34). When we hold on to unforgiveness we reap demonic torment.

Earlier, when we discussed the subject of Discernment of Spirits, we briefly talked about casting demons out of people (Matthew 10:8). Yet, when you try to cast demons out of someone who is holding onto unforgiveness, you're just wasting your breath. Why do you think that is? It's because the demon is there by the authority of God. He has the authority of God to come and

harass that person so long as that person holds on to his unforgiveness. Therefore, you might as well not waste your time trying to deliver people who insist on retaining their unforgiveness of others. In this context, then, we can now conclude that holding onto unforgiveness and holding on to the judgments we've made of other people, will keep us in our past. Refusing to forgive others and refusing to release others from judgment will hold us under the curses of preceding generations that have been passed on to us. They will hold us under the curses that we've brought upon ourselves by judging other people and they will hold us under the torment of demonic influence in our lives.

Now, I have talked about two things here: Forgiving and Releasing Judgments. Although they are in some ways similar, they are also quite different. Also related to them are concepts of: trust; discernment between good and evil; consequences of our behavior and reconciliation or restoration of relationships. In order to help bring understanding to the way these things work, I want to set before you a little hypothetical illustration.

Let's say I come to your hometown and I start a little business. It's a very successful business and I'm making lots of money. Needing some additional help to run my growing business, I hear about another Christian in town named Harvey. Now, Harvey is having real financial difficulties. He has not been able to feed his wife and kids; he is about to lose his house; he is deeply in debt; and, the creditors have been hounding.

I say "Harvey, I want you to come to work for me and I will pay you a really good salary because I want you to be able to work yourself out of the hole you are in financially." With that, I bring him in and I have him work in my business. I do give him a really good salary.

Things seem to be working very well for Harvey and for me. We are very busy. Harvey is managing the sales and I am out traveling to buy more products for us to sell. I am traveling much of the time from Hong Kong and Singapore to Paris and Rio de Janeiro. After several weeks of frenetic activity, I am at home for a peaceful weekend to catch up with myself. I finally get time to sit down on a Saturday morning and catch up on all the accounting for my business.

Sadly, I discover Harvey has been stealing from me. I'm forced to recognize he has stolen \$500,000 from my business.

I go to the office on Monday morning and the first thing I do is call Harvey in and say, "You are fired. Do not clean out your desk. Do not do anything or take anything with you. Just walk out the door and do not come back. All the locks will be changed before lunch time has passed." Why do I do this? Because it is neither loving nor wise to keep a man subjected to a level of temptation he has shown he cannot resist.

Having removed Harvey from the situation, I still have two more decisions to make about Harvey. The first is, do I go and hire a lawyer to sue Harvey to get my \$500,000 back? Well, if I decide to go that route I've got two problems. The first is this: the Bible says it is better to be defrauded than to go to the law court and sue Harvey because he is my brother (1 Corinthians 6:1). The second consideration is a very practical one. I'm a realistic fellow and I know that if

I spend \$20,000 on legal fees to sue Harvey in an attempt to recover my \$500,000. I will just have lost \$20,000 more. Harvey did not own anything when he started working for me. He still does not own anything. He does not have the ability to pay back what he owes to me. I'll never recover my losses. My \$500,000 is simply gone. I will not get anything back if I sue him.

So, I call Harvey and say "Harvey, every penny you stole from me, I am treating it as a gift to God. Every penny is being charged to Jesus' account. I forgive you. You don't owe me anything. What you did to me was sin. It was evil and it certainly was a crime. We both know you should not have done it. It was completely wrong and I feel terrible about it. But I forgive you."

That is forgiveness: complete, total, and absolute forgiveness. Harvey does not owe me anything. He does not owe me repentance. He does not owe me thanks. He does not owe me a smile or a good attitude. He does not owe me a willingness to be nice or meet with me or a confession or any other thing no matter how small. Harvey owes me nothing. Jesus paid it all. That is the nature of forgiveness.

Now, some will react to this by saying with outrage, "So you are just going to treat Harvey like it was alright that he took your money."

Absolutely not! One of the great tragedies of human relationships is when people need forgiveness and we respond with, "Oh, it's alright." NO! NO! NO! It is not alright. If it were right the person would not need to be forgiven. It is all wrong. That is the point of saying, "I forgive you." It is because you wronged me. It was evil. It was wrong. But, Jesus paid the price. So, I have forgiven you just as He has forgiven me. With no strings attached, I am forgiven. With no strings attached I forgive those who hurt me.

Having forgiven Harvey and treated this as a gift to God, I still have another decision that I must make. In this state it's a crime to steal \$500,000 from someone else's business. It's called embezzlement and it's a felony. If convicted, Harvey would go to jail. Understanding that the law has been broken, do I call the local police department and have them come and arrest Harvey? They would turn him over to the prosecutor, who will then present the state's case. The jury will find him guilty and the judge will convict him. That would mean that Harvey would forever be a convict, a felon, an embezzler, a thief, a sinner.

But, sometimes desperate men do desperate things. What Harvey did to me was evil, it was sinful and it was a crime against me but I'm not going to call the police. I'm not going to turn him over to the courts. I'm going to release him from judgment. I will let Harvey be a man who stole from me but he won't be a thief. I'm going to let Harvey be a man who sinned against me but he won't be a sinner. He's a man who committed a crime against me but he's not a criminal. Do you understand the difference?

If Harvey is a man who once committed a crime then he might never commit another. But criminals are the people we expect to keep on committing crimes. If Harvey is a man who once sinned, the repentance of the Lord may touch his life and he might never sin again. But, sinners are people we expect to keep on sinning. You notice Father God does not call you a sinner. Once you come to Jesus, He believes in you and He calls you a saint. And that is what you are.

We must understand, the scriptural concept of not judging other people does not mean that we do not correctly discern that their deeds are evil. Judging people has to do with our expectations of their future not our evaluations of their past actions. God reserves to Himself the exclusive right to judge peoples' futures. And, He has declared that He will withhold that judgment until after the person has died.

If we as children of God choose to preempt the Father by judging others, there are consequences. We will reap the same judgment which we have sown. In so doing we curse our own lives by our choice to judge another. This is a terrible price to pay. Our choice to not believe in God's power to bring others to repentance works a curse that brings us under the same judgments.

And, please notice that Jesus' warning was not against being wrong about our judgments. It was a warning about the consequences of judging at all.

There is another impact from our judgments also. An effect often not recognized. When we judge another person or group of people we begin to become bitter toward the one(s) we have judged. The longer we hold on to the judgment the more our bitterness becomes rooted within us. The scripture warns us against these roots of bitterness because these roots defile not just the one who judged. These roots defile the people around us. Indeed, we often discover that this defilement has the effect of making our judgments self fulfilling prophecies. People act like we expected them to act, not because they wanted to but because our defiling bitterness pushed them into it.

I know of a local church leader on the West Coast who was ministering to a small congregation for years. There never seemed to be enough money in that small congregation, so he concluded that the people were just stingy. He preached on tithing; he preached on offerings; he preached on alms for the poor. He preached and he preached and he preached. Furthermore, he taught and he taught and he taught some more. But those stingy people still would not give.

Finally, with a feeling of great relief, he heard the call of the Lord to move from that congregation to another congregation. He'd only been there two or three months when he got a letter from the pastor who had taken over the congregation that he had left. The letter read "I want to thank you and tell you how grateful I am that you taught these people to be such generous people. They have blessed us and poured out lavishly upon us with such great generosity." His judgment of the people had not only affected him but had also produced a root of bitterness within him that defiled the people.

It is important for us to get people set free from their past for their own sake. But, it is also important to get them free from their past for the whole Body's sake. As believers, it's important for us to learn early in our lives the terrible consequences of sitting in judgment of our brothers and sisters, and of sitting in judgment of the world.

I am amazed when I watch a congregation of people in this country proclaim judgment on our nation time after time after time. They seemingly do it without remembering that the scripture specifically says that judgment must begin with the household of God (1 Peter 4:17). If you want to sit in judgment of your city, your county, your state or your nation, remember that the first entity that God is going to sit in judgment of is his own family. He will not sit in judgment of the nations until first he has judged his family. I suggest, therefore, that you be really careful of the judgment you think you want to bring upon your nation.

I understand the reality for those of you who have lived in abusive homes. I know that many times someone comes into our lives who sins against us and sins against us and sins against us, the same sin over and over and over and over. Some of you live in a home with someone who is addicted to anger. I understand how painful it is when you wake up every morning not knowing what's going to happen that might set that person off.

Let me clear up a lie that has sometimes been fostered by the silence of the church. No one in the entire universe has the right to abuse you. NO ONE! You are free to walk away from any abusive person. Whether it is a spouse, a parent, a sibling, a co-worker, or any other person, you are free to walk away from abuse.

But whether you walk away or stay, you need to forgive the people who have hurt you. How many times does one forgive? Forgive him 70 times 7 (Matthew 18:22). The 70 times 7 didn't have anything to do with a tally of 490 times? It had to do with the need to stop counting.

Often, I get a response that asks: "Stuart, are you saying, now that you forgave Harvey and released him from judgment, you intend to trust him and hire him back and restore the relationship just like it was."

Again the answer is NO! NO! NO!

This deceptive misunderstanding has been one of the most effective tools of the enemy to keep us imprisoned in our unforgiveness and judgmental attitudes. There are two important aspects of human relationships we need to understand to completely debunk this deception.

First, look at how trust really works in human relationships. With anyone, when you first meet him, absent some internal prejudices on your part or some external indicators he shows, you will grant him the gift of a certain level of trust. Even if a stranger drives toward you on a street, you will trust him at least to stay on his side of the street unless you see him weaving all over the road. In a familial or loving relationship, the level of trust is much greater. That initial trust is simply a gift we give.

If we never took the risk of giving a little trust we would not be able to operate in our society. But, when the drunk is weaving all over the road, only a fool continues to trust his driving. When the robber waves a knife in ones face, only a fool continues to trust his good intentions. When Harvey embezzles my money, even though I completely forgive him; even though I refrain from judging him and form no opinion about how he will act tomorrow, I would have to be a fool to hand him the keys to the cash box.

Trust is initially given as a gift. But, once it has been betrayed, trust can only be restored when the one who betrayed it earns the trust over time. And, sometimes that can be a very long time indeed.

“Well then,” I am often asked, “what does it mean that we are ambassadors of reconciliation? Can relationships really be restored?”

Yes, relationships can be restored. They will not be like they were before they were broken. Like broken bones that have been set and healed, healthy restored relationships will be even stronger than they were before they were broken. But, reconciliation and restoration of relationship depend on the active willingness and participation of both people involved. You are powerless to help two people be reconciled until the Lord enables each of them to desire reconciliation and restoration.

Neither your freedom nor your disciples freedom, which we are discussing here ever depends on anyone else. It was for freedom that Christ has set you free. But, just because you are free does not mean that your relationships will all be restored. Sometimes we must live for the rest of our lives with the consequences of a broken relationship.

Chapter 12

Understanding the Traps – Part B

In this modern era of pseudo-intellectualism and psycho-babble analysis we often encounter long standing debates like whether people are more influenced by their genetic make-up or by the nurturing they receive as they are reared. The difficulty, of course, with these discussions is that they rarely acknowledge, even in passing the spiritual forces that are responsible for significant parts of the outcome of men's lives. The Scriptures, however, teach us that all that is visible is rooted in and has been made from the spiritual which is not visible. Thus, all our attempts to explain things will fall short of being complete so long as we insist on refusing to discuss the spiritual aspects.

Generational Iniquities -- One of these aspects is revealed in God's description of His own glory to Moses set forth in Exodus. There God says that the sins of the Fathers affect the children as far as the third and fourth generations. (On a side note: He also says that a healthy relationship with God affects our children to many generations.) This evil affecting of the future generations is described in other places as generational iniquity. A concept that is so unused that most of us have no idea what it might mean.

The concept of an iniquity is like trying to shoot an archery match when all of your arrows have been bent. When the arrows are bent, no matter how skilled the archer, it is almost impossible to hit the target. It is not that we intend to miss the target. Even our most careful aim at the bulls-eye continues to miss the mark.

God does not tell us these things as some perverse hatred He has for unborn children. He explains so we will be aware as Fathers that our intentional choices to rebel against God, our sins, have long term consequences. This is not an expression of His dis-like of our children. It is an explanation that the spiritual laws of the universe can not be lightly ignored. Thus, as we discussed in the previous chapter, the man who abuses his wife or child is bending his children's arrows. He is greatly increasing the probability that his children and grandchildren will also become abusive parents.

But, abuse is only one of the many places we see this phenomenon. Children of divorced parents are much more likely to break their own marriage vows. Children of alcoholic parents are much more likely to become alcoholics. Children of addicts are much more likely to become addicts. We could continue the list through many more examples.

Why is this true? Because what a man sows he will also reap. Some of the things we sow, whether as farmers or as parents will still be being reaped by future generations. These generational iniquities continue on with a crippling effect on people's spiritual maturation until some one sets the person free.

Soul Ties -- Another crippling tool of the enemy over men's lives is one that comes from their own actions rather than from their ancestors. Bondage can be created between people. Some of these bonds are good and Godly. A man and his wife become "one flesh." They are tied to each other in ways that they are not intended to be tied to any other person. What is rarely acknowledged in our sexually promiscuous society is that people develop a similar bond with every person with whom they have sex.

Unhealthy soul ties between adult offspring and their parents are so common that we have developed terminology to describe them. We discuss being tied to Mama's apron strings or having an Oedipus complex.

Sometimes this bondage grows out of a covenant of relationship we voluntarily form. Two little girls in third grade who swear to each other that they will be "best friends forever," can grow up to live in a bondage that drags one of them away from her walk in Jesus. The same dynamic can shape the lives of two boys at scout camp who cut their thumbs, mix their blood, and proclaim themselves "blood brothers forever."

Tragically, but necessary to acknowledge, some of these soul ties has arisen from manipulative relationships formed in the name of the church. People, some of them deceived but with good intentions, have encouraged faithful believers to form "discipleship" or "covenant" relationships. These relationships, often very helpful at first, can result in a manipulative bondage.

Three things will always characterize healthy relationships in the Body of Christ: 1. Each person will always be encouraged to hear God for himself even when he disagrees with the apparent leaders. 2. Each person will always be free to make his own choices. 3. Each person will remain open to receive from as well as give to the other. In the Kingdom of God there is no such thing as a hierarchy among believers. There is no such thing as "clergy" and "lay persons."

Demons -- Demons are spirits, angelic beings aligned with Satan. Because man has been given dominion over the Earth, the power of these demons over man can only arise by the actions of man. For those who are children of God, either we, or someone around us, allow them to deceive us or we act in a way that authorizes them to affect us. There is nothing shameful about having a demon affecting your life. That has happened to thousands of people. What is silly is for us to allow the demonic activity to continue. We are intended to be free of demons.

Actions that Authorize: As we discussed above one of the most common actions that we take that authorizes demon activity in our lives is that we refuse to forgive the people who have hurt us. Holding on to unforgiveness is like drinking poison and waiting for someone else to die. Our unforgiveness is not ultimately affecting the person we will not forgive. But, it is always affecting us. Our holding on to unforgiveness authorizes satanic demons to torment us. That authority continues until we choose to forgive thereby revoking the basis of the authority.

Other actions that can authorize demon activity include, but are not limited to: engaging in witchcraft, sorcery, or occult practices; utilizing addictive substances; participating in sexual immorality; and, inviting the demons into our lives in exchange for the power, profit and/or pleasure we gain in return.

Deception. Sometimes we become the victims of demons not as a result of our choices to rebel against God but, like Eve, we are deceived by the lying spirits. Often these deceptions can become most difficult to set straight. Notice that the entire New Testament letter to the Galatian Called Out Ones revolves around the Holy Spirit's desire to release the people from a subtle deceptive lie. The Church in Galatia had been tricked into believing that they had to follow a set of religious rules in order to please God. Our religious deceptions are the ones most difficult to set straight because they seem so "godly."

Others Open the Door. Many of the demons who affect our lives are neither the result of our actions nor of our being deceived. Rather they are the result of the actions of some other person who opened the way for the demons to affect us. A few examples: Most young children of divorced parents become the victims of spirits of abandonment, rejection and fear. Most victims of sexual abuse, particularly violent sexual attacks become victims of spirits of perversion, promiscuity, and/or violence. Many children of addicted parents become victims of spirits of addiction. Etc. etc.

Many of the people who were first affected by these demons as children in their homes have lived with the demonic activity for so long they have no concept of life with out the demons. They actually believe they are normal and that all normal people feel and think the way they do.

We recognize demons by the spiritual gift of discernment of spirits. They are not intellectually figured out. A demon affected person and another person may be sitting side by side doing exactly the same things in response to exactly the same input. Discernment of which is which is by the power of the Holy Spirit not by our analysis. Because the Holy Spirit produces in us the fruit of self-control, when ever we encounter people who are unable or unwilling to control their abnormal behavior we might reasonably suspect that we are either dealing with mental illness or demonic activity. (Not all mental illness is demonic and not all demonic activity produces mental illness.)

Ongoing demonic activity in a person's life will produce a stronghold. That is an area of life where even though the person knows and wants to do the will of God, he has no real hope of walking in it. When we are told that the weapons of our warfare are powerful even to the tearing down of strongholds these are the situations being described. Sadly, much of the church feels powerless to deal with these situations. We are not powerless. We really can set people free. The Spirit of the Lord is now upon you to set captives free.

Neither your freedom nor your disciples freedom, which we are discussing here ever depends on anyone else. It was for freedom that Christ has set you free.

Chapter 13

Setting People Free

We have examined five things which keep people prisoners of their pasts: Unforgiveness; Judgments; Generational Iniquities; Soul Ties; and Demonic Activity. So how do we get people free? Getting people free is really not all that complex. You should realize that this is truly simple stuff; this is the children's bread of life. Every child of God has a right to be set free from his past and there's no reason why any disciples should remain entangled in their past except that no one has come to tell them how they can be free.

First, let us understand some things about the Kingdom of God. This Kingdom is not about empty talk. This is a Kingdom in which every son of God has the right to power over all the forces of evil. This is not practicing religious formalities but denying that we have real power to effect real change for real people.

We have power in our own lives and we have power to set other people free as well. BUT, there is one important limitation. This comes back to the relationship issue. You do not have power over other people. If you like your prison cell and enjoy its security and comfort, then I may be able to unlock the door but I do not have authority to drag you out. Some people choose to remain in prison.

There is another factor that will sometimes frustrate us for a while. It is best understood by looking at the training of an elephant. Elephant trainers, when the elephant is young and not yet to its full strength, chain one of its feet to an immovable anchor in the ground with a short length of very strong chain. The young elephant learns after a while that no matter how hard he struggles he can not break the chain; he can not get free.

When the trainer wants to work with the animal, he undoes the chain and takes the animal to work. When they are done the foot is again chained. Eventually the elephant completely gives up trying to break the chain. This is a lesson the elephant never forgets.

When the elephant has reached its full strength it could with little effort break even a very strong chain. And yet still he remembers the lesson of his youth. The elephant can be tied in place with only a simple weak rope attached to the foot he learned he could never free. Why? Because he does not believe he can break free so he does not even try. He just submits to the remembered bondage of his youth.

So, while we can unlock the prison doors and cut the chains of bondage, we must trust the Father to give the people love, security and confidence to walk in their freedom. He loves them more than we do. We can trust him. We never manipulate people so they conform to our good ideas. We let the Father take care of them.

How? All of us want to know how to be free and how to set others free. But before we can address that question honestly, we need to address for a moment “Who?” Many errors are propagated among us by cookbook recipes which never address who is the cook and who runs the kitchen. It is the power of God that sets men free, not our power. As sons of God modeled after Jesus, we only do what we see the Father doing; we only speak what we hear the Father speak. We are simply doing the works which He, the Father, prepared for us in the eternal realm. As such, obviously, we are utterly reliant upon hearing the Holy Spirit reveal to us what Father is doing. This is never an intellectual exercise it always remains spiritual.

So then, in the context of acting as sons of God, how does the power of God flow through us? The power of God is embodied in the words which God speaks. Every word of God accomplishes the purpose for which He sent it. God speaks His words through us. Just as Jesus was sent, we are sent. We are sent to be the word of God dwelling among people.

In this context Jesus proclaimed that we, His followers, have some inherent capabilities as we operate in our sonship. 1. When we forgive sin, it is forgiven. 2. What we release here on Earth is released in the spiritual realm also. 3. We cast out demons.

Not only are we children of God; we are also children of Adam. As such, we are made in the image of the creator God. In this regard we have the right to take dominion over our portion of the world. As such, we each have the power to forgive, or not forgive, the people who have hurt or offended us. In the same way, we have the power to judge people around us or to release them from our judgments.

Because we are made in His image God sees in us a quality like His. That is this: When He makes a decision of His will and proclaims it, it is true. In the same manner when you make a decision of your will (within your sphere of power) and you proclaim that decision, God accepts that as true.

Thus, if you decide to forgive me and you say, “Lord Jesus, I forgive Stuart for offending me.” Then, I am forgiven.

Similarly, if you decide to release me from judgments you have made about me, and you say, “Lord Jesus I release Stuart from the judgments I have made about him.” Then I am released and the judgments are abolished.

Now, neither of these things mean you will feel good about me or about what I did. Your feelings are an entirely different issue and they do not change your spiritual reality even though they may make it difficult for you to operate in a social situation with me.

You’ve got to learn to release people from their past. That doesn’t make them perfect people. Only God grows his children up to be perfect people. But when you hold on to their past and hold them imprisoned in it, it retards their ability to grow up. At the same time it cripples your spiritual development. Sin is terrible and when you’re sinned against it hurts. Jesus knows that. It hurts a lot. He’s been sinned against more than any of us. He’s been insulted repeatedly, over and over and over and over again. If you take a look at the first chapter of Romans, you’ll see

that the fundamental nature of sin, the very essence of the nature of sin, is that we are elevating something that was created by God, above the glory of the one who created it (Romans 1:21-23).

**Release him from judgment. Forgive him, even as God has released you from judgment
and forgiven you.**

Now the scripture also tells us that it was Jesus, by whom, for whom and through whom everything was created (Colossians 1:16 & John 1:3). So, the fundamental nature of sin is when you sin, you're insulting Jesus. You are stealing from him the glory to which he has an absolute right. The fundamental nature of forgiveness is that you lay down your life and provide a way to restore the relationship with someone who is still actively insulting you and hurting you. Forgiveness is not based on repentance first. The offender is not required to repent before you will forgive him. It's not based on his apology to you so that you can withhold your forgiveness until he apologizes. Jesus laid down his life and forgave us while we were still insulting him, hurting him, stealing from him and generally willing to nail him to a cross: one of the most miserable and painful deaths imaginable. Don't encourage people to wait until everything's all right before they will forgive. That's certainly not God's way.

So how can you do this after having been abused, violated, deceived, etc.? I am not suggesting for one moment that you feel good about having \$500,000 stolen from you or being robbed of your dignity. You can't feel good about having your independence stolen and the peace of your home taken away. I don't want you to feel good about those things. Those are not things in which we take joy. They are painful, hurtful, experiences that we would sooner forget but we must deal with them or we end up paying an even greater price through our unforgiveness. I am suggesting this: that we make a willful decision to forgive and release from judgment those who have hurt us.

I didn't forgive Harvey because I'm happy that he now has my \$500,000. I forgave Harvey because, as a decision of my will, I chose to forgive him and to not hold on to an expectation that somehow I would get even. I chose to forgive Harvey because there's no possible way Harvey could pay me back anyhow. Harvey couldn't take away the pain that I felt from being exploited and victimized. I had my \$500,000 stolen and I had my trust in him violated. There's no way he could pay it back. It's not just because he doesn't have the \$500,000 but because it wouldn't take away the pain of what he had done even if he handed me back the \$500,000 plus interest.

So you forgive as a decision of your will. It is not because you feel good. It is not because everything's all right, but because everything's all wrong. People come to us in their own fumbling way to ask for forgiveness and we say, "Oh, it's all right." No, it's not all right! They actually did sin against us. We need to be honest and say, you really did hurt me very deeply but I forgive you.

Forgiveness is not pretending that you were never hurt. Forgiveness is not pretending that whatever was done to you is okay. Forgiveness is releasing people from the expectation that they're going to make it right.

Releasing them from judgment is not saying that there was never a wrong committed. Releasing them from judgment is not to say they haven't sinned. Releasing them from judgment is to say, "I'm not going to put you in the box of being that kind of person. I'm going to let you be in God's hand and free to become all that God has destined you to be."

**Every child of God has a right
to be free from his past.**

So how do you get free and help others to get free too? It's really not a complicated process. So I'm going to give you a chance to experience it and to function in it right here, right now.

While you have been reading this the Holy Spirit has been speaking to you. His Spirit of Forgiveness has been working in you. He is reminding you of someone who has hurt you. So, right now just speak a simple thing to the heavens:

Lord Jesus, I forgive _____ (fill in the blank). I forgive (Him or Her) for _____.

Now, let the Holy Spirit help you remember other people who have hurt you in the past. They may be parents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts, ex-husbands, ex-wives, children, employers, people who worked with you. All kinds of people in your life, who have one way or another, come into your life and they have done something that was evil to you. But you know that when you're holding a nail for someone and he hits your thumb on purpose or by accident, it really doesn't matter because either way it still hurts. It's not a question of that person's motivation. You don't know the motive of that person's heart anyway. It's only a matter of your decision to forgive. For each one:

Lord Jesus, I forgive _____ (fill in the blank). I forgive (Him or Her) for _____.

Now just keeping going through all the people the Holy Spirit brings to your mind.

Virtually every person has at one time or another, been hurt by his parents. As you go through this process I want you to get very specific about the realities of your own life. Just go ahead and speak out loud into the heavenly realm. Let your voice be heard. "Lord Jesus, I forgive my father. I forgive him for the anger that he poured out on me. I forgive him for abandoning me when I needed him. I forgive him for all the ways in which he hurt me. Lord Jesus, I forgive my mother. I forgive her for not being there to protect me when I needed her. I forgive her for not teaching me to love. I forgive her for all the ways that she hurt me."

Go ahead and continue down the list that the Holy Spirit is bringing to your mind right now. Just continue to say "Lord Jesus I forgive..." and fill in the blanks. Proclaim forgiveness for every single person that the Holy Spirit brings to your mind. Forgive the young woman who rejected you. Perhaps it was a person who did not hurt you directly, but, he hurt someone you love.

Take your time.

Okay, have you covered them all?

Alright now another simple little bit to speak:

Lord Jesus, I release all these people from the judgments that I've made about them. Lord Jesus, I forgive myself and I release myself from the judgments I've made about me. Lord Jesus, I release you from the judgments I've made that you've been unfair to me. I give up my right to judge you, Lord Jesus. I give up my right to judge myself and I give up my right to judge other people. Amen!

If you have forgiven all the people the Holy Spirit brought to your mind and released them from your judgments I have one more thing I want you to say if you agree with it.

Lord Jesus, I renounce Satan and all of his demons. I renounce all power and pleasure they have given me. I revoke any authority I may have given to any of them. Amen!

If you have renounced Satan and his demons, I want to write something very personal from me to you.

You are the loved one of God.

I forgive you. All of your sins, from the day you were born right through until today, are completely forgiven. From the worst, most degrading of your intentional sins to the little things you just forgot to do are now forgiven. No one in the universe has the authority to accuse you of anything that happened before this moment in time. You are completely clean.

All of your sin is completely forgiven and I release you from the curse of your sins. I release you from the iniquities of your father's sins. I release you from the iniquities of your mother's sins. I release you from the iniquities of all the sins of the past generations of your family.

I release you from every curse that has ever been spoken over you. I release you from every word of condemnation that has been spoken about you or to you. I release you every judgment that has been spoken over you.

I release you from every unholy bondage to any other person.

I command every demon that has been harassing your life because of your unforgiveness to leave you. I command every demon that has been affecting your life to be silent.

The demons have no authority over you and you are free; you are completely free.

It was for freedom that Christ set you free so don't be tangled up again. Be quick to forgive those who hurt you. Be quick to release from judgment those that you begin to judge.

You might feel like you could just float right up now because such a heavy weight has been lifted off of you. Many of you know that you're free like you've never been free in your life before.

Give the love and forgiveness of God to people generously. Expending forgiveness on people will never be wasted because it's the goodness of God that brings people to repentance (Romans 2:4) and not his judgment.

Pour out love lavishly.

Spread forgiveness like wildfire.

People who are free from their sin and free from their past can grow up into the Kingdom of God in the fullness of all that he has for them.

**Holding onto unforgiveness
is like drinking poison.**
