

A Word Of Hope

Biblical Mentor Study Guide

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This Mentor's Study Guide is designed to help you and help you to help others think Biblically and to apply the Gospel and God's Word to life's struggles.

<http://www.biblicalmentor.com/free-resources.html>

TOPICAL CHOICES:

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How to Use This Study Guide:

This guide is meant to be RELATIONAL. Yes, you can benefit from using it alone, but it is best done in some form of community where there can be accountability, teaching and guidance, and iron sharpening iron.

It is suitable for both teens and adults.

Some of the content appears to be written to only the mentor or counselor, but consider this - all of us are both mentors and mentees, counselors and counselees, teachers and students, all at the same time to varying degrees.

Most of your contexts for using this book will be one person who is more spiritually mature than another or older than another, guiding another through the applicable lessons. But even if you are the younger person, you will want to consider learning and passing on what you learn to another, too.

Ministry should multiply. Whether you are the mentor or the mentee, you will both be using what you learn in this study guide and passing it on to others.

Here are some relationship contexts where this study guide would be useful:

- *Mentor and Mentee
- *Counselor and Counselee
- *Friends
- *Family
- *Parent and Child
- *Small Groups
- *Discipleship relationships
- *Youth Leader and Student
- *Sunday School Teacher and Student

When we say this guide is meant to be relational, this means that you will study on your own as “homework,” but then come together in a relationship to discuss the study, apply it to your life, and pray together. That generally works best if you meet once a week, but that is not a requirement to get full benefit from this guide.

You are welcome to use this Guide any way you wish, of course, but it is designed to be utilized in the following manner –

You will notice that this Guide contains several topical chapters after the “Tools” are explained. You are welcome to go through any or all of them that apply to the current discussions you wish to have with your counselee, mentee, or anyone you are walking alongside. But please do not only use the topical sections alone. They are meant to target key struggles and to be studied and discussed along with doing other ongoing book by book Bible reading, memorization, and prayer together.

Your format in your mentoring, discipling, small group, or wherever you are using this book should look like this:

1. **Choose a topical section to work through.** Pick something that one or both of you are struggling with or one that simply interests you. As homework between meetings, read the lesson and look up all Scriptures that are given. Answer the questions provided.

You will discuss your study progress when you meet.

Plan together how much of it you will do each time and take as long as you need in order for it to sink in to your hearts.

2. **Pray.** In between your meetings, pray for each other. When you meet, share personal prayer needs, and spend some time in prayer together. Don’t neglect this - it’s critical to both of you in your mentoring relationship.

3. **Every day, jot down 3 things you are thankful for.** After building this habit over time, it will be an amazing attitude-adjuster as it causes you to focus your mind on God's goodness, provision, and immense love for you! Be sure to share your gratitude journal with one another as time allows.

Keeping it simple: In summary, here is what you will do as you proceed with your mentoring or counseling or discipling relationship.

HOMEWORK.

1. Work through the agreed upon topical section. Use journal pages for answers as needed.
3. Pray for your mentor/mentee.
4. Write down 3 things you are thankful for each day.

MENTORING MEETINGS

1. Mentoring Q & A
 2. Discuss your topical section insights. Plan the next week's plan for how much of the lesson to accomplish, or which topic to begin as you finish one.
 3. Share what you are thankful for.
 4. Share prayer requests and spend time praying for each other.
- (A-C-T-S) Adoration / Confession / Thanksgiving / Supplication (ask)

YOUR TOOLS

Mentor's Bible Study Method:

As you are doing your personal study in God's Word, it can be helpful to use a "guide." This is also a method you can use to teach others - maybe someone you are discipling or mentoring yourself.

Feel free to use it as it is intended - as a GUIDE. That means you can skip the things that don't apply to a particular verse or passage or add in things that you want to as you decide to dig deeper than this guide takes you.

It is up to you how you use it, and it is meant to encourage you to think about God's Word interactively.

The Mentor's Bible Study Method is something you will become very familiar with as you utilize this book. It is simply this:

*Meditate *Memorize *Meaning *Meet *Master *Mentor*

Meditate:

*Pray for understanding and guidance as you seek God's wisdom.

*Read the passage several times, at least 4-5 times. Feel free to read it in several versions and listen to an audio version if you wish.

*Take all or a portion of it and rewrite it in to your own words (paraphrase).

Memorize:

Read the chosen verse(s) repeatedly, daily, and commit the verse(s) to memory.

Meaning:

Some questions to ask about the passage:

- * What is the main lesson and what are the overriding spiritual principles in the passage?
- * How does this passage pertain to me specifically?
- * Who are the main characters, and what role do they play in the passage?
- * What verse(s) are significant in the passage?
- * Is there an example to follow?
- * Is there an error to avoid?

- * Is there something revealed that a person should obey?
- * Is there a promise to claim?
- * Is there a prayer to echo?
- * What cross-references have you discovered that pertain to this study?
- * What key words do you see in the passage? (Do a simple word search using a dictionary, concordance, and other Mentor's Resources tools that you wish for deeper study.)
- * If you are studying people in Scripture, do a search on other places this person is mentioned and ask "What insights have I found into this person?" (What is their reputation/ character qualities/background/significant events/relationships they were in/personality description, etc.)

This is a guideline, so you can adapt it to the study you are engaged in at the time. Add to it or delete from it so that it is something that works for you.

A note about CONTEXT: As you look to answer some/all of the above questions, remember to always check the context. You do that by reading well before the passage, well after the passage, and by looking at any cross-references you have available. As you look at the context, it is best to read that entire chapter of Scripture or the entire book for deeper context study.

Meet:

Meet with Jesus in the passage! The Bible as a whole is the revelation of Jesus Christ. The Old Testament points to Him, the Gospels give the details of His earthly life, and Acts and Letters show His activity in the world. Therefore, it is possible to find Jesus' presence in all areas of the Bible! From the passage you are studying, find out what you can discover about the nature, ministry, or person of Christ. Look for the Gospel.

Master:

Master the Scripture. Ask yourself "Am I living it?" and plan to be obedient to what you believe the Spirit is saying. Interact with the passage mentally and also on paper to make it personal. You can also briefly write down any further

questions you have about what the text means. These questions can be helpful for future study. God can use them to help you understand the Bible better.

Ask yourself, “How will I begin to apply what I have learned, how do these insights apply to me personally, and what am I going to do about them?”

Mentor:

Ask the following questions:

- * How has this passage challenged me personally?
- * How might this passage challenge someone else in my life?
- * How can I share hope from this passage?
- * Who do I know who needs to have a word of hope right now?

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It is always good to ask God to search your heart and do some self-examination!

The following are some things that will give you more fruitful ministry and could be considered “qualifications” of someone who mentors, teaches, disciples, etc.

- \*Be more of a listener than answer-giver.
- \*Be certain that you, as a believer, are called to it.
- \*Esteem others more highly than yourself.
- \*Love God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength.
- \*Have a strong love for God’s people of all ages.
- \*Have a love for God’s Word.
- \*Know how to go to God’s Word for answers, rather than secular sources.
- \*Enjoy seeing people transformed by God’s Word.
- \*Be willing to be stretched beyond your comfort zone.
- \*Be willing to let God work in your heart, starting with your thoughts, beliefs, and desires.
- \*Be willing to be committed, even when people are difficult.
- \*Be willing to seek counsel for yourself when you are struggling.
- \*Be humble, patient, and kind towards others.

- \*Have regular devotional time and Bible Study for your own walk.
- \*Have a meaty prayer life.
- \*Memorize Scripture.
- \*Serve the body in your local church.
- \*Attend church regularly.
- \*Fellowship with believers regularly.
- \*Evangelize in your sphere of influence.
- \*Read quality books from Christian authors that challenge you to grow.

TOPICAL CHOICES:

- \*Anger and Forgiveness
- \*Worry, Fear, Anxiety and Stress
- \*Depression
- \*Grief and Loss
- \*Relational Conflict and Peacemaking
- \*Fear of Man and Insecurity
- \*Decision Making
- \*Thought Life
- \*How To Change
- \*Strongholds and Addictions
- \*Guilt, Shame and Regret



## Anger and Forgiveness

You may wonder why we have both anger and forgiveness in the same lesson. More often than not, they go hand in hand. A woman who is unforgiving is an angry woman. An angry woman is unforgiving. The only antidote for anger is forgiveness. The world offers many so-called “solutions” to anger problems. There are anger management courses, medications to calm anger, psychological methods for unleashing your anger, and any number of self-help remedies. Anger does not always look “angry.” It can be expressed outwardly, which is what we most commonly think of when we think about anger. It can also be turned inward, which eventually causes feelings of depression. A depressed woman may not look angry to you, but often when you dig deeper with her and take a look at her heart (her thoughts, beliefs, and desires), you will find an angry woman who has allowed her anger to go unresolved. There is very likely unforgiveness in her heart.

When you are sharing hope with someone with an angry and unforgiving heart, it is critical to review the Gospel with her. Be as certain as you can that she understands it clearly and that she believes it. Then begin to teach her to apply it to her anger and unforgiveness. If after a time you are not seeing any evidence that she is growing in her ability to forgive, you need to consider encouraging her to seek help from a Biblical Counselor.

It is helpful to understand anger and forgiveness accurately before you can offer hope to others. First, let’s take a look at anger. Anger is defined as an emotional response to a perceived wrong. It is a feeling of outrage when perceiving or thinking about injustice.

Ephesians 4:26-27 tells us not to sin when we are angry. While not all of our anger is sinful, most of it is. Anger is sinful if it results from not getting our way. Self-centeredness is at the center of sinful anger.

“In your anger, do not sin. Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.” (Ephesians 4:26-27)

To express righteous anger, first, we must understand what makes God angry, and, second, how God expresses His anger. The Bible tells us all we need to know about this. A big part of our problem is the limited time we spend in God's Word seeking to know Him and live by His Truth.

Psalm 7:11 says, "God is angry with the wicked every day." However, note that whenever the Bible describes God as angry, He remains holy and just. God is slow to anger, yet simultaneously merciful, gracious, compassionate, forgiving, and abundant in lovingkindness and truth – read Psalm 103:8-18. Note primarily that God's anger is ALWAYS directed at rebellion or disobedience to His commands, which are always holy and just and for His glory and our good. Read the following Scriptures: Deuteronomy 29:14-21; Psalm 78:21-22; Romans 2:5; and Hebrews 3:7-11.

As we limit our expressions of anger to God's model, we will find ourselves far less burdened with feelings of vengeance and remorse. Man's sinful, self-centered anger never accomplishes God's purposes (James 1:19-20). It's about Him, not about you or me.

If we have limited our expressions of anger to God's model, we are also far more likely to be forgiving. The following are some statements drawn from various resources about forgiveness for you to consider. Use them to evaluate whether or not you are harboring any unforgiveness, and use them to share hope with others.

\*The parable in Matthew 18:21-35 teaches us about the nature of love as we forgive others: Forgiveness cancels a debt (this is a metaphor for forgiveness). When there is a debt, someone must pay. Either the one who owes must pay it back, or the one who is owed must absorb the loss.

Forgiveness requires bearing the pain and loss yourself.

Just as Jesus bore our sin as He forgave us on the cross, so must we willingly bear our offender's sin when we forgive them.

\*Forgiveness is not a feeling; it is a choice. The feelings of forgiveness come as a result of forgiveness and reconciliation. We are commanded to forgive!

\*Forgiveness is totally undeserved. No one deserves it. There is no good work we can do to earn God's forgiveness. Likewise, the person who offended you can never do enough to deserve your forgiveness. God forgave you out of mercy. You must choose to show mercy and forgive in the same manner that you have been forgiven (see Ephesians 4:32).

\*Forgiveness is a threefold promise:

1. Forgiveness means that you will not bring up that offense again or use it against them. The only reason to ever bring it up is for the purpose of reconciliation, not vengeance.
2. Forgiveness means that you will not bring it up to others in gossip or malign them because of it. We too often fall into gossip and place all blame on others.
3. Forgiveness means you will not bring it up to yourself and dwell on it. You do not replay the videotape of the sin and you do not savor the details.

\*Failure to forgive turns victims into victimizers. When we fail to forgive, we are active, not passive. We want to extract payment until we are satisfied. We take God's place and dole out doses of our own version of justice.

\*Forgiveness is both an event, and a process. When we forgive someone, it is an event of "I forgive you." In addition, every time we remember the offense or think about it, we must continue to forgive again and again and again. We must remember the threefold promise we made and we must not act on any sinful desire for revenge.

\*If you do not understand forgiveness as an event and a process, discouragement and guilt can set in, and anger lingers. Lingering anger becomes bitterness. This is because the decision to forgive may not immediately eradicate the hurt, lack of trust, and anger you have towards the person. But if you see it as both an event and a process, discouragement and guilt are minimized. You know you HAVE forgiven, even though you are also aware of your temptation to make the person pay. This awareness keeps you vigilant against the sin in your own heart. It leads you to God's strength when you struggle.

\*Forgiveness is not forgetting. The word remember in Scriptures about forgiveness does not refer to memory, but to the promise not to treat that person as their sins deserve, just like God does not treat us as our sins deserve. He chooses to absorb the cost himself in the person and work of Jesus Christ. We must choose to absorb the cost when we forgive others (see Jeremiah 31:34).

\*Forgiving does not mean that you become vulnerable, like a doormat. Scripture does not tell us to make it easy for people to sin against us. It calls us to love them by challenging their actions. There may not always be opportunities for godly confrontation – sometimes we are called to suffer in a godly way – but this confrontation is important. It is a lack of love when we don't take the opportunity to confront in a godly way.

\*In dealing with someone who habitually sins against us: Matthew 18:15-17 outlines the steps to take if repentance and reconciliation do not occur. Forgiveness does not mean turning a blind eye to sin. Please read the passage in your Bible.

\*We are to love the sinner wisely. Romans 12:17-19 teaches us how to establish boundaries for loving a habitual sinner. In putting this into practice, you are entrusting that sinner to God instead of taking matters in to your own hands. Sometimes others have to be called in to help, and sometimes that may even mean civil authorities for safety, or church leaders for discipline. Forgiving does not make it easy for someone to sin against you.

\*Luke 17:3 says to forgive only if the person repents. Mark 11:25 says you must immediately forgive an offender if you recall a sin. BOTH ARE TRUE. One of these describes the vertical axis of forgiveness, the other the horizontal axis of forgiveness.

Mark 11:25 is the vertical: man to God. It is my own heart attitude toward the person before God. It calls me to repent of bitterness, and forgive. Forgiveness as an attitude (vertically) must be present in my heart first.

Luke 17:3 speaks of the horizontal, person to person. Forgiveness as a transaction between two people is possible only if the offender repents, admits

sin, and asks for forgiveness. But even if the offender does not repent, the offended person must maintain forgiveness as an attitude in the vertical dimension. You cannot use the offender's failure to seek forgiveness as an excuse to hold on to your anger and hurt!

\*We tend to err on the side of not forgiving rather than forgiving. Without the grace of Christ working in us, forgiving does not become part of our lifestyle. Only someone who understands she has been forgiven will routinely forgive others. But none of us will ever forgive others in a measure that equals what God has forgiven us through Christ! When we fail to forgive, we have lost sight of our own forgiven debt.

\*Sometimes our own self righteousness keeps us from forgiving. It is as if we don't think we really need to be forgiven, and our hearts have hardened.

\*Sometimes we think we are unforgivable. This may sound humble, but it is actually pride. It is as if we are saying, "My sin is so big that God's grace can't even top it!" We also may not want to rely solely on God's mercy because we would rather work for it.

\*Sometimes we think God has forgiven us, but that "I just can't forgive myself." This is totally unbiblical thinking. It is God who judges us and pronounces us NOT GUILTY by virtue of our trust in Him. But when we make the statement "forgive myself," we sit as judge and overrule God's decision.

\*Sometimes, the joy of His forgiveness has grown dim. We forget about God's grace, and we need to be constantly reminded of it through One-Another relationships and the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, Scripture, worship, and prayer.

\*FORGIVENESS and ASKING FOR FORGIVENESS are supernatural works of grace. They can only happen when God's forgiveness captivates our hearts!

Grace is getting what you don't deserve. Mercy is not getting what you do deserve. We have a gracious and merciful God. Because of His grace and mercy, let's purpose not to withhold forgiveness!

**Study from God's Word on this topic:**

As you read the following concepts, look up the Scriptures referenced. Use your preferred Bible version to do this. Write down (in your journal pages) your responses and insights.

1. Is anger in itself sinful? How do these verses address this? (Psalm 7:11; 1 Kings 11:9; 2 Kings 17:18; Mark 3:5)
2. What must be done with sinful anger? (Colossians 3:8; Ephesians 4:31-32)
3. What are some good Biblical tools to use when you are sinfully angry? (James 1:19-20; Proverbs 14:17)
4. Read these Biblical narratives and discuss how they apply to your anger:  
\*Genesis 4 ~ Cain and Abel  
\*2 Chronicles 16:10 ~ Asa
5. What is a Biblical response to anger? (Romans 12:19; Proverbs 20:22)
6. How do these verses apply to anger and forgiveness? (Proverbs 10:12; Proverbs 12:16; Proverbs 17:9; Proverbs 19:11; 1 Peter 4:8)
7. Do angry people make good companions? (Proverbs 22:24-25; Proverbs 21:19; Psalm 119:63; Proverbs 19:19)
8. What does this parable indicate about unforgiveness? (Matthew 18:23-25)
9. What must we put away? Ephesians 4:31-32)
10. What does the story of Joseph teach us about forgiveness? (Genesis 45; Genesis 50)

Examining your own heart:

Take some time to consider how this topic personally relates to you. Be honest and transparent and ready to share these insights with each other. Use a journal to write down what The Lord is revealing to you.

This will require honesty before The Lord and transparency with one another.

It is suggested that you consider the following as you examine your heart ~

- \*Identify your struggle, in your own words.
  - \*Do you have a history of struggling with this, or is this a recent struggle?
  - \*What have you tried to remedy this struggle?
  - \*Where have you turned for help and what were the results?
  - \*Have you ever heard a Biblical viewpoint on this struggle?
  - \*How does the phrase "think Biblically" apply to this struggle - what does God's Word say about it?
  - \*How does the Gospel apply to this struggle?(Spend much time on this - it's the key to overcoming the struggle!)
  - \*Have you had any victory through and from this struggle as you have studied it here?
  - \*How can your mentor or mentee pray for you regarding this struggle?
  - \*What principles from God's Word apply to this struggle? What commands apply? What promises apply?
  - \*What is your heart's condition as it relates to this struggle? What thoughts, beliefs and desires have led to this struggle? How are these thoughts, beliefs and desires revealing themselves in your emotions, attitudes, motives and behaviors?
- Put it in to practice! ~

In addition to your study time, be sure that you also apply what you are learning in a practical way. Commit together to make personal application of the hope that God has provided you in His Word. You can do this by discussing some ways that you can implement something you are learning, and then make note of it here: When you meet, be sure to ask each other how your practical commitment went

since you last met. This provides accountability!

Here are some examples of practical application of this lesson's topic:

- \*Seek forgiveness from a specific person
- \*Extend forgiveness to someone who has asked for forgiveness
- \*Confess an offense to someone and seek forgiveness
- \*When angry, journal about what triggered it, how you responded, and write down 3 strategies to avoid any unbiblical reaction next time.
- \*Think back on your life, and ask God to reveal to you anyone you have not forgiven (in the vertical sense), whether they asked for it or not.
- \*When you become angry, STOP, pray, and be slow to speak. If you are unsure that you can respond Biblically, call your mentor/counselor/helper and ask her to pray with you and offer you some guidance.



## Worry, Fear, Anxiety and Stress

Anxiety – along with fear, worry, and stress – are things that all human beings struggle with. They are closely related; therefore, in this lesson we will put them all under the term “anxiety.” Anxiety takes on various forms, and people’s responses to it take on various forms. Anxiety is the prolonged sensation of fear in response to a perceived threat against oneself. Fear, by definition, is a self-protective tool to help a person sense and respond to a perceived danger. We see this in Psalm 55:3-6.

3 “My enemies shout at me, making loud and wicked threats.

They bring trouble on me and angrily hunt me down.

4 My heart pounds in my chest. The terror of death assaults me.

5 Fear and trembling overwhelm me, and I can’t stop shaking.

6 Oh, that I had wings like a dove;

then I would fly away and rest!” (Psalm 55:3-6 NLT)

From the Psalmist’s viewpoint, he is anxious due to threats from the enemy. He is terrified of death and danger, and he perceives escape to be the best solution. This passage is a vivid example of what some might call an “anxiety attack” or “panic attack.”

While it is a common human experience to be anxious, it can be debilitating. We must think Biblically about anxiety so that it will not interfere in our relationships, damage our ability to engage in daily activities, or consume our thought life. It is natural to feel worried or troubled about things in life that are indeed worrisome or troubling! It is not God’s will or plan for you, however, to be so consumed with it that it overtakes your trust in the Lord.

Note: Anxiety that brings on a panic attack is serious, and this would be an appropriate time to urge someone to seek Biblical Counseling. The counselor is trained for and skilled to know how to best advise someone like this. Often, she will require a medical evaluation to rule out any physiological causes, and to evaluate for the appropriateness of medication. Although it is true that medications tend to be over-prescribed in many situations, it can at times be a

useful tool that can stop the effect of excessive fear and anxiety while the heart issues are dealt with through Biblical Counseling. When the counseling is effective, the medication can quite often be stopped.

Let's take a look at the difference between a person who has debilitating anxiety, and the person who sometimes feels anxious but her trust in God keeps her from an overriding anxiety. Look up the following verses, and write down what they say to us about how to deal with our stress, worry, fear and anxiety:

As you share hope with someone who is anxious, encourage her to look at her worries and fears at the heart level. What is she thinking, believing, and desiring that is feeding such anxiety? Remind her to think Biblically about these things.

### **Study from God's Word on this topic:**

As you read the following concepts, look up the Scriptures referenced. Use your preferred Bible version to do this. Write down (in your journal pages) your responses and insights.

1. When does anxiety tend to grab hold of us? (Job 23:8-9; Psalm 73:2-3; Psalm 142:4; Philippians 4:8)
2. What is the result of anxiety? Is it helpful to the situation? (Proverbs 12:25; Job 6:1-3)
3. What is a proper response to anxiety? (1 Peter 5:7; Philippians 4:6-7; Isaiah 41:10)
4. Trust alleviates anxiety. What do these verses say about that? (Psalm 139:16; Isaiah 45:5-7; James 4:15)
5. Read the following Biblical narratives and explain how they speak to anxiety:
  - \*Hannah, 1 Samuel 1
  - \*Jeremiah, Jeremiah 32:24-27
  - \*David, Psalm 13
6. What does Jesus instruct about worry? (Matthew 6:25-34; Matthew 6:25; Matthew 6:26, 28)

7. What are some "secrets" to peace? (Psalm 37)
8. What happens if we don't deal with our anxiety Biblically? (Proverbs 12:25; Proverbs 14:30; Proverbs 17:22)

Examining your own heart:

Take some time to consider how this topic personally relates to you. Be honest and transparent and ready to share these insights with each other. Use the journal pages near the back of this book to write down what The Lord is revealing to you. This will require honesty before The Lord and transparency with one another.

It is suggested that you consider the following as you examine your heart ~

- \*Identify your struggle, in your own words.
- \*Do you have a history of struggling with this, or is this a recent struggle?
- \*What have you tried to remedy this struggle?
- \*Where have you turned for help and what were the results?
- \*Have you ever heard a Biblical viewpoint on this struggle?
- \*How does the phrase "think Biblically" apply to this struggle - what does God's Word say about it?
- \*How does the Gospel apply to this struggle?(Spend much time on this - it's the key to overcoming the struggle!)
- \*Have you had any victory through and from this struggle as you have studied it here?
- \*How can your mentor or mentee pray for you regarding this struggle?
- \*What principles from God's Word apply to this struggle? What commands apply? What promises apply?
- \*What is your heart's condition as it relates to this struggle? What thoughts, beliefs and desires have led to this struggle? How are these thoughts, beliefs and desires revealing themselves in your emotions, attitudes, motives and behaviors?
- \*What "put off/put on" may be required for change?

Put it in to practice! ~

In addition to your study time, be sure that you also apply what you are learning in a practical way. Commit together to make personal application of the hope that God has provided you in His Word. You can do this by discussing some ways that you can implement something you are learning, and then make note of it here: When you meet, be sure to ask each other how your practical commitment went since you last met. This provides accountability!

Here are some examples of practical application of this lesson's topic:

\*When you feel stressed, overwhelmed, worried, fearful or anxious, first read through Philippians 4:4-9 out loud. Pray. Call your mentor if this hasn't helped and ask her to pray with you and offer you some guidance.

\*When anxious, redirect your thoughts by turning on some good praise music, a wholesome movie, read a wholesome book, engage in a hobby - sometimes distraction is your best way to counteract extreme anxiety.

\*When anxious, focus on God's faithfulness to you over your lifetime. List all the blessings He has given you.

\*If you have not had a medical exam in the past 2 years, do so now.

\*Exercise every day, eat well, and rest.

## Depression

Depression is a very common reason that women and girls seek counseling and medical care. There is debate these days about whether or not depression is a physical problem, an emotional problem, or a spiritual problem. From a Biblical standpoint, we do not need to spend much time on these debates, because ultimately the Bible still has what a depressed woman needs for her wellbeing. Whether or not you and she agree that she has a chemical imbalance, hormonal problem, or other physical cause for her depression is not the main concern. Our main concern as we do Life On Life, One-Another ministry with others is that they apply the Gospel and think Biblically. They can learn more about God and His Word and how it applies to their lives regardless of their diagnosis, medication need, emotional problem, or spiritual problem.

It is always critical for a woman dealing with depression to seek medical care. It is important to rule out serious medical issues that can cause hormonal and chemical imbalances. In cases where there is legitimate physical cause, medical care is very appropriate. Where there is no physical cause, it is up to the individual whether or not she chooses a medication treatment. There is a caution in this because medications are so easily obtained and overly prescribed. More often than not, a depressed woman with no medical cause for her depression can benefit and work through her depression with solid Biblical Counseling by a trained counselor or a well equipped mentor.

Depression is extremely common. It is not a sign of weakness or spiritual lacking – it is a sign of being human! Some signs that you are depressed are:

- \*Unable to sleep
- \*A desire to sleep too much and/or fatigue
- \*Headaches, body aches, change of appetite
- \*An overwhelming sense of sadness and hopelessness
- \*A preoccupation with the way you feel

- \*Indifference to the things of God
- \*Finding little or no enjoyment in activities that you previously have enjoyed
- \*Focusing on your circumstances more than trusting God
- \*Wishful thinking – wishing your life was different
- \*Inability to see any purpose in suffering
- \*Prolonged grieving
- \*Feeling like a failure
- \*Suppressed anger – anger turned inward becomes depression

Depression is often marked by the following:

- \*Regret about the past
- \*Helplessness about the present
- \*Hopelessness about the future

Each of us is vulnerable to suffer depression at any time, and it can be helpful initially to simply empathize. As helpful as empathy can be, it is critical to help someone who is depressed to find hope.

It is always helpful to encourage someone who is depressed to read the Psalms. In them, you find empathy and also hope as the Psalmist works through his pain realizing God is sovereign, faithful, and trustworthy.

Hopelessness indicates that there is a problem in the heart, in thoughts, beliefs, or desires. When we dwell on or long for the wrong things, we will feel depressed. God's Word offers many reasons for hopefulness.

**Study from God's Word on this topic:**

As you read the following concepts, look up the Scriptures referenced. Use your preferred Bible version to do this. Write down your responses and insights.

1. How does "depression" feel, according to Biblical descriptions? (Proverbs 18:14; Psalm 69:1-3; Psalm 6:6-7; Psalm 5:1-3)
2. Consider the following verses, and the HOPE that God provides. Personalize these verses - how do they apply to your depression? (Psalm 38:9; Psalm 9:12; Job 23:10; Psalm 43:5; Jeremiah 29:11; Psalm 16:8; Psalm 73:25-26; Ephesians 1:17-19; Isaiah 44:21; Psalm 9:18; Psalm 37:23-24; 2 Corinthians 4:16; Psalm 138:8)
3. Is sin ever involved in depression? (Genesis 4:6-7)
4. If sin is involved, what is the solution? (Psalm 32; 51; Proverbs 28:13)
5. Read the following Biblical narratives. What do they say about depression?  
\*Elijah, 1 Kings 19  
\*Job, Job 19:7-27  
\*Jeremiah, Jeremiah 20:7-18
6. How can God use your depression to bring hope to others? (2 Corinthians 1:3-4; John 14:1, 27; Ecclesiastes 3:11)
7. Can deep depression be avoided? (2 Corinthians 4:8-9; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18)
8. How did Paul avoid getting depressed in spite of circumstances? (2 Corinthians 11:23-28)

**Examining your own heart:**

Take some time to consider how this topic personally relates to you. Be honest and transparent and ready to share these insights with each other.

It is suggested that you consider the following as you examine your heart ~

- \*Identify your struggle, in your own words.
- \*Do you have a history of struggling with this, or is this a recent struggle?
- \*What have you tried to remedy this struggle?
- \*Where have you turned for help and what were the results?

- \*Have you ever heard a Biblical viewpoint on this struggle?
- \*How does the phrase "think Biblically" apply to this struggle - what does God's Word say about it?
- \*How does the Gospel apply to this struggle? (Spend time on this - it's the key to overcoming the struggle!)
- \*Have you had any victory through and from this struggle as you have studied it here?
- \*How can your mentor or mentee pray for you regarding this struggle?
- \*What principles from God's Word apply to this struggle? What commands apply? What promises apply?
- \*What is your heart's condition as it relates to this struggle? What thoughts, beliefs and desires have led to this struggle? How are these thoughts, beliefs and desires revealing themselves in your emotions, attitudes, motives and behaviors?

In addition to your study time, be sure that you also apply what you are learning in a practical way. Commit together to make personal application of the hope that God has provided you in His Word. You can do this by discussing some ways that you can implement something you are learning, and then make note of it here: When you meet, be sure to ask each other how your practical commitment went since you last met. This provides accountability!

Here are some examples of practical application of this lesson's topic:

- \*Eat well, sleep plenty, and exercise.
- \*Get up and dressed and groomed by 9:00 a.m. daily, no matter what.
- \*Reach out to one person a day with a phone call, note of encouragement, text, email, or facebook message.
- \*Volunteer to serve in a ministry.
- \*Look up examples of those who were "depressed" in Scripture, and read their stories.



## Grief and Loss

We are going to encounter people who are suffering from loss and grief from time to time. There are many types of loss, and each type brings its own form of grief. We also all grieve in different ways. Let's throw out the psychological and traditional wisdom that says that grief "comes in stages," as if it is some sort of formula to be followed. That tends to make us feel as if we are not grieving properly if we are not following that formula. That formula is not found in Scripture, although grief is evident all throughout Scripture. God's Word shows us how we are to view it Biblically and how we can minister to those who are grieving and suffering loss of various kinds.

In order to have a proper theology of grief, we need to again apply the Gospel and encourage those who are grieving to do the same.

Hebrews 6:19 reminds us that in our trials, we are anchored to God's love.

"We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure. It enters the inner sanctuary behind the curtain..."

Isaiah 12:2-3 reminds us that we have a deep, deep well to draw from.

The well of salvation! "Surely God is my salvation; I will trust and not be afraid.

The LORD, the LORD, is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation."

With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation." (Isaiah 12:2-3)

A person who is grieving, especially in the early hours and days of a loss, will respond best to simple comfort in the form of your presence, a hug, crying together, helping her with a meal or housework, or just sitting with her. We often try to use our words too soon, when her emotions are too raw and she is not ready to receive them. Ask God to lead you by His Spirit as you minister to someone who is grieving. A good practice is that it is better to say nothing and just be present than to say all the wrong things.

After some time has passed – maybe a funeral has come and gone, life around her is returning to normal and the impact of her loss is now really hitting her – you have some new opportunities for sharing a Word of hope with her. Now she will be ready to receive the comfort you can offer her from God’s Word.

We are called to offer hope to those who have suffered a loss and are grieving.

“Rejoice with those who rejoice; mourn with those who mourn.” (Romans 12:15)

Help someone apply the Gospel to their grief by reminding them that God is the source of all comfort.

\*In Genesis 6:6, God reveals that He grieves over our sin. God knows grief.

\*In Matthew 26:37-44, Jesus asked several times that His burden be removed, while still submitting Himself to the Father’s will. When we grieve, we feel that the pain is too much to bear. Jesus understands.

\*In John 11:17-44, Jesus grieves with others. We are called to grieve with others too.

\*Revelation 21:4 offers us the future hope of heaven. In our grief, we need to remember that this fallen earth is not our home.

\*He gave His only begotten Son, so that those who believe in Him will have eternal life in heaven (John 3:16). The sacrifice of His own Son caused an unimaginable grief. This is how God can meet us in our own grief – because He understands and has suffered with us and for us.

Most of us have suffered some form of loss and grief in our lifetimes. God wastes nothing, and He will use everything we go through for His glory. Often, our grief will reveal God to us in a fresh, new way. We can then pass on the comfort we have received to others. This is One-Another ministry!

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.” (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

**Study from God's Word on this topic:**

As you read the following concepts, look up the Scriptures referenced.

Write down your responses and insights.

1. What hope is there when grief overwhelms us? (Psalm 28:7; Psalm 55:22; Psalm 30:5; Isaiah 43:2)
2. Describe how God is our refuge. (Psalm 31:1; Psalm 31:9; Psalm 31:19)
3. How does knowledge of God's sovereignty comfort us in grief? (1 Thessalonians 4:13, 18; Psalm 116:15)
4. What does God say to us about our grief? (Psalm 6:8; Psalm 56:8; Psalm 199:28; Psalm 126:5-6; Isaiah 25:8)
5. How do the following Biblical narratives address grief and loss?
  - \*Isaac and Rebekah over Esau, Genesis 26:34-35
  - \*Parents, Proverbs 10:1; 17:25
  - \*Mary and Martha, John 11:1-44
  - \*Disciples regarding Jesus leaving, John 16:16-22
6. What does God say about fearing death? (Psalm 23:4; Romans 8:38-39; Hebrews 9:27; Philippians 1:21-23; 2 Corinthians 5:6-8)
7. Does grief ever end? (Isaiah 51:11)
8. How can we comfort those who are grieving? (Romans 12:15; John 11:33-36)
9. What happens to death ultimately? (1 Corinthians 15:26; Isaiah 25:8; Revelation 21:4)

**Examining your own heart:**

Take some time to consider how this topic personally relates to you. Be honest and transparent and ready to share these insights with each other. Use a journal to write down what The Lord is revealing to you.

This will require honesty before The Lord and transparency with one another.

It is suggested that you consider the following as you examine your heart ~

- \*Identify your struggle, in your own words.
- \*Do you have a history of struggling with this, or is this a recent struggle?
- \*What have you tried to remedy this struggle?
- \*Where have you turned for help and what were the results?
- \*Have you ever heard a Biblical viewpoint on this struggle?
- \*How does the phrase "think Biblically" apply to this struggle - what does God's Word say about it?
- \*How does the Gospel apply to this struggle?(Spend much time on this - it's the key to overcoming the struggle!)
- \*Have you had any victory through and from this struggle as you have studied it here?
- \*How can your mentor or mentee pray for you regarding this struggle?
- \*What principles from God's Word apply to this struggle? What commands apply? What promises apply?
- \*What is your heart's condition as it relates to this struggle? What thoughts, beliefs and desires have led to this struggle? How are these thoughts, beliefs and desires revealing themselves in your emotions, attitudes, motives and behaviors?

In addition to your study time, be sure that you also apply what you are learning in a practical way. Commit together to make personal application of the hope that God has provided you in His Word. You can do this by discussing some ways that you can implement something you are learning, and then make note of it here:

When you meet, be sure to ask each other how your practical commitment went since you last met. This provides accountability!

Here are some examples of practical application of this lesson's topic:

\*Don't spend too much time all alone. Ask someone to keep you company every couple of days.

\*Take care of business - don't neglect to make arrangements, go through personal items of the loved one who is gone, arrange financial matters, and intentionally remember God's goodness to you.

\*Eat. Sleep and exercise.

\*Let others help you, and don't dwell on any unhelpful remarks they may offer.

### Relational Conflict and Peacemaking

As long as we are involved in any kind of relationship with one another, there will be conflict. All conflict is the result of sin, as you can see by reading about Adam and Eve in the garden. Adam blamed Eve, and Eve blamed Satan; that is where a poor pattern of handling conflict began and continues today.

The Bible tells us how to make peace with one another. Conflicts between believers are always dishonoring to God. James explains that our conflicts are the result of our evil desires at the core of our heart (refer back to the heart diagram). When we strive to fulfill those desires, we will often fight in order to do so. Instead, we should submit to God.

“What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God.” (James 4:1-2)

When we do not handle conflict Biblically, there are consequences. Some of the results of using unbiblical methods of conflict resolution are seeking revenge, verbal attacks, gossip, slander, assault, and lawsuits.

Can you think of other results that you have seen in your own relationships?

Note them here:

Conflict can be seen either as a struggle or an opportunity. If we remain in the struggle mindset, we are less likely to find victory through the conflict. If we see that conflict brings opportunity to glorify God, to be more like Christ, to serve others, and to bear witness to a watching world, God can be glorified.

There is a difference between peacemaking and peacekeeping.

Peacekeepers want to avoid conflict and will do whatever it takes to do so.

Peacemakers want to resolve conflict and will do whatever God's Word teaches to do so.

It is critical that you and they understand the difference between peacekeeping and peacemaking. God calls us to be peacemakers, not peacekeepers. Do you see anything in your own life that indicates that you have been more of a peacekeeper than a peacemaker? Ask the Lord to reveal this to you.

A peacekeeper is a person who struggles with fear, insecurity, people-pleasing, peer pressure, and control, to name a few. These are all under the heading "the fear of man," which we will cover in a future lesson. For now, let's focus on how to be a peacemaker.

"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone." (Romans 12:18)

There are times that peace is out of your reach. You may find that as hard as you try to Biblically resolve conflict, the other person may not be willing to do the same. God does not hold you responsible for the sin of others. If you have done your part, as far as it depends on you, then you have honored the Lord.

Peacemaking is a work of the Spirit in our hearts, not something we can muster up on our own. There is great blessing in being a peacemaker!

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God." (Matthew 5:9)

There are some general peacemaking principles that we must consider:

\*Apply the Gospel. A large part of peacemaking is in forgiving the offender, and seeking forgiveness when we have offended.

\*Get the log out of your eye (Matthew 7:3-5). We must take responsibility for our sin in the conflict.

\*Seek forgiveness for whatever fault you have in the conflict, even if it is only a small amount of fault.

\*Extend forgiveness Biblically (see our previous lesson on forgiveness).

The Gospel Is the Key to Peace. A true peacemaker is guided, motivated, and empowered by the gospel – the good news that God has forgiven all our sins and made peace with us through the death and resurrection of his Son (Colossians 1:19-20). Through Christ, He has also enabled us to break the habit of escaping from conflict or attacking others, and He has empowered us to become peacemakers who can promote genuine justice and reconciliation (Colossians 3:12-14.)

### **Study from God's Word on this topic:**

As you read the following concepts, look up the Scriptures referenced. Use your preferred Bible version to do this. Write down (in your journal pages) your responses and insights.

1. What does Jesus say about peacemakers? Matthew 5:9
2. What are we called to do when there is conflict? Hebrews 12:14; Romans 12:18; Psalm 34:13-14; James 3:17-18
3. Why is reconciliation a priority? Matthew 5:23-24
4. What are the steps to peacemaking laid out in Matthew 18:16?
5. Do we always need to confront others? 1 Peter 1:22-23; 1 Peter 4:8
6. What personal attitudes must be present for peacemaking? Galatians 5:13-15; Galatians 5:19-20; Matthew 17:12; Galatians 5:22-23
7. How does patience tie in to peacemaking? Proverbs 15:18; Proverbs 20:3; 1 Cor. 13:4

8. How do we promote peace? Colossians 3:12-13; Romans 14:1-23; Ephesians 4:15; 4:29; 1 Corinthians 6:7; Ephesians 4:31

9. Is forgiveness necessary in peacemaking? Ephesians 4:32; Ephesians 5:1-2

Examining your own heart:

Take some time to consider how this topic personally relates to you. Be honest and transparent and ready to share these insights with each other.

This will require honesty before The Lord and transparency with one another.

It is suggested that you consider the following as you examine your heart ~

\*Identify your struggle, in your own words.

\*Do you have a history of struggling with this, or is this a recent struggle?

\*What have you tried to remedy this struggle?

\*Where have you turned for help and what were the results?

\*Have you ever heard a Biblical viewpoint on this struggle?

\*How does the phrase "think Biblically" apply to this struggle - what does God's Word say about it?

\*How does the Gospel apply to this struggle? (Spend much time on this - it's the key to overcoming the struggle!)

\*Have you had any victory through and from this struggle as you have studied it here?

\*How can your mentor or mentee pray for you regarding this struggle?

\*What principles from God's Word apply to this struggle? What commands apply? What promises apply?

\*What is your heart's condition as it relates to this struggle? What thoughts, beliefs and desires have led to this struggle? How are these thoughts, beliefs and desires revealing themselves in your emotions, attitudes, motives and behaviors?

In addition to your study time, be sure that you also apply what you are learning in a practical way. Commit together to make personal application of the hope that God has provided you in His Word. You can do this by discussing some ways that you can implement something you are learning, and then make note of



it here:

When you meet, be sure to ask each other how your practical commitment went since you last met. This provides accountability!

Here are some examples of practical application of this lesson's topic:

\*Ask a loved one to come to counseling with you if the situation is beyond a friend's ability to help. Ask for help towards reconciliation.

\*If you are being mistreated, ask for help. If there is physical abuse, get to a safe place with the help of a trusted person. If things are extremely difficult due to emotional or verbal abuse, but there is no physical abuse, talk to a pastor or Counselor.

### Fear of Man and Insecurity

Co-dependency, peer pressure, insecurity, people pleasing, perfectionism and wanting to be the center of attention are all common struggles. In Biblical terms, these struggles all fall under the heading "fear of man."

The fear of man is the Biblical term for engaging in any kind of thought process or behavior that indicates that people have become bigger than God in your life. In other words, your relationships with others have more importance in your life than your relationship with God. You may not realize it, because it can be subtle. It can easily become a struggle before you catch it.

The terms listed above are only a few in a list of many that could apply to the fear of man. To give you a better understanding of the fear of man, here are some ways that "fear of man" may be manifested in your life:

\*Performance-oriented

\*Overcommitted

\*Can't say "no"

\*Always busy

- \*Striving to impress and be thanked or noticed
- \*Perfectionism
- \*People pleasing
- \*Afraid of people
- \*Timid, shy
- \*Attention-seeking
- \*Approval-seeking
- \*Self-promoting
- \*Elevating people above God
- \*Overbearing, intrusive
- \*Feeling like you don't measure up
- \*Controlled by people
- \*Controlling
- \*Easily hurt
- \*Envy, jealousy
- \*Easily embarrassed
- \*Lying, covering up
- \*Fear of exposure
- \*Can't make decisions
- \*Second guessing decisions
- \*Peer pressure
- \*Look to people for security, safety, significance, strength
- \*Concerned with "self esteem"
- \*Fear of failure
- \*Doesn't complete (or start) tasks due to fear of failing
- \*Feeling empty - "love hunger"
- \*Other people make you angry, depressed, crazy
- \*Avoiding people
- \*Feel you are better than others
- \*Feel others are better than you

- \*High expectations of others
- \*Withholding truth, fearing rejection
- \*Following a crowd
- \*Gossiping
- \*Think and feel responsible for other people
- \*Feel compelled to help people solve their problems even if you don't know how
- \*Get tired of feeling like you always give to others but no one gives to you
- \*Blame others
- \*Feel unappreciated
- \*Fear rejection
- \*Feel ashamed of who you are
- \*Worry whether you are liked or not
- \*Focus all your energy on other people and problems
- \*Threaten, bribe, beg
- \*Saying things that you think will please, provoke, or get what you need
- \*Manipulate
- \*Let other people keep hurting you and never say anything
- \*Feel angry
- \*Feel like a martyr
- \*Are extremely responsible OR irresponsible
- \*Willing to sin to fit in
- \*Unwilling to seek forgiveness, unwilling to extend forgiveness
- \*Insecure
- \*Self righteous

This was by no means an exhaustive list! These are a sampling of some of the ways in which the fear of man manifests itself in our lives. As you identify the things that are manifestations of it in your life it is important to know that we can assume that everyone struggles with the fear of man in one way or another. It is a universal problem. No one is exempt from it no matter how mature a believer they are.

Once you have understood fear of man you can then filter many of your problems through that lens. In a nutshell the fear of man is being controlled by people instead of being controlled (in the right way) by God.

One example of this would be a teenage girl who tells her mother that she refuses to wear clothing purchased from a discount store because people would judge her and think she is unstylish. The opinions of others are controlling her thinking. These opinions, therefore these people are bigger in her mind than God is. Whenever people control us they are bigger than God in our lives. When people are out of proportion in our lives, God is also out of proportion.

The problem isn't the people. The problem is that we want things from people that people are not meant to give to us. For example, we crave honor, respect, approval, affirmation, acceptance, and attention. All of these are a craving for significance. They all indicate that there is a fear of rejection. When we fear rejection by someone, we are controlled by that person. This is the fear of man. The counter to this common struggle of the fear of man is to have a big God! We need to give God His rightful place in our lives by surrendering to His rightful control over us. When you are controlled by God through His Holy Spirit, then people are brought down to their proper size and place in your life. The solution is not to make ourselves bigger so that people can't control us, but to make God bigger by believing and applying the Gospel, believing His promises, obeying His commands, and following His principles. When we walk closely with the Lord, people's control over us will lessen naturally.

We can apply the Gospel to the fear of man by understanding that the finished work of Christ on the cross tells us that we have been approved, accepted, respected, and we will never be rejected. We possess all of these great benefits in Christ, so why crave them from people? We already have everything we crave in Christ. Jesus is our example of having such a dynamic relationship with God the Father that people never controlled Him. Because of this, He was able to serve others in love. If we need others in unhealthy ways, we cannot serve them in love. Fear of man is a hindrance to healthy, loving relationships.

The antidote to the fear of man is the fear of God. This is a healthy and proper fear that gives God the respect and honor He is due. The following list is a resource for you to read through when you need the reminder to fear God more than you fear man.

According to the Bible, if you fear God you:

1. Walk in His ways, love and serve Him with all of your heart – Deuteronomy 10:12
2. Hate evil, pride, arrogance and the perverted mouth – Proverbs 8:13; Exodus 20:20
3. Are a truly humble person because of your relationship with God – Proverbs 8:13; 15:33
4. Are being honored by the Lord – Proverbs 15:33
5. Obey His commandments – Ecclesiastes 12:13; Psalm 128:1
6. Are being blessed by the Lord – Psalm 128:1
7. Receive wisdom from the Lord – Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 15:33; Psalm 11:10
8. Are in a frame of mind to receive God’s instructions through Scripture in the choices you should make – Psalm 25:12
9. Experience God’s goodness – Psalm 31:19
10. Are a special object of God’s protection – Psalm 31:20
11. Are truly gracious and generous in a godly way – Psalm 112:4, 15
12. Are a confident, courageous person because of your relationship with God – Psalm 112:6 – 8; Proverbs 14:26; Job 4:6; Psalm 112:7
13. Trust God and are not afraid when evil tidings come because of your relationship with God – Psalm 112:7
14. Are a person who keeps your word, who makes promises and keeps them even if it is to your own disadvantage because of your relationship with God – Psalm 15:4
15. Experience true godly contentment because of your relationship with God – Psalm 112:5, 6, 8, 9; Psalm 34:9
16. Are a godly husband & father (if you are a married man with children) – Psalm 128:1
17. Are a godly wife & mother (if you are a married woman with children) – Proverbs 31:30
18. Receive the benefit of peaceful sleep because of your relationship with God – Prov 19:23
19. Are free from an envious spirit because of your relationship with God – Proverbs 23:17

20. Have a solid hope for the future because of your relationship with God – Prov 23:17, 18
21. Respect God ordained authorities because of your relationship with God – Prov 24:21
22. Avoid intimate associations with people who are disrespectful to God ordained authorities; to people who “are given to change” – Proverbs 24:21, 22
23. Are a place of refuge for other family members because of your relationship with God – Proverbs 14:26
24. Are a source of blessing to other family members because of your relationship with God – Psalm 128:1 – 4; 112:2
25. Are characterized by integrity and faithfulness because of your relationship with God – Job 2:3; 4:6
26. Are truly considerate and kind to other people – Psalm 112:4, 5
27. Persevere in doing what is right because of your relationship with God – Psalm 112:3-5
28. Practice constructive speech in their dealings with people because of your relationship with God – Malachi 3:16; Proverbs 31:30
29. Work hard, but are not so committed to work that you will not have time for enjoyment because of your relationship with God – Psalm 128:3
30. Accept responsibility for your own family & yet are not overly responsible – Psalm 128:1-4
31. Take responsibility for parenting, but not smother and inhibit their children’s personal development – Psalm 128:1-4
32. Delight in worshipping God – Revelation 14:7
33. Are free from the fear of man because of your relationship with God – Matthew 10:28; Deuteronomy 1:17; Isaiah 41:10
34. Exercise whatever authority you have in a righteous, God honoring manner without being domineering or authoritarian – 2 Samuel 23:3; Nehemiah 5:15
35. Are willing to submit to the Lord and make sacrifices for Him – 2 Kings 17:36
36. Are a person who praises God – Psalm 22:23, 25; 40:3
37. Know God in an intimate way – Psalm 25:14
38. Stand in awe of God – Psalm 33:8
39. Think much about God’s loving kindness – Psalm 33:18

40. Want to encourage others to know God and fear and love and trust Him – Psalm 40:3
41. Receive a godly inheritance of spiritual graces & blessings from the Lord – Psalm 61:5
42. Want to tell others of the great things He has done for you - Psalm 66:16
43. Desire to be with those who fear God - Psalm 119:63
44. Do not want to offend God and you will not take His judgments lightly - Psalm 119:120
45. Have your desires fulfilled; your prayers answered - Psalm 145:19
46. Recognize your own limitations and be humble about what you know - Proverbs 3:7
47. Recognize that being right with God is more valuable than all of the riches the world may provide - Proverbs 15:16
48. Are zealous in your efforts to try to persuade people to come to Christ - 2 Cor. 5:11
49. Want to confess your sin and be cleansed of anything in your life that may be displeasing to God; if you are serious about pursuing holiness - 2 Corinthians 7:1, 11
50. Are willing to submit yourself and gladly be in subjection to other believers - Eph. 5:21
51. Honor other people and have a deep love for other Christians - I Peter 2:17
52. Want to glorify God – Revelation 14:7; 15:4
53. Believe God and His Word – Exodus 14:31
54. Desire with all your heart to magnify the Name of Jesus Christ – Acts 19:17; Phil. 1:20
55. Receive, respond to the message of salvation in Jesus Christ - Acts 13:16
56. Love to hear and share the message of salvation Acts 13:16 – 43

**Study from God’s Word on this topic:**

As you read the following concepts, look up the Scriptures referenced. Use your preferred Bible version to do this. Write down your responses and insights.

1. In this topic, please use the verses about "fearing God" just above this section and look them up one by one. Journal about how they speak to your heart in the areas of fear of man and insecurity.

Examining your own heart:

Take some time to consider how this topic personally relates to you. Be honest and transparent and ready to share these insights with each other. Write down what The Lord is revealing to you.

It is suggested that you consider the following as you examine your heart ~

- \*Identify your struggle, in your own words.
- \*Do you have a history of struggling with this, or is this a recent struggle?
- \*What have you tried to remedy this struggle?
- \*Where have you turned for help and what were the results?
- \*Have you ever heard a Biblical viewpoint on this struggle?
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When you meet, be sure to ask each other how your practical commitment went since you last met. This provides accountability!

Here are some examples of practical application of this lesson's topic:

\*When you are under peer pressure to do something you know is wrong, say "no" and let your mentor or counselor know about the situation so that she can pray for strength for you.

\*When you are having insecure thoughts, redirect your thought life intentionally. Instead, look up Scriptures that address your identity in Christ. Make a list in a journal.

\*Journal about discontentment. Why are people more important to you than God? What is He not providing for you that you think you need?

\*Notice how often you focus on other's opinions.

What does God say about you?

### Decision Making

“After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, ‘Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this.’ At once I was in the Spirit, and there before me was a throne in heaven with someone sitting on it. And the one who sat there had the appearance of jasper and carnelian. A rainbow, resembling an emerald, encircled the throne. Surrounding the throne were twenty-four other thrones, and seated on them were twenty-four elders. They were dressed in white and had crowns of gold on their heads. From the throne came flashes of lightning, rumblings and peals of thunder. Before the throne, seven lamps were blazing. These are the seven spirits of God. Also before the throne there was what looked like a sea of glass, clear as crystal. In the center, around the throne, were four living creatures, and they were

covered with eyes, in front and in back. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like an ox, the third had a face like a man, the fourth was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was covered with eyes all around, even under his wings. Day and night they never stop saying:

‘Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, Who was, and is, and is to come.’

Whenever the living creatures give glory, honor and thanks to him who sits on the throne and who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who sits on the throne, and worship him who lives for ever and ever. They lay their crowns before the throne and say:

‘You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power, for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.’”

(Revelation 4)

What a picture this represents! Whenever we struggle with the concept of God’s sovereignty, we would do well to read this passage and realize that we cannot mess with God’s sovereign plans. He is on the throne, and He will never slip off of it. Nothing we can do, no poor choice or bad decision we can make will ever remove Him from His throne. This Truth should encourage us and help us in our ability to make godly decisions.

We often struggle to understand how to make decisions because we worry that we don’t know what God’s will is. As you minister to others, you will find that this topic comes up frequently. A very common reason that people seek counsel is because they are struggling with a decision. The following concepts will help you to help others with their decision making challenges.

God’s will can be looked at from three different perspectives:

\*God’s revealed will (His moral will revealed in the Word of God)

\*God’s sovereign will (such as events that are outside of human choice)

\*God’s permissive will (He gives us a free will to choose wisely or unwisely)

Your decisions fall under either His permissive will or His revealed will.

Decisions that fall under His revealed will are a matter of obedience. Either there is a command to be followed or a clear principle that cannot be ignored. Decisions that fall under His permissive will are those choices that we can make with wisdom, but that are not spelled out clearly in Scripture.

Some examples of decisions that fall under God's revealed (moral) will are:

- \*Should I stop fellowshiping with believers?
- \*Should I commit adultery?
- \*Should I stop praying?
- \*Should I forgive my offender?

Some examples of decisions that fall under God's permissive will are:

- \*Should I look for a new job?
- \*Should I marry this man?
- \*Should I change churches?
- \*Should I volunteer for this ministry?

Biblical decision making starts with a willingness to submit your intentions to God's will and to humbly follow His direction. We get tripped up when we don't know how to figure out exactly what God's will is in any given decision we face — especially the bigger, life-changing decisions.

Here is a common road map for Biblical decision making. It is not a formula, but rather a guideline to help you and those you are ministering to as you seek to honor God in your choices.

#### BIBLICAL DECISION MAKING:

1. Start with prayer! Commit the decision to prayer. As you pray, do so with an attitude of trust and obedience. You can be secure in the knowledge that God knows what is best for you. "For I know the plans I have for you,' declares the LORD, 'plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.'" (Jeremiah 29:11)
2. Define which kind of decision it is. Does it fall under God's revealed will? Or

does it fall under God's permissive will? It is usually easier to make a decision that falls under God's revealed will, because you will find your clear direction in God's Word. If God has already revealed His will on that decision in Scripture, your response is to obey. The permissive areas still require the application of Biblical principles, but sometimes the direction is harder to discern. "Your Word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path." (Psalm 119:105)

3. Be prepared to accept and obey God's answer. Your will must be submitted to God's will. When we are humble and submissive, we are in the perfect posture for God to reveal and shed light on our decision. "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

4. Exercise your faith. Decision making can take time, and you may need to submit your will many times to God throughout the process. Faith pleases God, so by faith trust Him with confidence that He will reveal His will in His timing. "And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and that He rewards those who earnestly seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6)

5. Seek concrete direction. Gather your data and find out what the Bible says about the situation. Gain any practical and personal information that relates to the decision, and write down what you learn.

6. Seek counsel. It is always wise to get spiritual and practical advice from the godly leaders in your life. A pastor, counselor, elder, parent, or another mature believer can give you important insight and help you to remove doubts. They can also confirm your inclinations. The caution here is to be sure you choose people who will offer sound biblical advice and not just say what you want to hear. "Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisors they succeed." (Proverbs 15:22)

7. Make a list. What do you believe God's priorities are in your situation? These are things that are not necessarily important to you, but rather the things that

are most important to God in this decision. Will the outcome of the decision draw you closer to God? Will it glorify Him in your life? How will it impact those around you?

8. Add to your list the pros and cons connected with the decision. If you find that something on your list clearly violates the revealed will of God in His Word, you have your answer. If not, then you can now see that you have options to help you to make a responsible decision.

9. List your priorities related to this decision, starting with your spiritual priorities. Ask yourself questions that reveal how your decision relates to these priorities. Will the decision hinder your walk with Christ in any way? Will it strengthen it and provide more opportunities to serve Him? If more than one possible choices will fulfill these priorities, then choose the one which is your strongest desire. Sometimes God gives you a choice. In this case there is no right or wrong decision, but rather the freedom from God to choose, based on your preferences. Both options are within God's will for your life and will lead to the fulfillment of God's purposes for your life. This is His permissive will.

10. Act on your decision. If you have arrived at a decision with the sincere intention of pleasing the heart of God, incorporating biblical principles and wise counsel, you can proceed with confidence knowing that God will work out His purposes through your decision. "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose." (Romans 8:28)

Study from God's Word on this topic:

As you read the following concepts, look up the Scriptures referenced.

Write down your responses and insights.

1. Is it likely that you will make decisions that go against the Word of God? Why? (Deuteronomy 5:29; Psalm 25:4-5; Proverbs 4:25-27; Isaiah 55:8; James 3:17)
2. Why is prayer important in decision making? (Colossians 1:9-11; James 1:5)

3. What does God say about seeking advice? (Proverbs 11:14; Proverbs 15:22; Proverbs 14:15)
4. What does God say about a decision to sin? (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5; Ephesians 5:15-17; 2 Timothy 2:22; Joshua 24:14-15)
5. How is the heart involved in decision making? (Psalm 40:8, Proverbs 3:5-6; Psalm 37:4-5; Jeremiah 6:16; James 4:13-15; Romans 12:1-2)
6. How does God's sovereignty apply to decision making? (Job 42:2; Isaiah 25:1; Isaiah 42:16; Jeremiah 29:11; Psalm 138:8; Jeremiah 10:23-24)

7. Read the following Biblical narratives:

\*Joshua 24

\*Lot's choices, Genesis 13-14; 18-19

\*Abraham's servant in Genesis 24:12-15

\*Early church in Acts, Acts 6:1-6

Examining your own heart:

Take some time to consider how this topic personally relates to you. Be honest and transparent and ready to share these insights with each other.

It is suggested that you consider the following as you examine your heart ~

\*Identify your struggle, in your own words.

\*Do you have a history of struggling with this, or is this a recent struggle?

\*What have you tried to remedy this struggle?

\*Where have you turned for help and what were the results?

\*Have you ever heard a Biblical viewpoint on this struggle?

\*How does the phrase "think Biblically" apply to this struggle - what does God's Word say about it?

\*How does the Gospel apply to this struggle? (Spend much time on this - it's the key to overcoming the struggle!)

\*Have you had any victory through and from this struggle as you have studied it here?

\*How can your mentor or mentee pray for you regarding this struggle?

\*What principles from God's Word apply to this struggle? What commands apply? What promises apply?

\*What is your heart's condition as it relates to this struggle? What thoughts, beliefs and desires have led to this struggle? How are these thoughts, beliefs and desires revealing themselves in your emotions, attitudes, motives and behaviors?

Put it in to practice! ~

In addition to your study time, be sure that you also apply what you are learning in a practical way. Commit together to make personal application of the hope that God has provided you in His Word. You can do this by discussing some ways that you can implement something you are learning, and then make note of it.

When you meet, be sure to ask each other how your practical commitment went since you last met. This provides accountability!

Here are some examples of practical application of this lesson's topic:

\*If there is a decision you have been avoiding, make it by a certain day/time.

\*Make a list of pros and cons about a particular decision. Weigh the risks and benefits.

\*Make a list of life's regrets, mistakes, and failures. Write them in your journal.

Then take a big red marker and write "PAID IN FULL." Journal about God's sovereignty in those decisions you made that you regret.

\*Face your fears by admitting what you are scared of about a particular decision. Ask your counselor or mentor to walk you through that. Talk about the "worse case scenarios".

## Thought Life

“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.” (Romans 15:4)

The thought life is the one area that we most commonly struggle with, and therefore we also find it difficult to have hope about controlling it and changing our thought patterns. It is Satan’s chief target and the biggest battleground for the enemy’s attacks.

Romans 15:4 reminds us that we do have hope and that His Word helps us to change and gives us the endurance to go through the process of change. The thought life is at the core of the heart, the center of our beings. Out of our thoughts pour our behaviors, motives, attitudes, and emotions. Along with our beliefs and desires, our thought lives must be in line with the Truths of the Gospel if we are to reflect Christ to one another.

Gospel driven thoughts, beliefs, and desires occur in our minds. They are revealed in our motives, attitudes, behaviors, and emotions, which will flow out of our hearts. Heart change must start by applying the gospel to your thoughts, beliefs, and desires. This will lead to change in your behaviors, emotions, motives, and attitudes. 2 Corinthians 5:17.

There is a principle that we can pull out of Philippians 4:8 that applies well to our thought lives in general. Although this is not the unpacking of a passage in precise context, there is something very applicable in this passage that relates to our thought life in general.

“Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8)

If we examine a thought through the lens of this verse, we can use the verse as a kind of checklist. For example, we have a thought about our future, such as “I am so worried that someday I might lose my job and not be able to pay my bills,



and then I will lose my house.” If we look at that thought and examine it according to our Philippians 4:8 checklist, we start with “whatever is true.” We have to halt right there, because worrying about something that may or may not happen in the future is not something that is “true”! It may be possible, and we may need to be good stewards about that possibility. However, it is not something we can know for sure, and we certainly should not spend our thought life worrying, which is also distrusting God’s sovereignty and care for us. More often than not, we do not get any further than “whatever is true,” because many of our thoughts are related to worry, anxiety, and fear.

Our thought lives can be controlled. We can have victory over ungodly thoughts, negative thought patterns, hopeless thinking, unbiblical thinking, and bad attitudes. Much of our thought life is spent on things that are not beneficial to our walks with the Lord, and these thoughts develop into a bad habit very quickly. Bad habits can be changed! God has given us the ability to control what we think, and it is up to us with His help and the Spirit empowering us to stop the ungodly thoughts and replace them with new thoughts. We will never be perfect at this until we reach heaven, but we can have victory through the thought pattern struggles that we all have.

It is helpful to remind one another that Satan cannot enter your mind if you are a believer. He can certainly manipulate circumstances that might cause your mind to think certain thoughts, but he cannot read your mind and cannot inhabit your mind. We cannot blame the enemy for our thought patterns – we need to take responsibility for our own thought lives. If you know someone who is struggling with his thought life, you can offer him a Word of hope by helping him apply the Gospel to his need to control his thoughts as well as apply the Gospel to the particular thought that is preoccupying his mind. For example:

A woman shares with you that she is a believer, but has been feeling very guilty for an abortion that she had 10 years ago. She thinks about this every day, sometimes obsessively. She wonders what the child would be like, and how her life would be different if she had not made that choice. She worries that if she

ever tells her family that they will not be able to forgive her. She thinks that maybe God has not forgiven her, because she now understands that she chose to have the life of her baby ended, and she knows this was a sin. You are the first person that she has confessed this to. She admits that these thoughts wake her up during the night, and that the burden has become too much for her to bear. She thinks that she will never be able to stop having these haunting and obsessive thoughts about the abortion.

You listen to her story, and you remind her that when she accepted Christ, she became a new creation in Him, and that He provided everything she needs in His Word for change (2 Timothy 3:16). You remind her that there IS hope for changing her thought patterns (Romans 15:4). Then you gently remind her that if she clearly believes the Gospel, she must realize that her sins are forgiven, including this sin. You may need to go back through the Gospel with her.

When she is profoundly impacted by these Gospel Truths, she will know that she is forgiven and she will then be able to start to change her thought patterns. She will need to purposely replace any wrong-thinking with Truth.

There are many ways that you can suggest to someone how to *put-off* one thought in order to *put-on* another (Ephesians 4:22-24). For some people, it is helpful to script what they can say to themselves instead of the negative thought. For example, if a person is telling themselves a lie such as “God will never forgive me for that,” you can encourage them to stop that thought and instead tell themselves “Jesus Christ paid the penalty for that sin, and God HAS forgiven me.” Some people might need to be encouraged to replace the thought by quoting Scriptures that address the thought. Others might be able to stop the thought by listening to theologically sound and edifying praise songs. Sometimes it is helpful to redirect the thought life by getting busy in some other kind of activity to distract the mind from those thoughts. As you walk alongside others, help them to discover what works for them, and offer to hold them accountable to you regarding their thought lives. If you detect an ongoing pattern of thought life struggles that do not change even after you have helped her to apply the

Gospel specifically, you will want to consider helping her to find a Biblical counselor who can help her more intensively.

**Study from God's Word on this topic:**

As you read the following concepts, look up the Scriptures referenced. Use your preferred Bible version to do this. Write down (in a journal) your responses and insights.

1. What do our thoughts say about us? (Proverbs 23:7; Mark 7:20-23)
2. How does this principle help us to think Biblically? (Philippians 4:8)
3. What does God know about our thoughts? (Jeremiah 23:23-24; Psalm 139:2)
4. What should we do if our thoughts do not match God's? (Isaiah 55:8-9; 2 Corinthians 10:4-5; Ephesians 4:22-24; 1 Corinthians 2:16)
5. What should our thoughts towards ourselves be? (Romans 12:3; Galatians 6:3; 1 Corinthians 10:12)
6. How do we become more mature in our thinking? (1 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Corinthians 14:20; Proverbs 22:17)
7. What must we do with worldly thinking? (Romans 12:2; 1 Corinthians 3:18-19; Matthew 5:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-5)

**Examining your own heart:**

Take some time to consider how this topic personally relates to you. Be honest and transparent and ready to share these insights with each other.

It is suggested that you consider the following as you examine your heart ~

- \*Identify your struggle, in your own words.
- \*Do you have a history of struggling with this, or is this a recent struggle?
- \*What have you tried to remedy this struggle?
- \*Where have you turned for help and what were the results?
- \*Have you ever heard a Biblical viewpoint on this struggle?
- \*How does the phrase "think Biblically" apply to this struggle - what does God's Word say about it?

\*How does the Gospel apply to this struggle? (Spend time on this - it's the key to overcoming the struggle!)

\*Have you had any victory through and from this struggle as you have studied it here?

\*How can your mentor or mentee pray for you regarding this struggle?

\*What principles from God's Word apply to this struggle? What commands apply? What promises apply?

\*What is your heart's condition as it relates to this struggle? What thoughts, beliefs and desires have led to this struggle? How are these thoughts, beliefs and desires revealing themselves in your emotions, attitudes, motives and behaviors?

\*What *"put off/put on"* may be required for change?

Put it in to practice! ~

In addition to your study time, be sure that you also apply what you are learning in a practical way. Commit together to make personal application of the hope that God has provided you in His Word. You can do this by discussing some ways that you can implement something you are learning, and then make note of it. When you meet, be sure to ask each other how your practical commitment went since you last met. This provides accountability!

Here are some examples of practical application of this lesson's topic:

\*When your thought life runs amok, STOP, refocus by listening to good music, reading a good book, talk to a friend, engage in another activity.

\*If your thoughts lead to worry and anxiety, read Philippians 4:8 until you can implement self control over those thoughts.

\*As you think about life's struggles, ask yourself "How should I think Biblically about this struggle?" Journal your responses.

\*Stay away from temptations that lead your thoughts astray. For example, TV, alcohol, drugs, excess food, movies, pornography, images of any kind that provoke ungodly thinking. When these things are in front of you, FLEE them.

\*Consider any other practical applications that would be beneficial to you!

## How To Change

Justification is God's unconditional love for us through Jesus Christ's death on the cross.

Sanctification is the reciprocation of our love toward Jesus through our life.

Glorification is the ultimate reward we will receive when Jesus returns.

We will be like Him.

The Gospel, God's promises, principles in God's Word, and God's commands are all necessary for people to change. Heart change is a result of our salvation. As we approach this subject of how people change, it is good to review the details of salvation.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

Each one of us have broken God's law. This is sin. The wages of sin is eternal death. (Romans 6:23). This price is more than we can possibly repay. Because of God's love for us, He gave his only son Jesus to pay for our debt on the cross.

This event is done by Jesus, because He is the only One worthy to pay the price for each one of us since He never sinned. He has not broken God's law like we have. Only He can die a physical death and raise back to life – conquering death! There is absolutely NOTHING we can add to our justification. We are justified by Christ alone.

After justification is sanctification. It's the reciprocation of our love toward God.

We are sanctified with the help of the Holy Spirit. Sanctification means to set apart, or to make holy. The Spirit helps us in this process to become like Christ.

It is an ongoing life long process. This is not about adding to our justification.

That leads to legalism. We are justified in Christ alone, and our love for Him motivates us to live for Him.

Glorification happens after Jesus returns. John writes about this in his first letter when he says “when He shall appear we shall be like Him” (1 John 3:2).

Paul refers to our glorification several times. For example: “Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will

be raised imperishable, and we will be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). He also says, “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). We get glorified bodies and a new name! We will feast with Jesus, receiving eternal life and being with Him wherever He goes. What HOPE!

Looking at this in the context of applying the Gospel in our relationships, we see that the Gospel provides for our justification upon salvation. The Gospel applied provides for our sanctification. The Gospel makes possible our glorification (when we get to heaven). This is our hope of salvation!

As we walk with God in the here and now, we are given the ability to apply the Gospel, follow God’s principles, obey God’s commands, and cling to God’s promises as we are being sanctified.

Sanctification is defined as “being set apart to be holy.” Do you view yourself as holy? God views you as holy, because of the Gospel!

“For He chose us in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight” (Ephesians 1:4).

We need to understand God’s view of us before we can undergo Biblical change. Because of the Gospel – Christ’s finished work on our behalf – we stand before God blameless and pure. If we are a believer, nothing we do will cause God to view us any differently. We must realize that our motivations to change are not to earn more favor from God or change His view of us. Our motives for change are to love God by believing and obeying His Word, because He loves us and gave His life for us.

The source of all true heart change is: The Gospel. (Good News)

As you mentor someone who is needing to change because they are not applying the Gospel to their circumstances or to their sin struggles, you will want to first identify the problem. A Biblical mentor or helper of any kind should remember to put the problem in to Biblical terms. For example, a girl is wanting to stop habitually shoplifting. She has been labeled by others as a “cleptomaniac.” This has become a part of her identity and the way that she sees herself. Biblically, if

we are believers, we are not identified by our sin. To identify herself by her sin is to not apply the Gospel to her sin. In Biblical terms, kleptomania is simply “stealing.” Stealing is a sin, and therefore there is hope for change!

Once you have identified the problem, you will need to assess their motives. Their motives will reveal whether or not they have clearly understood the Gospel. This will give you a very good starting point. For example, if a woman says that she wants to stop her habit of gossiping, you can ask her why she wants to do that. If she says something like “I want to stop because I don’t have any friends left and I am getting lonely,” you can acknowledge the validity in that statement, but point out to her that her motive is self-centered and not God centered. If she says that her motive is “I know it displeases God, and it does not reflect Him well in my life,” then you can proceed to help her with the change process, because her motive is God-centered.

Once a problem is identified and a Biblical motive is established for change, you can begin to help her to have hope in her situation. The hope that you share will come from the application of the Gospel and encouragement to follow God’s principles, obey God’s commands, and believe God’s promises.

Biblical change is a work of God (through His Holy Spirit and His Word) in our hearts. In addition to that, there is a part we play in our heart change.

“Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.” (James 1:22)

We need to encourage others to “do what it says.” There is a great principle found in Ephesians 4:22-24, which we call the “*put off/put on*” principle.” When we need to change a particular behavior, we need to follow this principle by identifying what we need to “put off” and also by replacing that with something that we “put on.”

“You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.” (Ephesians 4:22-24)

Christians often fail to change, because they try to only change the outward behavior. If you recall our heart diagram, you will remember that behaviors flow out of our thoughts, beliefs, and desires at the core of our hearts. Simply replacing the behavior will not bring lasting change, although it is important to make the appropriate behavioral changes. Replacing our faulty thoughts, beliefs, and desires will bring lasting change. Behavior change will be a natural outcome of heart change. Believers are to put off the old sinful way of life, renew their mind with Biblical Truth, and put on the new godly way of life. Your role is to help them to understand the principle and to walk alongside them while they put it in to practice.

Sinful habits, tendencies, and patterns do not develop over night. They become habits when they are practiced repeatedly over time. Likewise, in order to put off these habits, time will need to be given to practice repeatedly the putting on of the new. We can unlearn unbiblical patterns as we engage in a gradual process that takes place as we put into practice new Biblical principles for living. In time, the old sinful ways will begin to diminish. We are to press on!

“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.” (Philippians 3:12-14)

It is helpful to remember that your goal is not perfection. Your goal is progress. Perfection will not happen until we are in heaven! Progress should be a part of every believer’s sanctification.

In order to know how to guide someone to apply the put off/put on principle, it is vital to have a working knowledge of God’s Word. When you don’t know for sure what someone should put on, turn to your study resources and do some searching. God’s Word does have the answers, but it may take some time on your part to direct someone to them or find them yourself. It will be worth it as



you have the amazing privilege of watching God change someone's heart. You get to play a part in that by being an instrument of change as the Spirit uses you to impart Biblical help to one another.

**Study from God's Word on this topic:**

As you read the following concepts, look up the Scriptures referenced. Use your preferred Bible version to do this. Write down (in a journal) your responses and insights.

1. What does Romans 12:2 say about change? How do you apply this?
2. Can people change? How is it possible? (2 Corinthians 5:17; Ezekiel 36:25-27)
3. What role does the Holy Spirit play in changing you? (John 1:12-13; Titus 3:4-6; Romans 8:1-14; Romans 8:9; Romans 8:13-14)
4. Are we alone in the process of change? (Philippians 2:12-13)
5. What does God give us that enables us to change? (2 Peter 1:3; 2 Corinthians 9:8)
6. What part do we play in our own change process? (Romans 6:19-23; Ephesians 4:22-24; Colossians 3:1-17; Galatians 5:16-26)
7. What should we do when it gets difficult? Why? 1 (Corinthians 6:12; 2 Peter 2:19; Ephesians 6:10-18; Ephesians 6:10-11; 1 Peter 5:8-9; James 4:17; Proverbs 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:58; Proverbs 4:14-15; Psalm 19:12-14)

**Examining your own heart:**

Take some time to consider how this topic personally relates to you. Be honest and transparent and ready to share these insights with each other.

It is suggested that you consider the following as you examine your heart ~

- \*Identify your struggle, in your own words.
- \*Do you have a history of struggling with this, or is this a recent struggle?
- \*What have you tried to remedy this struggle?
- \*Where have you turned for help and what were the results?
- \*Have you ever heard a Biblical viewpoint on this struggle?
- \*What does God's Word say about it?

- \*How does the Gospel apply to this struggle?
- \*Have you had any victory through and from this struggle as you have studied it here?
- \*How can your mentor or mentee pray for you regarding this struggle?
- \*What principles from God's Word apply to this struggle? What commands apply? What promises apply?
- \*What is your heart's condition as it relates to this struggle? What thoughts, beliefs and desires have led to this struggle? How are these thoughts, beliefs and desires revealing themselves in your emotions, attitudes, motives and behaviors?
- \*What *"put off/put on"* may be required for change? *Put it in to practice!* ~

In addition to your study time, be sure that you also apply what you are learning in a practical way. Commit together to make personal application of the hope that God has provided you in His Word. You can do this by discussing some ways that you can implement something you are learning, and then make note of it here:

When you meet, be sure to ask each other how your practical commitment went since you last met. This provides accountability!

Here are some examples of practical application of this lesson's topic:

- \*Identify specific areas that you would like to change. Set goals for one day, one week, two weeks, and one month from now. Make sure they are specific and attainable.
- \*Ask your mentor or counselor to hold you accountable to the change process.
- \*Do one proactive thing per day that leads you towards the change you are hoping for.
- \*Read biographies of Christians who have amazing testimonies.
- \*Ask others to share their stories with you of God's goodness in their lives. Share yours with them, too.

## Strongholds

Alcohol, illicit drugs, prescription drugs, eating disorders, pornography, gambling, excessive shopping, excessive exercise, excessive sleep, cigarettes, self-injury, work, sugar, sports, lying, shoplifting, sex, homosexual activity, caffeine, television, and internet are all behaviors that can become a stronghold, or “addiction.”

This is not an exhaustive list. Many other behaviors can become addictive such as seeking status, seeking attention, and seeking approval.

Anything that a person craves can become an addiction.

We need to be mindful to put things in Biblical terms rather than psychological terms, as we have covered in previous lessons. You will recall, for example, that we looked at the psychological term depression by using the Biblical terms suffering and despair. We looked at the psychological terms insecurity, codependency, and peer pressure by using the Biblical term fear of man. We are now going to look at the psychological term addiction by using the Biblical term spiritual stronghold.

The Bible does not directly use the term “addiction” or “substance abuse.” Instead, it speaks of a person’s slavery to sin (John 8:34). Scripture also speaks of a person’s disposition to evil and depravity that produces sinful passions (Romans 1:18-32). The Bible speaks to idolatry of the heart (Ezekiel 14:1-5).

Addictions are a manifestation of the flesh ruling a person’s heart and life, which is idol worship. What we worship become our strongholds.

Our goal is to apply the Gospel to not only our initial salvation through belief in Christ’s finished work on the cross (justification), but also to our current walk with God as we are being formed in to Christ’s image (sanctification), until our salvation is complete in heaven (glorification). In order to apply the Gospel to addiction, we need to first define exactly what an addiction is.

The humanistic psychological approach calls addiction a "disease." Having a disease implies that there is a physiological or biological cause that requires a medical intervention for healing (either physical or psychological intervention). While it is true that of course there is hope in Christ for healing of a disease, most of the time our diseases require some form of treatment. The hope we have tends to depend on the success rate of that treatment. That is a flimsy hope, at best. If you use the Biblical term for addiction, hope takes on a whole new meaning. An addiction is a spiritual stronghold. Biblical Counselors often use the term "life dominating sin." Scripture has much to say about strongholds, and we will be getting in to that further in this lesson.

Applying the Gospel to a spiritual stronghold brings us real hope, not the flimsy hope described above. Because of the Truth of the Gospel, we are free from bondage and no longer prisoners to our sin. We are declared victors, and therefore we can choose holiness over sin whenever we are tempted. We can have victory through our struggle with strongholds as well as from our struggles with strongholds. This is good news!

It is good news that addiction is a sin issue, because if it is sin, then there's hope! 2 Corinthians 10:4 speaks about demolishing strongholds.

"The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds." (2 Corinthians 10:4)

Keeping this verse in context and reading it along with the broader passage of 2 Corinthians 10:1-5, we see that Paul is addressing the issue of warfare. He points out that although the apostles were living in fleshly bodies, they did not wage the Christian warfare according to fleshly methods or motives. The worldly weapons would include things like swords, guns, and warfare strategy. It would also include wealth, power, influence, or manipulation to accomplish goals. Instead, a believer uses methods that have "divine power to demolish strongholds." Faith in God, prayer, and obedience to His Word are the effective weapons of warfare for a Christian. These are the warfare weapons that will tear

down strongholds. Included in those methods is the application of the Gospel in sharing hope with someone caught up in an addiction, or stronghold.

The things that a person becomes addicted to are things that bring pleasure and a sense of comfort. They become so pleasurable that they are desired more frequently. These things are not sinful in and of themselves, but they can become sinful if they become so important that they grow into idolatry. If someone cannot handle being denied whatever they are drawn to, or if they feel as if they cannot get enough of it, it begins to interfere in their daily lives. They seem to not be able to let go of it regardless of the consequences.

There are usually conflicting emotions as a result of their idolatrous desires. They may say that they feel out of control, stuck, in bondage, and hopeless; and yet, when they indulge their desires they experience an intense pleasure that only feeds further desire. This is where addiction/life dominating sin/strongholds begin. The drive behind it is the desires of the heart.

“And I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. I want to do what is right, but I can’t. I want to do what is good, but I don’t. I don’t want to do what is wrong, but I do it anyway.” (Romans 7:18-19)

Addictions, or strongholds, are a sin issue. Recall that it is at the core of our hearts where we find our thoughts, beliefs, and desires. When we have sinful desires that we repeatedly indulge, we are quickly caught up in a stronghold. If we are in a situation or know someone who is in a stronghold, it is important to make sure that we/they receive the right kind of help.

It is very rare for someone with an addiction to a substance or to a sexual sin to simply just “stop.” More often than not, they will go through a gradual process of healing, finding victory through the struggle as you walk alongside them and help them to apply the Gospel.

The answers that this person needs are found in God’s Word. Depending on the nature of the stronghold, it may be appropriate to refer her to a Biblical Counselor for intensive and long term counseling. A mentor can also play a role

in their healing, by holding her accountable and spending time with her as she is healing. In most cases, it will be a longterm process requiring patience, endurance, understanding, and hope.

### **Study from God's Word on this topic:**

As you read the following concepts, look up the Scriptures referenced. Write down your responses and insights.

1. What are we to do with our bodies? (1 Corinthians 6:15; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20)
2. What should we be "filled" with? (Ephesians 5:18)
3. What do these verses say about idolatry and separation from God? (Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10)
4. How should we conduct ourselves, and why? (Romans 13:13-14; 1 Peter 4:1-3; Isaiah 5:11-12, 22)
5. Is there hope for change? How? (2 Corinthians 5:17-18; 1 Cor. 6:11; Colossians 1:13-14)
6. What are the results of "drunkenness" according to these verses? (Genesis 9:21; Job 12:25; Psalm 107:27; Proverbs 23:21; Isaiah 19:14; Isaiah 24:20, Jeremiah 25:27, Lamentations 4:21; Ezekiel 24:33; Romans 13:13; Ephesians 5:18)
6. Read this Biblical narrative: \*Noah, Genesis 9:20-24

### **Examining your own heart:**

Take some time to consider how this topic personally relates to you. Be honest and transparent and ready to share these insights with each other.

It is suggested that you consider the following as you examine your heart ~

\*Identify your struggle, in your own words.

\*Do you have a history of struggling with this, or is this a recent struggle?

\*What have you tried to remedy this struggle?

\*Where have you turned for help and what were the results?

\*Have you ever heard a Biblical viewpoint on this struggle?

- \*How does the phrase "think Biblically" apply - what does God's Word say about it?
- \*How does the Gospel apply to this struggle?(Spend much time on this - it's the key to overcoming the struggle!)
- \*Have you had any victory through and from this struggle as you have studied it here?
- \*How can your mentor or mentee pray for you regarding this struggle?
- \*What principles from God's Word apply to this struggle? What commands apply? What promises apply?
- \*What is your heart's condition as it relates to this struggle? What thoughts, beliefs and desires have led to this struggle? How are these thoughts, beliefs and desires revealing themselves in your emotions, attitudes, motives and behaviors?
- \*What *"put off/put on"* may be required for change? Put it in to practice! ~

In addition to your study time, be sure that you also apply what you are learning in a practical way. Commit together to make personal application of the hope that God has provided you in His Word. You can do this by discussing some ways that you can implement something you are learning, and then make note of it. When you meet, be sure to ask each other how your practical commitment went since you last met. This provides accountability!

Here are some examples of practical application of this lesson's topic:

- \*When tempted, FLEE, then call your mentor/counselor/helper & tell them what happened.
- \*Stay away from the things that tempt you. Stay completely away!
- \*Every day, admit to any successes and victories and also to any failures and setbacks. Journal about that, and share those things with your mentor.
- \*Lay out a plan of new healthy habits. Start on that plan. Allow yourself to be held accountable.

## Guilt, Shame, Regret

What does the Gospel say about guilt and shame? We can quickly say the answer to that and this should be the easiest area to apply the Gospel, but it is often where our biggest spiritual weakness is. As quickly as we may answer, we may not entirely believe it as it applies to our own guilt and shame.

### GETTING PERSONAL:

The following is a personal testimony by me, Ellen Castillo, the author of this book.

Here's my story: Jesus is enough!

After I finished college, I got married and I also began my career working in psychiatric hospitals as an Occupational Therapist.

My entire worldview at that time was rooted in humanistic secular psychology. I was not a Christian at this time, and had the opinion that anyone who claimed any sort of faith was just using it as a "crutch" and not taking control of their own life. I was all about thinking I was in control!

I fully believed that secular psychology held all the answers to life's problems. I think that the whole reason it appealed to me was because it was supposed to make you feel better about yourself, feel more comfortable with life, and just feel good in general. So I was not only all about thinking I was in control - I was also all about being comfortable!

The last thing I would have done back then is look for comfort from the God of All Comfort! I never would have thought that God could fill that void, because I literally did not believe in Him. I even called myself an atheist. I thought that Christianity was, in my wording, stupid. I could never figure out how an intelligent person could believe in something that to me sounded like a fairy tale. In 1981, we had our first baby. A difficult pregnancy resulted in what I felt at the time was like a nightmare. At two days old, our baby girl died in my arms. I used to believe that when a person died, they just simply ceased to exist. With that lack of hope, I had nothing to get me through the grief but to delve back in to my psychology-thinking that said, "You feel bad, so now you need to find



ways to make yourself feel good.”

I wanted to be comfortable, so I turned back to my career and psychology and started trying to feel better somehow. I did not feel better, but I was not about to admit that even to myself. Deep down, I had also started to feel really guilty about our baby’s death, wondering if an x-ray I had may have caused the genetic disorder she died from. There is no way we could ever prove or disprove that, but that thought was way too painful to face, and I could find nothing in psychology to make me feel better about that feeling of guilt.

So I did what many people do – I shoved it down and refused to think about it. For years I went on like this!

After 7 years of grieving the loss of that baby, some close friends of ours started to have some very obvious changes in their lives. I couldn’t help but notice that they had changed, and we started corresponding. I asked my friend Nancy what it was that made her change so drastically, and she saw that as an open door to witness the love of Christ to me. HE is the drastic change that had happened in her life!

Even though at the time I considered it a psychological problem to consider yourself a Christian, I found myself compelled to ask her questions about why she had changed so much. Her answers made me angry at first, and then I would re-read them and start to think maybe she was on to something that I needed. Then I’d remind myself that being religious was just another symptom of a mental problem, and I’d again think she was just being stupid. Eventually, she did share a very clear gospel message with me, and as a result of those letters, I became a Christian. This was, by the way, to my total shock! But I suddenly completely believed. That was 24 years ago.

Even though I had become a believer, I continued to hang on to much of my belief in secular psychology. I also continued to feel very guilty about our baby’s death, and I think I really wanted to even hide it from God somehow.

Remains of my psychology-thinking said “Take care of that one myself, don’t give it to God. It’s my problem and I will find a way to handle it.” I had no idea

at the time how seriously that was holding me back as a Christian from truly enjoying God's grace.

On top of the guilt of the baby's death came some more years worth of guilt that I kept shoving down, all as a result of my perceived failures as a mom. As more years past and that mom-guilt (as I call it – you know how they say “guilt” is a mom's middle name) continued to get shoved down, we decided to adopt kids from the foster system.

We had not gotten pregnant for many years, and this was something we had always wanted to do. We added 3 adopted kids to our family within a couple of years, and then as soon as we moved in the final adopted child, I got pregnant. Then two years later, I was pregnant again. Yes, adoption cures infertility sometimes! By this time, I was a homeschooling mom with 6 kids and had this notion that I was now doing everything right as a Christian mom. We attended a church that reinforced the idea that it was important to “do everything right,” so I naively felt that there were some built in guarantees that my kids would be solid in their faith as adults.

Looking back on that era I really think that I believed deep down that my guilt feelings would be cured (or maybe just buried deep enough that they wouldn't keep bothering me) if I just did all the right things. That was my way of trying to take care of it myself – by doing good things to cover it all up. But, that kept coming up empty and I remained plagued by the mom- guilt.

My weak spot is my kids, for sure. If ever I am going to revert to the mom-guilt, it's when my kids are not doing well, even the ones who are now adults. I want to share with you a few things that are part of my current testimony and how God has given me freedom from that mom-guilt in spite of bad circumstances. Having adopted older and special needs children brings with it some difficulties that I don't think we really fully expected. We had to learn quickly that you don't just love the hurt out of them when a child's past is full of abuse of every kind. Some of our adult children are not walking with the Lord as I write this. I will leave out any details so as not to betray their privacy. I will summarize it by

saying that we have come up against some very difficult and serious things that I never imagined I would have to face as a parent.

So, having alluded to some current very heartbreaking and difficult circumstances with my adult children, am I currently experiencing that mom-guilt again? I can honestly say that, no, I am not (although at times I have been tempted to slip back in to that!) Because of something that God showed me a few years ago, I have learned that I can trust God in any circumstance. If I begin to revert back to the mom-guilt, it doesn't last long anymore because of what the Lord has taught me through these trials. I remember several years ago, as I tried to deal with all that mom-guilt that I came to a point of thinking "I accepted God's forgiveness when I got saved, and I believe that He forgives me, so, it must be that I just need to forgive myself." It never occurred to me to first determine whether I was even really guilty! Of course no parent is perfect, but the things that most bothered me and that I felt so guilty about weren't even really things that I was guilty of! But I didn't see it that way then.

I am not sure what it is about moms, but we often tend to take on guilt that is not even ours to carry. If it is our guilt, we can confess, repent, and accept God's forgiveness. If we are feeling guilty about something that we are not guilty of, how silly it is that we would carry that around with us, but we do.

I kept thinking I just need to forgive myself (since I was feeling so guilty). I wanted to do that so that I would feel better about how things turned out with our baby and later with our other kids. I worked at forgiving myself, and worked on it some more, never being able to really forgive myself or understand HOW to do that. I eventually took a particular Bible study that I thought was going to finally teach me HOW to forgive myself, because I was feeling very ready to move on from that.

In the Bible study I took, I read the words "the concept of self-forgiveness is not anywhere to be found in Scripture. It simply is not a Biblical concept."

That was a huge revealing moment. I suddenly realized that I had believed a lie that really came right out of secular psychological theory, not out of the Bible. I

realized that I had for years tried to do God's job in my life by trying to forgive myself. I always understood that we are forgiven by Jesus because of the finished work on the cross. I never doubted that, really. I also understood that we are to extend that forgiveness to others. But I threw in this self-centered concept that I also needed to forgive myself.

1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness." There is no SELF-forgiveness there - I AM forgiven, my sins were nailed to the cross, and that is enough! If I truly believe that I am forgiven, that takes care of needing to forgive myself! My children are sinners in need of a Savior, just like you and I. My husband always says that we can't take all the credit for the things our kids do right, so we also can't take all the blame for the things our kids do wrong. Easier said than done for a mom prone to that mom-guilt thing!

I have come to a much better place than wallowing in mom-guilt now. I have HOPE. I have hope, because I know that in my own life Jesus is enough.

I find hope and encouragement in the story of the prodigal son in Luke 15. I know that God would graciously receive my children with open arms if they come to Him, just like the father in the parable.

My job is not to feel guilty about their choices ---- my job is to PRAY.

This self-forgiveness issue was just one of the things in my thinking that was way off base as a Christian, but it was the most important one to get rid of because it literally tripped me up for years. I believe it stunted my growth until God set me free from that line of thinking.

In order to make sure I don't fall back in to that kind of mindset, I have for the past few years been compelled to make sure that I am pressing in to Jesus more than ever before as I enjoy doing in depth study in the Word of God, having a meaty prayer life, and surrendering to a lifestyle of serving God.

I need these disciplines in my life, not because I have to do all the right things anymore - but because I know that on my own, when I am not seeking God faithfully, I am prone to wander. I struggle sometimes with seeking comfort from

things other than Christ, even after I realized Christ died to set me free from such behavior. I am prone to avoiding God and trying to take control back in to my own hands. I am prone to spiritual laziness and a weak study and prayer life. God, in His Word, has SO met all my needs and given me all that comfort and all those answers I was looking for in all the wrong places. Learning to understand and present a clear Gospel, and to apply the Gospel to my heart and life continually has deepened my walk with the Lord. As a result of that moment that I realized my thinking about “self-forgiveness” was not Biblical I was launched in to a new lifestyle of ministry as a Biblical Counselor. Sharing a Word of Hope with other women, girls, and their families is something I never would have imagined I would do. As soon as I understood Truth more clearly, I could not hold back and have felt compelled ever since to share that HOPE with others!

Because I’ve left my former “religion” of secular psychology behind, I have found a new place to look for comfort and for the answers to life’s problems. It’s called the Bible. The Truth of the Gospel has set me free, praise the Lord!

John 1:1 says, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

We need add nothing to it! Jesus IS enough!

Thank you for “listening” to my story. I hope that as you read it, you will consider how God has taught you to think Biblically and apply the Gospel. It’s possible that you will share your story one day, too!

### **Study from God’s Word on this topic:**

As you read the following concepts, look up the Scriptures referenced. Use your preferred Bible version to do this. Write down (in a journal) your responses and insights.

1. Where does guilt come from? (Psalm 69:5; Psalm 32:3-5)
2. What should we do when we realize we have sinned? (1 John 1:8-10; Hebrews 10:22-23)
3. What do the Psalms say about our shame? (Psalm 31:17; Psalm 71:1-3)
4. How does God view our sins? (Isaiah 1:18; Micah 7:18-19; Psalm 103:12;

Isaiah 43:25; Isaiah 38:17)

5. What replaces guilt? (Psalm 119:80; Philippians 4:8)

6. Read these Biblical narratives: \*David, Psalms 32; 51

7. Is God's forgiveness limited? (Psalm 103:8-12; Psalm 86:4-7; Isaiah 55:6-7; Psalm 32:5)

8. How is God's grace evident in these Scriptures? (Luke 23:43; Luke 15:11-32;

Romans 3:21-25; Ephesians 5:25-27; 1 John 1:7; 1 John 1:9; 1 Corinthians

6:9-11; John 4:13-14; Ephesians 1:3-10; Acts 4:12; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:18-19)

### Examining your own heart:

Take some time to consider how this topic personally relates to you. Be honest and transparent and ready to share these insights with each other.

It is suggested that you consider the following as you examine your heart ~

\*Identify your struggle, in your own words.

\*Do you have a history of struggling with this, or is this a recent struggle?

\*What have you tried to remedy this struggle?

\*Where have you turned for help and what were the results?

\*Have you ever heard a Biblical viewpoint on this struggle?

\*What does God's Word say about it?

\*How does the Gospel apply to this struggle? (Spend time on this - it's the key to overcoming the struggle!)

\*Have you had any victory through and from this struggle as you have studied it here?

\*How can your mentor or mentee pray for you regarding this struggle?

\*What principles from God's Word apply to this struggle? What commands apply?

\*What is your heart's condition as it relates to this struggle? What thoughts, beliefs and desires have led to this struggle? How are these thoughts, beliefs and desires revealing themselves in your emotions, attitudes, motives and behaviors?

\*What "put off/put on" may be required for change? Put it in to practice! ~

In addition to your study time, be sure that you also apply what you are learning in a practical way. Commit together to make personal application of the hope that God has provided you in His Word. You can do this by discussing some ways that you can implement something you are learning, and then make note of it here:

When you meet, be sure to ask each other how your practical commitment went since you last met. This provides accountability!

Here are some examples of practical application of this lesson's topic:

\*Whenever you have the thought that you "feel guilty", stop and remember the Gospel. Apply it.

\*Make a list of those things you feel guilt over. Determine which ones are things you are truly guilty of, then confess, repent and receive forgiveness. Don't keep repeating the same ones - forgiveness is permanent!