

Introduction to Counseling

How to Gain Freedom from the Bondage of Perfectionism

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Behind many of today's domestic tragedies lies a socially acceptable behavior pattern that is overlooked by most, even Christians. // Most all long term emotional pain has been caused by this one negative personality characteristic.
- B. There are few Christian qualities that get confused more than the qualities of diligence, excellence, sacrifice, and correctness as shown up in perfectionism.
1. Pastor, counselor, author David Seamans states, "Perfectionism is the most disturbing emotional problem among evangelical Christians" (p. 79).
- C. Perfectionism is often commented on by others as an admirable trait. //These comments just feed perfectionism in others.
1. Many view perfectionism as a positive virtue because it is confused with excellence.
 - a. Perfectionism is motivated by pride, fear of disclosure, rejection, abandonment and/or fear of failure.
 - b. Excellence is motivated by a sincere desire to create a quality end product that is motivated by faith and humility.

How would you tell the difference between a motivation for excellence and a motivation to achieve perfection?

2. Perfectionism is even excused. "Oh, he's just a perfectionist" or "He likes things to be done right." The work "right" is often used as another word for perfect.
3. Excusing this attitude only encourages the continuance of perfectionism and sadly its harmful effects on relationships.
4. Excusing it only implies it is normal. For the perfectionist it is his normal standard, but you will see it is not God's normal.

- a. Prov. 14:14, "There is a way that seems right to a man but its end is the way of death."
- b. Because a perfectionist views his perfectionism as normal, he has no motivation to change it or explore the dysfunctional root issues behind it.

D. Most people (50-84%) have at least pockets of perfectionism.

- 1. It is found in every personality type (outgoing or reserved), therefore, it cannot be said it is in itself a personality type.
- 2. It is seen in almost every personal or relational problem people have shared.

E. Perfectionism historically has an early and a common origin.

- 1. The original cause of perfectionism is rooted in the very first sin experienced in the Garden of Eden by Adam and Eve.
 - a. Genesis 3:6, "When the woman (Eve) saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband (Adam) with her, and he ate."
- 2. The effect of this sinful action resulted in two negative emotions rooted in perfectionism.
 - a. Shame
 - 1) Genesis 3:7, "Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loin coverings."
 - 2) They hid their body for shame.
 - 3) Perfectionism is well characterized by hiding something whether it is real or imagined.
 - 4) Only the presence of sin can account for this shame. There were no other people in the garden to look at them to produce shame.
 - b. Fear
 - 1) Genesis 3:8, "And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God among the trees of the garden."
 - 2) Out of their fear of discovery by God, they hid their presence from God. Why? They may have reasoned that if God was to discover their sin He would reject them.
 - a) Remember, there was no human history of rejection.

- b) They never saw anyone rejected because of sin.
 - c) Perfectionism is basically an intentional and external hiding with a fear of discovery resulting in rejection and abandonment. Again, they had no experience of this happening. It was only the presence of shame and the resulting fear of discovery that now motivated them to hide as a result of their sin.
3. Perfectionism is a shame based desire to hide for fear of:
- a. Disclosure
 - 1) There is a fear that someone will see or discover a flaw or mistake. A lot of covering up or over compensation results from these efforts to hide.
 - b. Rejection
 - 1) If the flaw or mistake is discovered, rejection cannot be far behind.
 - a) The perfectionist logic: "If you knew the real (shameful) me you would dislike, reject and abandon me."
 - 2) Note: There was no historical record or experience of shame and rejection to draw from. Apparently it came with the presence of sin.
 - c. Abandonment
 - 1) The natural consequence of rejection is abandonment, aloneness, the one thing God said was not good in creation (Gen. 2:18).

In what way have you attempted to hide something for fear of discovery and possible rejection? How has that affected your life? Who have you seen this pattern in and how was it acted out? What cost has this been on relationships?

F. Perfectionism is not a desire to be perfect like God, it is a human deception that one could BE God – perfect.

- 1. The effort to be perfect is now a human effort to accomplish what failed to be accomplished by Eve's and then Adam's sin.
 - a. Gen. 3:5, "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
 - b. Satan's goal was to replace God by human effort to be God.
 - c. Perfectionism is an attempt to replace God with self effort.

2. The Apostle Paul sternly warned of this very pattern of attempting to be perfect like God by human effort.
 - a. Gal. 3:1-3, "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ²This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"

G. Perfectionism greatly reduces one's job performance and relationship skills. The primary reason for this is that the perfectionist is motivated out of fear which reduces the mind and body to work efficiently.

1. Makes less money
2. Poor athletes
3. Poor spouses
4. Poor parents
5. Poor friends
6. No one enjoys a relationship based on fear.
 - a. I John 4:18, "There is no fear in love; but perfect (mature) love casts out fear, because fear involves torment. But he who fears has not been made perfect in love."
 - b. Mature love removes fear. Strong fear removes love.
 - c. No one controlled, managed or related to out of fear feels loved.

Why would a relationship based on fear not be mutually fulfilling? What would a fear based relationship look like?

ATTITUDES OF THE HEART

II. WHAT CHARACTERISTIC ATTITUDES OF THE HEART ARE FOUND IN A PERFECTIONIST? // (ATTITUDES YOU WILL OBSERVE THAT WILL GIVE YOU A CLUE TO THE PRESENCE OF PERFECTIONISM.)

A. Fear of failure and discovery of a failure or flaw.

1. Do you live in fear of failure and of others finding out about your failure or flaw?

2. Fear of failure rather than the desire for excellence lies at the root of his motivation and behavior (self-deceived).
3. This is observable in general nervousness, anxiety and a driven personality.
4. This attitude is in direct opposition to the way Jesus views failure.
 - a. Jesus speaking to Peter in Luke 22:31-32, "Simon, Simon, behold Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat. ³²But I have prayed for you that your faith may not fail; and you, when you have turned again (from failure) strengthen your brothers."
 - 1) Peter was going to fail but not be rejected by God.
 - 2) God planned on using Peter's failure to prepare Peter for a ministry to strengthen his fellow believers.
5. The perfectionist has a big fear of failure and discovery of the failure which could result in rejection.
6. His ultimate goal is not to re-feel the emotion of rejection that he may have felt as a child or to re-feel the repeated praise he received that was out of balance with appropriate correction..

B. He lives under constant pressure, pain, and frustration.

1. It can result in physical symptoms because of stress and of a high degree of anxiety.
2. A lot of emotional energy is unnecessarily spent resulting in potential chronic fatigue.

C. He idealizes almost everything; himself, family, birth home, people, the world.

1. He sets up standards or ideals that are impossible for him or others to achieve yet much energy is used to meet these unrealistic standards and ideals.
2. Idealization is a defense mechanism that keeps you from experiencing feelings that you do not want to feel.
 - a. A person will idealize a parent to avoid rejection from them or achieve acceptance from them or avoid re-feeling pain they may have felt in the past.
 - b. This is similar to looking at life through rose colored glasses. It is a form of denial.
 - c. People, places and things must meet his idealized perfectionistic standard or he gets angry.

D. Anything worth doing is worth doing right (perfectly).

Where did you hear this as a child?
What did they really mean by “right?” Who’s “right?”

1. He clearly feels he is the only one who cares that things are done right and that everything depends upon him (self-centered, proud, selfish).
 - a. He clearly holds a childlike perspective that everything is about himself.
 - b. I Kings 19:14;18, "Then he (Elijah) said, 'I have been very zealous for the Lord, the God of host; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars and killed Your prophets with the sword and I alone am left; and they seek to take my life. (Then the Lord said to him) ¹⁸Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.'"
2. If standards are lowered, he feels all the world could fall apart.
 - a. Anything less than perfect is not acceptable.
 - b. He feels, "I could do more."
3. He feels others don't understand his desire to do things right.
 - a. He is right and they are not because they are not obsessed with doing it to his perfectionistic standards.
4. No allowance is made for growth because he is an all or nothing, black or white thinker. This drives him to extreme attitudes toward himself and others.
 - a. This attitude is totally contrary to the growth principle in grace.
 - 1) Phil. 2:12-13, "So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure."
 - 2) 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity."
 - b. There is a lot of anxiety when they read Romans 14 because God allows choices and differing options. The issues are not black and white.
 - c. Good resource book, We Are Driven, by Minirth and Meier.
5. Procrastination is one result of this logic. He will not tackle a project unless it can be done right. If he does not have the time to do it perfectly, he will not want to

start it. That is why perfectionists can live in a big mess because they are just waiting to do it perfectly.

E. He projects personal standards on others (which may not be God's standards) and looks down on them for not measuring up to his perfect, idealized standards.

Did you ever see this in your home or school growing up?
How was it acted out? How did it affect you?

1. His self-condemnation for not measuring up is projected on others to perpetrate his own self-deception.
 - a. He runs others down to hide his real or imagined flaws and attempt to build himself up in the process.
2. The evil inside of him is projected on to others to avoid his own sin. The Pharisees did this often to Jesus.
 - a. Matt. 12:24, "But when the Pharisees heard this, they said, 'This man casts out demons only by Beelzebub the ruler of the demons.'"
3. God warns us that He will measure (judge) us by the standard we measure others by.
 - a. Matt. 7:1-2, "Do not judge so that you will not be judged. ²For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you."

F. No sense of joy in accomplishments only fear that others will see a flaw in it or see one in him.

1. In contrast, believers, like Paul were able to have a sense of accomplishment.
 - a. 2 Timothy 4:7, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith."

G. "Can't" is one of the most common words in their thought pattern because of the pressure to do it perfectly and not succeeding in the past.

1. "Can't" contradicts the promises of scripture.
 - a. Philippians 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."
 - b. They do not ask if God wants them to do it. They never get that far. They just get overwhelmed and think they should not try it because of the risk of failure.

2. Weakness is viewed as inability and shame, not an opportunity for God to demonstrate His strength through their weakness.
 - a. 2 Cor. 12:9, "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

H. Always feels he could do better because he never measures up to the perfect ideal he has pictured in his mind.

1. One of his chief attitudes and feelings is that of never doing well enough or being good enough (Seamans, p. 79).
2. This produces a great deal of guilt for not measuring up which is in reality false guilt.
3. True guilt means one is worthy of blame.
4. False guilt means you feel guilty but there is no legitimate basis of blame.
5. True guilt and false guilt feel the same therefore, they must be tested by truth and reality.
 - a. 1 John 4:1, "Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world."
6. To them it is not false guilt because they feel they have not measured up and they should have. No, it is still false guilt because the idealistic standards are not achievable. It is like feeling guilty because you can't swim across the ocean. It is totally unreasonable to think you should be able to. But since perfectionists hold themselves to a God-like standard (omnipotence), they believe they should be able to do it.

I. There is a fear of being average.

1. Any feelings of being average, balanced, middle, mediocre, normal, are very upsetting.
 - a. One of the main reasons is his pride that he is better than everyone else and to be average means being flawed and thus imperfect.
2. The possibility that something can be less than perfect and still good is "too good to be true" so in his mind it isn't.
3. He can't grow by seeing his weaknesses and needs because his denial helps him avoid the their reality.
4. The fear of being average totally ignores the variations of gifts and talents in the body of Christ.

Where do you think a perfectionist would place himself in the body of Christ, head, arm, leg, foot? Why do you think he would see himself in that position or at that level?

- a. Paul describes the body of Christ and all of the differences (1 Cor. 12:12-26).

J. A perfectionist is deceived into believing the lie that things can be perfect, contrary to all evidence from life experience.

1. The Apostle Paul spoke directly to the lie that you can become perfect through human effort.
 - a. Galatians 3:1-3, "O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? 2 This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? 3 Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?"
 - 1) "Bewitched" means to manipulate with an evil eye into believing something that is true when it is not.
2. The prophet Jeremiah describes the heart as being deceitful, not perfect.
 - a. Jeremiah 17:9, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"
3. The heart is the core of our belief system. It attempts to get us to believe what is not true or disbelieve things that are true.
 - a. Prov. 4:23, "Keep (protect) your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life."
 - b. Prov. 23:7a, "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he."
4. One basic deception is, "If I'm not perfect I will be rejected" or be a disappointment.
5. Jesus told his followers that their righteousness had to exceed that of the perfectionists of His day, the Pharisees and Scribes, before they could enter the kingdom of God. In fact, they had to become like children in their hearts, i.e. humble and **weak**.
 - a. Matt. 5:20, "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees (**perfectionists of their day**), you will not enter the kingdom of heaven."

K. Fearful of the future because he sees too many hurdles that would limit his performance and increase his potential to fail and experience rejection.

1. One of the results of this fear is that he will even sabotage his future so he can control the failure. It is all about control. Control is motivated out of fear not faith.

L. Remains emotionally immature (stuck).

1. The lies that feed the need to be perfect were developed in childhood and he is still a child emotionally about 6-8 years old.
2. One of his tasks is to grow up emotionally and put away those child-like patterns of thinking by identifying where he is stuck, get un-stuck and grow up emotionally.
 - a. I Cor. 13:11, "When I was a child, I used to speak as a child, think as a child, reason as a child; when I became a man, I did away with childish things."
 - b. I Cor. 14:20, "Brethren, do not be children in your thinking; yet in evil be babes, but in your thinking be mature."
3. You cannot put away (end control) what you do not acknowledge. God will only grant grace for the truth and reality (John 1:14).
4. The hurts in early life stopped emotional development but not physical development, so the body grows up and the emotions stay stuck in the past.

M. Attempts to escape a sense of shame by comparison with others.

1. He controls feelings of badness by comparing with others who are more overtly bad.
 - a. 2 Cor. 10:12a, "But when they measure themselves by themselves and compare themselves with themselves, they are without understanding."
2. Perfectionists get very critical of **them** as seen in the practice of projection. They project their own thoughts, flaws, shortcomings onto others and then criticize them for it. In reality the other person may not be displaying that behavior.
 - a. Rom. 2:1, "Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things."

N. Anger and fear are the most controlling emotions of the perfectionist.

1. Fear is the first emotional gear **in a car** and anger is the second gear.
 - a. They become angry at anyone or thing that stimulates their fear.
2. In contrast, anger and fear are not listed as part of the fruit of the Spirit. Lives managed by anger and fear are not under the control of the Holy Spirit.

- a. Galatians 5:22-23, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such thing there is no law."
- 3. Anger in this case can be a defense mechanism to protect one's pride, by distracting from the issue at hand.
- 4. Mature love casts out fear. Strong fear casts out love.
 - a. I John 4:18, "There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfect in love."
 - b. Mates and children rarely feel loved by a perfectionist. Enough is never enough. They are the objects of criticism and little warmth.

BEHAVIORAL CHARACTERISTICS

III. WHAT CHARACTERIZES THE BEHAVIOR OF A PERFECTIONIST?

A. He spends much of his time trying to control his environment to prevent any loss, re-feeling the pain of past hurts or anyone discovering a flaw in his 'perfection'.

- 1. He needs to control all people, places, and things that could represent potential loss and the pain of feeling bad. That could include the fear of failure or rejection.
- 2. To the degree he is fearful of being out of control on the inside, he will need to be in control on the outside.
- 3. Outward control of others and things helps him stay focused in his head (mind) and away from his emotions (fears).
 - a. Perfectionists are usually afraid of emotions and view them as a sign of weakness.
 - 1) Jesus expressed a whole range of emotions.
- 4. This pattern of control was illustrated in the New Testament by Diotrephes.
 - a. 3 John 1:9-10, "I wrote something to the church; but Diotrephes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say. ¹⁰For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren, either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church."

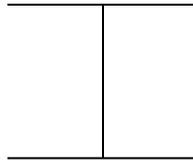
Have you ever seen this pattern played out in any group you have been in, either inside or outside the church?

B. He can't tolerate weaknesses in himself and others (spouse, children).

1. Usually there is very little compassion or support to go along with his high standards, either for himself or others.

a. DRAWING

HIGH STANDARDS



LOW EMOTIONAL SUPPORT



2. The people most denied this compassion are the spouse, children or friends.

Have you ever seen this pattern played out in any group you have been in either inside or outside the church?

3. Weakness is seen as shameful resulting in feelings of being bad.

a. But scripture in contrast views weakness as the major source of power.

- 1) 2 Cor. 12:9, "And he said to me, `My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness."

What particular emotional display do you think perfectionists are most critical of and why?

4. The absence of compassion is contrary to the character of God. Ironically, perfectionists want to be God but without the emotions.

a. Exodus 34:6, "The Lord God, compassionate and gracious."

b. Deuteronomy 4:31, "For the Lord you God is gracious and compassionate.

c. Psalms 116:5, "Yes, our God is compassionate.

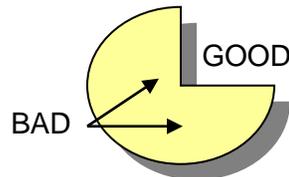
d. Psalms 112:4, "God is gracious and compassionate and righteous.

e. Matthew 9:13, "I desire compassion not sacrifice (i.e., performance, perfectionism).

C. He is disapproving of other's imperfections and projects disappointment in the quality of other people's work.

1. People do not want to work with a perfectionist because they fear they will not measure up to his standards which can often shift.
2. He makes little allowance for anything that is less than perfect to his own standards.
3. He totally avoids the pie praise concept, that is, to praise a person for whatever was done right before correcting the other.

a. DRAWING



4. The Apostle Paul practiced pie praise with the church in Corinth.
 - a. I Cor. 11:2, "Now I praise you because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you."
 - b. I Cor. 11:17, "But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse."

How would you go about expressing "pie praise?"
What would it look like or sound like?

D. His vocabulary is full of "should have," "must have," "could have," "should," "ought," "must."

1. He beats himself with regrets for failing to live up to his idealistic, perfect standard that is unachievable anyway.
2. He lives under constant condemnation of should, ought, must, contrary to what God teaches.
 - a. Romans 8:1, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus"
3. He would agree that God does not judge him but he does judge himself, usually harshly.

Why would a perfectionist be characterized by a habit of second guessing himself?

E. He procrastinates until he can do it right or perfectly.

1. He is immobilized by the need to do it perfectly so nothing gets done.

2. This explains how a perfectionist can live in a trashed out house or have a trashed out car, closet or office. He is not going to do it until he can do it right.
3. Doing anything less than perfect is an opportunity to feel shame.
4. They tend to research a thing to death to prevent making a mistake and feeling shameful for it.
 - a. After the researched purchase, he may discover the product had a flaw or wasn't what he thought it was and he will beat himself up because he "should" have known. The only way he could have known was if he was omniscient. True, because he holds himself to a God like standard.
 - b. He has a life-time subscription to Consumer's Report.

F. He gets upset when things do not go as planned and as a result, he is very inflexible.

1. His control is his way to feel secure so that nothing can surprise him.
2. One of the characteristics of a perfectionistic co-dependant relationship is that they can't stand change.
3. Things must be predictable in order to be secure. In fact, people are not allowed to change, it throws the perfectionist into a tailspin.
4. This rigidity is totally fear based with faith in God virtually taken out of the picture. Why? Because faith involves risk and you could get hurt or fail. But faith only exists outside the comfort zone of fear.

a.



- b. Heb. 11:1, "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

How do you think the perfectionist's life would be different if he exchanged his life of fear for a life of faith?

G. He really gets down on himself if a mistake is repeated.

1. He holds the same rule for relationships. People get one try at being their friend or spouse.

2. The same rule goes for children and their performance.
 - a. Often the perfectionist parent will tell the child to go do something else so the adult can do it "right." The task done right is more important than training a child to do it over time.
3. In contrast, God acknowledges that a righteous man will fail and makes provision for it.
 - a. Prov. 24:16, "For a righteous man falls seven times, and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity."
 - b. I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

H. He may deny his own perfectionism or defend it as "normal."

1. The New Testament Pharisees had the same attitude as a present day perfectionists.
 - a. Luke 18:11, "The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank You that I am not like other people, swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector.'"
2. Whatever we are raised to believe is normal that is normal to us. Because this pattern usually begins early, perfectionists feel this is just "who they are" and excuse their behavior.
3. They will go as far as to rewrite history or rationalize wrong behavior to avoid feeling guilt and shame.
 - a. ill.: Suppose a Victorian brick building is torn down a brick at a time and made into a modern contemporary building. The perfectionist rebuilder would swear it was a contemporary building all along.

I. He wants to be sure that his motives are absolutely pure and honest.

1. A repeated statement you will hear them say is, "I want to be honest with you," or "I'll be honest with you."
2. He is motivated by a fear you might find a flaw in him or, God forbid, an inaccuracy in something he might say and this, he believes, would be a source of shame or grounds for rejection.

J. He focuses on external control to bring calm within himself due to anxiety, self-deprecation, disagreement.

1. Any disorder on the outside gets in touch with any perceived disorder on the inside.

2. However, reducing anxiety starts within, not attempting to control others on the outside.
 - a. Phil 4:6, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."
3. Things and order of things are more important than people and their feelings.
 - a. Luke 6:6-11, Jesus heals a man on the Sabbath and this enrages the perfectionistic Scribes and Pharisees.

What firsthand experience have you had at needing to control yourself or observing others controlling things?
 What have you noticed about your or their quality of life?

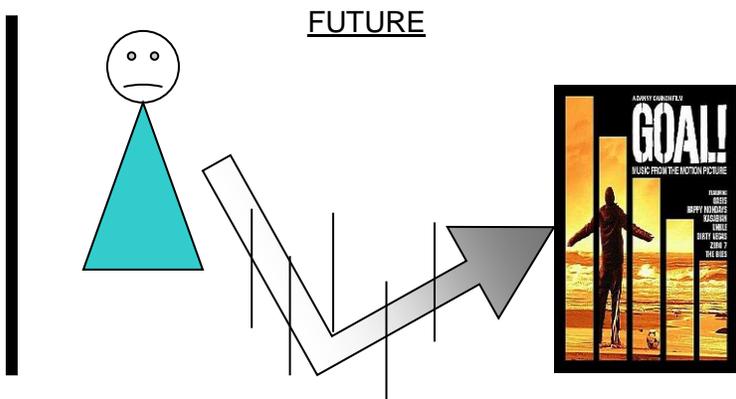
K. He obsessively pursues one thing (issue) to the exclusion of others.

1. There is no balance on any issue or variety of issues.
2. He may obsess on a single doctrinal issue, i.e., prophecy, election, etc., to the exclusion of other important doctrines.
3. He will obsess or focus on certain scriptures that supports his imbalance and overlook others.
 - a. He will find all the submission verses to beat his wife with but totally ignore the verses that call him to lay down his life for her (Eph. 5:22, 25).

What kind of hobby horse have you observed in yourself or those around you?
 What kind of imbalance did you observe? What did they ignore?

L. He is blind to his past accomplishments and obsesses on future barriers and thus can be paralyzed.

1. DRAWING PAST
 Past Accomplishments
 Don't Count



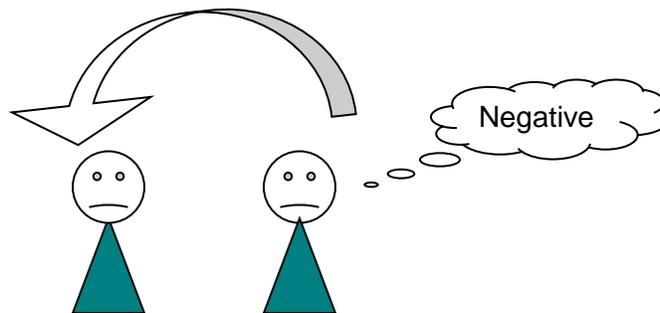
2. They can't see the goal or reasons it will work. They only see the obstacles and reasons it will not work.
 - a. ill.: pessimist
3. This person will have commitment phobia in relationships and become fearful of marriage out of fear of failing.
 - a. Often you will see this in couples who are living together but not married out of fear.

M. He tends to maximize failures and minimize successes.

1. He may minimize complements from others by maximizing his personal defects or failings.

N. He projects his own negative feelings on to others.

1. DRAWING



2. He condemns others for having feelings that in reality he has.
 - a. Romans 2:1, "Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

O. He has a very rigid, legalistic approach to life, ritualistic, avoidant (denial) or phobic (fear) behavior.

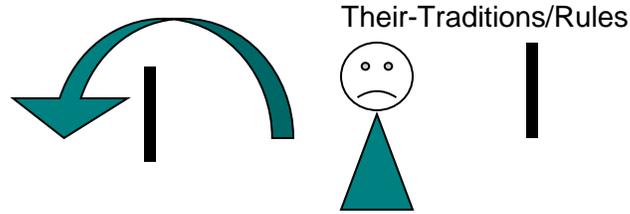
1. Legalistic rules help control himself from feeling feelings of badness like the Pharisees or making a mistake and being rejected.

Legalistic rules (like the Pharisees had) help him control his feelings of being bad or making a mistake and being rejected.

- a. He has an oversensitive conscience and is a legalist who rigidly overemphasizes external do's and don'ts, rules and regulations (Seamans, p.81).
2. The Pharisees made rules within rules to keep from breaking the big 10 rules (Ten Commandments).

- a. DRAWING

10 Commandments



- b. Matt 23:23-24, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law; justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. ²⁴You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"
 - c. Matt.15:1-3, "Then some Pharisees and scribes came to Jesus from Jerusalem and said, ²'Why do Your disciples break the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' ³And He answered and said to them, 'Why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?'"
 - d. Matt. 15:14, "Let them alone; they are blind guides of the blind. And if a blind man guides a blind man, both will fall into a pit."
 - e. Matt. 23:4, "They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger."
3. Religious perfectionistic separatists have no appreciation for liberty in Christ.
 - a. Luke 7:39, "Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet He would know who and what sort of person this woman is who is touching Him, that she is a sinner.'"
 - b. Rom. 14
 - c. Liberty can not be controlled by the perfectionist.
 4. Rules are more important than the person and relationship.
 - a. John 5:10, "Therefore the Jews were saying to him who was cured, 'It is the Sabbath, and it is not permissible for you to carry your pallet.'" //Even if you were healed.
 - b. Matt. 12:1-2, 7, 12, "At that time Jesus went through the grain fields on the Sabbath, and His disciples became hungry and began to pick the heads of grain and eat. ²But when the Pharisees saw this, they said to Him, 'Look, Your disciples do what is not lawful to do on a Sabbath.' ⁷"But if you had known what this means, 'I desire compassion, and not a sacrifice,' you would have not condemned the innocent."¹²"How much more valuable then is a man than a sheep! So then, it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath."
 - c. Rules without a relationship will result in rebellion, especially in kids.

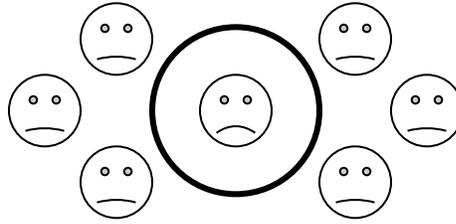
5. He thinks he gains value from his performance instead of accepting God's acceptance and value he has in Christ.
 - a. Galatians 3:1-3, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? ²This is the only thing I want to find out from you; did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? ³Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"
 - 1) They were born again by God's Spirit by no effort of themselves, now they believe they can become perfect by their own effort.
6. Jesus came to give "rest" not "rules." Performance-based perfectionists have lots of rules and no rest.
 - a. Matt. 11:28-30, "Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. ²⁹Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. ³⁰For My yoke is easy and My burden is light."
7. Some perfectionists may have a dreaded fear of God and therefore even a fear of death.
 - a. Since perfectionists can't do enough or be enough, they fear God will discover a flaw that they do not know about (creates anxiety). They fear they may not be saved (because they have not measured up or because of the secret flaw), therefore they may fear that because of the flaw they will die and go to hell.
 - b. This is an idealized lie but it feels true in their core belief system.

What experiences have you had in a legalistic system
or with legalistic people?

P. Perfectionists discourage and even alienate friends from themselves and become isolated.

1. This alienation and isolation may include family members, also.
2. They see a flaw and reject them which ends the relationship.
 - a. Matt. 9:10-11, "Then it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. ¹¹When the Pharisees saw this, they said to His disciples, 'Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?'"
3. Performers tend to be loners because of their fear of disclosure and fear of rejection by others because of their flaws. If there is no relationship, there is no risk of failing or of discovery.

a. DRAWING



4. These people are drawn to legalistic churches who emphasize performance not relationships.
 - a. The pastor is usually emotionally abusive to the flock and drives them with guilt, shame and fear.
 - b. The flock usually comes from homes where this was normal, so it feels good to them. They are fearful of grace filled churches.

Q. They stop striving for the best (positive) and simply strive to avoid the imperfect, therefore, they can only see the imperfect and negative.

R. Rarely can they relax and they tend to be very nervous.

1. Nervous physical traits - rocking knee, rocking body, skin blotching.
2. The body will express what the mind will not acknowledge.
3. They have high anxiety and are hyper alert to their environment.

S. They are black and white thinkers.

1. They make a list and if they accomplish 9 of the 10 things on the list they feel they have failed. It is all or nothing.
2. There is no room to grow in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - a. 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be the glory both now and forever. Amen."

IV. HOW IS PERFECTIONISM DEVELOPED?

How do you think a person develops into a perfectionist?
What part is heredity and what part is home environment?

A. Performance-based behavior may be developed from a critical parent who is impossible to please.

1. Thus, perfectionism is developed out of desire to be accepted by performance
2. e or a strong fear of disapproval.

3. Often these parents dole out love and approval in exchange for achievement which makes them look good at the child's emotional expense.
4. Parents may be overtly or covertly critical of big and small things.
 - a. If the parent over reacts to a small thing, the child is fearful of making a big mistake and therefore he focuses on small things.
5. This criticism may have been verbal or conveyed by body language (rolling the eyes) or tone of voice.

In what ways did you see this growing up in your family or a friend's family?

B. The perfectionist may have developed a deep sense of shame from things done to them, things done by them, or things done around them so they make an extra effort not to experience shame from a mistake.

C. Perfectionism is learned early as a way to handle internal distress/anxiety.

1. It is developed by feelings of being alone or isolated and helpless to control a hostile or critical environment.
2. Perfectionism is an intense activity to gain and keep control to prevent discovery of a flaw and experience subsequent rejection or shame.
3. This fear could have been role modeled by a parent and learned by the child.

D. Perfectionism is developed to protect from any more losses through negative experiences.

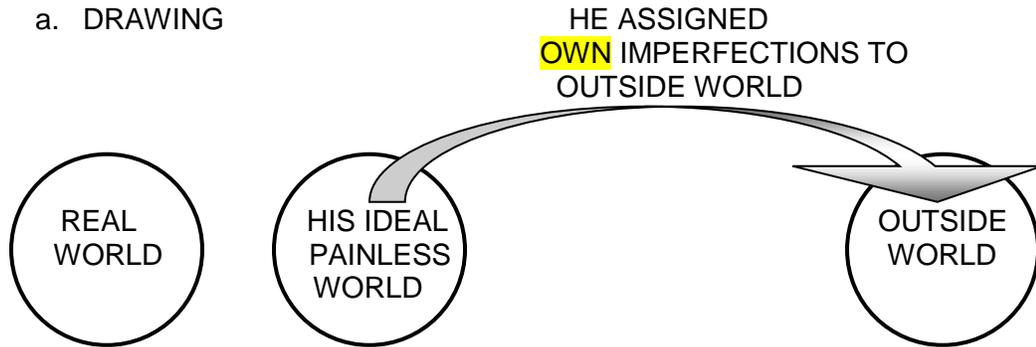
1. Some will go as far to make an internal vow to themselves that they are not going to allow a certain thing to happen to them ever again.

E. Parents may have been aloof, emotionally distant, unpredictable and even dangerous (brutal) and the child has to *guess* where he stands with them.

F. As a child he learns to cope by shifting from living in a painful real world to a less painful ideal (perfect) world where the losses can be minimized by control and problems are "fixed" quickly.

1. Now all of life's imperfections are attributed to the outside world and he seeks to assign the ideal to the self.

a. DRAWING



- b. This helps him to defend himself from himself.
2. The real self is dropped and the idealized self world is now the focus of all his energies. It's an unreal world he lives in.
 3. He can't be real or honest, but obsessive with being honest.
 - a. This results in big time denial of reality, especially as it relates to himself.
 - b. He fears that if you knew the real me you would not like me because of hidden sources of shame, real or imagined.
 4. **Perfectionism** keeps one from becoming aware of their own feelings of anger and fear.
 - a. His own feelings are his biggest fear and other's feelings are just as scary.
 - b. Hardest job as a counselor is to get a person in touch with or acknowledge his/her feelings in order to discover his hidden source of shame, fear, anger..
 - 1) Reality is Painful
 - 2) Denial is Peaceful

G. The perfectionist starts out to avoid the anxiety (pain) of life by taking control of life. But in exchange for protection from fear/anxiety the person must deceive (lie to) himself. Control is only an illusion. It is like driving on ice. There is very little actual control.

1. This deception is created from a deceived heart that believes control is safe and a guarantee of painlessness. It is all about avoiding pain.
 - a. Jer. 17:9, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?"

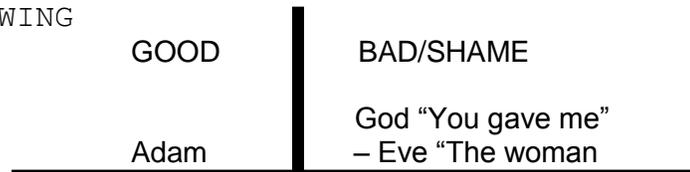
2. God will not cooperate with a goal of a pain free life. He has called us out as believers to suffer and grow through it.
 - a. I Peter 2:20-21, "For what credit is it if, when you are beaten for your faults, you take it patiently? But when you do and suffer, if you take it patiently, this is commendable before God. 21) For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps."
3. But the perfectionist's life purpose is the pursuit of the impossible, ideal, perfect and the absence of pain.
 - a. Usually this pursuit is at the expense of relationships.

What experience have you had with perfectionism costing or at least straining a relationship? Was it ever corrected and if so how?

- H. Children learn perfectionistic traits from parents and reproduce in a desire to be accepted by them or at least not disapproved by them.**
 1. The parent's perfectionism is normal so if the child is going to be normal he must be a perfectionist, too.
- I. There may have been a lack of clear standards set within the home.**
 1. This results in a child never knowing where he stood. He was kept guessing which led to more performance.
 2. He may have discovered the rules and expectations of parents only when he broke them.
 - a. This develops paranoia. They never knew when disapproval was coming.
 3. There are no clear boundaries which create security.
- J. Occasionally, as a child, he received praise and thus a high reward or pay off. An effort to maintain or recapture that euphoria is met with frustration because of inability to gain it through performance or achievement.**
 1. This euphoria is a form of mood altering from a bad mood to a good mood or feeling.
 - a. Eph. 5:18, "And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit."
 2. This euphoria can be addictive as seen in a workaholic.
- K. Perfectionism is a rebellion with Satan to be like God, motivated by pride and the desire to be self_sufficient.**

1. You will never meet a genuine humble perfectionist because they are so self absorbed by fear and are self absorbed with protecting themselves by being perfect.
2. They can not face the fact that they are human because they feel they can achieve god-status.
 - a. Genesis 3:5, "For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."
3. They present on the outside that they "Have no needs" because that would demonstrate weakness.
 - a. Rev. 3:17 The church of Laodicea said that they, "Have no needs." This position makes God sick.
4. This denial creates an inner hell of self-contempt and torment a total absence of peace, which is the fruit of the Holy Spirit.
5. We all attempt to distance or separate from our bad so we can be all good.
 - a. Adam projected (blame shifted) his bad on to God and Eve to escape responsibility. (Gen. 3:13)

b. DRAWING



L. Summary

V. HOW TO WORK THROUGH PERFECTIONISM (or performance approval)

If you were to help a person to work through or correct his perfectionistic pattern of life, what would you do? Where would you start?

A. Understand a working definition. \ (Not a clinical definition)

1. A perfectionist is "an imperfectionist out of control on the inside living with the fear of being discovered."
 - a. "Imperfectionist" — one with human needs (flaws, emotions) who is able to see any shame, guilt or fear he may feel and deal with it biblically.
 - 1) Flaw plus shame = Feeling of being bad.

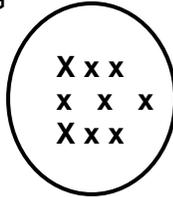
- b. "Out of control on the inside" these are inner needs or feelings that will not submit to denial or total control.
 - 1) Pam K., ran out of church when she began to cry for fear of being out of control. (i.e., she fears letting people see her cry because crying equals shame.)
- 2. "One who idealizes almost everything around them and then sets up standards, expectations and images for themselves/others that are impossible to meet." Yet, they are deceived into thinking they are achievable.
- 3. Perfectionism is an extreme effort to achieve flawlessness, faultless performance to gain approval.
 - a. Scripturally, we are already positionally Holy, perfect in Christ. But they want it to be their reality in their everyday life.
 - 1) I Cor. 1:2, "To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ their Lord and ours."
 - a) Believers are referred to as saints 60 times in the New Testament.
 - b) Believers are declared holy by God then set aside for special use by God.
 - c) It takes a lifetime to work that reality into our lives until Christ returns (Phil. 1:6).
 - b. Perfectionists want to skip the process to become spiritually mature through the Spirit and growth process or believe they can do it What the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives..
 - 1) Galatians 3:1-3, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? (2) This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (3) Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"
 - a) "Bewitched," "manipulated you," "cast you under some evil spell by an evil influence."
 - b) they were manipulated into believing they could be born again by the Holy Spirit but becoming mature and complete was totally up to their own self effort.

How does legalism play into this trap?

B. Realize areas or emotions that are fearful of being out of control or discovered.

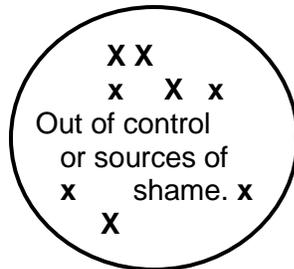
1. This is usually step 1 in a 12 step program. You are incapable of doing this on your own and you need God to do it.
2. Life is made up of many facets — home, school, work, kids, clothes, cars, toys, food, relationships, feelings, etc.

a. DRAWING



3. The control of these are at varying degrees at various times.
4. Perfectionist has a lot of areas that are out of control either actually, perceptually, or potentially inside himself. He also has areas that could be flaws or imperfections that he feels he needs to hide..

a. DRAWING



C. Understands that stress and pressure inside this circle is usually fueled by guilt, shame, and fear. It is like three knobs on a gas stove that are controlling the flame under the pressure cooker.

1. Drawing



2. Guilt for confessed or un-confessed sin.
 - a. Legitimate guilt means you are worthy of blame; you are responsible for your wrong actions and it has not been acknowledged and confessed.

- 1) I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."
- b. False guilt means you continue to feel worthy of blame for sin that has been confessed and dealt with.
 - 1) You did confess it but your mind may not allow you to accept the forgiveness.
 - a) Guilt feelings came from thoughts of guilt.
 - (1) If it has been confessed then it is the presence of a lie that it was not forgiven and therefore it must be unconfessed.
 - b) True and false guilt feel the same but have entirely different bases. True guilt is deserved and leads to repentance. False guilt is not deserved and leads to re-confession. Re-confession only deepens the lie it was not forgiven.

What experience have you had personally with the confusing true and false guilt? What did you do to correct it? What scripture did you use? Where did you learn to use them?

- 2) You must identify the lie then renounce the lie and ask the Lord to speak truth to you then affirm it in your mind.
 - a) Identify
 - b) Renounce
 - c) Ask
 - d) Affirm
- 3) Failure to go through this process leads to the false notion that we must forgive ourselves.
 - a) Self forgiveness is not biblical.

What explanation have you heard for the concept of forgiving yourself? What biblical support have you seen for it? How effective has self-forgiveness been? Who gets the glory when we feel good for forgiving ourselves?

- b) The main reason we feel we must forgive ourselves is because we feel we are not worthy to be forgiven. That is a lie of the heart. We are made worthy of forgiveness solely on the basis that Christ has taken and paid for all our sin.
- 3. Shame for actions done to him, by him, or around him.
 - a. Shameful actions done to him.
 - 1) Verbal attacks as to who he is; dumb, stupid, loser.
 - 2) Physical actions, physical abuse.
 - b. Shame done by him.
 - 1) Sexual activities done by him.
 - 2) Other shameful or abusive actions such as stealing, degrading, lying, drugs, alcohol, irresponsible.
 - c. Shame actions done around him.
 - 1) Unclean home
 - 2) Alcoholic parent
 - 3) Public embarrassment by a parent or sibling.
 - d. False shame
 - 1) One is made to feel ashamed for things that were done to you that were not your fault or responsibility.
 - a) Sexual abuse people struggle with this.
 - 2) One is made to feel ashamed for things that are not legitimate sources of shame.
 - a) I Cor. 4:14 "I do not write these things to shame you, but to admonish you as my beloved children.
 - 3) False shame may come from feelings of shame for things you have committed but have confessed them to God and received forgiveness.
 - a) Jesus not only absorbed our sin but our shame.
 - (1) Hebrews 12:2, "Fixing our eyes on Jesus the author and perfecter of faith who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- 4) It is appropriate to have a sense of sadness or sorrow for what you have done or for something that was done to you. That's normal. It may be time to look for the "gold" in all the pain and see how it could be converted to your benefit and God's glory in the present.
 - a) Gen. 50:20 "But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive."
 - b) Luke 22:31-32 "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. 32) But I have prayed for you that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.'"
- 5) False shame must be rejected and the people who put it on you must be forgiven.

e. Legitimate shame

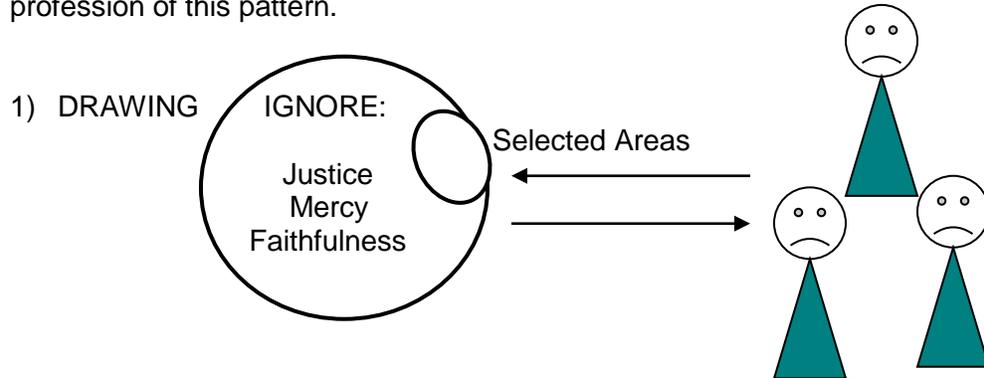
- 1) A source of emotional guilt for sin that has not been confessed and corrected.
 - a) I Cor. 6:5, "I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren,"
 - b) I Cor. 15:34, "Become sober-minded as you ought, and stop sinning for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame.
 - c) 2 Cor 4:2, "But we have renounced the things hidden because of shame, not walking in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God."
- 2) The sin must be confessed then allow God to wash away the sin and shame.
 - a) I John 1:9

What struggles have you had with legitimate or ill-legitimate shame? What did you do to get relief from it? What has been the results of this in your life?

4. Fear that drives perfectionism has three levels .
 - a. Fear of discovery of a flaw or imperfection.
 - b. Fear of rejection because of this discovery.
 - c. Fear of abandonment because of the rejection.

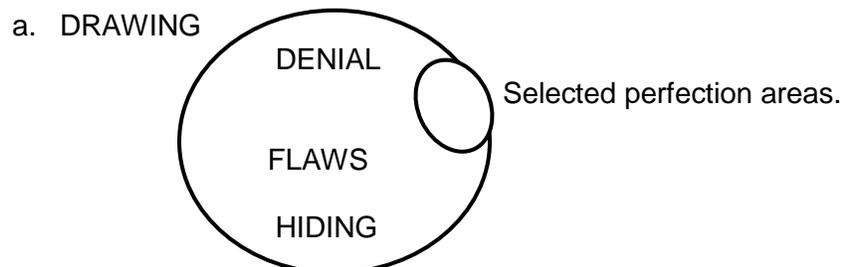
D. Identify the areas (or pockets) you are using to relieve internal pressure, things you are concentrating on in order to perform perfectly, even obsessively, in yourself or others.

1. The selection of obsession is usually based on ability or need to control. // They can be arbitrary (house, car, kids, clothes, work, personal grooming, etc).
 - a. Obsessing on select areas gives the outward appearance (front) that everything else is under control. It is usually ignored. Pharisees made a profession of this pattern.



2) ill. You can use an egg and yolk as a visual analogy of this concept.

- b. Matthew 23:23-24, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe the mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. (24) You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!"
 - c. Matt. 15:7-8, "You hypocrites, rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you: (8) 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me.'"
2. Partial control of selective things gives one an artificial feeling of being under control; it is an inward delusion designed to mask needs, flaws, failures and hide feelings of being bad. // This is a form of self-denial. It is a form of hiding like Adam and Eve did after their sin (Gen. 3:7-8).



b. A classic denial story by Pharisees.

- 1) Luke 18:9-14, "And He also told this parable to certain ones who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and viewed others with contempt. (10) Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee, and the

other a tax-gatherer. (11) The Pharisee stood and was praying thus to himself, 'God, I thank Thee that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax-gatherer. (12) I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.' (13) But the tax-gatherer, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, the sinner!' (14) I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled, but he who humbles himself shall be exalted."

- 2) People who acknowledge their needs to God and others get what the perfectionist cannot achieve – acceptance/love.
- c. The beam and speck analogy illustrates the critical thinking behind the perfectionist.
 - 1) Matt. 7:3, "Why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye?"
3. This partial control of people, places, things, and emotions, temporarily reduces some inner anxiety but is basically an illusion of flawlessness which is totally contrary to God's perspective of us.
 - a. Jer. 17:9, "The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?"
 - b. I John 1:8,10, "If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (10) If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us."
 - c. Rev. 3:17, "Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked."
4. Denial is ultimately going to be confronted with reality either by man or God or both.

What experience have you had on putting on a front for others? What had you hoped to hide? What did you fear if it was revealed or exposed? What have you done to become more open and authentic?

E. Recognize the purpose for this selective perfectionism (controlism) is three fold:

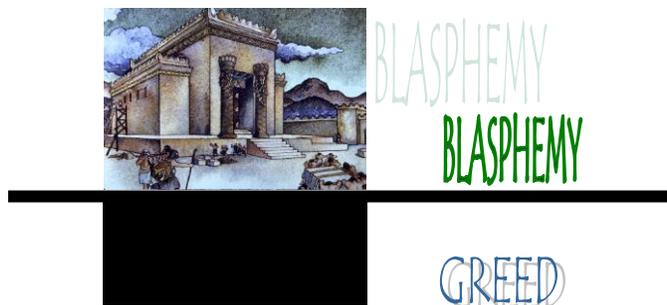
1. To relieve inner anxiety/pressure
 - a. Perfectionistic behaviors are a false substitute of relief instead of utilizing a biblical release of pressure.

- 1) Philippians 4:6-7, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. (7) And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

b. Four sources of the pressure producing anxiety.

- 1) It may be a feeling you don't want to feel because of its association with shame or guilt. Martha felt this way.
 - a) Luke 10:41, "But the Lord answered and said to her, "Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many things;"
- 2) It may be fear of seeing a truth about yourself or others you don't want to see. Those who stoned Stephan covered their ears because they could not handle the truth.
 - a) Acts 7:56-57, Stephan speaking to Pharisees and He said, "Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God. (57) But they cried out with a loud voice, and covered their ears, and they rushed upon him with one impulse."
- 3) It may be fear of assuming a responsibility you do not want to assume and have been avoiding.
 - a) Mark 7:11-12, "but you say, 'If a man says to his father or his mother, anything of mine you might have been helped by is Corban (that is to say, given to God),' (12) you no longer permit him to do anything for his father or his mother;"
 - b) The Pharisees had a responsibility to take care of their aging parents but gave much of their money to God so they were not able to take care of them. Remember, they gave their money to God in public so people would see their generosity to God and get public praise and approval in return.
- 4) It may be a fear of realizing a motive you do not want to acknowledge.
 - a) John 11:47-48, "Therefore the chief priest and the Pharisees convened a council, and were saying, 'What are we doing? For this man (Jesus) is performing many signs. (48) If we let Him go on like this, all men will believe in Him, and the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation."
 - b) Matt. 26:65, "Then the high priest tore his robes, saying, He has blasphemed! What further need do we have of witnesses? Behold, you have now heard the blasphemy;"

c. DRAWING



- 1) They were crying out “blasphemy” when in reality it was greed and envy.
2. To give the outward illusion (front) that all else is under control, good, and flawless.

a. DRAWING



- b. Matt. 23:23-28, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others. (24) You blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel! (25) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and of the dish, but inside they are full of robbery and self_indulgence. (26) You blind Pharisee, first clean the inside of the cup and of the dish, so that the outside of it may become clean also. (27) Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness. (28) Even so you too outwardly appear righteous to men, but inwardly you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness."

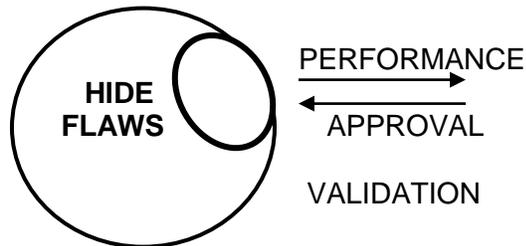
- 1) Usually the biggest rule makers publicly are the biggest rule breakers privately.

- 2) This is a hypocritical effort to hide the presence of shame and guilt and to protect ones pride (value).

- c. Matt. 6:16, "And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do; for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full."

3. To gain the approval of others which perfectionist desperately feel they lack. // The outward efforts of performance are driven by the inner compulsion to perform to gain recognition, acceptance, approval (need due to criticism and lack of love in childhood).

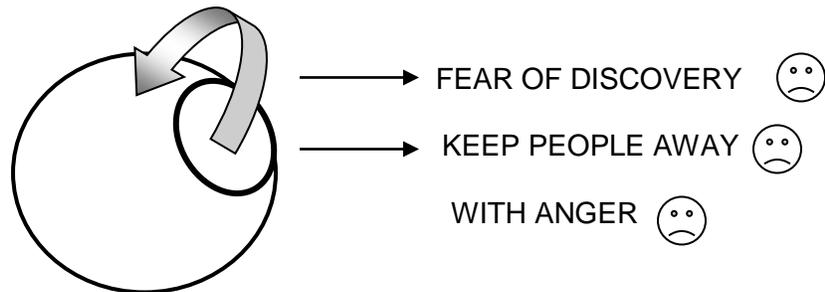
- a. Matt. 23:5-7. "They do all their deeds to be noticed by men...they love the place of honor..., chief of seats...,respectful greetings...."
- b. John 12:43, "For they love the approval of men rather than the approval of God."
- c. DRAWING



F. Acknowledge the primary driving emotion is fear inwardly and anger outwardly.// (Not love, joy, peace).

1. The primary fear is that of failing, or discovery of flaws or things that are out of the circle of control.

- a. DRAWING



2. It is a fear of disclosure to others of objects of shame, guilt or embarrassment and this results in attempts to hide.
 - a. This fear of disclosure can come from past, present, and future actions or desires.
3. The ultimate fear is the fear of abandonment. // Logic: "If they really knew me, they would not like me, and I would experience further loss by abandonment." Even when they know of scripture to the contrary.
 - a. Deuteronomy 31:6,8, "Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the Lord your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." (8)"And the Lord is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. **He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear, or be dismayed.**"

- b. Hebrews 13:5 "Let your way of life be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, **I will never desert you, nor will I ever forsake you**".
 - c. Romans 8:38-39, "For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, (39) nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, **shall be able to separate** us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
 - d. Rom. 8:15, "For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, 'Abba! Father!'"
 - e. To the degree you are secure in your relationship with Christ to that same degree you can be honest, open, and truthful in human relationships.
 - 1) Fear of abandonment is a childhood emotion that needs to be replaced with truth.
4. These fears are a trap that soon becomes a prison with the lock and keys on the inside.

a. DRAWING



- b. Prov. 29:25, "The fear of man (rejection) brings a snare (trap), but he who trusts in the Lord will be exalted."
 - c. 2 Timothy 4:16-17, "At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. (17) But the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me, in order that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was delivered out of the lion's mouth."
 - d. Mark 15:34, "And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'Eloi, Eloi, Lama Sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?'"
 - e. Gal. 2:12, "For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he (Peter) used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing (rejection of) the party of the circumcision."
5. This fear traps and keeps you in an abusive relationships or prevents you from having a relationship. // No human relationship is 100% risk free.

What experience have you had of being in a fear-based relationship or have observed one? What was it like? How was religion a factor in these relationships? What do you think it would take to correct the relationship or to get out of an abusive controlling relationship?

6. These fears can easily slip into anger.
 - a. If he is afraid of being abandoned then he will become angry at the one who is abandoned him although his controlling dominating behavior may be driving his wife away.
 - b. If his shame/guilt is going to be exposed by someone else that he is not controlling or losing control over then that fear will slip into anger to prevent that exposure.
 - c. This fear-loss cycle can develop a love-hate relationship as seen in a misogynist (a woman hater). The real issue is not anger but a fear of women.
 - d. Resource: "Christian Men Who Hate Women," Dr. Margaret Rink, Zondervan Publication.

QUESTIONS TO HELP DETERMINE A LOVE /HATE MARRIAGE

1. Does he assume the right to control how you live and behave?
2. Have you given up important activities or people in your life in order to keep him happy?
3. Does he devalue your opinions, your feelings and your accomplishments?
4. Does he yell, threaten or withdraw into angry silence when you displease him?
5. Do you "walk on eggs," rehearsing what you will say so as not to set him off?
6. Does he bewilder you by switching from charm to rage without warning?
7. Do you often feel confused, off-balance or inadequate with him?
8. Is he extremely jealous and possessive?
9. Does he blame you for everything that goes wrong in the relationship?

Men Who Hate Women, Dr. Susan Forward, (p.10)

7. Anger is the primary weapon of a controlling perfectionist.
 - a. Controllers are attracted to performers and vice versa.
 - b. Anger is the tool that is used to prevent intimacy in a relationship.
 - c. Everyone has to "walks on eggs" to prevent the eruption of anger. They take the responsibility for the controllers anger.
 - d. The anger can be subtle as in sarcasm.

G. Implement the steps to freedom from the performance trap.

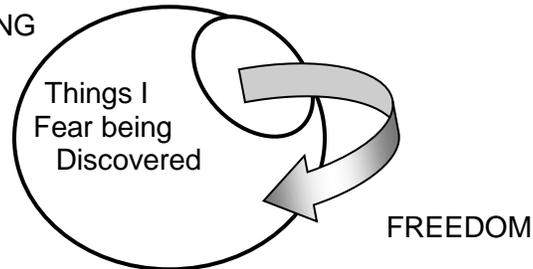
1. Understanding and accepting who you are in Christ.
 - a. The perfectionist is basically having an identity crises.
 - 1) He does not know who he really is because he has been a performer for so many years.
 - 2) He is trying to create someone that he really isn't so that he can be accepted.
 - b. This will require a change in his core belief system.
2. Purpose to make your core identity who you are in Christ and not this idealized false front.
 - a. Gal. 2:20, "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me."
 - b. Phil. 1:21, "For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."
 - c. Col. 3:1-4, "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. (2) Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. (3) For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Why do you think it is important to change the core belief before you don anything else?

3. Acknowledge the truth (reality) of yourself to God and to others appropriately. About whatever you fear anyone knowing about you, what you are hiding. What is it you fear others discovering about you? Share it in a safe environment with a

trusted friend or pastor. Allow them to help you deal with the secrets biblically. One well known author had to share that he had a police record as a kid and that he had his pregnant girlfriend get an abortion. He feared that secret from becoming public. But he worked it through and now publicly tells the world about it. He acknowledges that he was a perfectionist to hide the guilt and shame.

a. DRAWING



- b. John 8:31a,32,36, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; (32) and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. (36) If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."
- c. John 1:14, "And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth."
- d. John 14:6, "Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."
- e. Prov. 28:13, "He who conceals his transgressions will not prosper, But he who confesses and forsakes them will find compassion."
- 1) Note: Confession brings about the very thing desired but too fearful to acquire, i.e., compassion; someone who will identify with your pain and show empathy or suffer with you.
 - 2) Appropriate confession deepens understanding.
- f. Psalms 51:6, "Behold, Thou dost desire truth in the innermost being, and in the hidden part Thou wilt make me know wisdom."
4. Confession (disclosure) brings glory to God
- a. Josh. 7:19, "Then Joshua said to Achan, 'My son, I implore you, give glory to the Lord, the God of Israel, and give praise to Him; and tell me now what you have done. Do not hide it from me.'
5. View your confession as a basis for prayer resulting in inner healing.
- a. James 5:16, "Therefore, confess your sins to one another, and pray for one another, so that you may be healed. The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."

- 1) "To one another" not for forgiveness because only God can forgive sins (1 Tim. 2:5).
 - 2) "Pray for one another," purpose for disclosure is for prayer for others to help carry your burden (Gal. 6:2) and be a witness to you of the truth that you can be totally transparent and still be loved and accepted.
- b. James 5:17, "Elijah was a man with a nature like ours (weaknesses), and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months."
- 1) Elijah was well known by Jews and may have been idealized (perfect) but now is seen in a human light. Pride filled perfectionists hate to be viewed as normal or like others. Why? Because they have idealized themselves above others.
 - 2) "Nature like ours" "a man of like feelings," or "fellow sufferer"; he was flawed and frail, imperfect but was powerful in prayer.
- c. Jewish people were very performance oriented. James is the first New Testament book, written primarily to a Jewish church. Transparency was one of the first issues to be addressed.
6. Realize the fear of disclosure (loss) and rejection energizes perfectionism (and legalism). Candid disclosure will reduce the energy to perform and to obsess. Then you can relax and build relationships.
7. Allow others to illustrate to you how God can know all about you and still love and accept you.
- a. Luke 7:47, "For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much, but he who is forgiven little, loves little."
 - b. John 8:10-11, "And straightening up, Jesus said to her, 'Woman, where are they? Did no one condemn you?' (11) And she said, 'No one, Lord.' And Jesus said, 'Neither do I condemn you; go your way; from now on sin no more.'"
 - c. The basic fear of abandonment is reduced because you realize that someone really knows you and still likes you.
 - 1) Proverbs 17:17a, "A friend loves at all times..."
8. Project: Share your past with someone who cares for you. If it is sexual in nature it is not important to disclose the details.
- a. Prepare your hall of shame list then share it with a friend, pastor, church leader, counselor, but rarely a family member unless they are mature enough to keep confidences.
 - 1) Remember Jesus took both your sin and shame.

- a) Heb. 12:2, "Fixing your eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne."
- b. Prepare a statement to give to anyone who would ask you about something you did or was done to you that you are ashamed of.
 - 1) I Peter 3:15, "But sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts, always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you, yet with gentleness and reverence."

H. DESTROY THE LADDERS OF PERFORMANCE

1. Identify the ladders of performance you have developed in your life. // There is an inner driving force that says "If only you would work harder or more perfectly you would succeed and be accepted, approved, loved etc."
 - a. This driving force has been likened to a 55 pound parrot that is constantly driving him by repeated criticism and threats of failure. He is being driven by fear.
 - b. Believers are led not driven.
 - 1) Rom. 8:14, "For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God."
 - 2) Matt. 11:29, "Take My yoke upon you, and learn form Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls."
2. Realize the ladders are in stages of performance in life.
 - a. You run up the first one and when you get to the top you discover...another ladder.
 - b. You walk up the second ladder and then you discover...a third ladder.
 - c. You crawl up the third ladder and discover...and on and on and on.
 - d. DRAWING



3. Ask yourself a key question: If you are on the center of the second ladder of performance, where is God located in relation to those ladders?

- a. He is with you? You mean He is with you giving you the energy to perform to get accepted?
- b. He is at the top of the ladders and you are performing for Him to get Him to accept you?
- c. He is on the bottom (correct)? You are already accepted in Christ. There is not need to perform unless one values other's approval above God's. God calls that person "men pleasers" (1 Thess. 2:4; Gal. 1:10; Col. 3:22)

Why would God be located at the bottom of these ladders in this analogy?

- 1) Rom. 5:8, "But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were (already) yet sinners, Christ died for us." He loved you before you even constructed the ladders.
 - 2) "Wherefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God." Our task is to illustrate God's acceptance to our brothers.
 - 3) God does not "do" ladders or make you perform to be accepted. In fact He hates ladders of performance.
 - a) Gal. 3:1-3
4. If God is not at the top, ask who is at the top requiring performance acceptance?
- a. Is it yourself? \ No, you are performing for someone else to get something for yourself, i.e., love, acceptance.
 - b. Is it God? \ No, He is not giving you the energy to perform for approval.
 - c. Is it mom and dad? Usually it is one or both. It is rarely siblings.
 - 1) Whether the parents are dead or alive we still perform for their approval in our minds.
 - a) Matt. 10:37, "He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me."
 - d. It (perfectionist performance) is putting people in the place of God. \ i.e., putting people on a pedestal to gain their approval.
 - 1) The logic is, if I perform for them (sacrificial actions) they will love me in return (granting my request) just like a god.

- 2) Idealization of people (putting them on a pedestal) is a defense mechanism to protect the self from the emotional pain of perceived or actual rejection. This is the basis of idolatry.
 - a) Eli practiced relational idolatry with his sons.
 - (1) (God to Eli), I Samuel 2:29, "Why do you kick at my sacrifice and at my offering which I have commanded...and honor your sons above Me? (3:13) God to (Samuel to Eli), "For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them." Why?
 - b) Eli feared his sons rejection, instead of God's disapproval.
 - c) Eli was also guilty of the sin that his sons were doing. He could not condemn them without condemning himself.
 - 3) God made it clear who should have all our heart and be the object of our love, devotion and loyalty.
 - a) Matt. 22:37, "...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul and with all your mind."
5. Parental idolatry is the basis for co-dependency or relationship addiction.
 - a. Logic: "I need their approval — not I want it." \ The key words are "need" and "want"

What do you think the difference is between “needing” and “wanting” someone’s approval?

- b. It is placing people, places or things in the place of God, or wanting and expecting from those ultimately only what can come from God.
 - 1) Love
 - 2) Forgiveness
 - 3) Favor (grace)
 - 4) Approval - acceptance
 - 5) Security
- c. One may have to grieve the loss of acceptance from childhood so it can be filled by God in adulthood.
 - 1) Adulthood was never intended to make up for childhood losses. They must be grieved then allow God to fill the hole in the soul.

6. Realize approval seeking acceptance is the basis of legalistic Phariseeism and is energized by Satan.
 - a. Paul explained this to the churches in Galatia.
 - 1) Gal. 3:1-3, "You foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified? (2) This is the only thing I want to find out from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith? (3) Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?"
 - a) "bewitched: "to miss lead by an evil eye, to charm, to lead away by evil acts"
 - (1) This pattern is motivated by Satan
 - b) "Works" human effort devoid of any awareness of God working through His Spirit.
7. Purpose now to remove ladders of performance.
 - a. Picture your parents (or others) for who they are in reality, flawed, broken defective idols. // It's time to take them off the pedestal or altar.
 - 1) Visualize them as sinners, people who fall short: Stop idealizing them.
 - a) Rom. 3:10-12,23
 - 2) See them as owning weaknesses and flaws as part of humanity.
 - 3) Realize they are not perfect and do not deserve to be placed on a pedestal.
 - 4) See them as needful people themselves.
 - 5) Acknowledge they may have lacked caring/loving skills
 - 6) They may have tried to prevent your "leaving" and "cleaving" to your spouse because of their own unmet dependency needs.
 - 7) They may have unresolved rejection and dependency issues with their own parents and are attempting to fix themselves through you.
 - 8) They may be stuck in their own cycle of perfectionism/neo-Phariseeism.
 - 9) They may be absorbed in their own insecurities and immaturities.
 - b. Confess the sin of your parental idolatry.
 - 1) I John 1:9

- c. Purpose to destroy the altars of human approval and you choose to become a living sacrifice yourself but only to God.
 - 1) Rom. 12:1, "I urge you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship."
 - a) It is a life lived in appreciation for the acceptance God has already given.
 - b) Chapter 12 of Romans explains how to do it.
 - 2) I Cor. 10:31, "Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God."
8. Purpose to transfer your dependence from human idols to God alone.
- a. Only God can ultimately provide your needs.
 - 1) Phil. 4:19, "And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."
 - 2) Heb. 11:6, "And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him."
 - 3) Ps. 73:25, "Whom have I in heaven but Thee? And besides Thee, I desire nothing on earth."
 - b. He delights to meet your needs.
 - 1) Rev. 3:17-18, "Because you say, 'I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing,' and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked. (18) I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed, and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see."
9. Call out to God for release from obsessive or parental dependence.
- a. 2 Corinthians 10:3-5, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh, (4) for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. (5) We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, (6) and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.
 - 1) View unwanted thoughts like unruly children who need to be corrected and controlled.

10. Allow "panic attacks" (or anxiety attacks) to remind you first, that you are not in control and that control is a lie and delusion. Second, allow them to reveal to you the lies, feelings, truths, and motives that are not processed that are behind those attacks. Realize that God is the only one who is ultimately in control.
 - a. Ps. 127:1, "Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it; unless the Lord guards the city, the watchman keeps awake in vain."
 - b. Phil. 4:6, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God."
11. Acknowledge and confess that control has been your lifelong means to prevent loss and avoid pain and now by faith you are going to relinquish this destructive deceptive delusion.
12. Go on record that you are going to do all things that God expects from you through the strength you are going to receive through Christ.
 - a. Phil. 4:13, "I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."

VI. Summary

VII. Keys for Success

- A. Understand a working definition of perfectionism.**
- B. Trace the roots of perfectionism to its source.**
- C. Identify the attitudes and behavior of perfection.**
- D. Discover areas or emotions of control.**
- E. Identify any roots of guilt, shame, fear.**
- F. Identify patterns of pressure release.**
- G. Explore the unhealthy uses of anger and fear.**
- H. Deal with the fear of discovery and rejection.**
- I. Affirm your total acceptance in Christ.**
- J. Destroy all ladders of performance.**