

# Introduction to Biblical Counseling

## How to Live with a Self-Centered Person

### Part One What are They Like?

#### I. The Self-Centered Person

##### A. Introduction

1. Everyone has some selfish tendencies but they can be reasoned with and can come to a mutually agreeable conclusion. The extreme self-centered person (narcissist) is different.

2. Story of Narcissus

- a. In Greek mythology, Narcissus was the extraordinarily beautiful son of a minor God. He was so handsome that all the nymphs of the woods, where he went often to hunt, were in love with him. But he shunned them all. One day a maiden who had tried in vain to attract him uttered a prayer that he might some time or other feel what it was to love and not have that love returned. The avenging goddess Juno heard and granted the prayer.

Soon after that, while he was out hunting, Narcissus came upon a clear fountain. He stooped down to drink and saw his own image in the water. He thought the image was some beautiful water-spirit living in the fountain. He fell in love with himself. When he brought his lips near to take a kiss and plunged his arms in to embrace the beloved object, it fled but returned again after a moment and renewed his fascination. Narcissus could not bear to turn away; he lost all thought of food or rest while he hovered over the brink of the fountain gazing longingly upon his own image. As his tears fell into the water, the image fled again and again, leaving him inconsolable. Eventually he pined away and died.

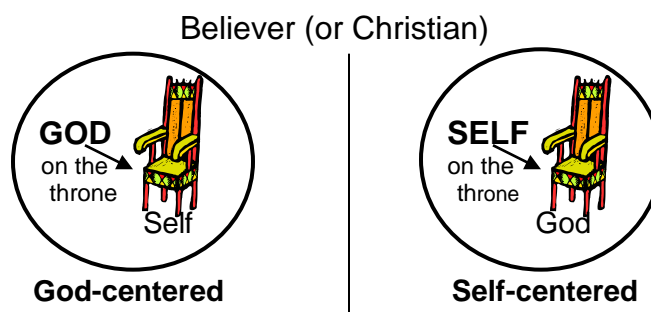
The term, *narcissism*, taken from the myth of Narcissus, has become associated with an exaggerated focus on and absorption in the self.

- b. In the end times men will be defined as lovers of themselves (II Timothy 3:2).
3. Definition: Narcissists are so deeply self-absorbed that they focus exclusively on manipulating others to get what they want. They have little interest in changing because they do not believe they have problem areas in need of change; it's always the other people with the problems who need changing. They are unwilling to receive feedback (from anyone) ...they seem to specialize in making the lives of those closest to them miserable.
  4. "Malignant narcissism" is a form of narcissistic personality disorder characterized by suspiciousness to the point of paranoia, feelings of grandiosity and sadistic

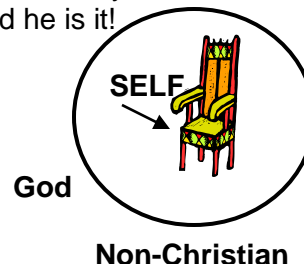
cruelty accompanied by complete lack of remorse (Dictionary of Psychology, Reber, p. 481).

## B. Biblical understanding of the self-centered person

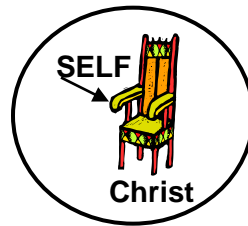
1. Satan lied to Eve in the Garden of Eden that if she ate of the forbidden fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden, she would not die (Gen. 3:4). He removed the consequences of disobedience in her thinking so she felt free to decide for herself what she wanted to do.
2. Next, Satan lied to her that God was holding out on her, "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like God, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5). So she ate and passed it to Adam and he ate.
3. Self-centered persons cannot be told what is right or wrong because they have been deceived like Eve (II Cor. 11:3) and in their new god-like status they determine what is right and wrong.
  - a. Rom. 1:20-22, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, 21) because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. 22) Professing to be wise, they became fools."
4. What was Satan's offer? You can be your own god – deciding what is good and evil yourself. You can draw your own circle around your world and truly be "Lord of the Ring" and seek unlimited adoration. This is the demonic lie that motivates Mormons that you can become a god yourself.
5. God does not sit on the throne of the heart but is made the servant of the self-centered "lord". The God of the universe is irrelevant to him (Rom. 1:21). His self absorption illustrates that he has elevated himself to God-like status to be adored.



6. The unbeliever does not even have God in his circle and may even hate God (Rom. 1:30) because there can only be one God and he is it!

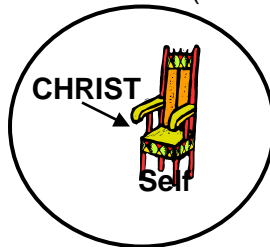


7. The believer who is living a self-centered life has removed Christ from being Lord in his life (Rom. 10:9) and now has made God his enemy (Rom. 8:7) and is totally controlled by the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21).



**Selfish (carnal) Christian**

8. The spirit-filled, obedient Christian has Christ on the throne of his heart (in his core belief system). Christ is Lord! (Rom. 10:9)

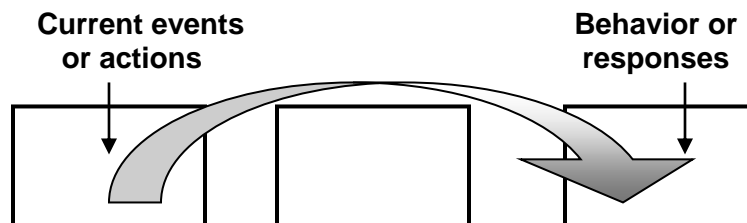


**Spirit-filled Christian**

9. One of the reasons the self-centered believer or the non-believer usually does not change is because he refuses to give up control of the throne of his heart. Life is all about him now! He is a lover of himself (2 Tim. 3:2). He fears if he gives any power over to another, they may not let him still be boss or lord.

**C. The operational system of the self-centered person, with self on the throne of his heart, has Satan now in control.**

1. Realize negative emotions and lordship entitlements of the heart control the self-centered person's behavior.
2. Most people believe that the self-centered person's behavior and responses are direct results of some action of another (offense) or an event (car accident). The event happens and the self-centered person just responds. It would seem that external factors totally influence their inner mood or sense of direction. They are just reacting.



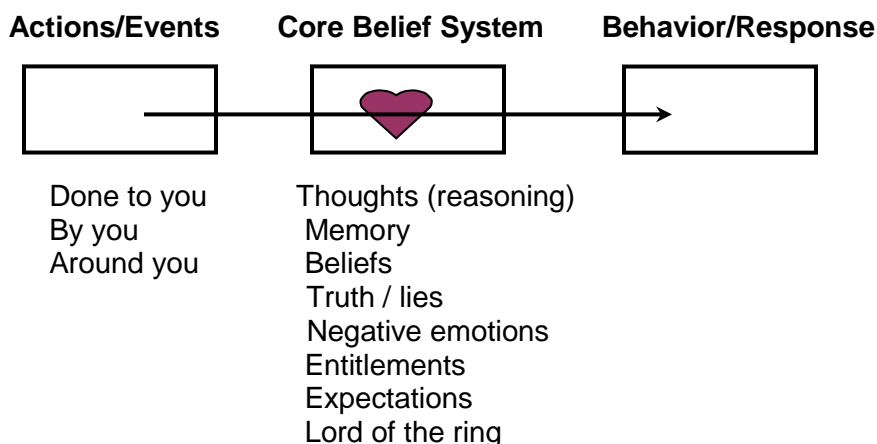
3. In reality, however, present events or actions of others first go through his core belief system that the scripture defines as the heart (Matt. 15:19, Prov. 4:23, Prov. 15:13, Prov. 23:7, Matt. 12:34). The behaviors or responses are a result of the self-centered person's beliefs, lordship entitlements (adoration) and negative emotions (i.e. fear of failure, rejection, etc.). He is not primarily responding to your words or actions although he may do all he can to blame you for his behavior.

DRAWING:



4. The core belief system (heart) contains our thoughts (reasoning), our memory of things done to us, by us or around us (history) and our memory of the emotions we felt from those events. These help form the core belief system. Out of this system comes negative emotions and self-serving entitlements he believes he deserves which control behavior and responses.

DRAWING:



5. The self-centered entitlement of being adored tends to manage his life and relationships more than anything else. He may not have a fear of abandonment but he does have a daily fear of not being adored.
- a. A true entitlement is bestowed from one person to another. A false entitlement is a right, claim, demand, sense of deserving or feeling of ownership of something without a mutual agreement or it being earned. A sense of entitlement is taken or demanded from another person to oneself.
  - b. Self-centered entitlements control thoughts, feelings, goals, behaviors, relationships, spirituality, ministry, finances and careers.
  - c. Many self-centered people work hard to prove to others the lie that they deserve these entitlements – self-appointed rights, privileges and adoration.

d. An acrostic of the word, entitlement, is:

Everyone  
Needs  
To  
Insure  
That  
Life  
Envelops  
My  
Every  
Need  
Totally

**D. The core beliefs and behavioral patterns of the self-centered person. No one has all these characteristics. It is a matter of degree. We will use the male pronoun throughout these notes but these patterns can be seen in both men and women, although the higher percentage is in men. These patterns can be seen in spouses, parents, bosses, employees, siblings, friends, church members and basically every area of society.**

1. Expectations: He has unrealistic expectations. As a result, he expects others to be perfect and meet his every need and criticizes every perceived failure to do so. He expects loyalty but is hardly loyal to those he exploits.
2. Manipulator: He manipulates others to cater to his every need. His tools of manipulation are guilt, fear, anger, false promises, money, control, accusations of being a poor wife or mother, spiritual abuse and submission totally out of balance. He ignores his responsibility to lay down his life for his wife (Ephesians 5) and grant her honor (1 Peter 3:7). He believes he does not have to; he is now the new "lord."
3. Hypersensitive: He is easily insulted, claiming that his feelings are hurt when he is really mad. He will rant about injustices of things that are normally just a part of life. He is very thin skinned. He reacts to criticism with feelings of rage, humiliation or shame.
4. Verbally Abusive: He constantly criticizes or says blatantly cruel or hurtful things, degrades (hair, weight etc.), curses, calls his victim ugly names. He may insist on late night talk marathons to bring about sleep deprivation (which is a form of abuse). A self-centered husband will tell his wife that no one would want her. Out of his own deep sense of feeling degraded and of little self-worth and value, he will project those feelings on to others.
  - a. God says, "Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers" (Eph. 4:29).
  - b. Abuse is using another person in a way which is harmful, usually inflicting physical and/or emotional pain, to gain or receive some form of control or gratification.

5. His Feelings: He makes everyone else responsible for his feelings. He will say, "You make me angry" instead of "I am angry." He will feel justified in his anger because his feelings have been hurt.
6. Other's Feelings: He has total lack of empathy or has an inability to understand or recognize how others feel. Others' feelings are discounted. They have no validity to him. Thus, the lack of empathy is a major hallmark of this attitude. He is disgusted by others' weaknesses, hurt, pain or emotional distress (Rinck, p. 51).
7. Blame Shifting: He chronically blames others for problems and mistakes. He twists everything around so that it is always someone else's fault when things go wrong. If you hold him responsible for his behavior that hurts his feelings. He may get mad about his hurt feelings and will say, "Why are you picking on me?"

Because the self-centered person does not respond to insight at any deep level, he will blame another totally for his feelings. Because his ego (sense of value) is so fragile, he cannot allow himself any self-examination to see where he might be wrong. Because he has so little insight into his own personality and has a strong need to feel special (apart from Christ), he cannot see the extent of his sin-functional behavior, therefore, takes no responsibility for his behavior and blames others instead. It is the only way he can remain superior (lord) in his mind.

- a. Adam started this blame shifting pattern. Gen 3:12, "Then the man said to God, 'The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate.'"
  - b. Aaron blamed the people for the golden calf he made, then, lied about how the calf was made (Ex. 32:21-24).
8. Mood Swings: He will demonstrate sudden mood swings in which he will switch from being sweet and loving to explosively violent behavior in a matter of minutes. A self-centered person will often switch instantly by acting one way one moment and acting entirely different the next. (Let's ... p. 37) He is often experienced like a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde. (Rinck, p. 16)
  - a. James 1:8, "He is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways."
9. Threat of Violence: He could make statements like, "I'll break your neck" or "I'll kill you" and then dismiss his words to you with, "Everyone talks that way" or "I didn't mean it." If his self-centered behavior has progressed this far, it's time to get help or get out. His hatred (really fear) of women may not be expressed physically (but often becomes so), but rather mentally and emotionally and is expressed more subtly (Rinck, p. 18). One out of two wives will be beaten at some point during their marriage. (IBCD, p. 42)
10. Rationalization: He is a master at rationalization and shaming. He displays unacceptable behavior, then, comes up with socially acceptable excuses. Why? The "adult" has to rationalize the behavior of the "child." He really is ashamed of his childish behavior.

11. Rewrites History: He has practiced rewriting historical events for so many years that he can do it in adulthood in a matter of minutes. Conversations and events are rewritten to make him out to be innocent and others guilty or he even may deny the event occurred. In that sense, he is calling his victim a liar when in reality he is the liar. But as “lord,” he thinks he is the pillar of truth.
12. Crazy Making: This is also known as double messages. It has to do with drawing a woman in by soft tones and kind words ... even a hug; and in the next moment he raises his voice, tenses his muscles and barks a command or demeans her. He can act both lovingly and hatefully with equal passion which really confuses her by this double message. He will even despise her more when she is weakened by the pain he caused. (Rinck, p. 19)
13. Brain Washing: He will hammer issues and ideas into his victim’s mind because he is right and the other person just needs to see it his way. If others would just listen, they would agree with him! Thus, he is very opinionated because he is lord.
14. Appearance is Everything: This is not a game to him. He really believes life is about appearances (Matt. 23: 5-7, 28). He spends much of his time looking for people to affirm and adore him. Outwardly he will appear to others as a sensitive, successful, loving man outside the home, but it is a totally different picture at home. (Rinck, p. 16)
15. Pseudo Listener: He is a false listener. When he listens, it is to gather information on how it will benefit him and how he can use the information as ammunition to control, manipulate or argue later.
16. Marriage; an idea, not a person: Marriage is not to a person, but to the idea, what it represents: success, happiness, acceptance in society and church. It’s the woman’s responsibility to help him keep up the image he wishes to present to people while being his sexual ATM machine. Marriage to him is not about love (I Cor. 13). It’s all about how it makes him feel. He has very little capacity to love because he is in love with himself and no one else.

His inclinations toward sexually exploitive behavior could be viewed as a craving for a connection or adoration with many women which feeds his ego (in reality pride) because he needs affirmation and adoration to make up for his deep seated insecurity and inferiority.

Before marriage he treats his future mate with dignity, but once they marry, he throws a switch in his brain which seems to render him incapable of being consistently nice (Let’s ... p. 169). Often this pattern emerges before the honeymoon is over to keep his wife off balance. (Rinck, p. 16) But this proves he is capable of being nice. It is an ugly reality that self-centered people cannot sustain expressions of love.

17. Holds Secrets: He will hold secrets about himself and will lie and say they are not there. If the woman gets close, he will manipulate with anger to keep her away. If he has to reveal a secret in order to win her back because she is

threatening to leave him, he may give up one of his deep dark secrets, but he will not give them all up. Why? The exposure is too threatening to his security.

18. Scared of Wife: Because she can hurt him emotionally like no other person can, he lives in fear of his wife, not in love with her (I Cor. 13; I Jn 4:18). He may have a fear of abandonment. In reality he is a scared little boy inside (I Cor. 13:11). The real issue is that he is very dependent on women but actually hates them. The phrase “hatred of women” is a literal translation of the Greek word *misogunia* (*misein* – to hate; *gune* – women), thus the title misogynist. (Rinck, p. 17) A misogynist is usually a controller out of fear of abandonment. A narcissist is very selfish out of a need to be adored. Misogynists can also have narcissistic tendencies.

The word hatred includes an intense hostility and aversion which usually is derived from fear, anger or sense of injury; it is an extreme dislike or antipathy. (Webster’s Dictionary)

19. Myopic Child: He is as myopic as a little child. Most everything in life is interpreted for his benefit or fear of his loss. Emotionally, he is four to eight years old, although he can function maturely in his career. He was unable to shed that child-like selfishness as the central part of his core belief system. His vulnerability is not in the intellect, but in his emotions. He has a huge need to feel special so he even lies to himself about his importance and he cannot believe others don’t see him as special. It is important that he does not display any weakness to anyone. He really believes that life is supposed to revolve solely around his desires like a two year old who has failed to grow up. He cannot see beyond personal cravings and that genuine happiness is a by-product of giving, not just taking (Let’s ... p. 182).

a. I Cor. 13:11, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.”

20. Seeks Counsel: He does so to see how he can make others change and do what he wants, to prove them wrong or to validate his feelings.
21. Self-Awareness: He has very little true awareness of himself or others. He does not believe in the basic truth that each person brings positive qualities to relationships.
22. Opinionated: He constantly discounts others’ opinions. Rather than receiving another’s opinion at face value, he measures it against his own standard of right and wrong. But if you do not agree with his assessment of the issue, you will probably get a condescending response. He refuses to recognize you can or should have an opinion. He is so sure he is right that he cannot tolerate you with a separate opinion.
23. Counterfeit: He is not genuine. His self-centered behavior can’t be trusted as an accurate reflection of his inner beliefs and priorities. To protect his selfish interests, he will be a phony. He can and often does act pleasant and charming in public. This proves he can be pleasant, but again, only if it suits his self-centered goals.



24. Controllers: He appoints himself a final authority, thus believes he should assume full control because of a fear that his desire may not get fulfilled under others' authority. Fear drives him to control people, places and things. His methods of control may include limiting the availability of household finances, insisting on changing churches or friends, demanding the wife quit work or discontinue her education and make demeaning sexual allusions in and out of the bedroom. (Rinck, p. 16) He can only have friends who support his reality. Diotrophes illustrates this in the context of the church.
- a. In 3 John 1:9, 10, "I wrote to the church, but Diotrophes, who loves to have the preeminence among them, does not receive us. 10) Therefore, if I come, I will call to mind his deeds which he does, prating (saying) against us with malicious words. And not content with that, he himself does not receive the brethren, and forbids those who wish to, putting them out of the church."
  - b. Financial control comes from the logic, "I earn it; I decide how it is spent." He will cause her to be very frugal but he spends as much money on himself as he wants. (Rinck, p. 48)
  - c. Tools of warfare: The self-centered person's tools of warfare toward others (which tools are totally of the flesh, Gal. 5:19-21) can be obvious or subtle. Remember his goal is to wear others down so he can still be "lord of the ring."  
  
He will use yelling, bullying, threatening, temper tantrums, name calling, constant criticism, verbal attacks, ridicule others' pain, subtle attempts to confuse and to get others to doubt their sanity, forgetting things he has done, accusations, blaming, rewriting history or shaming ("you call yourself a Christian?"). (Rinck, p. 53)
25. Entitlement: He has a very strong sense of entitlement and expects special treatment. All of his responses are right because he is entitled to act in any way he sees fit. Usually as a child, he was not held accountable for his anger which only fostered more feelings of entitlement.  
  
He has developed an expectation that the world owes him whatever he needs. (Let's ... p. 32) He takes advantage of others to achieve his own ends. (Rinck, p. 44)  
  
The most common evidence of a self-centered person's exaggerated sense of entitlement is irrational anger when people do not go along with his demands. He views people as if they are his property. He owns people closest to him. He puts unreasonable expectations on others, especially for favorable treatment.
26. Uncooperative: He views cooperation as an imposition because it may mean he has to lay aside his own preferences. Self-preservation is his highest priority. He makes unilateral decisions without any concern for how those decisions affect others. Team spirit is a foreign concept. Self-centered people are much more concerned about getting their way than they are about harmony. (Let's ... p. 136)

27. Idealize Self: His idealized view of himself blinds his ability to make sense of life, especially anything in himself that might not be perfect or that might need adjustment and he never wants to make adjustments. He can't force truth so he invents his own reality and remains imprisoned by his own falsehoods (I John 1:7). He cannot escape even though the lock and key are on the inside, not on the outside.
28. Superiority: The self-centered person's goal is to devalue your worth in your own eyes. He does so because he has such a deep seated sense of inferiority that he wrongfully overcompensates for that inferiority by asserting superiority. His twisted logic says the way to appear strong is to diminish the value of others. Beneath all behaviors and attitudes of the self-centered person is pride. He is driven by hunger to feed his egotistical cravings (Let's ... p. 139). He absolutely refuses to acknowledge a core truth about humanity: each person has innate worth from the day they were born and continues throughout life. He is driven by defiance of all authority (Let's ... p. 155). Your task in the face of this is to constantly remind yourself how valuable and accepted you are in Christ (Romans 8:31-39). God alone must be your final authority as to who you are.
- He can be preoccupied with fantasies of unlimited success, fame, brilliance, power, beauty or ideal love; thus needs constant attention and adoration. (Rinck, p. 45)
29. Passive Aggressive: The self-centered person may appear mellow and agreeable on the outside but in reality refuses to engage openly or cooperate with others. He asserts his will by being passive, refusing to cooperate or comply with others' wishes. He is more devious and less obvious in the way he controls. He will do anything to avoid personal accountability, is stubbornly unreliable, often lazy and hard to teach. Forcing a self-centered person to change is frustrating and success is rare (Let's ... p. 64).
30. Spiritually Abusive: Christian self-centered men are more dangerous and destructive because they have an arsenal of church doctrines, God-talk and the "sanctioning" of male authority (totally biblically misused or twisted). (Rinck, p. 20) In some cases religious orientation actually aggravates abusive behavior.
- a. He uses his Bible, God and church doctrine to support his right to tell his wife what to do, demands unquestionable submission to his desire (reversal of sacrificing for her, Eph. 5:25), his decisions, whims or plans. There is no mutual submission (Eph. 5:21; I Cor 7:4,5). He insists on patriarchal domination, instead of a servant-leader role as an example (I Peter 5:3).
  - b. He believes he has a "God-given" right (entitlement) to control how she lives and behaves. Any deviation from this by her, he declares "rebellion."
  - c. He cuts her off from Christian friends and activities that distract from him and he believes her place is in the home exclusively.
  - d. He demeans her opinions, views and feelings as not valid because "she, like Eve, is a woman and easily deceived" (II Cor. 11:3).

- e. He acts one way at church and totally different at home. Church people can't believe he is that way, so they side with him against her.
  - f. He is possessive and jealous of her even with her time with the children. He has a deep fear of being replaced. That is the reason this behavior can kick in when the first child is born.
  - g. If anything goes wrong in the home or relationship, it's always her fault. If she would be more "submissive," "filled with the Spirit," or "obey like a good Christian wife should," everything would be just fine. He views himself as virtuous for putting up with her. (Rinck, pp. 20-23)
31. Resistant to Change: There is very little you can do humanly to convince a true self-centered person (narcissist) to change. Why? By definition a narcissist has a very limited ability to accept someone else's version of reality. Why? Because he views himself as the ultimate keeper of truth. He can't admit wrong or if he does ever admit wrong, he will rewrite history and convince himself he was actually right in the first place. (Let's, p. 3)

## Part Two

### How to Respond to a Self-Centered Person

#### II. Establish Your Identity in Christ

##### A. The total source of your new identity must be in Christ

1. God alone establishes your identity – who you are! (called saints by God - I Cor. 1:2).
  - a. Parents (family) do not define you.
    - 1) They provide the DNA of your personality and physical make up.
    - 2) They can (do) define your identity before salvation.
    - 3) They can definitely attempt to define who you are.
  - b. Events do not define you (things done by you, to you or around you).
    - 1) They may have a huge influence on you prior to salvation.
    - 2) You can still struggle with healing today as a result of these events in the past, but your total identity has changed and it may take time to get your emotions (thoughts) to match up with the reality of your new identity as a saint (I Cor. 1:2).
  - c. Narcissists do not define you, but they would like to. God totally defines you because you are now reborn into His family with a totally different identity.

**B. The new birth (salvation) in Christ now defines your new identity.**

1. Your first birth defines your chromosome genetic make up (sex, body size, shape, ethnic background).
2. Your second birth now defines who you are – your new identity (John 3:6).
  - a. Just as first birth defines you genetically; your second birth totally redefines your identity – “who” you are (Eph. 1:4).

**C. What does the new birth identity in Christ (who you are) look like? // No one on planet earth can change or alter this.**

1. Loved unconditionally by God. Self-centered people usually do not love anyone else outside themselves (Rom. 5:8; 8:31-39).
2. Saint: You are called “saint” 60 times in the New Testament (I Cor 1:2).
3. Freed from the control of sin (Rom. 6:7).
4. Pardoned: You are no longer condemned now or in the future (Rom. 8:1).
5. Accepted: You are totally accepted by God through your rebirth into Christ (Rom. 15:7).
6. Belong: You are part of the Body of Christ and are on equal standing with all (I Cor 12:14-16).
7. Righteous: You do not earn righteousness. You are totally righteous because Christ gave you His righteousness. So much for performance (II Cor. 5:17).
8. Son / Daughter: You are His child and stand to inherit much because you are an heir (Gal. 4:7).
9. Complete: You have all that it takes to be a whole person (Col. 2:10).
10. Blessed: You already have every spiritual blessing God can bestow upon you (Eph. 1:3).
11. Chosen: God Himself selected you out of the line up of life (Eph. 1:7).
12. Sealed: God has put His permanent seal of approval on you (Eph. 1:13).
13. Peaceful: God guards the core belief system of your heart and mind from any efforts to steal your peace (Phil. 4:7).
14. Adopted: You are adopted into His family with the rank of first born (Eph. 1:5).

#### **D. How to respond to the self-centered person's attack against who you are in Christ.**

1. Review in your mind who you are in Christ.
  - a. Affirm your core belief back to yourself regularly.
    - 1) "I am deeply loved, accepted, valuable, etc. in Christ."
    - 2) Phil 4:8, "Finally brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy- meditate on these things."
  - b. This process is one of the key tools to renewing your mind to think like God thinks.
    - 1) Rom. 12: 2; "And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."
    - 2) Phil. 2: 5-11
2. Remember the self-centered person cannot change, alter or adjust who you are because you were reborn with a new identity in Christ.
  - a. The self-centered person's attack against you is in reality an attack against Christ Himself, not you. The apostle Paul learned this directly from Christ.
    - 1) Acts 9:4,5; "Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' 5) And he said, 'Who are You, Lord?' Then the Lord said, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads.'"
  - b. Satan is using the self-centered person's voice to speak the words of Satan, just like Satan used Peter's voice to attempt to prevent Jesus from going to the cross.
    - 1) Matt. 16:23, "But He turned and said to Peter, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of man.'"
  - c. You are not dealing with just the selfish person, but a demonic influence. You are in spiritual warfare and your weapons must not be fleshly, selfish devices, but spiritual weapons.
    - 1) II Cor. 10:3, 4, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. 4) For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds."
    - 2) Eph. 6:10-17

- d. But the self-centered person is totally responsible for his words and God will judge him for his words.
    - 1) Matt. 12:35-37, “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things. 36) But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment. 37) For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned.”
3. Recommit yourself to the Lord regularly.
- a. Use the attacks of the self-centered person as a reminder to yourself to continue to hand yourself over to the Lord Jesus.
    - 1) 2 Tim. 1:12, “For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep that which I have committed to Him against that Day.”
  - b. Jesus recommitted Himself to His heavenly Father each time He was attacked verbally or physically.
    - 1) I Peter 2:23, “Who when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.”
    - 2) The verb “committed” is an imperfect verb which means it happened from time to time in the past. He did not do it just once.
  - c. Jesus recommitted Himself for the last time on the cross before He died.
    - 1) Luke 23:46, “And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, ‘Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit.’ Having said this, He breathed His last.”
  - d. Picture yourself in the palm of His hand – protecting who you are. They can only kill the body but not who you really are – an eternal spirit creature in Christ. But no one can snatch the real you out of the Father’s hand (John 10:29).
4. Rest in the reality that God knows the facts that the self-centered person may attempt to distort in your mind.
- a. Jesus rested secure in the same reality that His Father knew the truth.
    - 1) “But committed Himself to Him who judges righteously” (lit. “The one who judges righteously”).
  - b. Jesus could rest in the fact His persecutors were liars and were wrong in their behavior.

- c. Jesus could rest in the fact some day they will face a judge who knows the truth and will judge them by truth.
  - 1) Romans 2:2, “But we know the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things.”
- 5. Respond from a position of confident security in Christ and self-control from the Holy Spirit.
  - a. Because Jesus knew who He was (God), when He was reviled (verbally abused), He did not revile (verbally abuse) in return (give back in kind). When He suffered (physical abuse), He did not threaten (revenge, I Peter 2:23). Why? He knew the righteous Judge would take revenge much deeper and longer than Jesus would do if He did it now. Revenge is ultimately God’s responsibility (Romans 12:19).
  - b. Gal. 2:20
- 6. Remember, you may lose in time but by your godly response, you will win greatly in eternity (Col. 3:23, 24). The self-centered person may win in time but will experience loss for eternity.
  - a. If he is a believer, he will lose his rewards.
    - 1) 2 Cor. 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.”
    - 2) I Cor. 3:11-15
    - 3) Rom. 4:10
    - 4) Col. 3:25
  - b. If he is a non believer, he will experience unending pain forever for what he has done to you and especially for not trusting Christ to be his Lord and Savior.
    - 1) Rev. 20:11-15
    - 2) Mark 8:36
  - c. Jesus left us an example of what to look forward to while suffering now (I Peter 2:21). “Who for the joy that was set before Him (in eternity) endured the cross, despising the shame (in time)” (Heb. 12:2).

**III. Identify and Stay in Your Own Circle of Responsibility. God has established four keys to work through any conflict.**

**A. Honestly identify what happened (or is happening) in the relationship or conflict. Write it out if it would help.**

1. God only gives grace for the truth (reality) (John 1:14, Ps. 51:6).
2. God never gives grace (power, energy, favor) for denial (Matt. 5:16, Rev. 3:17)
3. Revealing truth gives glory and praise to God (Joshua 7:19).
4. Discovering the truth is easier said than done (I Kings 3:18-28, I Cor. 6:5).
5. There are at least four reasons you may not want to look at the truth in yourself or others in the relationship.
  - a. A reality (truth) you do not want to acknowledge or admit (denial).
    - 1) They may not really love me.
    - 2) They may not be able to love me.
    - 3) I may not ever be loved by them.
    - 4) They will not change.
    - 5) I can't fix them.
    - 6) God may not change them.
    - 7) I'm being used.
    - 8) I'm using them.
    - 9) I knew better but did it anyway.
    - 10) I'm proud.
    - 11) I don't want to see my need.
    - 12) I don't want to admit I'm dependent.
    - 13) I'm afraid things are really as bad as they are.
  - b. Feelings you do not want to re-feel.
    - 1) I'm very angry.
    - 2) I'm afraid to be alone.
    - 3) I feel guilty for my own wrong responses.
    - 4) I'm ashamed for the ways I've acted.
    - 5) I fear being emotionally vulnerable.



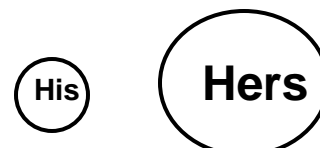
- c. Responsibility you do not want to assume.
- 1) I will have to establish healthy boundaries.
  - 2) I may have to support myself.
  - 3) I will have to forgive.
  - 4) I will have to assume responsibility for my own stuff.
  - 5) I will have to get my total identity in Christ, not others.
  - 6) I will have to pray for them.
  - 7) I will have to control myself and not them.
  - 8) I will have to stop being emotionally dependent on them and transfer my dependency to Christ.
  - 9) I may have to forgive them.
- d. Motive of your heart (core belief system) you do not want to acknowledge.
- 1) I'm selfish.
  - 2) I'm getting revenge.
  - 3) I'm controlling.
  - 4) I have to be right.
  - 5) I have to win.
  - 6) I'm using them too.

**B. Assign responsibility for all the parts of the conflict.**


1. Draw a circle for each one involved in the conflict and list who is responsible for what. Rom. 12:18



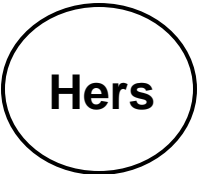
- a. The self-centered person will shrink his circle to the size of a pea and inflate your circle to the size of a large ball.



- b. Having your own circle of responsibility may be new thinking to you.
  - c. We often hear that a problem is so complicated that it defies solution. Why?
    - 1) It may not be your responsibility to correct it.
    - 2) It may be that you have not determined who is responsible for what.
2. Assign to each person what is legitimately in their circle of responsibility.
- a. Scripture laid the basis for identifying personal responsibility.
    - 1) Rom. 12:18, "If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men."
  - b. Areas to consider (roles and relationships defined in scripture and what has been mutually agreed to; job description, policies.)
    - 1) Parents (Eph. 6:4; Col 3:21), children (Eph. 6:1-3)
    - 2) Wives (Eph. 5:22-29; I Pet. 3:1-6), husbands (Eph. 5:25-31; I Pet. 3:7)
    - 3) In-laws (Eph. 5:31; Matt. 10:34-37)
3. Avoid two pitfalls while assigning responsibility.
- a. Blame shifting to avoid assuming your responsibilities. He may reduce his circle of responsibility and shift it over to her circle so that he does not have to be responsible for his actions.
 



His



Hers
  - b. Blame taking to gain acceptance peace and to avoid guilt, shame or conflict.

**C. Assume responsibility that is legitimately yours.**

1. Only assume what is in your circle of responsibility (Josh. 24:15).
  - a. The only person you change or influence is yourself.
2. Respectfully reject what is not your responsibility (Gen. 4:9).
3. Remember, God only gives you grace and power for what is in your circle (Matt. 11:28, 29; 2 Cor. 12:9).
4. Realize God also has a circle of responsibility.

- a. Convict (John 16:8)
  - b. Change (Phil. 2:13)
    - 1) It is never your ultimate responsibility to change anyone. You can urge, influence, appeal, which is like sowing and watering seed. But as with salvation, God is ultimately responsible for the change (I Cor. 3:6).
  - c. Control (Gal. 5:23)
    - 1) God does not give anyone ultimate power to control people, places or things; only yourself.
    - 2) God does give power to control yourself.
  - d. Wisdom (James 1:5; 3:15-17)
  - e. Revenge (Rom. 12:19)
5. Resist assuming other's responsibilities to accomplish the following six things:
    - a. To make peace
    - b. To avoid guilt feelings
    - c. To maintain a childish perspective
    - d. To gain acceptance
    - e. To avoid rejection
    - f. To please
  6. Realize assuming legitimate responsibility can be painful.
    - a. Wrong behavior may have been habitually justified because of the other person's wrong actions (Matt. 5:23-24).
    - b. Assuming your own responsibility before God increases your feelings of being favored (graced) by God because it is humbling to admit responsibility for one's own behavior and we are exalted when humbled (I Peter 5:5b, 6).
  7. General rule: do not do for others what they can fully do for themselves. Enabling is never done for the benefit of the one being enabled. It is really being done for the benefit of the enabler. It is never right to encourage irresponsibility.

**D. Fulfill your own circle of responsibility.**

1. Identify, assign and assume, do not work without the final step of fulfilling your circle of responsibility.

2. Here is where you restore the power and control of your life and potentially heal relationships.
  - a. James 1:22, 25, “But be doers of the Word and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. 25) But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.”
3. What are the benefits of being a doer (fulfiller) of what is in your circle of responsibility?
  - a. It will give you something to focus on for direction (focus).
    - 1) “I know the next right thing to do.”
  - b. It will give you a purpose for life (purpose).
    - 1) “I know why I’m doing what I’m doing.”
  - c. It will give you a sense of accomplishment (accomplishment).
    - 1) “I feel like I’m getting somewhere.”
  - d. It will give you a sense of security (security).
    - 1) “I know this is what I should do!”
  - e. It will reduce anxiety. (peace)
    - 1) “I don’t have to wonder if I should be doing something else.”
  - f. It will reduce tension. (calm)
    - 1) “I don’t need to be in someone else’s circle.”
  - g. It will reduce conflict. (harmony)
    - 1) “That’s not my responsibility.”
  - h. It will rebuild relationships. (heal)
    - 1) “Now I’m free to have a relationship.”
  - i. It will be a powerful witness (witness).
    - 1) “My life speaks louder than my words.”
  - j. It will give you a sense of well-being. (contentment)
    - 1) “I can be at peace within myself.”
4. Realize people are going to be irreconcilable in the last days no matter what you do (2 Tim 3:3 NASB).

5. Remember, you will only be held accountable to God for your own circle of responsibility (2 Cor. 5:10).
6. It may seem unfair that only you are being the responsible one.
  - a. True, life is not fair because Satan is the prince of the power of the air and he is not fair (Eph. 2:2).
7. Your task is to do what's in your circle of responsibility then, having done all that you can do, to "stand" ( Eph. 6:13).

#### **E. Your responsibilities when relating to a self-centered person**

1. Emotional health: It is your own responsibility to develop and maintain your own emotional health and composure even if the self-centered person remains in a toxic (poisonous) state.
2. Traps: Learn the patterns you are up against (truth – reality) and how to evade the traps that are set up for you by the self-centered person. One trap is to be so offended that you react *in* anger *to* their anger and lose your composure. Once you do, the selfish person thinks, "I got you." He now attacks your anger and remains oblivious to his own behavior that set up your reaction. To him, your anger only proves he was right and the better of the two of you. You will be shamed, "And you are supposed to be a Christian? Look at you!"
  - a. Your explosive anger is powerless to bring a healthy change in relationships. It drains you of energy, increases guilt, shame and regret and only offers a temporary release of deeply pent up emotion. But it does very little for rebuilding relationships (Stoop, p. 71). Remember we usually do the next dumb thing when we are angry, then we become overwhelmed with shame.
3. Action plan: Develop a plan of action to respond to self-centered behaviors to avoid being sucked in to the conflict and acting like they do. You are not obligated to get the self-centered person's agreement; you determine your plan to respond biblically. Failure to be true to your plan will result in you becoming irrational, angry, fearful, depressed and/or very anxious (Let's... p. 97).
  - a. I Peter 3:9, "Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing, knowing that you were called to this, that you may inherit a blessing."
  - b. No one should participate in a master-slave marriage where anything short of being a doormat results in violent anger. This is not a relationship; it is an arrangement based on a distorted view of women and an emotionally unstable man (Stoop, p. 177).
4. Emotionally detach: Separate yourself emotionally enough to maintain your own self-control and to be proactive instead of reactive. You do not need his cooperation to maintain your emotional integrity. Why?

- a. The ninth fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control apart from any human influence.
  - b. Gal. 5:22, 23, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23) gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.”
5. Character: The self-centered person’s irresponsibility is not a commentary on your character. His goal is for you to lose faith in yourself. Your bedrock belief in who you are in Christ will give you the strength to stand firm and be who God says you are regardless of what the self-centered person may say otherwise.
- a. Rom. 8:31-38
  - b. Eph. 1:3-14
  - c. Remember that the self-centered behavior may be rooted in some earlier experience of life and has nothing to do with you, although it is being acted out on you. He will attempt to make it all about you but that is his delusion.
6. Firmness and confidence: People can only control you if you allow yourself to be controlled. Their goal is to make you feel incompetent because that makes you easier to control. Therefore, respond with respect, firmness and confidence to any efforts to be manipulated. You will serve who you yield yourself to.
- a. Rom. 6:16, “Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves slaves to obey, you are that one’s slaves whom you obey, whether of sin leading to death, or of obedience leading to righteousness?”
  - b. Heb. 10:35, “Therefore, do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward.”

It is his goal to wear you down so you will give up and blindly do what he wants. You can, with respect, resist his inappropriate demands. Attempts to give him feed-back, to get him to understand or respect you will naturally lead to feelings of personal futility (Let’s ... p. 104). Do not respond to power with power; respond in quiet calm (peace) and with firmness.

- c. Is. 30:15b, “In quietness and confidence shall be your strength.” The selfish communicator is usually typified by put-downs, invalidations, comments, interruptions and insults. His goal is not to gain insights or awareness but to gain the upper hand. (Let’s ... p. 183)

Your task is to come to understand that unless there is a major breakthrough of the heart of the core belief system, any relationship will remain incomplete and suffer constant pain. Damaged (or wounded) emotions will not be healed through normal communication, loose ends will always be present and the emotional debt will never be repaid this side of heaven. (Let’s ... p. 184)

7. Avoid the spear: King Saul tried to kill David by throwing a spear or javelin at him. David quickly moved to the right or left and let it hit the wall. You must learn

to sidestep the verbal barrages, barbs, attitudes and abandon any idea of changing or reasoning with the self-centered person in your life. Such efforts will wring you out emotionally.

- a. I Samuel 19:10, "Then Saul sought to pin David to the wall with the spear, but he slipped away from Saul's presence; and he drove the spear into the wall. So David fled and escaped that night."
8. Happiness: It is not your responsibility to make the self-centered person happy. That is in his circle of responsibility. You are responsible to make commonsense decisions under the direction of the Holy Spirit.
    - a. Rom. 8:14, "For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God."
  9. Flawed reality: Refuse to make the mistake of talking with the self-centered person about his flawed perception of you or a problem. Let him blame you, that's his reality, but you do not need to accept that within yourself. You can make good decisions without his blessing. Remember, the self-centered person is not the final arbitrator of truth.
    - a. I Peter 2:20-24; 3:8,9
    - b. Jesus, Himself, was accused of having a demon and sought to defend Himself and they responded by trying to kill him (John 8:48-59).

When a self-centered person refuses to accept reasonable standards or reality, refuse to plead your case or debate the merits of your cause. Choose instead to consciously recommit yourself to God the Father because He knows the truth and will in the end judge based on righteousness (I Peter 2:23).

10. Experience consequences: It is your responsibility to carry out the consequences you have established for his boundary violation. It is one of the few ways to convey the message that you intend to be taken seriously. You will face his outrage which in reality is panic (loss of control). Your task is to stand firm in the Lord and do not respond with your own strong emotion (Let's ... p. 94). It is only when you allow the self-centered person to face the consequences of his behavior will he begin to see that he is responsible for making changes in his behavior (Stoop, p. 98).

When Israel refused to listen to God's Word through the prophets, God sent His "works". The whole book of Judges recorded this pattern. If the self-centered person refuses to listen to your word, it is important you allow him to face the full consequences of his actions. You are not responsible to cover for him or take the rap for him.

- a. Gal. 6:7, "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap."

11. Don't play God: Your task is to lay down your own need to play God and choose not to allow another human being to assume the position of God over you (Let's ... p. 144).
12. Maintain respect: The self-centered person demands respect and adoration. He responds in great anger or rejection when it is not given. He will act very disrespectful when he does not feel respected (Let's ... p. 147). It is your responsibility to always act in a respectful way, not because he deserves it, but because God commands it. Respect is an attitude of the heart. You can be firm, consistent and confident with a heart of respect. Respect is to be granted; not earned.
- a. The apostle Paul still demonstrated respect to an offensive high priest (Acts 23:1-5).
13. Convictions: Your goal is not to overpower the self-centered person's reasoning, but to remain true to your own convictions that you have established before the Lord. Remaining emotionally stable is your goal. He would like to squelch your ability to think and to make a separate decision. He can't stand independent thinking. He may call you stupid, say you're wrong or you've been ill advised. Remain respectfully firm and do not get sidetracked. But remember, God gives you the right and responsibility to be fully convinced in your own heart regarding questionable issues.
- a. Rom. 14:5b, "...let each be fully convinced in his own mind."
14. Approval: Choose not to fight for the approval of the self-centered person because it will never come. Stand on the fact you are totally accepted in Christ and nothing will separate you from His love. Refuse to allow yourself to ask, "What would it take for you to see I am a decent person of worth and value?" You are asking one who knows little about validating another's value. If you need his approval to feel okay about yourself, he is your god. He will never be able to give you what you need. Only the one true God can do that.
- a. Rom. 8:31-39
15. Accept Reality: Accept the truth (reality) that the narcissist will be selfish and insensitive. Stop pleading for loving treatment, rely less on him for encouragement and look to your relationship with Christ for comfort (2 Cor. 1:4), draw from other believers, then allow yourself to go through normal feelings of grief and sadness as you let go of the dream. This will free you to look to the Heavenly Father for personal peace.
- a. John 16:33, "These things I have spoken unto you that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."
- b. Because the self-centered person has such poor insight into his maladapted behavior, trying to persuade him to change without God's direct intervention is an exercise in futility (Let's, p. 119).



- c. Unfortunately, it is the exception, not the rule that the self-centered person will make the effort to grow and to mature.
16. Pray: It is in your circle of responsibility to pray for the self-centered person in your life (Matt. 5:44). Pray that God will break through his denial and see his arrogance and anger. Ask God to draw that person to Himself first. Without a heart change, all other change is temporary.
  17. Remember you are not trapped. Biblically, you have at least three choices. First, stay in the situation with no change (I Cor. 7:10); second, you can separate and remain single or third, separate and be reconciled (I Cor. 7:11). There may be more choices but these are three clear ones. God indicated that one of the characteristics of the end times is that people will be irreconcilable (2 Tim. 3:3 NASB).

#### **IV. Establish Reasonable Boundaries**

##### **A. Boundaries are limitations a person establishes for himself towards others to protect from verbal, emotional or physical harm or loss.**

1. Boundaries determine how far a person will allow another person or group to enter their physical, mental or emotional space.
2. Boundaries set the limits of who can come through the gate of your life from the outside in. Circles of responsibility identify what you are responsible for within those gates.
3. God has boundaries. He says we won't take His name in vain. We are to have no other gods.
4. To be able to set reasonable boundaries with appropriate consequences, one must first determine what he values. You will only build a fence (boundary) around something or someone you value. If you don't value yourself (and you won't if you see through the eyes of the self-centered person and not through the eyes of God), you won't be able to set boundaries. We build a fence around what we value. Then we are better able to determine what will happen if someone doesn't value what we value; i.e. "If you speak abusively to me on the phone, I will no longer receive phone calls from you. As long as you see me as valuable and vulnerable and precious and treat me accordingly, you may come inside my fence. The moment you forget and don't treat me as the valuable person I am, you will be shown the gate and it will be locked behind you." Each of us will have to determine what that actually looks like. You may have different boundaries with different people depending on their level of trustworthiness.

##### **B. Boundaries are not selfishness**

1. Distinguish in your mind the difference between selfishness and self-preservation. The self-centered person will accuse you of being selfish if you establish healthy boundaries and consequences if they are violated. Healthy people will be flexible and will adjust with reasonable limits. The self-centered

person would never understand the difference because his behavior is always selfish (Let's, p. 60).

## V. Grant Forgiveness on a Daily Basis

### A. Welcome your anger as a friend.

1. One of the hindrances to forgiveness is the reluctance to acknowledge the presence of anger toward the self-centered person.
2. Anger could very well be the most lied about emotion, especially among those living with a self-centered person.
3. Anger can be used in many wrong ways either by you or the self-centered person. He will add rage and temper tantrums to his arsenal.
  - a. To change
  - b. To control
  - c. To manipulate
  - d. To avoid other negative emotions (guilt, fear, shame)
  - e. To avoid responsibility
  - f. To exact revenge

### B. Understand God's purpose for healthy anger.

1. God gives you permission to acknowledge your anger (Eph. 4:26).
2. God designed anger to be a notifier of needs, hurts, fears, frustrations (Psalm 42:5a).
3. God knows you are going to get hurt in life.
  - a. It's a fact of life that every person will get hurt emotionally and sometimes physically (I Peter 4:12).
  - b. You may be tax-exempt but you are not test exempt (I Cor. 10:13).
  - c. Believers are singled out to experience hurt (I Peter 2:20-21).
4. Anger can be an automatic emotional response to present and past hurts, whether you are a Christian or not.
5. Anger can be expressed in various ways:
  - a. The exploder (the volcanoes)

b. Imploders (passive aggressive)

c. Runners (conflict avoiders)

**C. Discover the need behind your friend, anger.**

1. Give yourself permission to feel your anger.
2. Follow the anger down to the need, hurts and offenses.
3. Identify the person behind those offenses.

**D. Understand any desire for revenge is a legitimate, biblical principle (Heb 9:22b; Romans 12; 19).**

1. Failing to forgive in order to exact revenge is like drinking poison and hoping it will kill the other person (Let's ... p. 179).

**E. Realize when you feel the need to take your own revenge, you may have factored God out of all that He has already done to make forgiveness possible.**

1. God Himself has already paid the sin bill through the death of His Son. All sin was laid on Christ (2 Cor. 5:21).
2. The offender's sins were nailed on the cross (Col. 2:14).
3. God's payment for sin was big enough that it included all the offenses of all people everywhere for all time (1 John 2:2; John 3:16).
4. Taking your own revenge is, in a sense, double payment and that is not justice.
5. Forgiveness only makes sense in the light of Christ's death on the cross (2 Cor. 5:21).
6. But even withholding forgiveness is a subtle form of getting revenge.

**F. You may need to visualize in your mind Christ's punishment for yours and others' sins.**

1. His back was flayed open with a cat-o'-nine-tails (a long rod with long leather strips with glass, or sharp rocks attached to the end (Luke 22:63; 1 Peter 2:24).
2. His face was smashed to point of non-recognition (Matthew 26:67; 27:30).
3. Verbal curses and insults were hurled at Him (Luke 22:64-65; 23:35-37; Matthew 27:39, CF, 2 Peter 2:23).
4. Thorny branches were drug across His head (John 19:2).

5. They spit in His face (Matthew 26:67).
6. They embarrassed (shamed) Him in front of His friends and family (John 19:25-26).
7. They drove metal spikes into His hands and feet (John 20:26).
8. They isolated Him from His friends and family (Matthew 27:46).

**G. Picture sending the self-centered person over to the Lord Jesus Christ.**

1. Realize that the word forgiveness literally means to “send away”, not release.
  - a. The primary word for forgiveness is made up to two Greek words: “away” and “to send” or “to send away”.
  - b. The Old Testament priest confessed the sin of the people over the head of the scapegoat as a sign of transferring the people’s sin onto the goat. Then the priest “shall send it away” into the desert, “he shall release the goat in the wilderness” (Lev. 16:7-10).
  - c. The key question is where do you send sin now?
2. Understand that Christ bore all our sin upon Himself on the cross, therefore sin must be “sent over” to Him and then “released” to Him (I Peter 2:24).
  - a. Yours and their sin was nailed to Christ’s cross (Col. 2:14).
3. Now confess their sin to God and send it to the Lord Jesus Christ who already paid the debt 2,000 years ago.
4. Remember the choice is to either keep the self-centered person and his offense in your own heart (as a keeper) or to send the self-centered person and his sin over to the Lord Jesus Christ (as a sender).
  - a. Keepers are controlled by what or who they keep in the jail of their heart through bitterness. To stay stuck in bitterness means you have handed over control to the self-centered person who loves nothing more than to dominate your life.
  - b. Senders allow themselves to feel the anger, identify the offense and the offender, then; send both the offense and the offender over to the Lord Jesus Christ.
    - 1) 2 Tim 4:14, “Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May the Lord repay him according to his works.”
  - c. You may have to send the self-centered person over to the Lord 70 x 7 times a day. But forgiveness is the only spiritual discipline that will truly give you balance and stability as you continue to relate with these deeply troubled and troubling people (Let’s ... p. 179).

5. Basic parts of a prayer of forgiveness

### Four Part Prayer

(Picture standing with Christ)

1. Confess the offender's sin.
2. Acknowledge God's role in revenge.
3. Ask for grace, mercy and pardon for them.
4. Send them over to Jesus.

### Prayer of Forgiveness

Dear Heavenly Father,

I now acknowledge to You, (offender's name) against me. (List offenses specifically, one at a time). I also acknowledge Your responsibility to punish (name) for their sins. However, I pray that You grant them grace, mercy and pardon just like You have granted to me. I now transfer them and their sin over to You. I also confess my own anger and bitterness and ask You to forgive me. I now accept upon myself all the consequences of their sin against me. I know You will turn those consequences into blessings for me. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

#### H. Understand you will have memories after you forgive.

1. It is one thing to forgive, it is another thing to live with the memories of the hurts we received or caused.
2. It is one thing to be forgiven and another to live with the consequences of the hurt and damage sin has caused.
3. Often the counsel of the self-centered person to those who have been hurt is "to forgive and forget," "Put it behind you and move on" (a form of denial), "Don't let it bother you" (repress your emotions).
4. The discipline of forgiveness has nothing to do with forgetting.

- a. God designed our brains so that all memories are stored in your brain by electronic impulses and chemical transference.
  - b. Memory is not a function of the spirit. It is a biological function of the brain.
  - c. It must be remembered that a Christian's brain functions the same physically as a non-Christian's brain.
  - d. The Christian discipline of forgiveness does not destroy the brain's physical function of memory that God designed.
5. Even God's attributes prevent Him from forgetting.
- a. God cannot do anything contrary to His attributes.
  - b. One of God's attributes regarding forgiveness and memory is His attribute of omniscience - all knowing.
  - c. Ezekiel best illustrates what God actually chooses to do with His memory of your forgiven sin.
    - 1) Ezekiel 18:22, "None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live."
    - 2) Ezekiel 33:16, "None of his sins which he has committed shall be remembered against him; he has done what is lawful and right; he shall surely live."
6. Treat memories of forgiven sin like old bills that are stamped "paid."
7. Stop re-confessing your sin that has already been forgiven.
- a. Your memories of past forgiven sin are not designed by God to promote re-confession.
  - b. Re-confession of past forgiven sin only reinforces a lie that the sin was not forgiven in the first place and can result in increased depression and false guilt.
8. Distinguish between true guilt and false guilt.
- a. True guilt means that we are worthy of blame and it should result in confession (1 John 1:9).
  - b. If we feel guilty after confessing our sin to God, we are now experiencing false guilt, which is a feeling that we are still worthy of blame.
  - c. All feelings of guilt must be tested by truth (I John 4:1).
  - d. Choose to live out of your "thinker" (based on truth) and not your "feeler" (based on emotions) which may not be based on truth.

9. Use past memories of forgiven offenses as present reminders of God's grace and mercy, whether you are granting or receiving forgiveness (2 Timothy 4:14a, 2 Timothy 4:14b).
10. Choose to make your relationships a trophy (example) of grace and mercy, based on giving or receiving forgiveness.
11. Use your past memories of forgiven sin as a basis for your present expressions of love for God.
  - a. Jesus illustrated this principle with a forgiven prostitute (Luke 7:47).
  - b. Here are three things you can do when memories of your past forgiven sins come to mind.

### Steps to Love

1. Thank Him for the memory.
2. Thank Him for the forgiveness.
3. Love Him out of your gratefulness.

- c. This is what you can do when memories of the self-centered person's sins against you come to mind.

### Memories of Offenses

1. Thank Him for the memory.
2. Thank Him for dying for their sin.
3. Thank Him for the grace to forgive.
4. Thank Him for using it in your life.

12. Remember, forgiveness is what you grant because of what Christ has done on the cross. But, trust is what the self-centered person has to earn because of what he has done to you.
  - a. Don't force yourself to trust. That will take time and the rebuilding of a track record.

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