

**Living Foundation Ministries**  
**Ten Counseling Tips**  
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## ***Counseling Tip #1***

# **How to Rebuild from Failure**

**Dr. Chuck Lynch**

Mark was devastated. He really messed up big time with his wife. The kids were aware of it now. The deluge of guilt, shame and embarrassment controlled his thoughts. The overwhelming guilt only punctuated how badly he had failed his wife, his kids and God. His voice was now devoid of any hope of healing or restoration.

Surprisingly, Mark was in a good place. He was totally devastated, ashamed and humbled. It usually takes a crisis like this to make one really teachable. That's good. His humble attitude opened him up to experience tons of mercy and grace from God (1 Peter 5:5). Eleven insights were shared with Mark that turned him around and began to heal the fractured relationships he created.

### **Failure is Common**

Mark believed that failure was the exception instead of the rule in life. His first step was to realize everyone fails (Romans 3:23). Even the great heroes of scripture failed in obedience at one time or another Adam – Gen. 3:6; Moses – Num. 20:11-12; David – 2 Sam. 11; Peter – Luke 22:59-62).

### **Restoration is Possible**

Christians and non Christians experience moral failures. The difference is that the believer has the biblical tools to heal, to restore and to rebuild from those failures. The believer can be restored to stature of a “blameless” man (1 Timothy 3:2). The word blameless literally means “not to take hold of.” It suggests that no one is pursuing him to correct an offense that he failed to acknowledge and to make every effort to correct it. The scripture's focus is not on the sin (that is forgiven), its focus is on what has been done to correct it.

### **Search the Heart**

The first step in restoration is to honestly ask God to search your heart and to reveal all past and present unconfessed sin (offenses) in your life (Psalm 139: 23-24). When Mark did this, God was faithful and exposed all the dark areas of his heart - the core belief center of his life.

### **Assume Responsibility**

Mark willingly assumed full responsibility for his own behavior. Taking full responsibility means there is absolutely no shifting of blame (responsibility) onto anyone else (Exodus 32: 21-24; Psalm 51:4). The offending believer is to totally focus on his own circle of responsibility and temporarily ignore others' responsibilities for the failure (Matthew 7: 4-5). He resigns all rights to defend himself (2 Samuel 12:13). He honestly agrees when appropriate with those who confront him for his sin (Matthew 5:25). He simply states, “I was wrong.” Why? The word confession literally means “to say the same thing.” When we confess to God (1 John 1:9), we say the same thing God would say in naming our sin. The believer willingly withholds any explanation of his behavior until a later time when he is asked to do so.

### **Rebuild Trust**

Mark confessed his sin. His family in time came to the point of forgiving him. Yet, from the day of confession, with or without being forgiven by the family, it was his responsibility to immediately begin to rebuild trust. Forgiveness and trust are two separate issues. Forgiveness is granted as soon as possible (Ephesians 4:12). Trust is built over time (Proverbs 18:19). Mark was willing to take all the necessary steps to rebuild and even take the initiative to ask for those steps. Because rebuilding will take

time, Mark had to exercise patience and not demand his wife or others to forgive him and to just move on. He also knew it was not his responsibility to remind someone how much he has changed. If it can't be seen, it probably did not happen (1 John 3:18). A difficult reality must be mentioned here, one can do everything right to restore the relationship or reputation and it may not happen. People can be irreconcilable (II Timothy 3:3).

### **Welcome Examination**

How was Mark going to face other family members and friends? Simple. When a believer has completed the above aspects of restoration, he can now freely circulate anywhere because no one is pursuing him to make something right. He has fulfilled everything in his circle of responsibility. When confronted, he can say he failed, he has been forgiven and he is diligently making every effort to restore what his past actions have damaged.

### **Challenge Guilt Feelings**

After this process, Mark was able to see that he is now guilt free. Guilt means "worthy of blame." Because he has confessed his failure and has been forgiven, he is no longer contaminated by sin because the blood of Jesus Christ has washed him from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). It is appropriate to feel sad for the past failure or even have normal regret. However, false guilt means we are still worthy of blame. That is a lie!

### **Accept Consequences**

Mark now had the full responsibility to accept the consequences of his sin. Consequences for confessed sin are not punishment. Jesus already took the punishment for our sin (Romans 5:8; 1 John 2:2). Now Mark had the opportunity to use those consequences to deepen his walk with God and to build mature character and prepare him to help others in the area in which he failed (Luke 22:31-32).

### **Be Accountable to God**

Mark failed a lot of people. He did all he could do to restore and rebuild. But he had to come to the Counseling Tips; Ten Counseling Tips; 3.17.10

understanding that he is ultimately responsible to God (II Corinthians 5:10). Yes, there is human accountability (Ephesians 5:4). But regardless of how anyone chooses to respond to Mark, ultimately, Mark is responsible to God for his behavior (Psalm 51:4).

### **Minister Freely**

With no one pursuing Mark to make something right, he is now free to minister. After King David raped Bathsheba and murdered Uriah, her husband, God restored David and gave him the freedom to "teach transgressors Your (God's) ways" (Psalm 51:13). Mark was now free to be led by God's Spirit (Proverbs 8:14) and not by guilt (1 John 3:20). Mark has ended the accusation of being a hypocrite because he is who he is now by the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

### **Stand Tall**

After Mark did all that was in his power and circle of responsibility, relationships were still strained. He was reminded that after he had done all he could do to correct a past failure, it was time to just "stand" (Ephesians 6:13). Stand means to have the inner confidence that we are right with God and we are living in obedience to all that has been revealed to us by God and man. It is now important for Mark to let time take its course and walk humbly before God and others. You're looking at a new man of restored integrity.

March 2006

## ***Counseling Tip #2***

# **Positive Benefits from Negative Experiences**

**Dr. Chuck Lynch**

It may come as a surprise to learn that the word “problem” does not appear in the King James Version of the Bible. It only appears three times each in the New American Standard Bible and New International Bible, all in the book of Daniel. God does not view tragedies, hurts, losses and conflict as problems. He calls them trials, tests, temptations, afflictions, tribulations and sufferings. He, instead, views them as opportunities to experience at least twelve positive benefits.

1. Growth in personal character. What character quality is this building in me? (James 1:1-3). God is more concerned that we develop Christ like character than just fixing problems. This is the practical process of the doctrine of progressive sanctification.
  2. Gain insights in His Word. What insights am I learning from His Word as I go through this? (Ps. 119:71)
  3. Deepen your understanding of God’s ways. What ways of God am I learning? (Prov. 14:12; Isaiah 55:8-9)
  4. Deepen your relationship with Him personally. How is this deepening my relationship with God? (Phil. 3:10) Knowing about God is good and important. But knowing God personally is better. There is nothing that deepens that personal experience with Him more than to experience suffering with Him. The fellowship of suffering with Him is second to none.
  5. Illustrate to others how to respond to pain and loss. Who is going to benefit from my godly response? (2 Cor. 1:6; Phil. 1:12-14)
  6. Glorify Him. How am I glorifying God through this? (John 9:3; 11:4)
  7. Correct wrong behavior. What am I doing that is not pleasing to God? (I Cor. 11:30-32; Heb. 12:3-13; Ps. 119:67, 71).
  8. Prevent pride. What are my areas of struggle with pride?(2 Cor. 12:7)
  9. Learn obedience. What lessons do I have to keep learning? (Heb. 5:8)
  10. Purify your faith. What areas of my life can I not trust God? (I Peter 1:6-7; 2 Chron. 16:9). (2 Cor. 1:3)
  11. Reduce dependence on people, places or things. What am I depending on in the place of God? (Phil. 4:19; Judges 7:2)
  12. Prepare you to help others. Who does God want me to help? (2 Cor. 1:4)
- Many “problems” are not going to be “solved” this side of Heaven, but these benefits can be yours through faith and obedience to Christ.

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## ***Counseling Tip #3***

# **Rules to Improve Communication**

**Dr. Chuck Lynch**

The number one issue most people want to address in counseling is communication. They will say, “We can’t talk!” Fortunately, that is not true. They know how to talk. But the main reason they don’t communicate with each other is that they have not agreed on effective rules for communication.

Every sport and board game has printed rules (2 Tim. 2:5). You play by the rules and the game goes smoothly. It is enjoyable. Failure to abide by the printed rules results in frustration and conflict.

There are at least ten communication principles that most professionals agree upon that greatly increase communication and improve the quality of life.

### **1. Don’t Interrupt**

Choose not to interrupt, talk over or cut each other off, but instead, decide to focus on listening and understanding what is actually being said. In a board game, each player takes his turn. Talking while the other person is talking is not listening.

One of the first issues to be addressed James, in the earliest New Testament book, was the issue of communication, especially interrupting. James clearly states, “Let every man be swift to hear (understand), slow to speak” (James 1:19).

Tolerating a person while they speak is not listening. This is passive disgust. Preparing your answer (defense) is not listening. God calls it foolishness and shame to answer an issue before listening and understanding (Proverbs 1:13). The consistent application of this one communication rule will reduce hours of needless arguing.

### **2. No Name Calling**

Choose not to call each other names that are designed to tear down the worth and value of the other, but focus on words that reflect mutual respect (Rom. 12:10). Name calling is an obvious sign that the issue at hand has been abandoned, the argument is escalating and the relationship is now deteriorating.

God’s word is very clear, “Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but only such words that edify” (Eph. 4:29). The word *edify* means to *build up*. Let your words be carefully placed like bricks one at a time in a building project.

Calling each other names is a form of verbal cannibalism. Hurtful words bite and devour one another (Gal. 5:15). Under no circumstance, allow your communication to degenerate into shameful name calling.

### **3. Don’t Issue Hop**

Choose not to skip around from one topic to another, instead focus on one topic at a time. Avoid using the ‘history channel’ (“Remember when...”) and blame shifting (“Look who’s talking”).

Issue hopping is designed to avoid the topic at hand. Many couples admit that they have not been able to settle anything because of issue hopping.

Often, just the acknowledgment of the other person’s position on a given topic relieves a great deal of pressure. Acknowledgment does not mean agreement, but it does communicate that the listener heard the speaker’s perspective.

Many professional communicators recommend the mirror principle. When a person makes a point, respond by saying, “Am I hearing you say ...” or “What I’m hearing you say is ‘....’” However, mirror back as closely as possible what the other person said without judging, evaluating, correcting or interrupting.

#### **4. Control Your Anger**

Choose to avoid outbursts of anger. Focus on keeping control of your emotions and talk in mutual, respectful tones. Remember, self-control is the ninth fruit of the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:23). When we’re angry we usually say or do the next dumb thing which results in guilt and shame later.

Our verbal outbursts of anger never produce God-like results (James 1:20). Why? Lashing out in anger comes from a source of selfishness, not godliness (Gal. 5:19-20).

#### **5. Avoid Hot Buttons**

Choose to avoid words that are hot buttons, such as “you,” “always,” “never” or “if only.” Don’t drag up past forgiven events to remind someone of his past failure, weakness or forgiven hurts. This is like holding a club over the person’s head to force him to agree or to do something.

#### **6. Avoid Physical Signs of Disgust**

Choose to avoid signs of disgust, either in body language or in tone of voice.

Some physical signs of disgust are sighing, rolling the eyes, frowning, pursed lips, hands on hips, finger pointing, getting in their face, throwing your hands up, cornering and looking at the ceiling, floor or to the side of the room.

#### **7. Don’t Withdraw**

Choose not to withdraw, pout or resort to the silent treatment. Often this is to protect one’s self or to punish someone by withholding love and acceptance. Calling for a time out may be needed to cool off and to rethink what is really taking place.

#### **8. Take a Time Out**

Choose not to walk away from an important discussion without first affirming you will return and continue the process at a specific time later. Without this commitment, walking out of the room is abandonment and is very shaming.

Do not follow the person around from room to room if one of you has called for a time out. Usually when a person is done talking, they are done. There may need to be a third party present to help the process along (Phil. 4:2-3; I Cor. 6:1-7).

#### **9. No Physical Attacks**

Make an absolute commitment not to physically attack each other including shoving, biting, poking, throwing things, destroying things or restraining another adult.

#### **10. Agree on the Rules**

Mutually agree on these rules and reaffirm your commitment to them. As soon as one of these rules are violated, immediately declare you were wrong, apologize, then return to the discussion.

It is helpful to post these rules in a prominent place in the home as a constant reminder you are purposing to improve your quality of life through better communication.

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## ***Counseling Tip #4***

# **How to Make a Change that Lasts**

**Dr. Chuck Lynch**

Every person who wants to help others change behaviors, habits, or patterns often faces discouragement when he returns to his old ways. How can you increase the probability that the change will last?

1. Understand that behaviors or responses are not just a result of the events. The perception is that an event happens and the person just reacts.

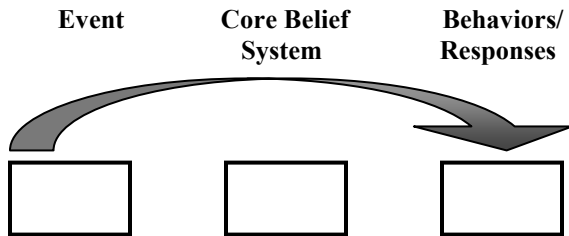


Diagram 1

2. Realize all events first go through our core belief system which Scripture refers to as the heart.

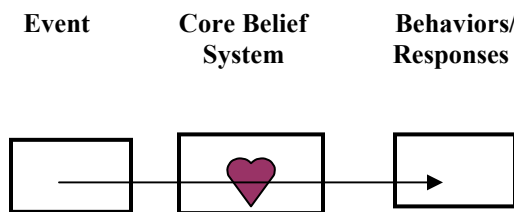


Diagram 2

God declares that behavior comes out of the heart (Matt. 12:34b) because it is the operational center of the emotions, intellect, understanding, discernment, reflection, will and values. It is for this reason God gives everyone the individual responsibility to protect or guard it against all contamination (Proverbs 4:23).

Life's issues come from the heart (core belief system), not just events.

3. Realize all long term biblical change must be accompanied with or be preceded by a change in the core belief system. All behavioral changes will be temporary if the core belief system is not changed also. It is only a matter of time before the person will return to old habits, behaviors and responses without this change.
4. Listen to the events that the counselee has experienced or is experiencing. He does want you to acknowledge what he is going through. Do not minimize the events.
5. Make note of the patterns of behavior or the responses he thinks comes from the events (Diagram 1, left box).
6. Identify the core beliefs that are controlling the behavior (Diagram 2, center box). Core beliefs can be lies that he believes about himself, others or God, such as:

"I'm unlovable." "I'm damaged goods." "I have no worth or value." "I'm a failure." "If I fail I'll be rejected." "I'm responsible for everyone." "I have no worth unless I perform well." "If you knew the real me, you would not like me."

"If I don't control people, places or things, I'll be alone, rejected or hurt again." "I'm a loser." "I'm responsible for my parents' emotional happiness." "I must obey my parents as an adult."

"I must do everything people want me to do or they won't like me." "I have to be perfect or risk abandonment." "If I say "no" they will not like me."

"I can do anything I want." "Women are inferior human beings and are to be used and controlled." "All men are jerks." "You can't trust men/women" "It's too late, I'm unforgivable."

Entitlements (rights) based on lies can be a big part of the core belief system.

7. Guide the counselee to renounce the lies he believes about himself, others or God and to repent from the selfish entitlements he believes belonged to him.
8. Help him to replace the lies with the truth (Phil. 4:8). In prayer, lead the counselee to ask God to speak truth directly to his heart (core belief system) or through a scripture or a fellow believer.
9. Encourage him to live out the truth (reality) that God reveals. This will bring about changes in his core belief system that will affect his attitudes and behavior.
10. Be aware that most people seeking counsel desire a behavior change (Diagram 2, right box) in themselves and others, not a heart change.

### **Core Belief Differences**

King David, after he raped Bathsheba and murdered her husband Uriah, was confronted by the prophet Nathan (II Sam. 11, 12), only then did he realize what had to change. David acknowledged in Ps. 51:16-17 that “You (God) do not desire sacrifice, or else I would give it; You do not delight in burnt offering (religious behavior). The sacrifices of God are... a broken and a contrite heart (core belief system). These, O God, You will not despise.”

David was willing to jump through behavioral hoops to please God. But David knew God did not want hoops but his heart. Why? Because while he was demonstrating religious behavior on the outside, he “despised the commandment of the Lord” (II Sam. 12:9) in his heart. He resented the moral limitations God put on him, especially in the sexual area. David did not despise all the commandments, just one (adultery). And since he did not agree with God in that area, he felt entitled to morally violate Bathsheba. David could not merely tell God he would not do that again. He had to go inside himself and change and break his selfish heart that despised God’s limitation (commandment) on his behavior (adultery).

By contrast, Joseph revealed his core belief system when he repeatedly was offered an opportunity for a secret sexual relationship with Potiphar’s wife (Gen. 39) but pointedly refused, “How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?” (Gen. 39:9). David went looking, Joseph went running.

### **Sample Behaviors from the Heart**

1. Why do couples live together without marriage? They believe (core belief system) that they don’t need to be married by man, government, etc. because they are married in God’s sight (John 4:18), sex equals marriage (I Thess. 4:3), they fear divorce and fear trusting another person (I John 4:18).
2. What core beliefs are at the root of most marriage problems? The husband lives to please himself and not to love his wife as a living sacrifice without conditions. The wife does not respect her husband without attaching conditions to it (Eph. 5:33).
3. Why do we control or micro-manage people, places or things? Fear of failure, loss or abandonment and a need for power.
4. Why do we demonstrate the character disorder of perfectionism? It stems from a fear of discovery, rejection and abandonment, coupled with the lie we can be perfect or make something perfect.

God addresses both the heart and behavior. But a meaningful response or behavior change will only be effective if the programming in the heart is also changed.

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## ***Counseling Tip #5***

# **How to Communicate with your Grown Children**

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The average distance between grown children and their parents is 100 miles. Careers account for part of that distance. However, much of that distance, either physically or emotionally, can be attributed to poor communication between parents and their grown children. What can a parent do to decrease this relational distance and increase the quality of the relationship?

### **1. Communicate adult-to-adult**

All children go through developmental stages from childhood to adulthood. Parents may have failed to acknowledge their kids are now adults even if the grown children do not act like it. It is important for the parents to end their parent-to-child talking patterns and address them as adults. Grown children are to put away their childlike patterns and be adults (I Cor. 13:11). Talking parent-to-child does not encourage maturity in grown children, but adult-to-adult communication does. The parents' task is not to wait until *they* think their kids are grown up, but to talk to them as God does now, adult-to-adult.

### **2. Respect their feelings, thoughts, and opinions**

Every opportunity for problem solving between parents and grown children must start with mutual respect. Granting the adult child respect may be a gift they don't deserve. But this is the essence of grace; favoring those who do not deserve it (Rom. 11:16; Eph 2:8-9). The parent may have to separate the grown child's behavior from his position in Christ, if he is a believer, or if not, the fact that he was created in the image of God. Refuse to degenerate into an angry little child when your offspring acts like a child. Do not return your insult for their insult (I Peter 3:4).

Choose rather, to stop communicating in a disrespectful way. It will never cause them to grow up. Disrespect for them never develops respect for you. Acknowledging their feelings, thoughts, or opinions does not mean you agree with them. It means you've heard them and understand where they are coming from.

### **3. Make requests, not demands**

As parents you have the same responsibility not to exasperate your grown kids as you did when they were young (Col. 3:21). When addressing other adults, you don't demand, instead you make respectful requests or appeals on an adult-to-adult basis. Demands do not reflect respect. Demands usually reflect an effort by one person to control another and adult children deeply resent this. Ask, "Would it work for you to ...?" This reflects a heart that will "give preference to one another in honor" (Rom. 12:10). True, they should respect you for your position as a parent; that's their responsibility. Yet, parents must earn respect; that's their (parents') responsibility. Often parents have to demand respect because they have failed to earn it. Your task is to role model our Lord's words "whatever you want men (your kids) to do to you, do also to them" (Matt. 7:12).

### **4. Stop using anger to control, to change or to manipulate**

The ninth fruit of the Holy Spirit is self-control. This includes your anger (Gal. 5:23). It is in God's circle of responsibility to change someone (John 16:8). Grown kids see "red" when they are faced with parents' anger, especially when they view it as their attempt to control, change, or manipulate. They prefer

distance from you rather than disrespect from you. Inappropriate anger never produces the righteousness God or you desire (James 1:20).

### **5. Encourage them often**

As good or bad as adult children behave, God designed in them a deep need to be encouraged. God values this communication tool so much that He urges it be done daily (Heb. 3:13). Practice “pie praise.” Praise them for the one piece of their life that is good. Congratulations, praise and support that replaces criticism and condemnation are guaranteed to have more beneficial results.

### **6. Listen more, talk less**

Communicating adult-to-adult achieves a balance of both speaking and listening. Talking is not listening. No adult likes a one-sided conversation. The Apostle James stated it this way, “But let everyone be quick to listen (and understand) and slow to speak.” (James 1:19). King Solomon said there is more hope for a fool than for a man (parent) who is quick with his words (Prov. 29:20).

### **7. Stay focused on one topic at a time**

Responsible communication includes a conscious effort to avoid jumping from one issue to another. When a second or third topic is brought up, affirm your willingness to discuss it at another specific time, then return the present topic. Avoid at all cost injecting their past history into a present situation, especially something that is unrelated to the current topic. This includes avoiding talking over or interrupting them: that is disrespect.

### **8. Avoid all devaluing patterns**

These include blame shifting, interrupting, diagnosing, labeling, analyzing, preaching, moralizing, ordering, warning, interrogating, ridiculing, lecturing and other devaluing statements. The Apostle Paul firmly stated not to permit any corrupt (rotten, putrid) word to proceed out of your mouth “but only that which builds up the listener” which would include the adult child. You may be surprised by their response if you demonstrate respect, remain cool headed, encourage often and focus more on listening to understand.

### **9. Admit you have struggles, too**

One of the first steps you may need to take in deepening your adult-to-adult conversation is to admit your own frustrations and disappointments with life and acknowledge you have made some poor decisions too. Admit you struggle today. The Apostle Paul demonstrated his vulnerability when he acknowledged to the Corinthian church that while he was with them for those 18 months he struggled. “I was with you in weakness, in fear and in much trembling” (I Cor. 2:3). They probably never would have known that had he not shared it. Be open for your kids to ask you questions and receive honest answers about past parenting. Be open and honest about your own history with your parents and grandparents. God does not waste history – yours or others. Your past is the frame around your life. It will help your kids have a deeper appreciation of who you are today.

### **10. Acknowledge you are a fellow pilgrim**

Nothing opens the door of your kids’ hearts for you more than your admission that you are a fellow pilgrim and learner just like they are. This levels the playing field from a parent-to-child level to an adult-to-adult level. True, you have a wealth of life experience that they don’t have. Admit to them that the more you know, the more you realize how little you know. Understand that’s where your kids are; overwhelmed with life. Be transparent with your kids. You don’t need to be strong. You need to be appropriately honest. This will open the doors for deeper communication on an adult-to-adult basis.

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Note: for more information on this topic refer to our website - [lfmtools.org](http://lfmtools.org). Go to Materials and click on “[Enjoying Your Adult Children](#)” and download it free.

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## ***Counseling Tip #6***

# **How to Live with a Self-Centered Person**

**Dr. Chuck Lynch**

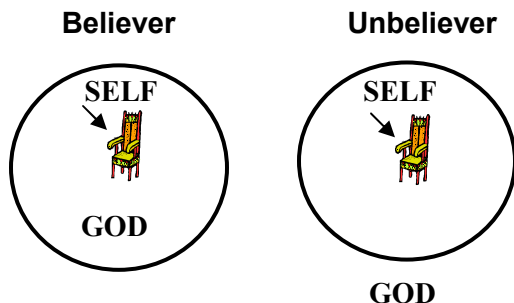
Every one of us struggles with selfishness. Usually we can be reasoned with and come up with a mutually agreeable solution, but not so for the extreme self-centered person (narcissist).

### **Characteristics of the Self-Centered Person**

He (or she) has unrealistic expectations of others; manipulates them to cater to his every need; is easily insulted; can be verbally and sometimes physically abusive; makes others responsible for his feelings but has a total lack of empathy for others; chronically shifts blame to others for his problems and mistakes; can have sudden mood swings; rewrites historical events to avoid any personal responsibility; conveys one personality in public and a totally different one in private; discounts others' opinions; appoints self as the final authority; controls others; feels entitled to be treated differently than others; is uncooperative; acts superior; craves adoration.

### **Biblical Understanding of the Self-Centered Person**

The self-centered person has accepted Satan's offer to Eve to be like God (Gen. 3:5). When a believer removes God from the center of this life and puts self on the throne, he is controlled by the flesh (Gal. 5:19-21), not by the Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:22, 23). The unbeliever doesn't have God in his life so self reigns on the throne of his life. .



### **How to Respond to the Self-Centered Person**

1. Affirm to yourself your true identity in Christ and not what you are told by the self-centered person (Gal. 2:20).
2. Review often in your mind who you are in Christ: I am deeply loved (Rom 5:8), accepted (Rom 15:7), righteous (2 Cor. 5:17), adopted (Eph. 1:5), chosen (Eph. 1:4), sealed (Eph. 1:13), protected (Phil 4:7), blessed (Eph. 1:3) and pardoned (Rom. 8:1).
3. Remember, the self-centered person cannot alter or change who you are because you were reborn with Christ's identity. The self-centered person does not define you. God does! (1 Cor. 1:2)
4. Recognize that verbal attacks, criticism and demeaning comments are actually coming from Satan through the self-centered person to you. Satan used Peter's voice to try to divert Jesus from going to the cross (Matt. 18:23). The self-centered person's goal is to devalue who you are in Christ. Whatever his tactics, the self-centered person is totally responsible for his words (Matt. 12:35-37).
5. Recommit yourself to the Lord daily. Jesus recommitted Himself often to His heavenly Father (1 Peter 2: 23).
6. Be assured that God knows the facts that the self-centered person may be trying to distort in yours or other's thinking (1 Peter 2:23).
7. Respond from a position of confident security in Christ and self-control from the Holy Spirit (Heb. 10:35; Is. 30:15b). Never defend the flesh. It's futile.
8. Remind yourself that you may lose in time, even with your godly response, but you will win in eternity

- (2 Cor. 4:7). The self-centered person may “win” in time but will lose in eternity, either his rewards as a believer (2 Cor. 5:10) or eternal destruction as an unbeliever (Rev. 20:11-15).
9. Identify and fulfill what is in your own circle of responsibility (Rom. 12:18). The self-centered person will shrink his circle of responsibility and attempt to expand yours and make you responsible for everything. Don't assume what's not yours.
  10. Maintain your own mental, physical and spiritual health at all costs (I Thess. 5:23; 2 Peter 3:18; I Tim. 6:6).
  11. Avoid traps that are set for you to act like him so he can come back and say “Look who's talking and you call yourself a Christian?” These are “got you” traps (2 Cor. 2:11; I Peter 3:9).
  12. Develop a response plan that will reflect your godly character and not his sinful response patterns (I Peter 3:9).
  13. Emotionally detach enough so that his mood swings do not put you on an emotional roller-coaster. You do not need his cooperation to maintain your own emotional and spiritual integrity. Why? Because you are controlled by the Holy Spirit, not his attitude (Gal. 5:22, 23).
  14. Remain firm, confident and respectful in spite of his goal to make you incompetent and lose control of yourself (Is. 30:15b).
  15. Avoid the spears of verbal, critical attacks that are thrown at you just as David did when King Saul tried to kill him (I Sam. 19:10). How? When they are thrown, duck and let them hit the wall by reaffirming to yourself, “This is not about me. This is about him.” (Phil. 1:27, 28)
  16. Allow the self-centered person to experience the consequences for his actions. This is one way to convey to him that you intend to be taken seriously (Gal. 6:7). When we do not listen to God's Word, He sends His works. The book of Judges illustrates this pattern.
  17. Maintain respect. The self-centered person craves adoration and control. God said we have to at least remain respectful. You can say, “No” respectfully and or refuse to play angry games or allow yourself to be manipulated (Eph. 5:33; Acts 23:1-5; I Peter 2:17).
  18. Hold to your biblical convictions at all costs because he will twist scripture to control you (I Peter 1:13; I Tim, 4:16; 2 Tim. 1:13).
  19. Accept the fact that you probably are not going to have the self-centered person's approval. He knows very little about validating another person. You are totally secure in Christ.
  20. Accept the truth that the self-centered person will be insensitive (Phil. 2:21). No pleading on your part is going to change that. Draw your comfort from God (2 Cor.1:4) and other believers (Gal. 6:2). Only God can change him (John 16:8).
  21. Establish reasonable boundaries with appropriate consequences. You only build a fence around something that is valuable. See yourself as valuable in Christ (Matt. 6:26). Put a stop to the boundary violations or remove yourself from the violator. If you do not see yourself as valuable in Christ, you will not be able to set legitimate boundaries.
  22. Grant forgiveness on a daily basis to prevent your spirit from becoming bitter (Eph. 4:32). Forgiveness is what you grant. Trust is what he has to earn (Prov. 18:19).
  23. Understand that you are not trapped. Biblically you can choose to stay in the situation without any change (I Cor. 7:10) or you can separate and remain single or separate and be reconciled (I Cor. 7:11). There may be other choices, but these are three clear ones.
  24. Pray for them (Matt. 5:44) that God will break through their denial, arrogance and roots of anger then draw them to Himself. Without a change of heart all behavioral changes are temporary.

Unfortunately, no relationship means much to the self-centered person, neither do tragic events. You can see this in the life of Pharaoh (Ex. 4:14). God warns us that one of the characteristics of the end times is that men will be lovers of themselves (2 Tim. 3:2). Your task is to remain godly in your responses, stay in your circle of responsibility, establish healthy boundaries and forgive regularly. Nothing may change, but your heart and spirit will grow through your godly response and this finds great favor in the sight of God (I Peter 2:20).

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## ***Counseling Tip #7***

# **The Power of Personal Responsibility**

**Dr. Chuck Lynch**

### **Realize there is a Struggle**

It would be naïve to believe that counselees will readily do what they are encouraged to do. In the back of their minds, they have a gain-loss scale. They weigh, “What will I gain if I do what I should do or what will I lose if I choose not to do it?” They need encouragement to do the next right thing.

### **Identify Responsibilities**

People are charged in Scripture “If possible, as much as it depends on you (in your circle of responsibility), live peaceably with all men” (Romans 12:18). God gives incredible power to those in a conflict to honestly identify what is happening; assign who is responsible for what; personally assume what responsibility has been assigned; then fulfill what is in their own circle of personal responsibility. God only blesses and empowers the “fulfillers” who do what is in their circle of responsibility (James 1:25).

### **Motivate to be Responsible**

Just identifying a person’s personal responsibility in a conflict does not guarantee they will follow through with it. Your task is to explain the incredible benefits of doing the next right thing in their circle. These benefits will tap into God’s power for personal responsibility. What are those benefits?

### **Focus**

Most counselees have little focus or direction for their lives. Identifying and fulfilling their personal responsibilities will give them specific direction and something to focus on when chaos breaks out around them. They will be able to say, “I know what is the next right thing to do” (Joshua 24:15).

### **Purpose**

One of the major losses experienced by Adam and Eve after they sinned was a loss of purpose in life. Chronic boredom is one of the results of a loss of purpose. When a person clearly identifies their personal responsibility, they can say, “I have something to live for” (Philippians 1:21).

### **Accomplishment**

Counselees often say, “I don’t feel I’m getting anywhere!” If they identify and fulfill what is in their circle of responsibility each day, then they can measure their progress and say, “I feel like I’m getting somewhere.” Each step of doing the right thing is equivalent to passing the next mile marker on a major highway. With the Apostle Paul they can declare, “I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race (completed all that was in my circle), I have kept the faith” (2 Timothy 4:7)

### **Security**

Most conflicts destabilize a person emotionally and tap into their insecurities. Once they clearly know what to do, instability gives way to solid security. They know what they should do or not do which reduces emotional vacillation and results in greater peace. When they have done what God expects them to do, they can stand in secure peace (Ephesians 6:13b).

### **Calm**

Visualize tension in relationships as two people pulling on a rope in opposite directions. It only takes one person to let go or move forward to reduce tension on the rope. Often when one person in a conflict begins to fulfill what is in their circle of responsibility, it will reduce tension in them whether or not there is a change in the other person. That’s

what the Apostle Paul was referring to when he stated, "...as much as it depends on you (your end of the rope), be at peace with all men" (Romans 12:18).

### **Harmony**

Discord is heard in an orchestra when an instrument is not properly tuned to the oboe or the right notes are not played. The counselee's task is to tune their words, actions and attitudes to God's word which will greatly increase the possibility of harmony. Their task is to tune their own instrument and play their assigned notes, regardless what others play. Sour notes played by others do not excuse the counselee from staying tuned to God's word and playing the notes assigned to their instrument (I Peter 3:8.9; Philippians 4:3).

### **Healing**

The power of personal responsibility holds the greatest possibility for healing relationships. When one person acknowledges where they were wrong and confesses it, then it can motivate the other offender to do the same. Jesus taught that whether you offend someone (Matthew 5:23-24) or they offend you (Matthew 18:15-17), it is in your circle of responsibility to go to them and seek to heal the relationship. The Apostle Paul recognized that at the end of this age, people will tend to be irreconcilable (2 Timothy 3:3). But the counselee could lay the groundwork for relational healing if they harness the power of their responsibility and fulfill it.

### **Witness**

People around the world who reject the Christian church tend to do so on two grounds; it's boring and it's irrelevant. One of the most powerful sources of witness is when a believer puts into practice in his everyday life what he believes. People who are responsible are in great demand. When you fulfill what is legitimately in your circle of responsibility and graciously refuse what's not in it, unbelievers stand amazed and state, "You really practice your religion, don't you?" "A responsible person emits a powerful witness (Matthew 5:16).

### **Anticipation**

Each believer is going to stand before God and have all his works judged for the purpose of rewards (2 Corinthians 5:10). Sin will not be the issue here because the blood of Christ has washed it all away (Romans 3:24, 25). But when the believer stands before God, he will only be judged for what he did or did not do in his own circle of responsibility. He will not be held accountable for what others have done in their circles.

A believer who has been a "doer of the word" in his everyday life can anticipate with gladness all that God has in store for him to enjoy forever. After the Apostle Paul affirmed he had fought the good fight, finished his race (circle of responsibility), he then confidently stated, "...there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me." Paul goes on to say, "and not to me only, but also to all who have loved His appearing" (2 Timothy 4:8). The power of personal responsibility, not only can energize the counselee now, but can excite him to anticipate the incredible rewards that he can enjoy forever.

### **Summary**

The power of personal responsibility can:

- Keep you focused.
- Give you purpose.
- Deepen your security.
- Calm your emotions.
- Establish your witness.
- Heal your relationships.
- Anticipate your reward.

Chuck's book, You Can Work It Out, covers these and many other hard questions based on the principle of personal responsibility. It can be ordered through the Living Foundation Ministries office for \$13 each. We will cover the shipping and handling (within the U.S.). No proceeds from this book go to the author.

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## ***Counseling Tip #8***

# **Pitfalls to Avoid in Choosing a Mate**

**Shelia Benzon**

### **Statistics**

With 85% of the US population marrying at least once and 50% of them ending in divorce, there is definitely a need to ask oneself some hard questions before finalizing a future mate selection. Choosing an emotionally healthy mate has more to do with the overall success of marriage than anything else you do combined after marriage. The following questions are intended as preliminary to more in depth questions as the relationship proceeds.

#### **Question # 1**

##### **Am I making this decision too fast?**

Quick marriages are already in trouble because they are based on a core belief of fantasies. "I will always be loved." "I'll never be alone." "It will make me eternally happy." "I'll have someone I can control." "I will always be needed." "I can escape the pain of my personal circumstances." "They will care for me or I can take care of them." Ironically, most of these are needs that only God can meet (Phil. 4:11-13). Therefore, quick marriages can be a means of putting another human in the place of God. This is normally called "co-dependency."

#### **Question # 2**

##### **Am I too young to make this important decision?**

Although the average age to get married has increased, there remains a large percentage of young married couples. These young couples usually fail to accomplish two important tasks of life. First, they do not know who they really are as to their identity. Adolescents and young adults are just coming out of a phase of conforming to their peers and have not fully identified the gifts, talents and personality strengths that God is developing in them. They were a different person at age 18 than at age 25. Often couples who marry young report that they or their mate are different people than when they married. Second, they may not have determined

their (or God's) life goal for themselves. There has not been enough life experience to determine this.

#### **Question # 3**

##### **Am I too eager to get married?**

Usually at the root of this eagerness is an attempt to fix something that is broken in themselves or someone else. Passion temporarily covers personal pain which only resurfaces later. Emotions are not subject to truth or reality. They only mask future responsibilities, relational conflict and the pain that follows. Finding a mate who is emotionally mature can eliminate close to 75% of the causes of divorce. Why? They have put away their childish ways of dealing with life (1 Cor. 13:11).

#### **Question # 4**

##### **Am I trying to please someone at the expense of my own feelings, desires, dreams or goals?**

Wounded mates stuff who they really are or who God has called them to be thinking they can gain acceptance and approval if they just perform well for their mate. They have confused pleasing with love. Pleasers fail to see who God made them to be, therefore, they arrive at midlife clueless as to who they are. Pleasers tend to marry angry controllers and spend the remainder of their lives walking on egg shells to control their mate's anger and are oblivious to God's leading by His Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:4). In time bitterness will control their heart (Heb. 12:15).

#### **Question # 5**

##### **Have I had enough balanced life experiences with this person?**

Have you observed this person in a variety of situations to be able to really know this person? People 'in love' do not like "problem talk" and therefore, they are clueless how this person will handle inevitable conflict. Healthy conflict can be a



base for deeper intimacy which is the result of deeper understanding. The single most direct influence you can have on your relationship and future children is how you manage anger. Life experience does not include sexual involvement which outside of marriage is sin (Eph. 5:3-5). Sexual sin does not produce a healthy marriage. Research repeatedly indicates couples who live together before marriage have less happiness in marriage than couples who waited. They report more frequent arguments during marriage and greater risk of separation and divorce.

### **Question # 6**

#### **Do I have too unrealistic expectations?**

Expectations are rules one adult makes for another adult. Adults do not like rules made just for them. When one fails to “keep the rules” conflict and disappointment ensues. Have the roles and responsibilities been clearly defined and agreed upon? Have they agreed on basic biblical marital attitudes; she is to respect him and he is to (sacrificially) love her (Eph. 5:33). The big self-deception is you can expect to change later what you do not like in a future mate now. Red lights before marriage do not turn green after marriage. Love alone does not fix past or present wounds. It is a false expectation that there will be no difficulties even if you seem to do most everything right in your marriage. It is a must that all topics (money, kids, sex, religion, etc.) are discussed and agreed upon before you say, “I do” or you will fight over them later.

### **Question # 7**

#### **Am I overlooking significant personality or behavioral problems?**

Personal and behavioral problems tend to be rooted in the birth family and are passed on generationally (Ex. 20:5, 6). You may need to ask yourself, “Am I willing to spend the rest of my life dealing with these problems (pride, control, selfishness, entitlements, jealousy, immorality, etc.)?” Negative personality traits will show up in almost every situation, not just once or twice in the course of the marriage. Failure to deal with these problems before marriage results in loss of leverage for change (what incentives do they have to change now in the marriage?) The problems will escalate under the normal stress of marriage and make them much more difficult to manage over time. The pleasure of denial will ultimately fade in the presence of pain over the long haul.

### **Question # 8**

#### **Am I minimizing the spiritual aspect of the relationship?**

Studies have repeatedly shown that a mutually agreed upon spiritual base (core belief system) has a very favorable influence on the marriage (Rom. 12:16). There is more satisfaction, greater sexual contentment, less divorce, less conflict, higher commitment, motivation to solve problems, to sacrifice for each other, to work as a team and greater desire to keep the marriage strong. Research also indicates partners from different religions are much more likely to divorce. Putting an ox and a horse in the same yoke proves to be very unsatisfying to the farmer (II Cor. 6:14).

### **Question # 9**

#### **Have we established and agreed upon communication rules before marriage?**

One survey of 21,500 married couples indicated the top category of predictive marital happiness was how they communicated with each other (Col 4:6). Have they agreed to stop interrupting and start listening (Prov. 18:13)? Are they going to refrain from name calling and start encouraging instead (Gal. 5:15)? Will they remain focused on one issue at a time and avoid hopping from one topic to another? Are they committed to acknowledging each other’s perspective without feeling threatened by the absence of agreement? Is there an effort to mirror back what is said in order to clarify the meaning of what is being said? Is there a commitment not to allow arguments to escalate in anger which results in destruction of the relationship (Eph. 4:27)? Have they agreed not to pout, withdraw or give the silent treatment? These are just a few of the “must discuss” aspects of commitment before the wedding.

### **Just a Beginning**

Consider these basic starting points before you say, “I do.” Hundreds of hours of relationship pain can be prevented by mutually processing these basic topics. God does not bless the “knowers” of what it takes to have a mutually satisfying marriage. He only blesses the “doers” who put it into practice (James 1:25). God designed marriage. He knows how it works best.

Shelia Benzon, member of counseling team of Living Foundation Ministries and American Association of Christian Counselors

For a more complete outline of “Traps to Avoid in Choosing a Mate, go to [www.Lfmtreeools.org](http://www.Lfmtreeools.org)

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## ***Counseling Tip #9***

# **Benefits of Believers in Working through Problems in Living**

**Dr. Chuck Lynch**

### **Big Surprise**

One of the biggest surprises to face both new and older believers is that they experience many of the same problems as the non-believer. This comes as a big shock if they were given the false idea that everything would change when they committed their life to Christ at salvation. Some Christians have even abandoned their faith because of the disappointment.

Anticipating this, the apostle Peter prepared believers so that they would not be surprised when encountering tough times. "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you" (1 Peter 4:12).

The apostle Paul also addressed this when he wrote the Christians in Rome. Many believers were superimposing Christianity on top of their past belief system. Paul challenged them to stop conforming to the values and attitudes of the world system around them but to go through a transforming process to change the way they think (Rom. 12:2). Problems in living help reveal the thoughts and behaviors in life that need to be changed.

So, just what advantages do believers have over non-believers in dealing with the problems of life? As you disciple (counsel) people, encourage them to be aware of these advantages.

### **Biblical Tools**

God has given believer specific biblical tools (Paul calls them *weapons* in 2 Cor. 10:4) to deal with problems in living. Tools are clear, precise scriptures that deal with specific problems or general principles from scripture that can be applied to problems. There

are also truths learned from experience and research that are effective in dealing with issues. This kind of truth must always be subject to Scripture and not contradict it. For instance, the truths in Dr. Gary Chapman's excellent book, The Five Love Languages, in and of themselves, are not found in the Bible. They are truths derived from research that have benefitted Christians around the world.

### **Sample Biblical Tools**

<u>Problem</u>	<u>Tool</u>	<u>Scripture</u>
Guilt	Confession, Forgiveness	1 John 1:9
Despair	Hope	1 Thess. 4:9-18
Anxiety	Prayer	Phil. 4:6
Rejection	Acceptance	Rom. 15:7
Failure	Restoration	Gal. 6:1
Marriage	Love, Respect	Eph. 5:33
Confused	Trust	Prov. 3:5, 6
Afflicted	Joy	James 1:2-4
Attacked	Resist evil	James 4:7
Unloved	Loved	Rom. 5:8

God has generously given them everything they need to live a godly life (2 Peter 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:16).

The benefit of sharing the concepts of biblical tools in counseling is that in subsequent sessions the counselor can ask if the person is using his tools. If the answer is, "This counseling is not working" then inquire what tool that he agreed to use is not working. (Clue) Most people confuse listening with doing. God primarily blesses doers of His Word, not knowers or listeners (James 1:25).

### **Power to Use the Tools**

God not only gives them practical biblical tools for dealing with problems, He also gives them the power to use the tools. This is one major distinction

between Christianity and other religions. Christianity is a relationship with a Person who provides power to carry out what He desires us to do (John 15:7).

The counselor must also be personally convinced that the counselee can do anything God expects of him through Christ who gives him the strength (power) to do it (Phil 4:13). Is it easy? NO! Will it take time? YES!

Jesus' last words were reassuring, "you will receive power" through the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:8). Paul reminded Timothy that God is a power "giver" (2 Tim. 1:7).

Your counselee will access God's power, first at salvation, then by staying in fellowship through obedience (1 Jn. 1:6-8). Ironically, God's power is more evident when we are in touch with our own personal weakness (2 Cor. 12:9).

## **Training to Use the Tools**

God's training to use the tools is not restricted to the classroom or book learning but focuses on life experiences also called trials, afflictions, temptations or testings (James 1:1-3). The counselor may refer to these as 'learning experiences'. Peter humbly helped others rebuild their lives by learning from his own failure (Luke 22:31).

Dealing with trials and temptations is the first issue in James, the first book written in the New Testament (James 1:1-7). How to deal with personal pain from loss is the primary issue addressed in Job, the first book believed to be written in the Old Testament.

## **Support While Using the Tools**

The support God provides can be physical, spiritual or emotional. He refers to believers as a body (1 Cor. 12:12-27) or a family (Rom. 12:11) and not just an organization. Christians are commanded (not suggested) to help carry (support) one another's burdens (crushing overloads). That will help fulfill the law of Christ which is to love one another (Gal. 6:2; John 13:35). Believers can give personal encouragement (Heb. 3:13) or share out of their resources, financially or materially (1 Jn. 3:19).

God personally supports believers by His Holy Spirit. He is the God of all comfort who prepares believers to comfort others like He comforts them (2 Cor. 1:3:4).

## **Rewards for Using the Tools**

God lays up an eternal reward each time they use the biblical tools. Yes, it is good to do the next right thing, especially, if it is commanded by God. But they may not gain an earthly benefit for doing what is right. Jesus did everything right and was killed. Regardless of the temporal outcome when they use their tools to do the right thing, God is preparing incredible rewards for them to enjoy forever.

The apostle Paul clarified the time and location that these hard earned rewards will be given out. All Christians (no exceptions) will be summoned to the bench (judgment seat) of Christ to receive eternal rewards for what we did on earth whether good (gain rewards) or bad (loss of rewards) (2 Cor. 5:10). Our works will be examined by fire (1 Cor. 3:12-15).

The anticipation of receiving these rewards is a powerful motivation to use God's tools and spiritual weapons to endure to the end of life without abandoning our faith as have so many (2 Tim. 4:7,8).

Yes, we and our disciples/counselees will get exhausted, discouraged, frustrated and stressed in life. But if we persevere and make every effort to stay spiritually healthy and use our biblical tools, there will be a bumper harvest awaiting us. "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up" (Gal. 6:9).

## **Our Task**

We, as biblical counselors and care givers, must do three things; first, study God's Word and search diligently for biblical tools. Second, study people and learn patterns of behavior. Third, learn how to apply the biblical tools to practical everyday life. This is true wisdom, understanding and knowledge (Prov. 1:2, 3).

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## ***Counseling Tip #10***

# **How to Restore Spiritual Identity**

**Dr. Chuck Lynch**

Three major losses took place the moment Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate fruit from the tree from which He specifically told them not to eat. God warned them of the consequences (Gen. 3:1-7). Satan Instantly accomplished the biggest robbery in human history. When he succeeded in getting them to sin, he stole their sense of personal worth, their purpose in life and their identity.

Some New Testament believers struggled to get their identity validated by their association with certain people (I Cor. 1:12). God has totally restored the believer's identity through his relationship with Jesus Christ (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 1:21; Col. 3:3).

### **What Does Restored Identity Look Like?**

- 1. You are now a saint.** Sixty times in the New Testament believers were referred to as saints while they were still alive. Yes, they have problems (I Cor. 1:11; 3:1-3; 6). You are a saint now because God makes you one. No religious leader or ritual makes you a saint. No miracles, no exceptional acts of "saintliness," nor extraordinary actions have to be performed by you, apart from trusting Christ as Lord and Savior. First century believers were called saints while still living and they did not need to wait 100 years before they could be declared a saint by a religious group.
- 2. You are a priest.** Yes, and you don't have to have formal religious training. In God's spiritual priesthood both men and women are not only priests, but holy priests (I Pet. 2:9). You do not need a preacher, rabbi, priest or mullah to pray for you. As a priest, you can skip the "middle man" and go directly into God's presence with bold confidence (I Tim. 2:5; Heb. 4:14-16) because He is the one who appointed you a priest.
- 3. Your body is a temple, God's holy residence on earth** (I Cor. 3:16). God Almighty has chosen to live inside of you by His Holy Spirit. Though people may refer to their place of worship as a temple, God does not live in manmade buildings but in the lives of His children. That's how special you are to God and why He emphatically says not to engage in immoral sexual activity because your body belongs to Him (I Cor. 6:15-20).
- 4. You are God's child now** (I John 3:1). When you confessed Jesus as your Lord and Savior (Rom. 10:9,10), God gave you the full right and authority to become His child here and now (John 1:12). Therefore, you can know (not guess, hope, wish) that you have eternal life (I John 5:13). Many religious groups say you cannot know for sure in order to control you and force you to stay in their system for the sake of their power and control and your money. It is not a matter of your good outweighing your bad. It is totally God's grace wiping out your bad altogether (Eph. 2:8,9). As an adopted child (Eph. 1:5) you are free to affectionately call your Heavenly Father "Abba" or Daddy" (Gal. 4:6). For the record, you belong to a huge family of born again brothers and sisters (Heb. 3:1).
- 5. You have a new citizenship** (Phil. 3:20). As a member of God's family, you are a legalized citizen of Heaven right now. There are no illegals! You not only have permanent,

irrevocable citizenship, there is a special place being prepared for you in Heaven (John 14:1-6). Since you are a citizen of Heaven, you may well feel like an alien here on earth (I Pet. 2:11).

- 6. You are an important member of Christ's body on earth** (Eph. 1:22, 23). His body refers to the universal church which is not a building but is made up of all Christians. Just as every part of the body is important and interconnected, so you are a valuable part of Christ's body and spiritually connected to all believers (Col. 1:18, 22, 24). This connection does not depend on local church membership. There was no such thing as church membership in the first century as it is viewed today. There were local churches, but they were made up of believers who already belonged to the universal church (body). It's important to be associated with a local Bible believing church, but that membership has nothing to do with your intimate connection to Christ's spiritual body, the church. That connection is a result of your faith in His death, burial and resurrection and receiving His pardon for your sin (Rom. 10:9-10; Rom. 6:23).
- 7. You are salt and light** (Matt. 5:13-14). God has chosen to work through you as a preservative, like salt, to slow down the moral decay and corruption in society. Your godly influence, like light, shines God's truth and hope into a dark and hopeless world (John 3:19).
- 8. You are Christ's personal ambassador** (2 Cor. 5:20). Just as world leaders appoint men and women to speak on their behalf, the King of kings has chosen you, as a citizen of Heaven (Phil. 3:20), to be His personal ambassador here on earth. You offer to an offending world (Rom. 3:23) the opportunity to be reconciled to an offended God (2 Cor. 5:20). You, as His ambassador, offer a pathway to peace through the cross of Christ (John 14:27).

- 9. You are a beautiful God-designed masterpiece** (Eph. 2:10). God is at work in

you where He lives creating a beautiful masterpiece, a new you. Just as a cocoon hides the beauty of the butterfly, so the body hides the real you created in God's image. You become God's priceless masterpiece, not by seeking His acceptance through good works (Titus 2:14, 3:8), but by faith in Christ. Good works are an expression of your gratitude to God for making you a beautiful masterpiece.

- 10. You are secure** (John 10: 27-29). Nothing can change or destroy the new you in Christ. Your old self has died and the new you has been raised with Christ (Rom. 6:3-8). You are now securely concealed in Christ who is in God (Col. 3:3). From your secure position, you are able to redirect your focus to the same issues and priorities that God has (Col. 3:1-2). You can look forward with anticipation to His physical return to snatch you up to be with Him forever (I Thess. 4:13-18).

Your present happiness is directly related to your understanding of your restored identity in Christ and acting upon that reality. All the behavioral changes you can make will not last unless you change your core belief system, the heart, (Prov. 4:23) to match who you really are in Christ. Choose to live out your restored identity today and you will have a better tomorrow.

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