

LESSON 1: STEPPING OUT

Confession of Principle 1 - "Realize I'm not God. I admit that I am powerless without Christ to control my tendency to do the wrong thing and that my life is unmanageable."

Scriptural support for this principle:

Romans 7:18 (NIV) - *I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I can not carry it out.*

Matthew 5:3 (NCV) - *They are blessed who realize their spiritual poverty, for the kingdom of heaven belongs to them.*

Revelation 3:17-21 (NASB) - *Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire so that you may become rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness will not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes so that you may see. Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; therefore be zealous and repent. Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me. He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

DENYING OUR REALITY

Exploring the issue of denial:

What are its effects on our lives?

1. **Repression**: The tendency to stuff down any emotion, feeling, or memory that causes pain and is unresolvable or uncontrollable in our eyes.

Solution: We must confess our tendency to control and manipulate our own lives and destiny by suppressing the conflicts we have been unwilling to face. We must purpose to stay open to facing any of these issues that God would bring to mind. It is important to recognize that God is faithful to guide us through any valley experience and to enrich our lives, as we yield in obedience to this journey, however painful it may seem. (Psalm 23, Hebrews 12:1,2, Psalm 66:16-20)

Biblical Application: EMBRACING GOD'S REALITY

1 Samuel 17 gives us an account of David's defeat of Goliath. The entire Israeli army was paralyzed with fear, unwilling to confront this conflict. This shepherd boy was willing to step out into the battle with this giant when other trained soldiers, including his brothers, cringed in defeat. What possible causes would paralyze this army of men when God had granted them so many miraculous deliverances (Pharaoh's army, Gideon, Joshua and the fallen walls of Jericho)? What might have been the heart

condition of Israel at this time? They had gone through the period of the Judges when everyone did “what was right in their own eyes”; they asked for a king like the other nations, transferring their trust in God to an earthly authority. How about David’s brothers? David was anointed and chosen King of Israel in the presence of all his older brothers in the previous chapter, though he did not move into that position yet. How might this event have affected their ability to trust God? What emotions might they have stuffed down deep in their hearts when they viewed this event firsthand? Embracing God’s reality may not always seem reasonable, but it is always the right thing to do. It may require us to face the giants in our lives, those things that seem impossible to man. It may also be something as simple as facing the daily tasks or routines of life. Whatever our reality may be, God promises to walk beside us. to strengthen us.

2. **Exhaustion** (spiritual, physical and emotional): The present is difficult to face when we have failed to allow God to help us with past struggles. Exhaustion can take on many forms. A temporary “fix” for this situation is working feverishly to help others, some of whom have more pain than we do. This becomes a band-aid for our own wounds as we become engulfed in the trials of others. We will tend to surround ourselves with those who are looking for a miracle cure and we become the doctor, tending to their wounds in an enabling way. As we become fixated on the problems of others, exhaustion quickly follows. We can never give to others what we ourselves have been unable to receive. Another form of exhaustion is depicted in Psalm 51:3. Trying to maintain life with a guilty conscience can be emotionally draining. We will discuss this Psalm later in more detail. The fruit of a guilty conscience can lead us to taking on various volunteer positions or becoming consumed with other good deeds and activities. The person involved in this type of “atoning work” is trying to pay for past sinful behaviors and actions. Exhaustion, and spiritual burn-out, can take place when we attempt to correct our past failures and shortcomings with rigorous acts of our own righteousness that God labels as “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6).

Points to Ponder

- Do you compare yourself to others whose conditions are much worse than your own?
- Do you relish T.V. shows that highlight the “drama” of others, enjoying their defeat and patting yourself on the back for not being so bad?

We may not be directly involved in atoning work, but still attempt to find relief from our own exhaustion by observing those that are caught up in a bigger rat race than we are experiencing. BEWARE! This type of coping can become a magnet to attract more drama in our own lives.

Solution: Surround yourself with spiritually mature individuals (peers, pastoral and mentor figures) who will encourage you to confront your own issues of failure and defeat.

Biblical Application: TURN TO THE LIGHT

Turn to: Proverbs 28:13. As long as our sins and failures sit in darkness, unacknowledged, they will grow like a cancer, eventually infecting every area of our life. We will only prosper as we reconnect with our Creator in humble repentance. Sinfulness could have been refusing to confront situations that God wants to resolve and heal (Hebrews 10:38,39).

READ: II Samuel 12:1-13

Nathan confronts David with the secret sin that David was denying. David's response was to admit his past issue of failure and accept his consequences. David finally repents in Psalm 51. Looking to Jesus as our role model, along with other successful Christian mentors will keep our focus where it belongs. We must look ahead towards the victory knowing it will only be gained as we face the shameful issues from our past, accept our God-given consequences and press on to triumph. (Hebrews 12:1-7).

3. **Isolation:** Fear is disguised in many ways. It may hide behind anger, or fits of rage, worry, or even a tormented thought life. Fear can also be isolating ourselves from others and uncomfortable situations. We tend to run from any circumstances or relationships that confront us with what we are trying to avoid.(Jonah)

Solution: Recognize our need for the body of Christ and their need for us.

Biblical Application: WORKING TOGETHER

Turn to: Galatians 6:2, I Corinthians 12:4-31. Scripture asks us to bear one another's burdens. There are trials and situations designed to bring us into a fuller recognition of the many membered body of Christ and the interdependence we have on one another. We must also recognize that we can become socially, emotionally and spiritually stunted the longer we are in isolation. Remember that people who have stayed in isolation for long periods of time may take some time to adjust to being in relationship with others. Many times we have developed negative behavior patterns that are hard to break.

Homework

1. Circle areas that are manageable. Place a box around areas that are unmanageable at this time.

time management	employment	nicotine/smoking	relationship to siblings
caffeine	food	electronics	material possessions
drugs	prescription drugs	sexuality	relationship to spouse
mood/emotions	alcohol	church attendance	relationship to parents
peer relationships	finances	relationship to children	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

2. In order to cope with dysfunction, families tend to have specific roles for each member. This is usually an unconscious decision that results from the temperament or vulnerability of the individuals involved. In your family of origin what role/roles did you most closely resemble? (circle)

peacemaker (tends to want peace at any cost) ***hero*** (driven to succeed to erase family shame)
scapegoat (usually blamed for family problems even when not at fault) ***clown*** (uses humor to cover pain)
troublemaker (gives up hope of family being successful and engages in risky and

unrestrained behaviors sometimes as a payback for family dysfunction)

3. We all have "hot buttons". These are the situations or circumstances that become a catalyst for creating more conflict in areas that are already unmanageable. These triggers can cause us to overreact and spin out of control. They may consciously or subconsciously remind us of past hurts or failures. What are your triggers? (Examples: fight with boss, roommate conflicts, confrontation with a past issue I have been avoiding, harsh words and put downs from those I value, lack of affirmation for a job well done, family disputes, personal failure)

Please list any that would apply including your own ideas of triggers. List them in order of intensity.

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4. Examine the life of David and the rich man through the following passages: (Matthew 19:16-22, II Samuel 11, II Samuel 12:1-13)

Contrast the men's responses to the authorities in their lives. What was the outcome/result of each encounter?

Which biblical character does your life resemble at this time? Explain your answer.

5. What steps have you taken to step out of denial?

6. What steps are you willing to take to step out of denial?

7. Who are those you can trust to hold you accountable through this journey?

8. Explain your heartview of God. How can this view of God help or hinder you in this journey?

Optional: you can draw a picture that expresses your view.

Be prepared to discuss homework in class.

Discuss homework from previous session

PRIDE: THE BEGINNING OF THE END

Pride is our own attempt to bring dignity into our lives through self effort.

Examples:

1. Tower of Babel- Gen.11:1-9

The people populating the earth at that time decided to construct a city with a tower to reach Heaven. The Lord responded to this vain human effort by scattering the people and their languages.

2. Haman - Esther 3:5; 5:9-14 ; 6:6; 7:10

Haman made every effort to bring down Mordecai for not bowing to him. He constructed a gallows to hang him, plotted the annihilation of his people, the Jews, and tried to manipulate the favor of the King. Haman's plan backfired and he was hung on the same gallows he had built for Mordecai.

In both instances, God intervened and the pride of the individuals/community brought their demise.

READ: Proverbs 11:2, Proverbs 16:18

The beginning of this lesson focused on denial, but we must take a deeper look at what elements of our lives have kept us in the place of denial. Why do we deny our condition? Why do we deny help for our unmanageable life? Why do we tend towards enabling help rather than help that will lead to brokenness and surrender? Though many of us may discover deep shame based fears that cause us to cover up our faults and failures, it is important to understand that the underlying roots of shame can be PRIDE.

Discussion: DENYING OUR CONDITION

“Covering up” for losses we have experienced can be a learned behavior. Many of us have had past generations teach us to be experts at covering up shame issues rather than confronting them. They lacked the understanding to teach us healthier resolves to our shame. We may have learned to use religious facades or masks to cover what we are trying to hide.

READ: Genesis 2:16-17, Genesis 3:1-8 (The fall of man/woman in the garden.)

This is the entrance of the issue of shame upon mankind injected into humanity through Satan's deception. They lose the original “clothing” of His Glory (made in His image), and become fearful and ashamed. They make an attempt to “cover” this shame with their own “clothing”, which is fig leaves! What are the fig leaves we have used to cover the shame we experienced from breaking God's commands? This includes the role playing discussed in the homework on page 3.

READ: Genesis 3:12-13 Our fig leaves can come in the form of excuses or blame transfer rather than taking responsibility for our actions.

Did you use role play, excuses, or facades as a “cover- up” for your weaknesses or failures?

Circle one: Yes No

If yes, describe: _____

Solution: Present ourselves before God without the “fig leaves” (excuses, cover ups, etc.)

READ: Isaiah 1:18-20, I John 1:9

This would include bringing our sinful condition before the Father and confessing our sins. This also includes confessing the facades (fig leaves) we have used to cover our shame.

Biblical Application: DIVINE COVER- UP

Once we resist the enemy’s temptation to transgress and cover up, we must be proactive in receiving and putting on the clothing God has designed for us (Genesis 3:21). Redemption restores our position with the Creator by imputing righteousness and exchanging it for our filthy rags or fig leaves (Isa. 64:6, Romans 4:1-8). The animal became the “sacrifice” needed for mankind’s transgressions, symbolizing the sacrifice of Christ that was to come, and the skins became the clothing they needed to cover their nakedness. For mankind today, Christ became our sacrifice, the innocent for the guilty much like the animal that was obviously slaughtered for Adam and Eve's clothing. The clothing we now have, as a result of that sacrifice, is Christ himself.

READ: Colossians 3:9-15

The wording "put on" indicates that we must take action! It is also a visual reminder that we have spiritual clothing that can cover us.

Discussion: PUTTING ON SPIRITUAL CLOTHING

How can this understanding solve the dilemma of putting on facades?

What benefit do we get from "putting on" this spiritual clothing?

Colossians 3:15 “And let the _____ of God rule in your hearts, to the which also you are called in one body; and be ye _____.”

Peace and gratitude become the byproduct of putting on Christ, which is in sharp contrast to the result of putting on fig leaves.

When we fall short, we are at a crossroad. The next step we take determines if we are following after Adam and Eve’s fallen nature and the consequences it brings or the redemption plan of Christ with the benefits it provides. See the following illustration:

Sin-----> Fig leaves (denial, excuses, blame transfer)-----> shame, guilt, alienation from God.
Sin-----> Atonement (admitting, confessing, forsaking)-----> peace, gratitude, intimacy w/God.

If we choose the latter we can have the proper influence on those around us and enjoy the fellowship of others: ***“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord.”*** -

Colossians 3:16 (KJV)

SPECIAL WARNING: “BEWARE: MISERY LOVES COMPANY”

Securing our freedom includes understanding the tools our adversary uses to hook us back into the same cycles of sin and defeat (I Peter 5:8). Satan, our adversary, the king of pride, suffered with a lack of contentment. He was unwilling to accept the assignment and position given to him by the Creator. He wanted to be lifted higher and his pride caused his fall. He rebelled, creating a mutiny in heaven and bringing many with him.

His assignment and position: Ezekiel 28:13-15

His mutiny: Isaiah 14:12-14

His consequence: Isaiah 14:15 (NIV) “But you are brought down to the _____ (Hell), to the depths of the _____.”

Misery loves company! Satan is still in the business of gathering the discontented. He wants to bring others down with him to the pit of destruction. Our issues of misery become the bait Satan uses to bring about our downfall. Satan tempted Eve into believing that she didn't have everything she needed. This thought enticed her to reach out for what she thought would bring gain. Curiously guided by the Serpent's crafty words, she foolishly sacrificed the glory of God for something that would bring misery and discontent. Independent of God's plans, Adam and Eve disobeyed and pursued what He had commanded them to avoid. Death and destruction quickly followed. Stay away from the miserable and those who grumble about their lot in life. Recognize when you are falling prey to this poison in your own life. Avoid the “pit” of discontentment.

The fig leaves, excuses and cover-ups began in the garden and are still here to entice us today. Although we may derive a temporary peace from putting on facades and acting out various roles in different social settings and circumstances, this will always lead to guilt, frustration and exhaustion setting us up for the next "fix" to cover up our shame. Living a double life always brings torment (James 1:8).

DENYING BIBLICAL SOLUTIONS TO OUR UNMANAGEABLE LIFE

God offers solutions that involve complete restoration - why do we deny it? This homework assignment will give us a specific example of why we can sometimes deny the cures God provides for our unmanageable life.

Homework

ENABLING HELP vs. BIBLICAL SOLUTIONS

READ: *II Kings 5: 1-14*

1. What was Naaman's position/title? (vs.1)

2. What problem did Naaman have that he could not manage on his own? (vs.1)

3. Who recommended a solution to his problem? (vs.2-3)

4. What was the solution? (vs.3, 10)

5. What was Naaman's initial response to this solution? (vs.11)

6. Be prepared to discuss why God would have chosen this solution.

Many times God will provide a way out of our unmanageable life by confronting us with the very same issues that have caused our addictions. This is always for our benefit and serves to provide a lasting solution rather than a "magic cure". The goal is to get to the root issues that caused the addictions.

7. List any previous solutions that you have rejected in the past.(rehab opportunities, counseling, accountability, etc.)

-
-
-
-
-

8. List any delusions and "magical cures" that you may have engaged in that eventually led you back into bondage. (This includes superficial religious solutions and relationships.)

-
-
-
-
-

Be prepared to discuss the homework in class.

Discuss homework from previous session.

PRIDE'S ENEMY: BROKENNESS AND SURRENDER

What does brokenness and surrender look like?

READ: II Samuel 11: 1-17

Discussion:

- 1. What was David's downfall? (vs.1-5)**
- 2. What did David do to remedy this unmanageable situation? (vs 6-17)**

READ: II Samuel 12:1-20

- 3. How did God choose to confront David's hidden sin? (vs.1-9)**

- 4. What were the consequences of David's hidden sin?**

a. Family Strife: "Behold I will raise up _____ against thee out of thine own house, and I will take thy _____ before thine eyes, and give them unto thy _____ and he shall _____ with thy wives in the sight of the sun." (vs.11)

b. Death for his household: "Howbeit because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely _____." (vs. 14)

- 5. What was David's response to this confrontation? (vs.13)**
- 6. What was David's response to the consequences he received? (vs.16-20)**

Initially, David foolishly chose the fig leaf response to sin, which involved covering up his shameful acts. God gave him an opportunity through Nathan's rebuke, to take responsibility for his actions. This second opportunity resulted in repentance and David turned his heart towards God.

READ: Psalm 51

Repentance is God's solution to our unmanageable sin. It is choosing atonement over the fig leaf solution. True repentance includes brokenness and surrender.

As long as David chose the fig leaf solution, he was in torment.

- 7. Many of us work furiously at looking very manageable on the outside, while our secret life is falling apart. We might spend hours on our outward appearance or labor endlessly on projects that make us look good to others. What evidence do we see that might indicate David's internal life was unmanageable even before this confrontation with Nathan took place? (Psalm 51:3,11,14)**

Discuss the difference between outward vs. inward evidence of unmanageability. Some of us can hide the internal consequences for a long time without any tell-tale signs for others to see.
8. The full circle of repentance includes offering our lives to God in our brokenness. Which words of this Psalm indicate that David completed the repentance process? (vs. 13-19)

Brokenness and surrender take courage. We tend to retreat from the uncomfortable unveiling of our weaknesses and shortcomings. Anything hidden in darkness will grow and become more unmanageable (Psalm 19:12-13). We become like a little child attempting to hide the evidence of our disobedience, when it is really quite obvious to others.

Closing Scripture:

Psalm 32 (ASV)

A Psalm of David

1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, Whose sin is covered.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom Jehovah imputeth not iniquity, And in whose spirit there is no guile.

3 When I kept silence, my bones wasted away Through my groaning all the day long.

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: My moisture was changed as with the drought of summer. Selah

5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, And mine iniquity did I not hide: I said, I will confess my transgressions unto Jehovah; And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah

6 For this let every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: Surely when the great waters overflow they shall not reach unto him.

7 Thou art my hiding-place; thou wilt preserve me from trouble; Thou wilt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will counsel thee with mine eye upon thee.

9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding; Whose trappings must be bit and bridle to hold them in, Else they will not come near unto thee.

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked; But he that trusteth in Jehovah, lovingkindness shall ***compass** him about.

11 Be glad in Jehovah, and rejoice, ye righteous; And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

***compass - surround, envelop, to enclose, assemble around, to encompass**

The Lord's hand is heavy upon us when we are living out our "fig leaf" lives. David indicates that his bones were wasting. I wonder if he was experiencing arthritis? He also described this season of his life

as the drought of summer. Anxiety and fears rob our bodies of moisture. He could not get away from the guilt of his sin. Hidden sin has a physical effect on our lives! In place of guilt and all that it brings, David's choice to repent and receive all that confession brings is evident in this Psalm. He chooses God's covering which is only available as we acknowledge and confess our sin. The benefits listed in Psalm 34 for making this choice are:

1. forgiveness 2. protection in overwhelming times 3. preservation and deliverance from trouble
4. instruction, teaching and counsel in God's ways 5. God's lovingkindness 6. gladness, rejoicing and joy

Take the time right now to confess Principle 1. Rejoice in knowing that God delights in His children drawing close to Him. Consider the many blessings that await us when we come to Him in true repentance.