

LESSON 8: LEFT BEHIND

Confession of Principle 8: "Make a list of all persons we have harmed and become willing to make amends to them all."

Scriptural support for this principle:

Matthew 7:12 (NLT) - *Do to others whatever you would like them to do to you. This is the essence of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.*

Luke 10:27 (NIV) - *He answered: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind'; and, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"*

Romans 13:8 (NCV) - *Do not owe people anything, except always owe love to each other, because the person who loves others has obeyed all the law.*

LOOKING BACK TO GET AHEAD!

At the core of every human dilemma, we will find selfishness. This manifests in the inability to love ourselves or those around us in an effective and meaningful way. Mankind, in his fallen condition, is constantly beckoned to do what is contrary to the Spirit. Giving in to temptation will always result in damage, not just to the individuals committing unrighteous acts, but to those in community with them. Many who come to a salvation experience are eager to proceed ahead to a new journey in Christ. Sadly, some of them never come to realize the wake of destruction they left behind.

Thought to ponder - **In your eagerness to live a Christ-like lifestyle, have you neglected to look behind at those you might have offended?**

Yes No

In contrast, however, we are encouraged in the following Scriptures, to look forward to the new things that lie ahead. **Read the following passages:**

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, - Philippians 3:13 (NKJ)

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. - 2 Corinthians 5:17 (KJV)

Craning our necks to look back can be a crime! Lot's wife turned to a pillar of salt when she looked back, didn't she (Genesis 19:26)? There is a distinct difference between looking back at our former life with longing or desire, and looking back to tend to unfinished business. The "looking back" that this principle requires should result in a greater realization of the completed work Christ has done for us. As we make a list of those we have offended and recognize the full impact that our unrighteous living had on others, we can only be ever more thankful for His great

mercy. It is amazing to comprehend that the Savior chose to embrace us in our sinful condition even before we fully realized the damage our reckless behavior had on others.

Reflection time:

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners. - Romans 5:8 (NLT)

Before moving forward with this principle, take a moment to thank the Lord for His great love expressed to us when we were still in a pitiful and selfish state.

Write out your words of gratitude to the Lord for this unconditional love on the lines below:

Share your words of gratitude with the group if you are comfortable.

LUMPY CARPETS -WHAT'S UNDER THE RUG?

In our last study, we talked about dirty plates and making sure we are letting God wipe our plate (slate) clean to restore our intimacy with him. This is a vertical action between God in Heaven, and ourselves. We are now being asked to look at the horizontal relationships in our lives, between others to whom we have been in community with, and ourselves. It is easier to sweep away our past, especially when confronting it means that a little humility might be required to make things right with those around us. In our foster home, we would occasionally have a young girl who didn't feel it was worth the time to accomplish her chore duties satisfactorily. One day, I caught one of these women in the act. She was sweeping all the dirt from the kitchen underneath the family room rug! Talk about surprise. She didn't expect me to enter the room at that time and was quite embarrassed. Do you have "**Lumpy Carpet Syndrome?**" Are you guilty of sweeping the debris of your past life under the carpet. A dirty floor can be just as distasteful as a dirty plate!

The Principle of Restitution: Removing the Lumps

Our supporting passage in Matthew 7:12 indicates that the message of the law and the prophets can be summed up in the single statement: "Do to others what you would like them to do to you." Let us take a look at one of the consequences an Israelite under the law would face when not applying this simple principle to his own life.

And the Lord said to Moses, Say to the Israelites, When a man or woman commits any sin that men commit by breaking faith with the Lord, and that person is guilty, Then he shall confess the sin which he has committed, and he shall make restitution for his wrong in full, and add a fifth to it, and give it to him whom he has wronged. But if the man [wronged] has no kinsman to whom the restitution may be made, let it be given to the Lord for the priest, besides the ram of atonement with which atonement shall be made for the offender. - Numbers 5:5-8 (Amplified Bible)

Group Discussion:

- **Note the emphasis on breaking faith with the Lord as a precursor to committing sin. Can you think of a time, in your life, when breaking faith with the Lord was quickly followed by sinful actions towards others?**
- **What was the offender required to bring along with his confession?**
- **Keep in mind what we learned in Principle 7 about sincere confessions being proved by corresponding actions. Why do you think the Lord made this requirement?**
- **It is interesting to note that if there were no relatives available to make restitution to, the priest would stand in the place of the offended party. Why do you think this was important?**

We tend to sweep these examples of Scripture under the carpet right along with our debris, dismissing them as irrelevant for those living under the New Covenant. We fail to look at the vital principles God's Word is teaching us in these passages, that are included in what is referred to as the Law of Moses. The New Covenant places an emphasis on the offended parties to release the offender even before confession or restitution is made. The following passages make this point obvious: Matthew 5:43-44, Matthew 6:12,14-15, Matthew 18:21-22, Mark 11:25-26, Colossians 3:13, Ephesians 4:32. In these references, the burden of responsibility is upon the one being offended. This is a good way to remain without offense and consciously and consistently resist a bitter spirit. However, we are examining our lives under this principle as the offender rather than the one who was offended. Let's keep this in mind as we proceed ahead with Principle 8.

In order to successfully navigate through this principle, we must define offenses from a Biblical perspective. We can look at the "obvious" acts of the flesh listed in Scripture and easily identify behavior that is offensive to the Lord.

READ: Galatians 5:19-21 and list these acts of the flesh on the lines below.

(You may want to grab a dictionary and multiple Bible translations for this exercise). Have you engaged in any of these activities? Put a check by any of the ones that you have engaged in to any degree. You may want to look up the exact meanings before trying to identify those that would apply to you.

After doing this exercise, take some time to think about the impact these activities may have had on others. Most of these "works of the flesh" involve more than one person! We may need to reflect on this fact as we move toward making our list of offenses.

Now here is the hard part. There are other sins called sins of omission. Rather than a focus on what we did to others, these sins are representative of times we didn't do something to or for others. For a deeper understanding of this principle, let's look at one of our support Scriptures a little closer:

Do not owe people anything, except always owe love to each other, because the person who loves others has obeyed all the law. - Romans 13:8 (NCV)

This is the sum total of what Christ expressed through the Sermon on the Mount as we discussed briefly in LESSON 4. Note the definition of the word "owe" expressed in this Scripture:
owe - This is from the Greek word, "opheileo" which denotes the idea of accruing, to be under obligation, to fail in duty, and to be guilty of indebtedness.

Our homework will give us the opportunity to reflect on times when we missed out on investing God's love into those around us. How can we put a tangible face on love? The Bible is full of instruction on how we are to love, but we may have subconsciously dismissed these standards of loving others as too difficult or unreasonable. Before you embark on your homework assignment, give God permission to probe your heart and reveal to you any areas you may have overlooked. Let him peel back the carpet to expose the layers of debris that need to be swept clean. Hang on as we look behind to get ahead.

Search me, O God, and know my heart: Try me, and know my thoughts; And see if there be any wicked way in me, And lead me in the way everlasting. - Psalm 139:23-24 (ASV)

Homework

LOOKING AT WHAT WE LEFT BEHIND

Have you ever been on a wonderful vacation and upon returning home and unpacking your bags you became aware that you left something valuable behind that most likely cannot be retrieved? Many times we find ourselves at the end of a particular journey in life, only to unpack the bags and realize that we missed something important. Many individuals will recount their grief for not spending more time with a loved one who passed, others sense remorse for missing out on their son or daughter's childhood because they were too busy with their own affairs. Some adults feel a sense of regret when they realize that so much valuable time has slipped away and they failed to spend enough moments doing what was really important.

List the different titles you held/hold in every day life (ex: employer, father, husband, etc.):

- | | |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ |
| 7. _____ | 8. _____ |

Read the following passages before comprising your list of offenses: Ephesians 5:22-6:9, Ephesians 5:1-5, Colossians 3:1-25 - 4:1, I John 4:7-11, 4:19-21, 5:1.

It is hard to think of others when we are wallowing in self-pity or acting self-righteously. Many of us were unaware of the times that we should have loved others because we were too busy thinking about how others didn't love us. Take the time to measure your love output in the various positions and titles you hold/held in life, using the standards listed in these Scripture passages. You may also want to refer back to LESSON 4 and take another look at the Beatitudes and the Sermon on the Mount. Be brave and proceed ahead with your list! The way to the Promise Land is paved with suffering. It will be much easier to proceed ahead without having to dodge the lumpy carpet.

Take out a clean sheet of paper and begin making your list this week. Remember to include not just those you offended by your harmful actions, but those you neglected. Encourage yourself with the following Scripture before beginning your assignment.

Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn't we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever? For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God's discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it's painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way. So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong. - Hebrews 12:9-13 (NLT)

You may not complete your list in this homework section. That's OK! We are purposing to finish our list before we move on to Principle 9.

CHARACTER SKETCH: King Saul - Man With the Lumpy Carpet

Let's take a break from examining our own personal lives and see if we can learn some life lessons from a man who walked on lumpy carpets for most of his life.

Read the following passages. As we go along, fill out the list of positions Saul held in life as well as the offenses he committed. Be mindful of his activities, actions towards others, and ability to follow the commands given to him by his earthly and heavenly authorities. Think about his love output towards those around him.

Read from Amplified or New Living versions.

I Samuel 9:1-10, I Samuel 10:1-16, I Samuel 13:1-14, I Samuel 14:24-35, I Samuel 15:1-35, I Samuel 16:13-23, I Samuel 18:1-2, 6-29, I Samuel 28:6-11, I Samuel 31:1-7

List the different titles Saul held throughout his life. Comprising this list while reading these passages will make this exercise easier:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____

7. _____

8. _____

List the offenses Saul committed, keeping in mind the various positions he held. Once again, this will be much easier if this is done while reading the passages:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Continue on back, if needed.

When scrutinizing this devious Bible character, it is easy to see how truly guilty he was of offending the Lord and others. The ramifications of his unrepentant lifestyle didn't just stop at his own family, nor did it end with the nation he miserably failed to protect. His actions also put future generations of Israel at grave risk. The villain of the book of Esther, named Haman, who contrived a wicked plot to annihilate the Jews, was thought to be descended from the Amalekites - the nation Saul failed to extinguish (Esther 3:10)!

Let's reflect back on our homework assignment. Were you able to scrutinize your own life as thoroughly as you examined King Saul's tainted past? Knowing the impact that our unresolved sin issues can have on future generations, there should be a renewed sense of vigor in our efforts to sweep away the debris!

Stop now and review your list of offenses. Ask yourself the following questions:

- **Are there any other titles or positions you occupied that you need to add to the list?**
- **Have you made an extensive list of people who may have suffered due to your neglect to follow the Biblical mandate to love?**
- **Have you considered any offensive actions you may have committed in response to those who first offended you?**
- **Does your list include all parties you have offended even those who are no longer alive?**

- **Have you considered the ramifications of your poor choices and how the consequences of your actions may have harmed not only those you offended but those close to them? (ex: Saul's jealousy and injurious treatment of David affected Saul's son, Jonathan, as well. Although Jonathan and David were very close, he lied for David and kept in touch with him secretly for fear of his Father's retribution.)**

Read support Scripture Luke 10:27. Can you see a relationship between loving God with all your heart, soul, strength and mind and loving others? Can we say we really love God when we fail to treat others according to His law of love? Saul's issues with others were a direct result of his failure to love and obey God.

Take time before the next lesson to complete your list.

SWEEPING AWAY THE CRUMBS

Week of unleavened bread: The Lord commanded a feast for His people that began with their Exodus from Egyptian bondage. It would be marked on the Hebrew calendar as the beginning of months and the first month of the year (Exodus 12:2). During this week, commonly known as Passover Week, the Hebrews were instructed to refrain from all food items containing leaven or yeast products (read Exodus 13). As time went on, Jews would celebrate this particular feast with great care, making sure they removed all trace of leaven from their home on the eve of Passover. They would take a feather and sweep every fine crumb into a dust pan, being careful to look in the deepest corners of their home. Though we might look at that custom as an exaggerated and unnecessary tradition, it would be good for us to adhere to that type of caution and scrutinizing for our spiritual sweeping. Are you willing to look at every nook and corner of your heart and allow God to sweep any leaven out? The Lord was emphasizing a sweeping away at the very beginning of their new life of freedom. Many of us have missed that step. We, too, have been delivered from the bondage of this world, and like the Israelites, it would be good to rid our lives from the crumbs of our sinful past as we press on to the Promise Land.

Wherefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, neither with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. - 1 Corinthians 5:8 (ASV)

Special Note:

Your list is a personal and private inventory between you and the Lord. It is, however, beneficial in some cases, to get the input of a close friend, relative or trusted mentor or counselor. If you need help, don't hesitate to find someone who will respect your need for confidentiality. You will never be asked to discuss your list in class.