

UNIT 3

FREE INDEED

Hymn Part 1 **CHRIST'S FREEDOM**

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

PHILIPPIANS 2:5



DAY 1

God's Goal: Your Freedom

DAY 2

Habits, Loyalties, Relationships, and Prejudices

DAY 3

Ambitions, Duties, Debts, and Possessions

DAY 4

Fears and Weaknesses

DAY 5

Hurts or Grudges

Why You Will Find This Unit Helpful

You will learn about 11 more areas in which you can experience bondage. In each area you will begin to experience the freedom of Christ as He renews your thinking, mindset, and outlook on life.

Lifelong Objective

In Christ you will live in peace with freedom from the control of sin.

Summary of God's Work in You

Christ's freedom within you facilitates the mental quality of attention. God's goal is your complete freedom from any bondage to this world system. Your growth in freedom from sin can be measured only by Christ's sinlessness. He gives freedom in His office as Deliverer. Christ sets you free.

Unit Learning Goals

- You will demonstrate a willingness to be set free from areas of bondage.
- You will understand why God wants you to be free from bondage to sin.
- You will understand ways God wants to set you free in the areas of habits, loyalties, relationships, prejudices, ambitions, duties, debts, and possessions.
- You will demonstrate a continued willingness to seek the kingdom of God above all other things.
- You will understand the damaging nature of fears, weaknesses, and hurts.
- You will demonstrate submission to God's work in your life to set you free from the damage caused by fear, weakness, and resentment.
- You will begin to demonstrate forgiveness toward those who have hurt you.

What You Will Do to Continue Growing in Christ's Freedom

- You will ask Christ to continue His work of producing freedom in you until you are free indeed.
- You will begin making lists of your habits, loyalties, relationships, prejudices, ambitions, duties, debts, possessions, fears, weaknesses, and hurts.
- You will begin to evaluate your lists to identify items that lead to bondage.
- You will seek Christ's help to be set free in those areas of bondage.

Scripture Memory Verses

"Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:32,36).

Lifelong Helps Related to This Unit

Bondage to Freedom Lists (pp. 224–26)

The Mind of Christ Cards Related to This Unit

3B. Unit 3: Scripture Memory—John 8:32,36

Optional DVD Message by T. W. Hunt

- Session 1, Part 2: His Freedom



DAY 1 GOD'S GOAL: YOUR FREEDOM

Today's Bible Meditation

"It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1).

Name of Christ for Today

The Truth (John 14:6)

Prayer to Begin the Lesson

Jesus, You are the Truth. You are the One who sets me free—free indeed. Please continue to work in me, producing the freedom You desire. Amen.

1. Begin today's lesson by reading the Bible verse and the name of Christ for today. Work on your memory verse. Then use the suggested prayer to begin your study.

God's Purpose in Freedom

Freedom has a purpose. We are free to serve Christ. We must be either servants of the world or servants of Christ. Freedom in one area means servanthood in the other. If you want to serve Christ, you must choose freedom from the world.

God inspired Peter to say, "Live as free men, but do not use your freedom as a cover-up for evil; live as servants of God" (1 Pet. 2:16, NASB). This means you could misinterpret the purpose for your freedom. You could see your experience of God's grace and freedom from the law as an invitation to live like the world—to do evil. That is not what God intended by setting you free in Christ. God gave His commandments as guidelines for right living. You are free to live within those guidelines and experience the fullness of life God intends for you. But when you cross over those boundaries, you become a slave to sin. As a slave to sin, you cannot be an effective servant of Christ. You will miss God's best for you.

2. Make the two statements below correct by crossing out the incorrect word inside each pair of parentheses ().

- When I live like the world and do (right/evil), I am a slave to sin.
- When I live like a servant of God and do (right/evil), I am truly free.

3. Read John 8:31-36 below and underline statements that describe what a servant (a disciple) of God does and what a servant of sin does.

³¹Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; ³²And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. ³³They answered him, We are Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? ³⁴Jesus answered them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whosoever committeth sin is the servant of sin. ³⁵And the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever. ³⁶If the Son therefore shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed."

4. Verses 32 and 36 are your memory verses for this week. As a way to begin memorizing them, write the verses below.

A servant of sin is one who commits sin (see v. 34). Such a person is in bondage, not to men but to sin. He or she becomes a slave of sin. A disciple of Jesus, on the other hand, is one who continues in Christ's Word (see v. 31). He or she knows the truth (see v. 32). This is a person who lives according to Christ's commands. When you are Christ's disciple, He sets you free!

God's Process Toward Freedom

Last week I explained a process God took me through to move me toward freedom in Christ. For a long time I thought these things were happening to me just for my sake. I never planned to share them publicly. However, the unusual series of events that led to my public sharing of these insights convinced me that God wants His children to be free from all bondage to sin. God wants you to be free.

To begin that process, I asked you to make a list of your desires or lusts. You have already begun to evaluate your desires and remove those that conflict with Christ's desires. In this unit I want you to look at some other areas where bondage occurs. Some are neutral areas of bondage. Items in these areas can be good or bad, depending on how they measure up against God's desires for you.

During this week I suggest that you prayerfully begin making lists in the other eight areas of bondage. You have already started the first. We are beginning with the neutral areas first because they are easier to deal with. Then I will guide you to tackle your fears, weaknesses, and hurts. These last three are damaging areas of bondage and are more difficult to deal with. I will explain each of these neutral and damaging areas in more detail during your study this week.

 5. Read the list of 12 areas of bondage in the right margin. Circle the one or two you think may be most difficult for you to deal with.

Two Cautions

Don't rush God! It took me more than 14 months to make and process the lists the first time. That is why I see this course as an introduction to a lifetime of developing the mind of Christ. For each list I had to pray for freedom and allow God time to guide me in working out the requirements for real freedom. Pray as you make each list. After you make the list, give God the liberty to do anything He needs to do to give you complete freedom. Don't be surprised if the Holy Spirit requires you to remake the lists from time to time. He may direct you to areas I have not named. He may work your transformation in a completely different direction from the one He took me through. Let God direct you through this process in His way and on His time schedule.

Don't give up your responsibilities. God assigns us responsibilities that limit us. For example, no spouse is completely free. Each is responsible to his or her vows. No Christian father or mother can declare freedom from the obligations to children. The limitations God assigns are a training ground for Christlikeness.

 6. Are you willing to give God all the time He needs to work out your freedom? Yes No

If you checked yes, tell God so right now.

If you checked no, ask Him to make you willing.

Neutral Areas

- Lusts
- Habits
- Loyalties
- Relationships
- Prejudices
- Ambitions
- Duties
- Debts
- Possessions

Damaging Areas

- Fears
- Weaknesses
- Hurts

Christ's Mindset

Anyone can be free in the 12 areas of bondage I have listed. God's intention is for you to be free from this world's mindset. In doing that, you become bound to His mindset—the mind of Christ. In being bound to God's way of thinking, you are free from the bonds of Satan and sin.

Jesus Christ was the freest human being who ever walked on earth. As His ministry moved into various phases, Jesus had to make decisions—ministry decisions—about what to say and when to say it, where to go and when to go, always watching the timing of His Father. Jesus often spoke of His hour. His decisions were always perfect. Only in freedom can we make correct spiritual decisions.

*Only in freedom
can we make correct
spiritual decisions.*

Christ greatly desires your freedom. He promised, "If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed" (John 8:36, NASB). Nothing outside you can disturb the freedom Christ gives. His freedom can endure. Paul cautioned, however, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free; therefore keep standing firm and do not be subject again to a yoke of slavery" (Gal. 5:1, NASB). Paul was talking about freedom from Jewish legalism, but sin also enslaves you.

Focused Attention

- To God
- To His Word
- To prayer
- To His voice

Why is your freedom from the bondage of sin so important to having the mind of Christ? The person with the mind of Christ has focused attention. When you are in bondage, your attention is on your lusts, loyalties, ambitions, grudges, and other things that bind you to the world. Christ's freedom within you allows and assists the mental quality of attention—attention to God, to His Word, to prayer, and to His voice. God's desire is our freedom.

 7. Why is freedom from the bondage of sin important?

 8. What is God's desire for you?

My f _____

This freedom God desires for you has no earthly measures. Its only measure is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. Your growth in freedom from sin can be measured only by Christ's sinlessness—not by yourself, by other people, or by any other standard.

 9. What is the standard for measuring your growth in freedom?

We are not talking about righteousness that God gives through faith in Christ. We are talking about the outworking of your faith. Fruitful faith is practical, and God indeed wants you free. Christ wants you to be free, just as He is.

 10. Close this session in a time of prayer asking Christ to set you free indeed. Ask the Father to make you fruitful and faithful like Jesus, His Son.

DAY 2

HABITS, LOYALTIES, RELATIONSHIPS,
AND PREJUDICES

1. Begin today's lesson by reading the Bible verse and the name of Christ for today. Work on your memory verse. Then use the suggested prayer to begin your study.

Habits

One afternoon I was to pick up my wife, Laverne. I forgot the appointment. I often did that kind of thing. I usually made the excuse that I was a professor, and my mind was on deeper things. When I remembered the appointment, Laverne had been waiting on me for an hour. I arrived to pick her up with profuse apologies. I begged her to forgive me. Of course, she immediately granted forgiveness. Then she said, "If you were serious about sin not being master over you, don't you think you ought to pray about your absentmindedness? After all, does a bad habit honor the indwelling Spirit?"

That got my attention. A few days later I came across this statement in Mark 10:1: "According to His custom, He once more began to teach them" (NASB). Jesus had habits! He was in the habit of going to the synagogue on the Sabbath (see Luke 4:16). Gethsemane must have been a favorite place, because He had the custom of going to the Mount of Olives when He was in Jerusalem (see Luke 22:39). Prayer was one of Jesus' habits (see Mark 1:35; Luke 6:12). But all of His habits were good. I knew mine were not. Clearly, the Lord was showing me another area of bondage: my habits.

We need to take action the moment the Lord reveals to us a necessary action if we are to be doers and not merely hearers of the word. In my next quiet time I prayed for the Lord to reveal to me all my habits, good and bad. I wrote down these habits, and it was obvious which ones needed to go. Again, in my helplessness I prayed for the Lord to show me paths that would eliminate all that was displeasing to Him. A bad habit (like absentmindedness) reveals an area of life that is not under the control of the Holy Spirit. Most of my bad habits resulted from carelessness. I had to take certain measures to overcome some of my bad habits, but essentially, the changes were effected not by personal discipline but by greater consciousness of the constant rule of the Holy Spirit. My habits were changed from being careless to being Spirit-ruled.

God's desire is to move your habits
from being careless to Spirit-controlled.

2. In your notebook, in your journal, or on separate sheets of paper, begin to prepare a list of your habits. Write the title "My Habits List" and today's date at the top of a sheet. If you have difficulty, turn to page 224 and use the guide to help you make your list more complete. You will make four lists today, so budget your time. List at least five or six habits as a start.

3. As you begin to evaluate your habits, ask God to help you identify which ones are careless and which ones are Spirit-controlled. Write a *C* beside the ones that are careless and need to come under the Spirit's control.

Today's Bible Meditation

"Commit thy works unto the Lord, and thy thoughts shall be established"
(Prov. 16:3).

Name of Christ for Today

The Way (John 14:6)

Prayer to Begin
the Lesson

Jesus, You are not only the Truth. You are also the Way to the truth about life. I don't really know the way apart from You. Please guide me in the way I should go. Amen.

Loyalties

One day I found myself arguing about a certain matter with a friend. I became defensive. At that point the Holy Spirit whispered in my spirit that defensiveness is a telltale sign of the world's mindset. Here was another signal from God, so I responded. The conviction was strong enough that I prayed through the matter. We usually think of loyalty as a good quality. The Lord seemed to say that I had been defending a false loyalty.

Jesus had loyalties. He was certainly loyal to His Father. Jesus loyally protected the disciples at the time of His arrest. Because I am to be like Jesus, the Lord was bringing to light the fact that not all my loyalties were Christlike. I had not realized a loyalty could be false or unnecessary.

I made a list of all my loyalties and then prayed through each one on the list. My list was too long! Loyalties, like wants, should be pure before the Lord. I discovered that my loyalties, even the legitimate ones, were not weighed according to spiritual value. I eliminated some of them as valueless. I assigned others a new value according to their spiritual weight. Basically, I found I could be loyal to anything I could pray for. The final result was an almost complete restructuring of my value system. My loyalties were changed from being scattered to being prayerful.

God's desire is to move your loyalties
from being scattered to being prayerful.

- 4. In your notebook begin to prepare a list of your loyalties. Title and date the list. If you have difficulty, turn to pages 224–25 and use the guide to help you make your list more complete. List a few loyalties to get started.
- 5. As you begin to evaluate your loyalties, ask God to help you identify which ones are scattered and which ones are prayerful. Write an *S* beside the ones that seem to be scattered or unnecessary.

Relationships

Relationships were the next area in which the Holy Spirit began working to free me from the bondage of sin. Because I am not a possessive person, I genuinely felt I was free from any bondage in relationships. Still, the Spirit may see areas of ownership of which we are not conscious. Deliberately, I gave my wife to the Lord by saying, "Lord, I ask You to make her love You more than she loves me." I asked God to make her priorities those of Mark 12:30-31. Our love for God must be first, far above all earthly loves. When I prayed that same prayer about my daughter, I had to add, "And this means if You want to take her to Africa or another distant field, her love and service to You must outrank her love and service to us." I have prayed this same prayer about each of my grandchildren.

I found the Spirit leading me to make a list of all my relationships—my boss, my friends, my colleagues, and others. Then I gave each one to the Lord to serve whatever purposes He had in bringing them into my life. Slowly I came to realize every relationship in my life was to be one of service to God. I really was being transformed. My relationships had changed from serving self to serving God.

MARK 12:30-31

"THOU SHALT LOVE THE LORD THY GOD WITH ALL THY HEART, AND WITH ALL THY SOUL, AND WITH ALL THY MIND, AND WITH ALL THY STRENGTH: THIS IS THE FIRST COMMANDMENT. AND THE SECOND IS LIKE, NAMELY THIS, THOU SHALT LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR AS THYSELF."

God's desire is to move your relationships
from serving self to serving God.

- 6. In your notebook begin to prepare a list of your relationships. Title and date the list. If you have difficulty, turn to page 225 and use the guide to help you make your list more complete. List three or four relationships as a start.
- 7. As you begin to evaluate your relationships, ask God to help you identify which ones are serving self and which ones are serving God. Write an *S* beside the ones that seem to serve self.

Prejudices

Next, the Holy Spirit began working on my prejudices. I didn't think I had any! Under the leadership of the Spirit, I found deep, hidden prejudices.

In the Bible Naaman was angry when Elijah told him to bathe in the Jordan. Naaman asked, "Are not Abana and Pharpar, rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel?" (2 Kings 5:12). The Pharisees showed their prejudices when they asked Jesus' disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax-gatherers and sinners?" (Matt. 9:11, NASB).

Many believers have taken care of the better-known prejudices (concerning race or ethnic groups) through the work of the Holy Spirit in their thinking. However, under the holy supervision of God's Spirit, you may find unsuspected prejudices. For example, some believers unconsciously think if God works a certain way in their lives, He is bound to work that same way in other believers. Most of us are prejudiced about natural or spiritual gifts. We sometimes think the use of our particular gift or gifts is the only way God can legitimately work in another person's life. Some Christian leaders think all people are called to their same calling.

If we are prejudiced about the way God works in anyone's life, we are limiting the sovereignty of God. If God is sovereign, no prejudice of any kind on our part can exist that would limit His working in our lives. Once again, I had to make a list. I had not suspected their lurking presence, but prejudices limit God's control.

God's desire is to move your prejudices
from being accidental to being scriptural.

If God is sovereign, no prejudice of any kind on our part can exist that would limit His working in our lives.

- 8. In your notebook begin to prepare a list of your prejudices. Title and date the list. If you have difficulty, turn to page 225 and use the guide to help you make your list more complete. To get you started, list three or four prejudices.
- 9. As you evaluate your prejudices, ask God to help you identify which ones are accidental and which ones are scriptural. Write an *A* beside the ones that seem to be accidental or contrary to Scripture.

In each of the areas named so far—false lusts, habits, loyalties, relationships, and prejudices—I had to make a list and fervently pray about its inherent bondage. I fervently

prayed over each list as a prelude to the Spirit's deep work in freeing me from these areas of bondage.

10. Close today's session by praying about the areas God seems to emphasize that need changing first or most. Give Him permission to do whatever is necessary to help renew your mind in these areas.

DAY 3

AMBITIONS, DUTIES, DEBTS, AND POSSESSIONS

Today's Bible Meditation

"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1 Cor. 4:2).

Name of Christ for Today

The Life (John 14:6)

Prayer to Begin the Lesson

Lord Jesus, You are my Life. Without You I would be dead in my sin. Please set me free from the things that keep me from living life to the fullest extent You have planned for me. Amen.

Ambitions

The Lord next led me to the bondage that comes from my ambitions. Ambitions include goals, purposes, objectives, hopes, and dreams. These drive us to achievement. A deep sin can lurk in ambitions, hidden from the conscious mind. Our ambitions reveal sin in the area of pride. Being honest with the Lord is difficult in this matter, so I had to pray that the Lord would help me be open to Him as I made the list of my ambitions. I had not carefully described certain ambitions. They were really unconscious hopes or dreams. As I prayed, I became aware of ambitions I had never openly admitted, even to myself.

After I made the list, I sincerely tried to give these ambitions to the Lord. Again, I freed God to do anything He needed to do to accomplish His aim. Many of my ambitions would have brought honor to me. Now the transformation began. The Spirit wanted me to put to death my personal ambitions and to develop ambitions that would honor the Lord or advance His kingdom.

God's desire is to move your ambitions
from honoring self to honoring God.

2. In your notebook begin to prepare a list of your ambitions. Title and date the list. If you have difficulty, turn to page 225 and use the guide to help you make your list more complete. You will make four lists today, so budget your time. List at least two or three in each category during this lesson to get started.

3. As you evaluate your ambitions, ask God to help you identify which ones are honoring self and which ones are honoring God. Write an *S* beside the ones that honor self or have pride as a root cause.

Duties

Next, the Spirit began to convict me that some of my duties were an obstacle to complete freedom. One of the works of the Spirit is to produce in us a sense of "ought to" about our basic Christian works. He convicted me that I was carrying on a

number of busy activities for which I was not gifted or called. I am a dutiful person, so this area shocked me. Under the close supervision of the Holy Spirit, I discovered I was being driven by duties I was performing that I had no business doing.

This does not mean all duties are wrong. We should feel certain divine obligations. We are not saved by works, but works are a fruit of our faith. I studied the times when Jesus said, “I must”: “I must be about My Father’s business. … I must preach to other cities also: for therefore am I sent. … I must journey on [to Jerusalem] … a prophet [cannot] perish outside of Jerusalem.” I sensed an eternal ring about all His duties. Jesus knew from the beginning the course and ultimate outcome of His life. Certainly at Caesarea Philippi Jesus knew of His coming death and resurrection (see Matt. 16:21), and He never veered from that course, even if it meant rebuking Peter (see Matt. 16:23). Jesus showed resolution in His final walk to Jerusalem and the cross (see Mark 10:32). He had duties and was relentless in performing them.

Indeed, God expects us to do certain things. For example, we are to be certain that we love God supremely. We are to honor our parents and pay our tithes. Many of God’s commands outline the “ought to’s,” or duties that God has intended for us. To be valid, each duty must be part of eternal work for the Kingdom: “We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Only God knows what He wants us to do. God’s will is discernable through the patterns He establishes in our lives, the teaching of Scripture, the authorities He places over us, and the counsel of wise Christians.

To have the mind of Christ, we must know what God wants us to do, just as Jesus knew what the Father wanted Him to do: “I must work the works of Him who sent Me” (John 9:4). But we must also know what we are not required to do. I made my list of duties and arduously discovered through much prayer that many of them were not of God. Ridding myself of superfluous duties was difficult and at times even painful. This exercise required an unexpected determination, but in the process I found myself thinking in terms of eternity and my place in it.

God’s desire is to move your duties
from compulsion to eternity.

- 4. In your notebook begin to prepare a list of your duties. Title and date the list. If you have difficulty, turn to page 225 and use the guide to help you make your list more complete. Remember to budget your time.
- 5. As you evaluate your duties, ask God to help you identify which ones are based on compulsion and which ones are based on eternity. Write a C beside the ones that seem to be based on compulsion.

Debts

Now the Lord began to speak to me about the bondage of debt. Previously, I had worked myself out of monetary debt, so I felt no bondage in this area … until the Spirit introduced a new way of looking at debt. I found that I owed many people for favors. We should certainly feel gratitude when someone is gracious to us, and we should express that gratitude. We should also demonstrate grace (giving what has not been earned by the recipient) without expecting to be repaid. We are gracious because of our nature, not because of what it will bring us.

EPHESIANS 2:10

“WE ARE HIS WORKMANSHIP,
CREATED IN CHRIST JESUS
UNTO GOOD WORKS,
WHICH GOD HATH BEFORE
ORDAINED THAT WE
SHOULD WALK IN THEM.”

I made a list of these debts and discovered that God was a part of each one. I am profoundly, eternally indebted to God for all He has done for me. Because of that, I am indebted to carry out His work. "I am a debtor to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." Paul used *debt* to indicate the ministry to which he was called. In other words, my debts were transformed from secular ones (temporal ones) to the ministry God had given me (eternal ones).

God's desire is to move your debts
from the temporal to the eternal.

- ❧ 6. In your notebook begin to prepare a list of your debts—both those that are financial and those that are interpersonal. Title and date the list. If you have difficulty, turn to pages 225–26 and use the guide to help you make your list more complete.
- ❧ 7. As you evaluate your debts, ask God to help you identify which ones are temporal and which ones are eternal. Write a *T* beside the ones that seem to be temporal or secular.

Possessions

*More than we know,
most of us are bound
by the things we own.*

Now it was time for the Lord to free me from my possessions. More than we know, most of us are bound by the things we own. We protect them and take measures to safeguard their security. Few Western Christians know the kind of life Christ lived. He owned nothing except the clothes He wore.

Our house was the first thing the Lord required that I give Him. Laverne agreed that the Lord should dictate our use of our house. We were not owners but stewards of what He had provided. So we dedicated our house to God. He quickly sent a series of students, friends, street people (usually homeless), and others for us to host—obviously as a test of the commitment we had made. Moreover, I had to disciple or teach those guests as well as I could under the circumstances. Later, we were required to sell the house as a part of God's call to a new job assignment.

At the time we owned two cars. We had a young friend who was about to be married and had no car. The Lord led me to go to the filing cabinet, get the title to one of the cars, and give it (as a gift from God, not us) to the young man. The Lord seemed either to find unusual uses for our possessions or to rid us of them. Little by little, our thinking was transformed from a mindset of ownership to a mindset of stewardship.

God's desire is to move your possessions
from ownership to stewardship.

- ❧ 8. Using your notebook, begin to prepare a list of your possessions. You may want to place some in large categories, like furniture. Title and date the list. If you have difficulty, turn to page 226 and use the guide to help you make your list more complete.
- ❧ 9. As you evaluate your possessions, ask God to help you identify which ones you relate to as an owner and which ones you relate to as a steward.

In all these transformations, my family and I were being freed from—

- the world as we had known it;
- inhibitions;
- the necessity to look a certain way at our friends and the world;
- timeworn but false conceptions of happiness and well-being;
- the restraints of secret bonds we had not realized were there.

We were being freed to—

- let God have first place;
- minister to His body;
- move into new and deeper lessons on Christlikeness.

Sin shall not be your master in any area (see Rom. 6:14). Its dominion in your life is to be zero.

10. Close today's lesson by praying about the areas God seems to emphasize that need changing first or most. Give Him permission to do whatever is necessary to help renew your mind in these areas.

DAY 4 FEARS AND WEAKNESSES

1. Begin today's lesson by reading the Bible verses and the name of Christ for today. Work on your memory verse. Then use the suggested prayer on the following page to begin your study.

Damaging Areas of Bondage

All the areas of bondage we have examined so far are neutral. They can be good or bad. Even Jesus, in all His magnificent freedom, had wants, habits, loyalties, and relationships, but His were all good. Mine were not, at least not all of them. The Lord patiently and gently took me from area to area and transformed my mind and my thinking. This process required more than a year of consistent work by the Spirit to transform my psyche and outlook about the items in these first nine lists. That year was a time of continual examination, probing, and reshaping of my outlook, even of my philosophy of life.

2. How much time do you think you should give the Spirit to do His renewing work in your mind? Check your response.

Probably less than a year. I'm a fast learner.
 Hopefully about a year.
 Several years. I'm awfully messed up.
 As long as God needs, maybe a lifetime.



Today's Bible Meditations
 "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

"He said unto me, 'My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness.' Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me"
 (2 Cor. 12:9).

Name of Christ for Today
 Spiritual Rock
 (1 Cor. 10:4)

Renewing my mind during that year was only a beginning that continues even now. Periodically, I remake the lists. Each time I discover that the Lord is taking me deeper into His freedom. I would even say He is taking me into His holiness. The Lord's

**Prayer to Begin
the Lesson***Jesus, I am often afraid.*

The world is a scary, unpredictable place for me and my family. I need to know the security You have for me. Help me know You as my Spiritual Rock—the strong foundation that will never fail me. Amen.

Fears indicate a lack of trust in God's provision and protection.

freedom is, after all, freedom from sin. I hope you will not put God under a time limit for renewing your mind. Give Him all the time He needs. Renewing your mind will be a lifelong process.

By now the Lord had prepared me for a step I could not have taken the year before. He had taken me through the neutral areas of bondage to prepare me for three areas that were not neutral but damaging. The probing was going deeper and requiring more.

Fears

The first of these damaging areas was my fears. I wrote down all the fears I could think of. Immediately I saw that most of them grew from my desire to protect myself. Even though I had given my debts and possessions to the Lord, some of my fears had to do with money or the lack of it. I had fears about my family and job security. In all of them I discovered the element of self-protectiveness. This revealed a lack of trust in God, so I prayed about the depth of my faith. To have the mind of Christ is to trust in the Father's provision. Only He can protect us. Only He can protect our families.

 **3. When you have fears and are self-protective, what does that reveal about your belief in God? _____**

Yes, fears indicate a lack of trust in God's provision and protection. They may also indicate a misunderstanding of God's purposes, which are far beyond our understanding. For instance, Jesus allowed Lazarus to die from his sickness rather than heal him. But Jesus had a greater purpose in mind that would bring glory to God when He raised Lazarus from the dead. (See John 11:1-45.)

Paul seemed to demonstrate the mind of Christ in his Letter to the Philippians. He was in prison, and some were seeking his death.

According to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Phil. 1:20-21, NASB).

Paul was ready for life or death. Whatever God permitted was OK. Paul faced both life and death without fear because he had trust and confidence in God. That is why Paul could write to Timothy and say, "God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7).

After I had written down all the fears I could think of, I gave them to the Lord and asked Him to transform my mind in whatever direction He wished. Christ began to develop in me a unique sense of security. The only security I am now allowed to have is in Christ. In God's process I realized that I was manipulative in ways I had not suspected. Some of my behavior was false bravery that covered a fear of being perceived as simple or naive. Sometimes my innocent remarks were really self-protective or self-secur ing. Slowly the Lord became the only security on which I could count. In spite of my fears, I was being changed from one who is self-protective to one who is secure in Christ.

God's desire is to change you from being one who is self-protective to one who finds his only security in Christ.

4. In your notebook begin to prepare a list of your fears. Title and date the list. If you have difficulty, turn to page 226 and use the guide to help you make your list more complete. Today list two or three fears to get started.

5. As you begin to evaluate your fears, ask God to reveal ways you seek security through being self-protective. Ask Him to begin moving you toward finding your only security in Christ.

Weaknesses

Weaknesses were the next area of damaging bondage. We often excuse our weaknesses by saying we were born that way. For example, one of my weaknesses was that I could not speak effectively in public. The guidance God was giving me at that time demanded that I do just that. I felt like Moses, who used that excuse. I am also basically a shy person, so I had developed ways to cover my shyness. I had found ways to make up for other weaknesses too. I did not want them to be known publicly.

Three times Paul asked the Lord to remove his “thorn in the flesh,” or a weakness. God’s response was “My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). Paul showed his responsiveness to the Lord when he said, “Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong” (2 Cor. 12:9-10).

I had never talked to the Lord about my weaknesses. I made my list. Then I carefully prayed about it and asked the Lord to strengthen me where necessary. I asked Him to use my weak points for His glory. In this way my weaknesses were transformed from being tools of Satan to being tools of God.

God’s desire is to move your weaknesses from being tools of Satan to being tools of God.

My weaknesses were transformed from being tools of Satan to being tools of God.

6. Using your notebook, begin to prepare a list of your weaknesses. Title and date the list. If you have difficulty, turn to page 226 and use the guide to help you make your list more complete. Today list several of your weaknesses to get started.

7. As you begin to evaluate your weaknesses, ask God to help you identify the ones being used against you as tools of Satan. Write an *S* beside the ones that seem to be tools of Satan. Ask God to transform these weaknesses into tools that bring Him glory.



DAY 5

HURTS OR GRUDGES

Today's Bible Meditation

"If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:3-4).

Name of Christ for Today

Physician (Luke 4:23)

Prayer to Begin the Lesson

Jesus, I have many hurts. Some of them go way back in time. I want to be healed of those hurts. I want to be set free from the damaging bondage to the past that they bring. As the Great Physician, please perform Your healing work in my life.

Amen.

1. Begin today's lesson by reading the Bible verses and the name of Christ for today. Work on your memory verse. Then use the suggested prayer in the margin on the left to begin your study.

The Holy Spirit had one area of bondage yet to deal with: my hurts, or grudges. I am grateful the Spirit saved this area for last. Hurts are perhaps the most difficult of all to deal with. As with all the other areas of bondage, I made my list of hurts or grudges. My list was long.

In 1959 while I was working on my PhD, I had a life-changing renewal experience in the Lord. Prior to the renewal I had been very successful in the area of musicology. I had achieved a reputation for knowledge and sophistication in that field. Then I found myself with a new set of values. The reputation I had sought so eagerly was now hollow. From being a witness for the world and its values, I was becoming a witness for Christ. That was not fashionable on the campus of North Texas State University in 1959. Fellow students who once looked up to me now looked down on me.

One of the men who recognized this new direction in my life was also a Christian. After we finished our doctoral work, I occasionally saw him at professional meetings. He seemed to work into the conversation that I was a religious fanatic. I bottled it up and resented him. Another man lied in order to worm his way into a position I was occupying. Others took advantage of me. I was dismayed at the depth of the resentments that were bottled up within me.

By 1973 the Lord had been preparing me for over a year to deal with these grudges. I finished the list and prayed over each hurt. I asked the Lord to forgive me for the resentment I felt and to forgive others for the wrongs they had done in selfishness.

2. In your notebook begin to prepare a list of your hurts, resentments, or grudges. Title and date the list. If you have difficulty, turn to page 226 and use the guide to help you make your list more complete.

God's desire is to move your hurts from producing resentment to producing love.

Later that morning I was praying as I walked to the school where I taught. I asked the Lord, "How well do I really understand forgiveness?" Immediately I remembered Matthew 5:43-44: "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy.' But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you" (NASB).

What could I legitimately pray for the fellow who made fun of my relationship with Christ? I told the Lord, "I must ask for something he would understand, and the only thing he seems to understand is money!" I groped for an understanding of the Christlike thing to ask for him. Repeatedly, money was brought back to my mind.

Then it occurred to me: I have various degrees, certificates, and awards I could hang on the wall if I wanted to (I don't). But I had no certificates, no outer or visible proof of the changes in my mind and outlook that had taken place the previous year. I had no tangible evidence that the changes were genuine and were of God. I wholeheartedly wanted to pray spiritually and intelligently (see 1 Cor. 14:15), but I needed a sign from God that I was on the right track.

So I prayed, "Lord, speak to Bill about Yourself through money. I ask that You cause an unexpected windfall so miraculous that he will know You are working in his life and care for him. Then, Lord, make him call me about what happened. If he calls me, I won't need a certificate! I will know You are signaling me and really want me free from these resentments and from all the other areas of bondage!"

Almost immediately I received a call from Bill! He said, "T. W., you will not believe what has happened." And then he told me about an unexpected windfall so miraculous that he knew God had done it. The moment was high joy for him and for me too. I told him, "Bill, you can't imagine how much this means to me." At first he didn't believe me. My sincerity, however, finally came through. We became good friends. As we talked, I realized God had worked through my resentment and the renewing of my mind to perform a miracle in Bill's life. What had been my resentment was changed into love!

What had been my resentment was changed into love!

3. As you evaluate your hurts, ask God to help you identify which ones you respond to with resentment and which ones you respond to with love.

Write an *R* beside the ones over which you still carry a grudge, resentment, or bitterness.

4. As you conclude this lesson, ask God—

- to forgive you for any resentment or bitterness in your life;
- to enable you to forgive those who have hurt you;
- to forgive those who have hurt you;
- to begin changing your resentment to love.