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A Road to Recovery

Care, Community and Support

The purpose of this information is to share what a road to recovery can look like. You will get first-hand accounts from other survivors and how they walked the path to recovery. Join us in not being silent any longer and becoming fully known, accepted and loved. Freedom from the Chains of Silence can be found if you are willing to do the work.

Founder Shawn Buck's Story To Recovery

I grew up in a broken home in a small ranching town in Texas. My mother told me to never come back at the age of 13. My father has been married 9 times to 6 wives. I want you to know that my parents did love me the best way they could, and I don't hold them at fault for their failures or mistakes in how they tried to raise me. I joined the military at age 18 so that I would have the ability to get away and have my college paid for along with traveling the world and serving my country. While I was on leave back home after my first deployment at the age 19, I was woken up in the middle of the night being sexually assaulted. It was the most horrifying thing of my life. I remember getting out of that house asap and running and running as far away as I could. I was barefoot in gym shorts and somehow had my cell phone with me. I sat down on the curb crying, scared and afraid. I called a girl I knew back at my military base. It was 3am or so and she answered. I was a complete mess and somehow, she was able help me gain my composure. I went back to the house after to try and get my things when the wife of the man you assaulted me asked not to go to the police for their kids' sake. I felt like even one of the closest people in my life didn't care about me at this point. I ended up leaving that night back to my permanent duty station. I didn't tell anyone else except the pastor of the church that my assaulter was volunteering at. The church from my perspective tried to handle it the best way

they could from inside the confinement of the church. It wasn't until another kid had it happen to them by the same assaulter that drastic measures were taken. I know I tried to call out for help but was so ashamed and afraid of what the rest of my family, friends and military brothers would think of me if I told anyone else.

I've had many ups and downs over the past 14 years, I was so angry, ashamed, scared to death and afraid of the judgement of what others may think of me. The night terrors kept me up for years being afraid to even go to sleep. I asked God why me, who can I trust and where do I turn for help. I ran, hid and tried to drink the pain away for so long. I only ended up hurting so many people by my actions, pushed everyone away and I wouldn't let anyone get close enough to hurt me again. I thought if I chased after women, I would be a man again, if I was successful enough it wouldn't matter anymore or if I drank enough alcohol, I would be able to forget what happened. After 6 years of trying all these methods and it not working, I hit rock bottom. Thanks to a community of men that God put in my life I finally broken down and told someone else for the first time. I finally felt like I was fully known and accepted by a small group of men that didn't judge me or think less of me. I then started biblical based counseling to start processing for the first time everything that happened and the years of self-destruction I caused to myself after the assault. After a few more years of processing and what I didn't know at the time was the Family of God was coming around me as Christ intended it to be. I didn't want anything to do with the church or region whatsoever. Finally, God revealed to me that the love, care and support I wanted my family of origin to give me would never happen and that was ok. It was by His clear design that we need a heavenly father that provides unconditional love, care, support and grace. We are all broken and suffer from wounds through what life as given us. Its only by the Grace, Freedom, Love and Care that Christ and the family of GOD provides through the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we are set free from the sins against us and the sins we have committed against ourselves and others.

The rage, fear, distrust, hurt, pain and nightmares are just a few things sexual violence survivors like me go through after sexual violence has been committed against us. I know now it wasn't my fault and I want others to know it's not their fault and you don't feel like you are alone in this world. I forgave my assaulter and family member that asked me not to go to the police

that horrific night. That doesn't mean I have forgotten what happened even when I see them at family events each year. My entire family finally knows what happened now and this was not to bring judgement to them but to be able to be fully known, loved and accepted as God created me to be. Forgiveness is much more for yourself than it is for the people that have wronged you or hurt you. If we just try to grasp the understanding of the Grace that God the father has given to us through the crucifixion and resurrection of His son Jesus Christ we can begin to realize that sin is sin and that no sin is greater than the other. We have been forgiven so we should forgive those that have sinned against us and others. Again, I say that does not mean we forgot or condone the sin that has been done. We will still suffer the consequences of our actions on this earth. This doesn't not give us or other a free pass to do whatever we or they want.

I'm Shawn Buck and through our organization Chains of Silence you do not have to feel like you are alone. Let us help you start the healing process and know that you are fully loved and accepted. We will stand beside you and our organization is here to help you start the process of connecting, recovering and getting the help you deserve. Join our community as we connect and help the survivors of sexual violence. Christ showed me a life worth living. Not a church, denominations, or a pastor and we want to help those who are hurting, don't know what to do or where to turn. Come as you are and let's be fully known, accepted and loved together.

Understanding Sexual Violence

- Rape or attempted rape
- Fondling or unwanted sexual touching
- Penetration of the victim's body, also known as rape
- Using other items to touch or penetrate the victim without consent
- Forcing a child or adult to watch or act out sexual actions
- Unwanted sexual advances or touching without consent
- Using drugs to alter one's mind or body to perform sexual acts without consent
- Forcing a victim to perform sexual acts, such as oral sex or penetrating the perpetrator's body

How do some male survivors react to sexual assault?

Men have many of the same reactions to sexual assault that people of other gender identities do. For all gender identities survivors, anger, anxiety, fear, confusion, self-blame, shame, depression, and even suicidal thoughts are all common reactions for someone who has

experienced a sexual assault. Men, however, are more likely than women to initially respond with anger, or to try to minimize the importance or severity of the assault. Male survivors are also more likely to use or abuse alcohol or other drugs as a means to try and cope with the experience and its after affects.

Male physiological reactions during a sexual assault may also make it more difficult for a male survivor to recognize that he was sexually assaulted. Some men may have an erection or may ejaculate during a sexual assault and may later feel confused that perhaps this means that they enjoyed the experience, or that others will not believe that they were sexually assaulted. In reality, erections and ejaculations may be purely physiological responses, sometimes caused by intense fear or pain. In fact, some perpetrators will deliberately manipulate their victim to orgasm, out of a desire to completely control their victims. The perpetrator can continue this manipulation after the assault to coerce the survivor away from reporting or seeking help. A physical reaction of an erection or ejaculation during a sexual assault in no way indicates that the man enjoyed the experience or that he did something to cause it or permit it. [1]

What ideas in our society prevent male survivors from speaking out about sexual assault? Because of how men are socialized and expected to behave in our society, a male survivor of a sexual assault may feel as if he is not “a real man.”

Because men in our society are expected to always be ready for sex and to be the aggressors in sexual relationships, it may be difficult for a man to tell people that he has been sexually assaulted, especially if the perpetrator was a woman. Additionally, either the survivor himself or those around him may feel that a “real man” would have been able to protect himself. Our society expects men to be in control, and therefore the survivor and others may have difficulty accepting the image of a man who has been victimized. In the case that the perpetrator is a woman, the survivor may be mocked or feel ashamed that a woman overpowered him. However, it is common for both men and women to “freeze” during a sexual assault, making him or her incapable of physically resisting the perpetrator. Sexual assault is, therefore, no sign of physical weakness in the survivor. Also, there are some beliefs that male survivors, especially if abused as a child, will go on to become offenders themselves. While research demonstrates that the vast majority of men who experience sexual abuse as children do not

perpetrate as adults, this stigma may negatively impact a male survivor's social experiences, and it may also lead male survivors to avoid disclosure (Widom, NIJ, 1995) [1]

Homophobia causes men who have experienced a male-on-male rape to fear telling their stories.

If the perpetrator is a man, the survivor may question his own sexuality, especially if he experienced an erection or ejaculation during the assault. If the survivor identifies as gay, bi, or queer, and in the process of coming out, he may question how others perceive his sexual orientation. He may also fear that he will have to disclose his sexual orientation if he tells others about the assault. Homophobia and gay stereotypes may affect a man's decision to disclose. Stereotypes on the promiscuity of gay men will often lead to victim blaming from a survivor's support system - either insisting the encounter was consensual or that the incident occurred merely because of their assumed promiscuity. This is simply not true - sexual assault happens due to the perpetrator exerting power and control - and homophobia is a tool that a perpetrator can use and perpetuate in order to maintain this power. Lastly, it should be noted that though most of the perpetrators of sexual assault against men are also men, between 96-98% of sexual assaults against all people are heterosexual men, thus conflating gay, bisexual, or queer men with sexual assault is false. [1]

By denying that males can be sexually assaulted, male survivors are made to feel that they are alone or abnormal.

Due to the disproportionate number of women who are survivors of sexual assault, it is often deemed solely a "women's issue." This may be because stereotypes and patriarchy cause most people to be more comfortable with the image of a woman being deprived of her power in a sexual assault than a man. Men and people of all genders also experience this form of violence. Many hospitals are not familiar with or prepared to look for signs of male sexual assault, and even some police departments still do not collect statistics on its frequency. National organizations like 1 in 6 (1in6.org) provide important resources for male survivors to normalize their response to trauma, reduce isolation and seek support. [1]

As a society, we must recognize the barriers that men face when choosing whether to speak out about a sexual assault. When these men do choose to come forward, it is important that male survivors, like all survivors, be believed and supported by those around them, and allowed to make their own decisions about what courses of action to take. [1]

Reluctance in Reporting Assaults

So about 87 percent of men attacked are not reporting it and “these are real men in real pain,” Hopper said. The pain is compounded by shame. Being sexually assaulted brings additional feelings of shame to a man because it works against the ideal of what it means to be a man, he said. And it brings fear. “There’s fear of those memories, there’s fear of being violated, there’s fear that someone might know what happened to them,” Hopper said. Men who have been sexually assaulted believe they are not worthy of respect, Strand said. The men who are assaulted are overwhelmingly heterosexual and so are their assailants, the officials said. “Most people who sexually assault adult men are heterosexuals,” Hopper said. “And those same heterosexual men who are assaulting men are often the same men assaulting women.” [2]

Fear of Being Ostracized

Many males won’t get help, he said, because they feel they won’t be believed, understood or supported. “Part of that is they know most people don’t expect men to be assaulted, that this can’t really happen to ‘a real man,’” Hopper said. They are also afraid of their friends or teammates finding out what happened to them, he said. They believe they will be looked at as less than a man, that they will be ostracized and shunned. And, many victims see the assault as the death-knell to their careers. [2]

Potential Effects of Sexual Violence

- Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and depression.
- Alcoholism and drug abuse.
- Suicidal thoughts and suicide attempts.
- Problems in intimate relationships.
- Underachievement at school and at work.
- Lashing out or withdrawing from family or friends.

Emotional Effects

Aside from physical traumas, rape and other sexual assault often result in long-term emotional effects, particularly in child victims. These can include denial, learned helplessness, genophobia, anger, self-blame, anxiety, shame, nightmares, fear, depression, flashbacks, guilt, rationalization, mood swings, numbness, promiscuity, loneliness, social anxiety, difficulty trusting oneself or other difficulty concentrating. Being the victim of sexual assault may lead to the development of posttraumatic, addiction, major depressive disorder or other psychopathologies. Family and friend experience emotional scarring including a strong desire for revenge, a desire to “fix” the problem and/or move on, and a rationalization that “wasn’t that bad”. [3]

Physical Effects

While sexual assault, including rape, can result in physical trauma, many people who experience sexual assault will not suffer any physical injury. Rape myths suggest that the stereotypical victim of sexual violence is a bruised and battered young woman. The central issue in many cases of rape or other sexual assault is whether or not both parties consented to the sexual activity or whether or not both parties had the capacity to do so. Thus, physical force resulting in visible physical injury is not always seen. This stereotype can be damaging because people who have experienced sexual assault but have no physical trauma may be less inclined to report to the authorities or to seek health care. However, women who experienced rape or physical violence by a partner were more likely than people who had not experienced this violence to report frequent headaches, chronic pain, difficulty sleeping, activity limitation, poor physical health, and poor mental health. [4] [5] [6]

Physical Indicators

Unexplained genital injury, Recurrent vulvovaginitis, Vaginal or penile discharge, Bedwetting and fecal soiling beyond the usual age, Anal complaints (e.g. fissures, pain, bleeding), Pain on urination, Urinary tract infection, STI, Pregnancy, Presence of sperm. [7]

Behavioral Indicators

Regression in behavior, school performance or attaining developmental milestones, Acute traumatic response such as clingy behavior and irritability in young children, Sleep

disturbances, eating disorders, Problems at school, Social problems, Depression, Poor self-esteem, Inappropriate sexualized behaviors, playing with themselves in public. [7]

Quotes from Survivors

“I stayed silent because I thought no one would believe me.” Peter

“I stayed silent because I was afraid of opening up myself to the painful process of healing. By opening up, I learned that I was stronger than this and that it didn't have to define me.”

Anonymous

“I stayed silent because my abuser used our friendship to control me and make me think what was happening was normal.” Richard

“I found the courage to speak up when I learned that I was not alone, and I didn't have to be alone.” Jeremy

“I stayed silent because I was asked not to go to the police for the kids that would have been affected by not having their father if I told anyone.: Shawn

A Road to Recovery

In the next few weeks, we are going to be looking at what has been done to you, what you have done to yourself and others. We will look at what brokenness and peace are and the difference between family of origin and family of God is. The church or a religious group may have been the ones that hurt you or covered up the actions against you and we do not condone this. During the next few weeks, you have the opportunity to peel back the layers of yourself to gain a better understanding of what freedom from the brokenness and sin that was done to you. Try to keep an open mind as you go through the process of self-reflection and growth.

Week One

COS is here with you, and you are not alone. The more we open up and talk about what happened and process the effects of the crime, trauma and sin that was committed against us the easier it becomes to find freedom. We know it can be difficult to open up and share your story but if you can trust us and have enough hope you can find healing and freedom from the chains of silence, shame and fear of the past.

1. What crime, trauma and sin were done to you and/or against you?
 - a. Write down your story of what happened to you. Please try to describe the pain, fear, and shame you have experience.

b. Have you ever told anyone else? Family, Friends, Pastor, Counselor? How did that go and how did they respond?

c. Make an inventory of all the major wrong doings and/or sins that have been done to yourself. (Bullet format is fine for now).

Week Two

What have you done to or against yourself? How have you dealt with what happened that has caused you to hurt yourself physically, mentally and/or your emotionally health?

2. What are the patterns in your life in dealing with everything because of the crime, trauma and sin that was done to you?

2. Please try to describe in detail the effects of the traumatic event(s) have had on you and what are the things that you have done to cope with it?

Week Three

Please try to describe in detail the things you have done that may have hurt, offend, or have become physical to hurt other people because of the crime, trauma and sin that was done to you.

1. Have you ever thought about hurting others or yourself since that traumatic experience?
Please describe:

2. How has pornography affected your life?

3. How has this crime, trauma and sin affected your sexuality?

Week Four

Let's seek to understand what brokenness and sin is. COS looks to what the bible not a church or denomination to tell us what brokenness and sin is. This is the basis of what we are to understand what God the Father says about sin and truth. Not what a church or denomination may have said or done.

Definition of Brokenness: a state of strong emotional pain that stops someone from living a normal or healthy life: I acknowledged my brokenness and my need for healing. [12]

Definition of Sin: an offense against religious or moral law. : an action that is or is felt to be highly reprehensible. [12]

Definition of Peace: Freedom from disturbance; tranquility. Peace is **a stress-free state of security and calmness that comes when there's no fighting or war, everything coexisting in perfect harmony and freedom.** [12]

1. Read the following scriptures below and describe what this means to you?
 - a. *"Now the serpent was more crafty than any other beast of the field that the LORD God had made. He said to the woman, "Did God actually say, 'You' shall not eat of any tree in the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden, but God said, 'You shall not eat of the fruit of the tree that is in the midst of the garden, neither shall you touch it, lest you die.'" But the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate, and she also gave some to her husband who was with her, and he ate. Then the eyes of both were opened, and they knew that they were naked. And they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves loincloths. And they heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and the man and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God among the trees of the garden. But the LORD God called to the man and said to him, "Where are you?" And he said,*

“I heard the sound of you in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked, and I hid myself.” He said, “Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten of the tree of which I commanded you not to eat?” The man said, “The woman whom you gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate.” Then the LORD God said to the woman, “What is this that you have done?” The woman said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.” Genesis 3:1-13

2. Read the following below:

- a. *“Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men because all sinned.” Romans 5:12*

3. Read the following below:

- a. *“But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death.” James 1:14-15*

3. Read the following below:

- a. *“For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become accountable for all of it.” James 2:10*

4. Read the following below:

- i. *“So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.” James 4:17*

5. Read the following below:

- a. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” Romans 3:23*

6. Read the following below:

- a. *“Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” Galatians 5:19-21*

7. Read the following below:

- a. *“But as for the cowardly, the faithless, the detestable, as for murderers, the sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars, their portion will be in the lake that burns with fire and sulfur, which is the second death.” Revelations 21:8*

8. Read the following below:

- a. *“Whoever conceals his transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes them will obtain mercy.” Proverbs 28:13*

9. Read the following below:

- a. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9*

Week Five

What is Forgiveness? Can you come to believe that a greater power can help you overcome what you've been through? Let's understand the difference between the family of origin and the family of God is to start.

What Is Forgiveness? Psychologists generally define forgiveness as **a conscious, deliberate decision to release feelings of resentment or vengeance toward a person or group who has harmed you, regardless of whether they actually deserve your forgiveness.** [13]

Family of Origin & Generational Sin:

Refers to the significant caretakers and siblings that a person grows up with, or the first social group a person belongs to, which is often a person's biological family or an adoptive family.

1. The Lord created families as a beautiful extension of His image. Sadly, in our fallen world we are born in a natural sinful state and can only be redeemed by our Creator. Our natural state is selfish at best and pathological at its worst. Dysfunction comes naturally to us. That is why salvation through Jesus is the key to breaking generational sin. Jesus offers us forgiveness, cleansing of sin, and real, unconditional love (1 John 1:9). Jesus gives His followers the power to love like He does, a love that is filled with grace and compassion. He is our example for how to love rather than loving ourselves or pleasures (John 13:34).

Jeremiah 32:18 says that the consequences of sin from one generation are visited on the next generations. Sin's destructive consequences hurt the person committing the sin as well as those around him. Each generation has the choice to let their natural inclination repeat the cycle or to find a better way. People often want to break negative cycles but do not know how because the way of thinking they were raised with has confused them. In addition, breaking the cycle can divide families when a person decides to follow Jesus instead of family traditions (see Luke 12:51–53). [10]

- a. What this means to you:

Family of God:

2. The Bible teaches that Jesus Christ and the Father are One (John 1:1-4), and that He is also the only begotten Son of God (Hebrews 1:1-4). This familial term indicates God regards Jesus as a family member. Born-again believers are told that we, too, are members of this family (Romans 9:8; 1 John 3:1-2). How do we become a part of this family of God? When we hear the gospel, confess our sins, and place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, we are at that moment born into God's kingdom as His children and become heirs with Him for eternity (Romans 8:14-17).

While Jesus Christ is referred to as the only begotten Son of God, believers are referred to as children born into God's family who need to grow and mature in our faith (Ephesians 4:11-16), and as sons and heirs adopted into His family (Galatians 4:4-7). God's infinite grace and mercy are revealed in Ephesians 1:5-6, which says He redeems sinners, whom He has "adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will—to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves."

As children of God, what do we inherit? Nothing less than the kingdom of God (Matthew 25:34; 1 Thessalonians 2:12; Hebrews 12:28)! Ephesians 1:3 tells us that believers are blessed with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. These spiritual blessings are infinite, eternal, and reside in Christ, and by God's grace we are given these blessings as His children. As earthly children we eventually inherit what our parents leave behind for us after their death. But in God's case believers are already reaping the rewards of our inheritance by having peace with Him through the sacrifice of His Son on the cross. Other rewards of our inheritance include the gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit at the moment we believe in Christ (Ephesians 1:13-14), which empowers us to live for Him in the present, and the knowledge that our salvation is secure for eternity (Hebrews 7:24-25).

Being a part of the family of God is the greatest blessing bestowed upon believers and one that should drive us to our knees in humble adoration. We can never do anything to deserve it for it is His gift of love, mercy, and grace to us, yet, we are called to become sons and daughters of the Living God (Romans 9:25-26). May we all respond in faith to His invitation! [9]

The new creation is described in 2 Corinthians 5:17: “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!” The word “therefore” refers us back to verses 14-16 where Paul tells us that all believers have died with Christ and no longer live for themselves. Our lives are no longer worldly; they are now spiritual. Our “death” is that of the old sin nature which was nailed to the cross with Christ. It was buried with Him, and just as He was raised up by the Father, so are we raised up to “walk in newness of life” (Romans 6:4). That new person that was raised up is what Paul refers to in 2 Corinthians 5:17 as the “new creation.” [8]

4. But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God. John 1:12-13.
5. He predestined us for adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, according to the purpose of his will, Ephesians 1:5.
6. “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. John 3:16.
7. Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. John 14:6.

Week Six

Make an inventory of the items that you've done wrong or sinned against yourself, other people and God.

1. List the items you have to hurt yourself and/or sinned against yourself

2. List the items and people, you have hurt, wronged or sin against.

3. List the items you have sinned against God:

4. What are your expectations about asking for forgiveness for the sins you have committed against yourself, other people, and God?

Week Seven

How to confess your sins to God and ask Him for forgiveness.

1. Read the following below and search your heart about what you may need to ask for forgiveness for.
 - a. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9
 - b. As for me, I said, "O LORD, be gracious to me; heal me, for I have sinned against you!" Psalm 41:4
 - c. Repent, therefore, of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that, if possible, the intent of your heart may be forgiven. Acts 8:22
 - d. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you. Ephesians 4:32
 - e. Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. Colossians 3:13
2. How do you feel after asking for forgiveness? Do you think you can forgive yourself?

Week Eight

How to seek forgiveness from the ones you have wronged and sinned against

1. Before asking for forgiveness tell the person what you want to ask forgiveness for
2. Then ask them how that makes them feel or felt by your actions or words
 - a. Don't speak and do NOT try to justify your actions and understand that their feelings matter as do yours.
 - b. Listen to their heart about the feelings they felt
 - c. Once they have fully expressed their feelings and you seek further understanding if needed of how you've hurt them and/or made them feel. Then sincerely ask for forgiveness for how you have hurt them or made them feel.
 - i. It is ok if they are not able to forgive you currently and if they try to attach you with words or actions then keep your composure and thank them for their time. Then leave knowing you have done what God asks of you.
 - ii. Being forgiven or forgiving others is not condoning previous behaviors, actions or thoughts.
 - d. Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.
James 5:16

Week Nine

Seek prayer and understanding from God that has forgiven you for all your sins. Seek understanding that God has a greater purpose for your life.

1. What are your spiritual gifts?
 - a. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills. 1 Corinthians 12:7-11
 - b. There are many spiritual gifts test online try one or two of them out and record your results.

Week Ten

Understand that forgiveness does not mean reconciliation

2. The Bible says that Christ reconciled us to God (Romans 5:10; 2 Corinthians 5:18; Colossians 1:20-21). The fact that we needed reconciliation means that our relationship with God was broken. Since God is holy, we were the ones to blame. Our sin alienated us from Him. Romans 5:10 says that we were enemies of God: “For if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!” When Christ died on the cross, He satisfied God’s judgment and made it possible for God’s enemies, us, to find peace with Him. Our “reconciliation” to God, then, involves the exercise of His grace and the forgiveness of our sin. The result of Jesus’ sacrifice is that our relationship has changed from enmity to friendship. “I no longer call you servants ... Instead, I have called you friends” (John 15:15). Christian reconciliation is a glorious truth! We were God’s enemies but are now His friends. We were in a state of condemnation because of our sins, but we are now forgiven. We were at war with God, but now have the peace that transcends all understanding (Philippians 4:7). [11]
 - a. Reconciliation is a process, and it takes time to build trust back. This doesn’t happen overnight and is a process. It is ok and encouraged to set health boundaries that can be set in place to help you move forward in life.
 - i. Check out the book *Boundaries* by Henry Cloud and John Townsend

Week Twelve

Boundaries show where one thing ends, and another begins. Boundaries in a relationship are kind of like this; they help each person figure out where one person ends and the other begins. In short, boundaries help you define what you are comfortable with and how you would like to be treated by others. [14]

7 Types of Boundaries You May Need [16]

- What boundaries do you need? ...
- 1) Physical Boundaries. ...
- 2) Sexual Boundaries. ...
- 3) Emotional or Mental Boundaries. ...
- 4) Spiritual or Religious Boundaries. ...
- 5) Financial and Material Boundaries. ...
- 6) Time Boundaries. ...
- 7) Non-Negotiable Boundaries.

Some great starting points are by learning to communicate during a disagreement with maturity and without raising voices. Letting go of codependency and learning to find or have your own identity. Asking for personal space and defining what that is for you. Voicing your concerns rather than holding onto resentment. [15]

What are some Boundaries you would like to put in place for your life moving forward?

- a) List out some examples you would like to start working on?

Recommend Books

- Rid of My Disgrace by Justin S. Holcomb & Lindsey A. Holcomb
- The Wounded Heart: Hope for Adult Victims of Childhood Sexual Abuse by Dan Allende
- Healing the Wounded Heart: The Heartache of Sexual Abuse and the Hope of Transformation by Dan B. Allender
- Caught in the Act of Grace: A Sexual Abuse Recovery Bible Study for Women by Darla Weaver
- Sexual Abuse: Beauty for Ashes by Robert W. Kellerman
- Boundaries by John Townsend and Henry Cloud
- Forgiving What You Can't Forget by Lysa TerKeurst & Thomas Nelson

Are You Open To What God Has For YOU?

Moving forward continue to have a daily relationship with God the father by reading His word, finding a local biblical community and support group to be a part of, become part of the family of God through biblical community and serving others as Christ did. We can find freedom in serving and helping others.

Read the following below and look inside your heart to understand what this means to you:

- a. *“We are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be delivered over to the chief priests and the teachers of the law. They will condemn him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles to be mocked and flogged and crucified. On the third day he will be raised to life!” Matthew 20:18-19*
- b. *“When they came to the place called The Skull, they crucified Him there, along with the criminals, one on His right and the other on His left. Then Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” Luke 23:33-34*
- c. *“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” 1 Corinthians 15:3-4*
- d. *“Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.” John 14:6*
- e. *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him” John 3:16-17*
- f. *“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” 1 John 1:9*

If you have not already given you life over to Christ, the Lord Jesus. We would like to help you with your next step. Please repeat this prayer. Lord Jesus Christ I am a sinner and fallen short of the glory of God. Please forgive me for my all my sins and come into my heart. I believe that God the Father sent you to die for my sins and that you were raised from the dead three days after beating death and sin. You are the ultimate sacrifice for all mankind.

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