A Practical Study of 2 CORINTHIANS:

Turning Tough Times into Triumph

"Using Adversity to Gain an Advantage"

<u>Study Number Twelve</u> – 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1

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Let's start with a couple of quotes on child relationships and discipline with children from *How to Really Love Your Child* by Dr. Ross Campbell:

(<u>How to Really Love Your Child</u> by Dr. Ross Campbell)

The foundation of a solid relationship with our child is unconditional love. Only that type of love relationship can assure a child's growth to his full and total potential. Only this foundation of unconditional love can assure prevention of problems such as feelings of resentment, being unloved, guilt, fear, insecurity.
p. 29

Another critical concept for parents to understand is that each child has an emotional tank. This tank is figurative, of course, but very real. Each child has certain emotional needs, and whether these emotional needs are met (through love, understanding, discipline, etc.) determines many things. First of all, how a child feels: whether he is content, angry,

depressed, or joyful. Secondly, it affects his behavior: whether he is obedient, disobedient, whiny, perky, playful, or withdrawn. Naturally, the fuller the tank, the more positive the feelings and the better the behavior.

At this point let me make one of the most important statements in this book. Only if the emotional tank is full, can a child be expected to be at his best or to do his best.
pp. 32-33

Betty Chase wrote a book called *Discipline Them, Love Them* and she says this:

(Discipline Them, Love Them by Betty N. Chase)

Loving your child involves [four things]:

1. BE LOYAL TO YOUR CHILD NO MATTER WHAT THE COST.

2. ALWAYS BELIEVE IN YOUR CHILD.

3. ALWAYS EXPECT THE BEST OF YOUR CHILD.

4. ALWAYS PERSEVERE NO MATTER HOW MUCH YOUR LOVE IS TESTED.
p. 96

And then H. Norman Wright paraphrased 1 Corinthians 13 to fit the family:

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(Help, I'm Having a Baby by H. Norman Wright and Marvin Inmon)

Because God Loves Me
A Paraphrase of 1 Corinthians 13

Because God loves me He is slow to lose patience with me.
Because God loves me He takes the circumstances of my life and uses them in a constructive way for my growth.
Because God loves me He does not treat me as an object to be possessed and manipulated.
Because God loves me He has no need to impress me with how great and powerful He is because He is God nor does He belittle me as His child in order to show me how important He is.
Because God loves me He is for me. He wants to see me mature and develop in His love.
Because God loves me He does not send down His wrath on every little mistake I make—of which there are many.
Because God loves me He does not keep score of all my sins and then beat me over the head with them whenever He gets the chance.
Because God loves me He is deeply grieved when I do not walk in the ways that please Him because He sees this as evidence that I don't trust Him and love Him as I should.
Because God loves me He rejoices when I experience His power and strength and stand up under the pressures of life for His Name's sake.

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Because God loves me He keeps on working patiently with me even when I feel like giving up and can't see why He doesn't give up with me, too.
Because God loves me He keeps on trusting me when at times I don't even trust myself…
pp. 149-50

It was Lucy in the Peanuts column who said:

"I do love mankind, it's people I can't stand!"
(source unknown)

We're moving from the realm of MINISTRY to the realm of INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS in the ministry.

One of the hardest things for anyone in the ministry is people. It's not the program, it's not the demands of the ministry, it's the interpersonal relationships of the people.

In our last study Paul gave us 18 words that we can expect as part of our life. Ten of them are things that come at us from WITHOUT in the ministry. Eight of them are things we can deal with on the INSIDE. Then we looked at NINE CONTRASTS when we wrapped it up. And when we got down to verse 10, we read this:

<u>2 Corinthians 6:10</u>

As sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

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Now Paul is going to turn from the things that happened to him to the people he's involved with. And the people he's involved with are really giving him a rough time.

The ministry in Corinth has been one of the most difficult ministries that the apostle has encountered. For some reason there are some people in that church that don't like him. There's some people in that church that are really bitter and resentful, maybe over the first letter that he wrote or something of that sort. And so we're going to find over and over in 2 Corinthians, as he bears his heart, he keeps coming back to this—"Corinthians we've got a problem. We've got to deal with it." And as the study starts, just realize we have a man who really hurts and he hurts because the Corinthians are not responding to his leadership.

Let's pick up at verse 11.

<u>v. 11</u> Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.

"Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide."

Remember as a child and our parents called our name and we knew they were serious? We knew right away we were in trouble.

Well whenever Paul uses the name of the people, they're in

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trouble. Like he says:

Galatians 3:1

O Galatians, who has bewitched you?

Then he says:

Philippians 4:14

Philippians you did well when you sent to help me in my need.

But to the Corinthians again he is using "Corinthians" and it's with a lot of emotion:

"Our mouth has spoken freely to you, … our heart is opened wide."

What's he telling us? He says, "With our mouths we have given you honest communication. We've spoken words of truth."

"our hearts are opened wide"—what does he mean?

"Our emotions have been real. We have demonstrated care and compassion and concern for you Corinthians so our hearts are open. We've 'spoken freely' and we've been honest in our communication, and our emotions have been expressed."

What would be the opposite of that? Let's say that we're in a

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relationship and we have to really be careful about what we say. Maybe it's our marriage. Where we speak with measured restraint, where we're careful about words because they can ultimately be used against us. And so we have to be so careful, huh?

Well see, that's the opposite of this. Paul says, "Corinthians, we spoke freely to you. We didn't have to walk around like we're walking on eggshells with you. We told you the truth. And we backed up everything. And Corinthians, our heart was opened wide."

What would be the opposite of that? Bitterness, resentment, closed, not wanting to be around them, not liking them that much, a heart that really didn't care.

If we were to ask most women what's the problem in their marriage they'll say: "He doesn't talk to me and he doesn't really demonstrate that he cares anymore."

And the Corinthians are treating Paul like that. They're closed with their hearts and their emotional feelings for him, and it's really a pain for them to talk to him.

We have to remember that Paul is a choleric and he usually has no problem saying what he wants to say. And he confronts them with it. Basically in the next verse he puts the ball in their court. See it?

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<u>v. 12</u> You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.

"You are not restrained by us Corinthians, but you are restrained in your own affections."

In other words, "Y'all have got a problem. And before we can go any further in this ministry, you've got to deal with the problem."

"you are restrained in your own affections."—the problem's with you.

<u>Acts 24:16</u>

Herein do I exercise myself to have always a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.

"The problem isn't with us Corinthians, the problem is with you."

And so we need to ask ourselves the questions:

How can we be guilty? How could we be someone who's restrained in our affections?

Let's say we're having a problem in interpersonal relationships. And in those interpersonal relationships what's causing the restraint? Why do we get bottled up inside? Why do we have a problem getting close?

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Now we can use these THREE Ss:

1. SELFISHNESS—"I really don't care about anybody else. I care about me."

"I've had a rough time in life and I'm #1 and so I really just don't take time to reach out to people because I just don't care about them—selfishness."

2. SCARS—now this is somebody who's been hurt in the past.

It's kind of like a turtle. We pull our head back in the shell where it's nice and safe and secure and warm. Because when we've been burnt once we don't want to get burned again. And sometimes we're restrained in our affections because we have scars from past relationships when we've been used, when we've hurt and we're just pained by that and so we just can't be free.

And then the third one is:

3. SIN—maybe there's someone with the sin of bitterness. Maybe it's an unforgiving spirit, maybe it's jealousy and hatred and false assumptions and envy and all those ugly things that naturally can make us very quick to be restrained in our emotions.

Grand Howard in his book *The Trauma of Transparency* says:

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(<u>The Trauma of Transparency</u> by J. Grant Howard)

Every human being has this deeply rooted tendency to find the focus of life in himself, to trust himself, to love himself more than others. This is what is at the root of all our problems—even our communication problems. We hide and [we] hurl because we are proud, sinful, self-centered [people]. p. 40

So he says to the Corinthians: "you are restrained in your affections." The problem isn't with us.

And we come to verse 13—COMMAND:

We're going to find there are FOUR COMMANDS in the study. In the rest of the study he's going to tell them to do FOUR THINGS and that's the way the study's going to unfold.

The first has to do with their compassion, their love and their caring.

<u>v. 13</u> Widen your hearts in the same way in exchange—I am speaking as to children—open wide also to us.

"Widen your hearts in the same way in exchange—I am speaking as to children—open wide also to us."

Now wouldn't that make a good doctor's or dentist's verse?

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“Open wide and say awe!”

He’s saying:

“I am speaking [to you] as to children”—no longer Corinthians.

“I am speaking [to you] as children [now]—open wide also to us.”

What does he mean?

“Come on, let loose of your affections. Come on, open wide and communicate the truth. Speak honestly! If you’ve got something against us then lay it on the line and let’s get it out in front and get it dealt with instead of this critical backbiting behind the scenes and carrying on like that. Get it out here where we can see it.”

So “open wide…to us,” speak to us.

So this first command has to do with LOVE and COMPASSION.

“where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” (ref. Matthew 6:21)

“Widen your hearts in the same way in exchange—I am speaking to as to children—open wide also to us.”

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In other words he's saying, "Do what we've done for you. Treat us in the same way that we have treated you."

Now here's a principle. There's an inviolable principle of human nature and it is this:

What we really love will ultimately be revealed in our relationship.

And what we really love is where we spend most of our time.

Remember back to the days of courtship? Was there a problem with our priorities at that time? We spent all kinds of time together because we really loved each other. And somebody looking at it from the outside says, "Wow, what a cost!"

Jerry White talks about it in *Choosing Plan A in a Plan B World*:

(Choosing Plan A in a Plan B World by Jerry White)

Perhaps something similar happened in your courtship. Night after night, day after day for weeks on end you spent your spare time with your loved one—at great cost. Hobbies languished. Exercise programs floundered. Other friendships were put on hold. Jobs suffered. Your great desire to be together made the sacrifices of no consequence. To say it involved "cost" would be ridiculous. You wanted the relationship more than anything else. Yet an outside observer might not the great cost you paid in [your] courtship.

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p. 23

All Paul is saying is, “Hey y’all, spend some time with us. You know, open up your hearts. Demonstrate that you really care about us.”

Reuben Welch says we really need each other:

(<u>We Really Do Need Each Other</u> by Reuben Welch)

That deadly spirit of judgment is indeed the plague. But love,
Jesus’ kind of love,
has the releasing affirming power to stay the plague and heal our lives.

What a handle—
I love you
I release you
I will not judge you.

We really do need each other.
p. 1

Peter Gillquist quotes that great Francis Assisi prayer:

(<u>Love Is Now</u> by Peter E. Gillquist)

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace.
Where there is hatred let me sow love;

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Where there is injury, pardon;
Where there is doubt, faith;
Where there is despair, hope;
Where there is darkness, light;
Where there is sadness, joy.

O Divine Master, grant that I may not so much seek
To be consoled as to console;
To be understood as to understand;
To be loved as to love;
For it is in giving that we receive;
It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;
It is in dying that we are born to eternal life.
pp. 157-58

In the first command he's saying:

"Please, get your love together. Let your affection flow freely in your emotions that you care and you're concerned! And then let your words follow that! Communicate with us!"

Now we come to the second command.

<u>v. 14</u> Stop being bound together with unbelievers; for what have righteousness and lawlessness in common, or what fellowship has light with darkness?

"Stop being bound together with unbelievers;"

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We have Christians who really believe that it is a sin to be out with people who are not believers. To develop in-depth relationships with someone to lead them to Christ is a foreign thought because of this very verse.

Alright, it says right there, "Stop being bound together with unbelievers!"

If that's the truth and that's what this verse means then take a look at the life of Jesus. He was criticized for the fact that He spent all of His time out there with people who needed Him. He says, "I didn't come to those who are whole. I came to those who are sick and in need of a physician. I spent My time where I was needed." (see Matthew 9:12)

Flowing out of love will come commitments. And if it's wrong love, it'll be wrong commitments. So he has to give them a warning in Command #2. And the warning is because they have been bound to false teachers, they've been bound to false religious idols.

He's saying: "Stop being bound together." That's "Stop"—and they're doing it, in other words—"with unbelievers."

Now what does he mean when he says that?

First COMPASSION, then COMMITMENTS.

Can we change the word "bound" to the word "yoked"? Now that's not the yoke of an egg, it's the yoke of an ox. Let's take

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that word and trace it through the Law for just a second and we'll understand this.

Let's put it this way:

"Stop being yoked together with unbelievers."

Now what does that mean? Let's chase down three verses in the Law just to help with this.

Deuteronomy 11:16

Be careful, or you will be enticed to turn away and worship other gods and bow down to them.

Now don't get involved in these false religions. Be careful, they might carry us away and we'll be yoked with them.

Deuteronomy 22:10

Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.

Now that gives us a picture. How dumb to have an ox in one yoke and a donkey in another one, trying to pull. They just don't work together. They don't fit.

So what's he telling us? He's telling us when we work, watch out that we don't put a donkey and an ox together. Don't put a Christian and a non-Christian together yoked in an association of business!

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Now he goes one step further.

Leviticus 19:19

"Keep my decrees: Do not mate different kinds of animals."

Now here he's talking about crossbreeding animals. Don't do that! And in essence he's talking about the relationship—the marriage relationship.

Don't take an unbeliever and bind that unbeliever with a believer. Don't be bound together in a mating relationship. When love flows into the wrong channels; it's going to end up with friendships, commitments and associates that are not part of God's ultimate plan for our life.

Because we need to remember that what we love and who we spend our time with is going to have a powerful influence on the direction of our lives. So watch it! That's all he's saying. Don't be "bound together with unbelievers."

1 Corinthians 15:33

Do not be deceived: "Bad company corrupts bad morals."

So watch this!

Now this is such a concern to the apostle—this second command—that he amplifies it with FIVE QUESTIONS. That

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shows us how much it's a concern to him.

All the way down to verse 16 are going to be questions that have to do with this second command. We're going to stop now and we're just going to move through FIVE QUESTIONS—one right after another—that amplifies why we're not "bound together." And it's asking questions to bring the truth to the surface.

Maybe when we're through with the five questions, we'll have a little understanding of what Paul means by don't be "bound together with unbelievers." That's how he addresses the argument a lot of times. He'll ask question after question after question. So let's take a look at this.

"Stop being bound together with unbelievers;"—there's COMMAND #2.

Now, QUESTION #1:

1. "for what have righteousness and lawlessness in common?"

So his first question focuses on DEEDS:

"what have righteousness and lawlessness in common?"

When we become a believer, the manifestation of being a believer is righteous acts. Righteousness flows out of a righteous relationship with God. And so he's saying:

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"what have righteousness and lawlessness in common?"

What is the deed of a person who's not a Christian? It's "lawlessness."

1 John 3:4

Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

So the first question focuses on our DEEDS. We have the fruit of righteousness that flows from us as believers. A person who's not, has lawless acts.

Now look at the second question:

2. "what fellowship has light with darkness?"

Now we move from DEEDS to DESTINY.

When we come to know Christ, we come into the Light—He is the Light. And we are sons of the Light.

John 3:19-21

"This is the condemnation, light has come into the world and men love darkness rather than the light; because their deeds were evil…"

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The person who's not a Christian is living in "darkness." He hasn't seen the Light. In fact, in 2 Corinthians 4 he said:

2 Corinthians 4:4

It is the god of this world who has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glories gospel of Christ would shine unto them.

And ultimately the guy who's not a believer is going to go to outer darkness so his life is permeated with darkness.

And so QUESTION #2:

2. "what fellowship has light with darkness?"

There isn't any there.

David Needham in his book *Close to His Majesty* tells the story of one night he was standing and he saw the sea. It was gorgeous with a full moon and all of that. He says:

(Close to His Majesty by David C. Needham with Larry Libby)

Yet as I stood by the seashore that night so many years ago, I could have chosen to stand with my back to the sea. I could have said, "But God, it's so dark!" And all the while missing the glory. God would say to me, "Turn around! I'm looking toward you; why aren't you looking toward Me?"

Turn around! That's exactly what repentance is. It's

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changing the direction of your mind—your focus. It's realigning your thoughts to look His way. How often have we found ourselves overwhelmed by the darkness of our circumstances when all the glory of God is shining on our backs!

Drink in His forgiveness. Affirm His love before all the principalities and powers of the universe. Rest in His presence. Fill your heart with His loving gaze. God's face is your way—and always will be.
p. 60

We're in the light. That's our destiny. They're in the darkness. So we've seen the DEEDS and the DESTINY in the first two questions. Look at the next one.

<u>v. 15</u> Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?

There's QUESTION #3:

"Or what harmony has Christ with Belial,"

This has to do with a real decision. What does "Belial" mean? That's another term for Satan and it means "worthlessness."

All of his activities are nothing but froth, cotton candy, bubbles. They're just there, but they're gone. There's no pleasure in it. There's no enduring value. It disappears. It's worthlessness!

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And he's saying here:

"What harmony" is there between "Christ [and] Belial"? There's none. Two totally different philosophies of life. One is bent on destruction and the other is bent on life.

We have no question of where Jesus stands in this situation. Peter comes up and says, "You know You're not going to the cross." He says, "Get thee behind me Satan. You don't mind the things of the Spirit of God." (see Matthew 16:23)

In Matthew 4, when he set out into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil, he says:

Matthew 4:10, 11

"Be gone, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only shall you serve." …

In John 8:44 He makes one of the strongest statements of His ministry:

John 8:44

"You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there's no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.

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What do we have to do? It's time for a decision, isn't it? At the end of the book of Joshua, Joshua in his final address tells the people, "You know, I don't know what y'all are going to do but as for me and my house we're going to serve the Lord." (ref. Joshua 24:15)

"It's time to choose you this day whom you will serve!" (ref. Joshua 24:14)

And he says in finding relationships, we have to make a decision. Is it "Christ [or] Belial"?

Ray Stedman in his commentary on 2 Corinthians puts a letter of a little girl who's marrying a guy who's not a Christian. This is the prayer that she prayed on her wedding day. She wrote it in her diary:

(<u>Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of Weakness</u> by Ray C. Stedman)

Dear God, I can hardly believe that this is my wedding day. I know I haven't been able to spend much time with you lately with all the rush of getting ready for today, and I'm sorry. I guess, too, I feel a little guilty when I try to pray about all this, since Larry still isn't a Christian. But, oh! Father, I love him so much. What else can I do? I just couldn't give him up. Oh! You must save him some way, somehow. You know how much I have prayed for him and the way we've discussed the gospel together. I've tried not to appear too religious, I know, but that's because I didn't want to scare him off. Yet he

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isn't antagonistic, and I don't understand why he hasn't responded. Oh! If only he were a Christian. Dear Father, please bless our marriage. I don't want to disobey you, but I do love him, and I want to be his wife. So please be with us, and please don't spoil my wedding day.
pp. 135-6

What a great prayer, huh?

Ray Stedman calls a spade a spade every time and he says this is the way it really was prayed:

(Expository Studies in 2 Corinthians: Power Out of Weakness by Ray C. Stedman)

Dear Father, I don't want to disobey you, but I must have my own way at all costs. For I love what you do not love, and I want what you do not want. So please be a good God and deny yourself and move off your throne and let me take over. If you don't like this, all I ask is that you bite you lip and say nothing and don't spoil my wedding day. Let me have my evil.
pp. 135-36

See the choice is one that has incredible consequences in that point. A decision has to be made. Some people are married to unsaved mates. Maybe both were unsaved when they were married, not one's a Christian and other is not. And they're wondering should they go ahead and divorce them.

First Corinthians 7 says if he will remain with you, let him

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remain because he is sanctified by his presence with you. (see 1 Corinthians 7:14) Don't affect that—pray that God will pick up the pieces and make it possible for us to have the joys of a oneness in marriage and a common faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Question #1 focuses on our DEEDS. We have "righteousness" and "lawlessness."

Question #2 focuses on our DESTINY. We have "light" and "darkness."

Question #3 focuses on a DECISION. We have to decide. Jesus Christ or "Belial" here.

And Question #4:

"or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?"

There's the DECLARATION. What is it that's "in common"?

Nothing—our deeds, our destiny, our desires, our devotion—all these things are different. And the unbeliever will not take the course often of the believer, but the believer will of the unbeliever.

We find this to be true. We're running uphill into the wind if we think that we're going to be lucky enough to get an unbeliever to go our way by a deep, intimate, binding associational relationship—we're not.

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Olivia Langdon was a beautiful Christian girl. She was raised in a Christian home. She married Mark Twain. Early in their marriage Mark said grace at the table and they read the Bible on occasion. But there came a day when he said, "Livy, I don't believe this" and they put it aside.

Later in their life and in their marriage, when there was real difficulty, Mark turned to Livy and said, "Livy, if it means something to you, go ahead and read it." She says, "I can't. I don't believe it."
(adapted from *Our Daily Bread*, date unknown)

That's it. That's what happens.

Swindoll probably has the best illustration of this. He says:

"When you put a white glove in the mud, you have a muddy glove not glovey mud."
(source unknown)

That's it. When we put it there, it's going to be muddy. The glove is not going to affect the mud.

So what do a believer and an unbeliever have in common?

Verse 16—here comes the next question.

<u>v. 16</u> Or what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living

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God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people.

QUESTION #5:

"Or what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols?"

There isn't any!

Idols are DEAD—God is LIVING!

Idols focus on WORKS—God focuses on WORSHIP.

Idols focus on SACRIFICES—God focuses on SALVATION.

"Little children, guard yourselves from idols." (1 John 5:21)

<u>Psalm 115:2-8</u>

…Their idols are silver and gold,
they're made with the hands of men.
They have mouths, but they cannot speak,
eyes, they cannot see;
ears that cannot hear,
noses that cannot smell;
and hands that cannot feel,
feet, but they cannot walk;
nor can they utter a sound with their throats.

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Those who make them will be like them,
and so will all who trust in them.

What is the common denominator between God and idols? There aren't any.

So we see the focus of those five questions are on:

our DEEDS,

our DESTINY,

our DECISION,

our DECLARATION and finally

our DEVOTION—to whom are we devoted?

They're all different.

We took those five words and put them in two columns to really get a handle on them.

In column #1 we have all the NEGATIVE words. In column #2 we have all the POSITIVE WORDS.

The NEGATIVE WORDS are:

1. "lawlessness,"

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2. “darkness,”

3. “Belial,”

4. “unbeliever,” and

5. “idols.”

The POSITIVE WORDS are:

1. “righteousness,”

2. “light,”

3. “Christ,”

4. “believer,” and

5. “temple of the living God.”

And we realize we’re not to be bound to that and why we’re not to be in an intimate relationship with that.

“For we are the temple of the living God;”

See that next phrase?

We’re not dead idols!

“just as God said, ‘I will dwell in them and walk among them;

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and I will be their God and they shall be My people."

What's he telling them?

"I will dwell in them,"

"I will…walk among them,"

"I will be their God,"

"they shall be My people."

Now here comes Command #3. What's the first one?

1. Open wide our hearts!—It has to do with our COMPASSION, our love and our caring.

What's Command #2?

2. "Stop being bound together with unbelievers!"—that's our COMMITMENTS.

Now Command #3, here's where we have to have some COURAGE.

<u>v. 17</u> Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And stop touching that which is unclean; and I will welcome you.

"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says

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the Lord. And stop touching that which is unclean; and I will welcome you."

Here it's going to take some COURAGE. We're going to have to "come out."

We're going to have to "come out from their midst and be separate"—we have to take ACTION. We're going to have to do something.

In English we have the PRESENT, the PAST and the FUTURE—we all understand that. In the Greek we have the AORIST TENSE.

The AORIST means: "I do this once for all."

When it communicates tense it means, "I did it and it's final." No pussy-footing around—no double-minded man unstable in his ways. One day he blows this way and one day he blows that way—NO! That's not the picture.

The picture is once for all. And he says:

"come out from their midst and be separate."

That's a DECISION. Now what does he mean by that? Well remember Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount? He says:

<u>Matthew 5:29, 30</u>

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"If your eye offend you, take it out;…if your hand offend you, cut it off…"

In essence he's saying TAKE DRASTIC MEASURES! Here's the PRINCIPLE:

If we're going to please God, there are some things that are just going to have to go. And if they don't come, they will just come—they will destroy us.

Remember Lot and his wife and his girls? What did the angel finally have to do? He came down to the city begging. What did he finally have to do? Take them by the hand and lead them out of the city to get them away from it before the city could be destroyed! "Hurry! Take your wife and your two daughters who are there, or you will be swept away when the city is punished." (see Genesis 19:15-17)

For the Prodigal Son it was "arise and go to my father" when he came to his senses. But he had to do it. He had to get up and go.

Now notice the next phrase:

"stop touching that which is unclean;"

Evidently they are.

1. "separate,"

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2. “stop touching.”

Now what happens when we do that? And what happens when we don’t do it?

Remember DANIEL? He “purposed in his heart.” (see Daniel 1:8)

Remember JOSEPH? He said, “I can’t sin and do this great wickedness.” (see Genesis 39:9)

There are two that DIDN’T. Now want to know two that DID? Talk to DAVID—talk to JUDAS as he throws the silver in the temple and he goes out and takes his life. Hideous stories—both of them.

“come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And stop touching that which is unclean;” and do something about it!

Not only ADMIT that He’s Lord but SUBMIT to His Lordship.

Remember, what we really love will ultimately be revealed in our relationships. And there are some things that have just got to go.

“Come out” and “stop touching.”

Remember Acts 19 where there’s a revival in Ephesus? We read this:

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Acts 19:18-20

Many also of those who had believed kept coming, confessing and disclosing their practices. And many of those who practiced magic brought their books together and began burning them in the sight of all; and they counted up the price of them and found it fifty thousand pieces of silver. So the word of the Lord was growing mightily and prevailing.

What was happening? People were doing surgery in their lives and as a result of that, God's Spirit was blessing and the Word of God was doing its work with mighty power!

Stormie Omartian, as she became a Christian, said this:

(Stormie by Stormie Omartian)

As I threw the clothes, books, magazines, records, and art in the trash, I knew I had to do the same with certain habits and relationships. I stopped watching offensive TV shows and became very selective about what movies I went to see. Filling my mind with violence, foul language, disrespectful use of God's name, and other people's sex acts did not make me feel good in my spirit, and I knew I didn't feel good in God's Spirit either. The Bible said I was the temple of the Holy Spirit of God, so how could I enjoy the fullness of His presence if He was being crowded out by all that was opposed to His ways? p. 131

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That's all he's saying! He's not saying become so heavenly minded, you're no earthly good. He's not saying, "Nah-nah-nah-nah-nah! Get over here and be weird." That's not the picture at all. He's just saying that in the process of growth there are some things that are going to have to go.

Now notice what he's going to do when those do go?

Francis Roberts pretends like she's the Lord speaking in her *Make Haste My Beloved*:

(Make Haste My Beloved by Francis J. Roberts)

My Spirit will not always strive. If by rebellion you resist My overtures, I will release you to your own way and you may walk alone if that is your choice. I have made free will a gift, and I will not violate your right to follow your own desires. p. 31

And that's scary isn't it?

Now what will He do when we respond properly?

v. 18 And I will be to you a father, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."

"I will be to you a father, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.'"

What's He going to do? Here's a PRINCIPLE—God blesses

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when we QUIT and CUT. How about that? Simple.

God begins to bless when we QUIT and CUT. We quit things, we cut things out of our lives because this is what God expects of us.

Now what are the results of that?

1. "I will welcome you."

Isn't that great? That's unconditional love. God is always RUNNING TO RECONCILIATION. Remember when the Prodigal Son came back? He was running to the son! "I will welcome you."

Secondly:

2. "I will be to you a father"—RELATIONSHIP.

"This is my son who was dead. He's alive again." (see Luke 15:24)

Third:

3. "you shall be [My] sons and daughters"—it focuses on future INHERITANCE.

To the Prodigal Son he says, "Bring my best robe. Bring the ring! Bring the shoes!" (see Luke 15) All marks of SONSHIP—make things right.

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"you shall be [my] sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty."

Now don't think that we can just make one big deal of commitment to Lordship and expect that all of sudden that it happens. It just doesn't happen like that. We can't get on a roll for Lordship and make one dramatic decision and He's going to be Lord the rest of our life. He will constantly be picking on things.

Hopefully someone is sensitive to the Holy Spirit and He's saying something to them right now on the level of growth of something that's got to go. This message isn't for somebody else, it's for every single person. At some level of growth we have to face a challenge of something that's got to go. Are we willing to do it? Are we willing to let it go so that God's blessing will flow in our life?

If we're sensitive to the Spirit of God, He's speaking to us about that right now.

Jim Elliot said it so well:

(Helping Those Who Don't Want Help by Marshall Shelley)

One does not surrender a life in an instant. That which is lifelong can only be surrendered in a lifetime.

Jim Elliot

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p. 175

There are some things that have got to go.

Chapter 6 has this in common. It OPENS with URGENCY and it ENDS with URGENCY.

There's an urgency in verse 1:

2 Corinthians 6:1

Working together with Him, we also are urging you not to receive the grace of God in vain.

And then verse 17:

2 Corinthians 6:17

Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord. "And stop touching that which is unclean; and I will welcome you.

Now what happens when we don't follow through? What happens when we know what is right and we don't do it?

So many Christians say, "Oh yeah, that's great! That's right! Amen brother!" But they're still back in the same place a week later if they don't do anything about it!

Are there any consequences for that?

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Pat and Jill Williams wrote a book called *Rekindled*. It's a great book to read on marriage. Their marriage was on the rocks and they put it together.

He was the general manager of the Philadelphia 76ers in the NBA. But they wrote a little book called *Keep the Fire Glowing* and this is about their children. Here's a story from their family:

(Keep the Fire Glowing by Pat and Jill Williams with Jerry Jenkins)

We love birds and [we] have close to fifty of varying sizes and species. One of our boys was assigned the chore of feeding our new canaries, a couple of very expensive little beauties. When we questioned him about it, he kept saying, "Yes, yes, I will. Don't worry about it. I won't forget."

The birds were able to go without seed for a while, but they could last only a few hours without water. When we returned home from our outing late that night, Jill checked on the birds. All were fine except the two canaries. They were on their backs in the cage with their feet up. Dead.

The next morning, we had to break the news to the family, including the offender. We might have wished the lesson weren't so expensive and painful, but it certainly brought home the truth that when someone doesn't follow through on his commitments, there is a price. The price in this case included remorseful tears.
p. 116

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If God is dealing with us about something that needs to go, then let it go or there's going to be some remorseful tears. There's going to be some hurt and some pain. If we don't take it out of our life, God's going to cut it out later and it's going to hurt a whole lot more.

That's exactly what he says in 1 Corinthians 11. If we would judge ourselves we wouldn't be judged. But because we don't judge ourselves, we don't deal with the situation, then God has to take up the knife and do the work! And as a result of that it's more painful.

Now the fourth and final command is in our last verse of our passage.

<u>7:v. 1</u> Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of body and spirit, bringing about holiness in the fear of God.

"Therefore, having these promises,"—what promises? Those back in chapter 6:

<u>2 Corinthians 6:16-18</u>

"I will dwell in them and walk among them; I will be their God, they shall be My people. Come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord…and I will welcome you. And I will be to you a father, and you shall be my sons and daughters," says the Lord Almighty.

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"having these promises, beloved,"—notice he changes from Corinthians to children to "beloved."

"having these promises, beloved,"—now here comes the command and he changes it. He identifies with the Corinthians. This is something for "let us"—he's in this.

Let us do this together—we've all got to be involved:

"let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of body and spirit, bringing about holiness in the fear of God."—Command #4.

COMMAND #1:

COMPASSION: "open wide your hearts."

COMMAND #2:

"stop being bound together in believers"—that has to do with our COMMITMENTS.

COMMAND #3:

It's going to take COURAGE—"come out" and "stop touching."

COMMAND #4:

CLEANSING—confession and cleansing comes when we deal, in open acknowledgement to this, "let us cleanse ourselves

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from all defilement of the body and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God."

Now are we willing to do that? To surrender to Him that the holiness of God might begin to manifest itself in our lives?

In 1 Peter he says:

1 Peter 1:15, 16

… "be ye holy, for I am holy," says the Lord.

That's the GOAL! That's where we're heading toward. That's our objective.

Bob Pierce was a missionary for a number of years and president of World Vision. He says:

(Bob Pierce: This One Thing I Do by Franklin Graham and Jeanette Lockerbie)

From that time at age twelve, I've sinned, I've quit, I've failed, I've stumbled, I've fallen, I've landed in the mud puddle and come out drenched with mud. But one thing has been true: God set me apart and there's no way that I could run away from God. I have tried. I dropped out for two and a half years one time; went into shipyards and worked and told the Lord, I [wouldn't] do another thing! I [wouldn't] even go to church. I resign, I give up, I quit, I don't have what it takes, I refuse. God just sat on the sidelines and twiddled His thumbs

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and said, “Well, when you get ready, what I’ve planned is going to come about and when you get through kickin’ and stompin’ and wailin’ and feelin’ sorry for yourself and blaming everybody else, we’ll start where we left off,” and that’s the way it’s been for all these years.

My life verse has been Philippians 2:13, “It is God who [working] in [me] both to [the willing and the doing of] His good pleasure.”
pp. 40-41

He’s saying, “let’s cleanse ourselves from all [of these things]!”

“Faithful is the one who calls you, who also will do it.” (1 Thessalonians 5:24)

That’s His purpose—that’s His goal—that’s His objective.

Now out of those verses we get these lessons.

Lesson #1: What you love and who you spend your time with will have a powerful influence on the direction of your life.

Lesson #2: Are your words and emotions able to flow freely to others because you are transparent?

We strain in our affections and in our emotions.

Lesson #3: Are you restrained in your affections because of selfishness, scars, and sin?

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Are we restrained in our affections because of selfishness, scars from the past, sin right now in the present that keeps us from being free and vulnerable?

Lesson #4: Has the Spirit of God convicted you about some alliances with unbelievers that need to be terminated?

Because it's not right, it's not a blessing? And God's withholding His blessing because of it?

Lesson #5: What you really love will ultimately be revealed in your relationships.

Lesson #6: There are some things we must cut out of our lives if we are going to continue to make progress toward Christlikeness.

There are just some things that have got to go.

Lesson #7: When we are cooperative and take the initiative in cutting things out of our lives, we avoid the Father's heavy hand of discipline and doing it later.

Lesson #8: Is the longing of your heart to bring about holiness in the fear of God?

That's the ultimate goal in the passage.

Let us cleanse ourselves from these things to bring about holiness.

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Lesson #9: Are you obedient to the four commands in the passage?

1. stifled love,

2. the bondage of a relationship,

3. quitting and cutting, and

4. cleansing yourself from defilement.

Robert G. Lee was a great old preacher. He always, when he came down to the time to make a decision, said this:

Just here let me, with compassionate insistence, urge you to believe that Time is making haste—and will soon be gone. And the years are making haste—passing so quickly. And Satan is making haste—seeking your ruin. And the World is making haste—making efforts to cheat you. And the Judgment is making haste—since "it is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the judgment. And Death is making haste—mocking our human hopes and frailties.

Oh! Make haste to make ready to meet [your] God. (source unknown)

This story graphically illustrates what God really wants from all of us.

(<u>Close to His Majesty</u> by David C. Needham with Larry Libby)

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When I was a boy, our family moved to a ranch in southern California, where we had acres of rolling hills to explore. My big dream was to get a dog. But not just a dog. I had my heart set on an English setter. I can't begin to calculate all the time I spent reading about English setters—studying their pictures down to the smallest detail. To me, there was no dog like a setter anywhere in the world.

One day my dad gave me the word I'd been waiting for. "Okay, son," he said, "you can get your setter."

Together, Dad and I went down to the kennel. I spent the better part of an hour examining a litter of fine English setter [puppies]. I tried to be objective—to look for all the qualities the books tell you to look for in a champion setter. The right ears and eyes and bones and tail and all that. When I walked out with that little fellow in my arms, I was sure I had the pick of the litter—the most beautiful pup I had ever seen. I called him "Mike."

In the months that followed he received the best care I knew how to give. A solid redwood doghouse with a cedar-shake roof. The best food. But most of all, the best of my love. Yet as the months went by, one fact—one terrible fact—became all too clear. Mike didn't want me. He didn't want my love. After a time, he didn't even want my food. I'd put out the dish for him and call, "Here, Mike! Here, Mike!" But Mike would not come. Or if he did, he would slink around the side of the house, pedigreed tail between his legs, work his way up to the dish, wolf down his food, and then slink away again.

When the cold winter nights came I used to long for him to sit by the fire with me. I just wanted him to lie beside me

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near the hearth so I could scratch under his neck and give him a big hug and let him lick my face.

But he never came when I called. And winter went by.

He may have been a good watchdog; he may have chased away the rabbits from our garden—I really don't remember [that]. I do know that eventually he discovered that if he ran full speed into the wire mesh surrounding our chicken pen, the chickens would become a squawking brown cloud piling up against the far side of the pen. And once in awhile, one of those terrified hens would just manage to clear the top of the fence—and Mike would kill it and carry it away.

We tried everything to get him to stop. [We yelled] at him. [We beat] him (with a rolled up newspaper). Providing him more than enough to eat. My dad even suggested tying a dead chicken right up close under his jaw and letting it rot there. Perhaps that might cure him. But nothing worked. Mike simply didn't care.

Finally one day—a day I knew eventually had to come—one of the hired hands followed my dog over a hill on the far side of the ranch, while I waited behind. I knew what was going to happen. And it did. I winced as a single shot echoed back through the hills. Mike was dead…and rightly so.

Undaunted, a few days later—it didn't take me long—I asked, "Dad, can I try again?" And Dad said yes. Off we went to the kennel to look at a whole new litter of setter puppies. But this time I didn't look for the finest pup. Instead, I waited for one of them to come running to me. And one did. I picked him up—a little ball of silky speckled black and white fur, his heart racing like a motor—and he slobbered all over my face. I took him home with me and named him Mike. (I was

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stubborn.)

Maybe you can guess the rest of the story. Mike became everything I had ever dreamed of in a dog. He wanted my love. He lived for my love. I wanted Mike, and Mike wanted me.

On winter nights, Mike waited eagerly to be invited in. Pressing against the big chair in front of the fireplace, as close to me as he could be, Mike relished every touch of love. In the spring, out on the hills with the tractor, Mike would run circles around me all day long. And every time I'd stop and climb down, Mike would be there to receive a big hug or to rest his big head on my knee. When water came running down the irrigation furrows, Mike would stretch out smack dab in the middle of the furrow close to where I stood. And then get up and shake that muddy water all over me. Of course he [wanted me] to cool me off!

When I went away to college a couple of hundred miles away, I would try to get home whenever I could. It would usually be late at night when I started up that long, curving road to the ranch house on top of the hill. Mom and Dad would be sound asleep, but Mike heard the sound of my car long before I came around the last bend. Coming to a stop, I could see him dancing in the headlights. A moment later, Mike would crash into the driver's seat and let me hug him and love him to my heart's content.

Years later, sitting on the edge of my bunk in a small, stark seminary dorm room down in Dallas, Texas, I opened a letter from Mom. "We did everything we could do," she wrote, "but Mike had got fox fever. The veterinarian tried too, but he told us there wasn't any cure. We loved him as you would have done. We made him as comfortable as we could. But

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yesterday, Mike died." I remember falling back on my bunk in that lonely dorm room and crying and crying until the ink was all smeared [on the paper].

Mike had let me love him.

He had received my self-giving with pleasure. His greatest delight was to be close to me. I had lost a friend who had never wearied of receiving my love.

What can we say then about our infinitely self-giving God? Some of us have developed such unbalanced concepts of God. The awesome supreme Judge of the universe before whom all heaven trembles? Yes, He is all of that. But first…He is love. He is the God who longs to fill our lives and our days with the wealth of His presence. A God who cherishes our companionship.

How do I, as a born-again child of God, respond to my Father's self-giving? By offering myself as a gift to Him…

It's like lifting an empty cup—a cup that God continues to fill with Himself. From the overflow, I give myself to others. And in so doing, "the love of God has truly been perfected" … pp. 86-89

<u>Matthew 11:28-30</u>

Come unto Me all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.

Father, thank You for Your presence. Thank You for the reality of this beautiful passage. Thank You for the commands

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that hit us with the realm of our compassion, our commitment that we not be bound together—that we are courageous enough to come out and to be separate. We are willing to acknowledge and confess and experience cleansing. Thank You that You love us and You just long for us to come to You and to be with You. We pray if there's someone without the Lord Jesus Christ, that You'll bring them to the foot of Calvary's Cross and they receive You as Savior. For those who know You and there are some things in their lives that need to be cut, there's some things they need to quit, please enable them to have the courage and the fortitude to make the right decision. And once for all to cut those things from their lives. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.

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A Practical Study of 2 CORINTHIANS:

Turning Tough Times into Triumph

"Using Adversity to Gain an Advantage"

Study Number Twelve – 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1

NOTES

v. 11 Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide.
v. 12 You are not restrained by us, but you are restrained in your own affections.
v. 13 Widen your hearts in the same way in exchange—I am speaking as to children—open wide also to us.
v. 14 Stop being bound together with unbelievers; for what have righteousness and lawlessness in common, or what fellowship has light with darkness?
v. 15 Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?
v. 16 Or what agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said, "I will dwell in them and walk among them; and I will be their God and they shall be My people.
v. 17 Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate, says the Lord. And stop touching that which is unclean; and I will welcome you.
v. 18 And I will be to you a father, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty."
7:v. 1 Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of body and spirit, bringing about holiness in the fear of God.

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QUESTIONS:

1. Read 2 Corinthians 6:11-7:1 and in your own words pull out the main thought of this passage.

2. How are the Corinthians restrained, according to verse 12?

3. What are they to stop doing, according to verse 14?

4. What are the answers to the questions in verse 15?

5. How are we characterized in verse 16?

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6. What are the Corinthians commanded to do in verse 17?

7. What will the Lord do when they are obedient, according to verses 17 & 18?

8. What does Paul challenge the Corinthians to do in 7:1?

9. What verse in the study has meant the most to you?

10. What lesson have you learned from this study?

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LESSONS FROM THE PASSAGE:

What are some of the lessons we can learn from this particular study?

LESSON #1: What you love and who you spend your time with will have a powerful influence on the direction of your life.

LESSON #2: Are your words and emotions able to flow freely to others because you are transparent?

LESSON #3: Are you restrained in your affections because of selfishness, scars, and sin?

LESSON #4: Has the Spirit of God convicted you about some alliances with unbelievers that need to be terminated?

LESSON #5: What you really love will ultimately be revealed in your relationships.

LESSON #6: There are some things we must cut out of our lives if we are going to continue to make progress in Christlikeness.

LESSON #7: When we are cooperative and take the initiative in cutting things out of our lives that must go, we avoid the Father's heavy hand of discipline and doing it later.

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LESSON #8: Is the longing of your heart to bring about holiness in the fear of God?

LESSON #9: Are you obedient to the four commands in the passage? 1) compassion — stifled love; 2) commitment — the bondage of a relationship; 3) courage — the severing of things from your life that are not pleasing to Him; and 4) cleansing — cleansing yourself from all defilement.

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