

Steps Six and Seven

STEPS 6 and 7: Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. Humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings.

Hello, dearly beloved in Christ Jesus! You have just got through the two most important steps of your recovery, Steps 4 and 5. This is a turning point for your life and the way you live it. Relationships will become closer, friendships more honest and real, your sensitivity will grow as your concern for others grows (a godly concern). This concern for others is the "heart of flesh" that God promises to give you in place of the "heart of stone" that you had in your self-centeredness and addiction (see Ezekiel 36:26-27). Getting this new heart from God and watching it grow, and receiving the Spirit of God is no lightweight stuff! You are not becoming a wimp or a pushover; quite the opposite is true. Honesty and truthfulness are strength, not weakness, because with them you develop integrity. Before, you could run, cover up, and just refuse to face the truth in life, but now you take RESPONSIBILITY for your stuff! In Steps 1-5 you stood up strong and admitted (confessed) your faults, and reconciled yourself to God, your heavenly Father. Now, you have clean and pure communication with your Creator, and that feels pretty good!

Now we must move to Steps 6 and 7. In these Steps we are still facing some not-so-pretty character traits we have developed over the years: lying, cheating, swearing, stealing, anger issues, exaggeration, worrying, pride, being critical and judgmental, and so forth. As we expose these, we start working on lessening their influence in our lives. Remember, you and the Father are on a different level of communication now, so you can be honest with Him as well as yourself, as you work on these issues. You can and will have complete victory. Remember, you are perfecting yourself for Jesus. The Bible tells us that the church is His Bride, and we want to be pure and without fault for Him. God's word also tells us that we are a Royal Priesthood for Christ, and children of the King, and we must behave in a manner that is worthy of His name (Col. 1:10).

Your Accountability Partner can help you through the process by observing and pointing out triggers that trip us up, or danger zones we shouldn't mess with, and other areas of temptation. Your Accountability Partner can certainly pray with you for wisdom and steadfastness in your quest! Dottie and I are here for encouragement, direction and prayer 24/7. What we are dealing with now took a long time to develop, and it will take a long time to do away with. Just be aware that you must keep moving forward, even if only a little bit at a time. As soon as you stop paddling a boat upstream, what happens? Do you just sit and float, or do you start drifting DOWNSTREAM again?

As we move through the next few weeks in Steps 6 and 7, we will discover what God says in His word about character defects and shortcomings. We will share some tools that will help, and you will be asked to share how you are doing on these steps. You would be surprised just how important it is to share, not just for others, but also for you. Remember, the journey you have been going through has brought forth a new you, someone worth listening to, because you have something to share about how God is working in your life. Praise the Lord! As your confidence grows as a Christian, you will need to share your faith and hope with others. That's why we want to have as clean a plate as possible. God's goal for you is to grow to Christ likeness (Rom. 8:29). You can be proud of yourself for hanging in there so far. You are more than half way through, and there has been a lot of healing, with still more to come! May God richly bless you all.

In His love,

First Week's Lesson - Steps 6 and 7

Bible Study

The Bible does not use the words "character defects" or "shortcomings" - the Bible calls it our SINFUL NATURE, a CARNAL MIND, or the OLD MAN. The Bible says that before we came to Christ and were born again, we were in DARKNESS, and what we call character defects are evidences of that darkness. Romans 13:12-14 tells us to cast off (throw away) the "works of darkness" and "put on" the Lord Jesus Christ. **Read EPHESIANS 4:17-25.**

17-18. "This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should **no longer walk** as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the **futility of their mind**, having their understanding **darkened**, being **alienated from the life of God**, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardening of their heart:"

- **I Corinthians 2:14-15** "But the natural man does not _____ (understand) the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he _____ them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he who is spiritual judges (discerns) all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one."
- **Proverbs 12:15** "The way of a _____ is _____ in his _____, but he who heeds [godly] counsel is _____."
- **Proverbs 16:25** "There is a way that _____ to a man, but its end is the way of _____."

Definition: "FUTILITY OF THEIR MINDS" - means emptiness and stupidity of their minds; **not thinking right**, not able to understand the things of God.

Definition: "No longer WALK as the rest of the Gentiles" - Paul is speaking to born-again Christians here, and telling them NOT to CONTINUE to LIVE THEIR LIVES or BEHAVE like **non-Christians**. He especially tells them **NOT** to **THINK like unbelievers**.

- **Psalms 1:1** "Blessed is the man who _____ in the counsel of (taking advice from) the _____, nor stands in the path of ("hangs out" with) _____, nor sits in the seat of (has fellowship with) the SCORNFUL (those who ridicule and reject God)."
- **I Peter 4:3** "For we have spent **enough of our past** _____ in doing the will of the Gentiles, when we walked in _____, _____, _____, revelries (partying, drugging), _____, and _____." **NOTE:** The Unbeliever is in DARKNESS, but the Believer in Christ is **NOT in darkness**.
- **John 12:46** "I have come as a _____ into the world, that whoever _____ in Me should _____ abide in _____."
- **Ephesians 5:8** "For you were **once** _____, but NOW you are _____ in the Lord. WALK as children of _____."
- **Colossians 1:12-13** "Giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the _____. He has _____ us from the power of _____ and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of His love."

19. "Who **being past feeling**, have given themselves over to **licentiousness**, to work all uncleanness with greediness."

- **Genesis 6:5-8** "And God saw that the _____ of man was great in the earth, and that _____ imagination of the _____ of his heart was only _____ continually."

Definition: "WHO BEING PAST FEELING" - Without listening to their conscience; having no remorse; not being sorry for doing wrong.

Definition: "LICENTIOUSNESS" - Lacking or deficient in discipline; without restraint, **LAWLESSNESS**; doing whatever feels good at the time.

- **Matthew 7:23** "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice _____!'"

20-21. "But **you have not so LEARNED Christ**; if so be that you have heard Him, and have been **TAUGHT by Him**, as the truth is in Jesus."

- **Matthew 11:29** "Take My yoke upon you and _____ from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find _____ for your _____."
- **John 8:31** "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed in Him, "If you _____ in My _____, then you are truly My _____."

22-24. "That **YOU put off**, concerning your former conduct, **the OLD MAN**, which is **CORRUPT** according to its deceitful desires and lusts; and **be RENEWED in the spirit of your MIND**; and that **YOU put on the NEW MAN**, which was **CREATED** according to God, in righteousness and true HOLINESS."

- **Read Colossians 3:1-10** (Verse 2) "Set your _____ on things above, not on things on the _____." (Verse 5) "Therefore put to _____ your members which are on the earth; _____, _____, _____, _____, _____, and _____ which is idolatry." (Verse 8-9) "But now YOU also must _____ all these: _____, _____, _____, blasphemy, _____ out of your mouth. Do not _____ to one another, since you have _____ the _____ with his deeds."
- **Romans 6:12-13** "**Do not _____ sin reign (have control)** in your mortal _____, that you should obey it in its desires. And **do not _____ your _____** as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin, but **_____ yourselves unto _____**, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members (parts of your body) as instruments of righteousness unto God."

Definition: "THE OLD MAN" - Our sinful human nature; **the embodiment of our habits and behavior patterns** learned BEFORE we were BORN AGAIN (we could also call them **our character defects and shortcomings**). God's word says that **WE as Believers** are the ones who have a **CHOICE** about following the **old nature** and its desires. If we **renew our minds** with the word of God, we will have the **will power** and strength from God to **choose to follow the new nature** (the NEW MAN).

- **II Corinthians 5:17** "Therefore, if anyone is IN _____, he is a _____; old things are passed away, behold, all things have become new."
- **Colossians 3:10** "And have put on the _____ who is renewed (created) in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him."

****God CREATES** the new nature (the "NEW MAN") in you when you are BORN AGAIN (your spirit is MADE ALIVE), when you receive Jesus as your Savior, but **you must make a daily conscious decision** to LET the NEW NATURE and God's Spirit CONTROL you. You must **YIELD or SURRENDER your WILL and your body to God** every day, even moment by moment, and **give Him the right** to use you as His servant.

- **Romans 12:1-2** "I beseech (beg) you therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that YOU _____ your _____ as a living sacrifice, _____ and acceptable to God, which is your reasonable _____. And be not conformed to this world, but be transformed by the _____ of your _____ that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Definition: "RENEWED" and "TRANSFORMED" - To be CHANGED and MADE NEW. If we want to see positive CHANGES in our lives (REMOVAL of character defects and shortcomings), we **must RENEW our minds** by constantly reading the **WORD of God**. Otherwise, we will think, act and talk just like the rest of the **world**. As our **MINDS** are changed (our way of thinking), we will begin to see things as God sees them, and our outward behavior will change. We will "Walk in the Spirit and will NOT fulfill (carry out) the lusts of the flesh (the Old Man)" Galatians 5:16.

- **John 8:31** "Then Jesus said to those Jews who _____ in Him, "If you _____ (continue) in My _____, then you are truly My _____."

****HOW** do we RENEW OUR MINDS? By abiding in God's _____.

25. "Therefore, **putting away LYING**, [let] each one **speak truth** with his neighbor, for we are members of one another."

- **Proverbs 6:16-19** "These six things the Lord _____, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: a _____ look, a _____ tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises _____, feet that are swift in running to evil, a _____ witness who _____, and one who sows discord among brethren."
- **Colossians 3:9** "Do not _____ to one another, since you have put off the _____ man with his deeds."

Personal Questions

1. **DISCIPLE** means a "**learner**". Have you become a DISCIPLE of Jesus Christ? Are you **allowing Him to teach you**? Does **OBEYING JESUS as He teaches us** differ from "giving ourselves over to licentiousness"?
2. Some of the character defects mentioned in verses 17-25 are covetousness (greed), uncleanness, lying, being undisciplined and self-centered (licentious), and so forth. What other character defects are mentioned in the scriptures above? Are there any that apply to you?

Second Week's Lesson - Steps 6 and 7

Were entirely ready to have God remove all these defects of character. **Dictionary definition of defect:** an imperfection that impairs worth or utility; a shortcoming; a lack of something necessary for completeness; a blemish.

Definition: "The FRUIT of the Spirit" - We MUST ALLOW the Holy Spirit to be in control of our lives, so that He can produce this FRUIT. As we mentioned above, these are the CHARACTER QUALITIES of JESUS, and God wants to exchange the character qualities of Jesus for MY CHARACTER DEFECTS and SHORTCOMINGS. **Romans 8:29 says that God wants to conform us to the image of His Son.** As we remove our character defects and shortcomings to make room for the Spirit of God to produce His fruit, we begin to have the character qualities of Jesus, and we will look and act like Jesus (become conformed to His image).

- **Romans 8:29** "For whom He foreknew (knew before we were born), He also predestined to be _____ to the _____ of His _____, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren."
- **Romans 12:1-2** "I beseech you (beg you) therefore brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present (yield, give) your _____ as a living sacrifice, _____, _____ to God, which is your reasonable service. And do _____ be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the _____ of your _____ that you may prove (demonstrate) what is that good and acceptable and perfect _____ of God."

11-14. "And have no fellowship with **the UNFRUITFUL works of DARKNESS**, but rather **expose them**. For it is **SHAMEFUL** even to speak of those things which are done by them in SECRET. But all things that are **EXPOSED are made MANIFEST** by the LIGHT, for whatever makes manifest is LIGHT. Therefore He says, '**Awake, you who SLEEP**, arise from the dead, and Christ will give you LIGHT."

- **Romans 6:21-22** "What _____ did you have then in the things of which you are now _____? For the end of those things is _____."
- **Luke 8:17** "For _____ is _____ that will not be _____, nor anything _____ that will not be _____ and come to _____."
- **I Thessalonians 5:6-8** "Therefore let us not _____, as others do, but let us watch and be _____. For those who _____, sleep at _____, and those who get _____ are _____ at night. But let us who are of the _____ be _____, putting on the breastplate of _____ and _____, and as a helmet the hope of _____."

Definition: "EXPOSE the WORKS of DARKNESS" - In last week's lesson we saw that **our character defects** were actually **the effects or evidences of the DARKNESS** in which we once walked, before we were born again. Ephesians 5:11 tells us to EXPOSE these works of darkness, or character defects. Did you ever stop to think WHY Steps 6 and 7 are located between doing our personal inventory and making amends (steps 8 and 9)? The reason for working on our character defects and shortcomings is so that we don't go on in life thinking that SOBRIETY or freedom from our addictions in itself is our goal.

- **John 3:19-21** "And this is the _____, that the _____ has come into the world, and men loved _____ rather than _____, because their deeds were _____."
- **Hebrews 4:13** "And there is no creature _____ from His _____, but all things are naked (exposed) and _____ to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account."

Definition: "MANIFEST" - Evident, shown, displayed, easily seen.

Definition: "SHAMEFUL even to speak of those things" - Read Romans 1:18-32.

A lot of the things listed in this passage in Romans are shameful things many of us brought up in our 4th Step inventory, and others are more like character defects. Either way, we see that these things are sinful, and God does not want them in our lives any more.

- **Romans 13:11-12** "And do this, knowing the time, that now it is high time to _____ out of _____; for now our salvation (the return of Christ) is _____ than when we first believed. The _____ is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore, let us cast _____ the _____ of _____, and let us put on the armor of _____."

15-17. "See then that you walk **CIRCUMSPECTLY**, not as **FOOLS** but as **WISE**, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but **UNDERSTAND** what **the WILL of the Lord** is."

- **Psalms 111:10** "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of _____; a good _____ have all those who _____ His _____."
- **Proverbs 1:7** "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge, but _____ despise _____ and _____."
- **Proverbs 18:2** "A _____ has no delight in _____, but [only] in expressing _____ heart (his own feelings and opinions)."
- **Proverbs 12:15** "The way of a _____ is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds (pays attention to) counsel is _____."
- **Read Proverbs 2:1-22** (Verses 1-2) "My son, if you receive My _____, and treasure My _____ within you, so that you incline your ear to _____, and apply your heart to _____." (Verses 5-6) "Then you will _____ the fear of the Lord, and find the knowledge of God. For the Lord gives _____; **from His mouth** (God's word, the Bible) come _____ and _____."

Definition: "Circumspectly" - To look around, be cautious, **CAREFUL to consider all circumstances and POSSIBLE CONSEQUENCES**. If you are not yet "entirely ready" for God to remove your character defects, perhaps you should **CONSIDER the CONSEQUENCES** of holding onto those things, and how much they will trip you up in your walk with the Lord (see Hebrews 12:1-2).

Definition: "The Fear of the Lord" - Reverential AWE and RESPECT for God, especially as EVIDENCED by OBEDIENCE to His commands and **DOING His will**. The New Testament equivalent is HOLY LIVING and being FILLED with the SPIRIT. As we OBEY God's commands that we see in His word, even the simplest ones, He will REVEAL **more of His will** for our lives to us. Why should He give us more detailed information if we don't even obey His will that is revealed in His word?

- **I John 3:22** "And whatever we ask, we _____ from Him, because we _____ His _____, and _____ those things which are _____ in His _____."
- **II Corinthians 7:1** "Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us _____ ourselves from all _____ of the _____ and _____, perfecting _____ in the _____ of God."

Definition: "CLEANSE OURSELVES of all FILTHINESS" - Notice, the command is for US to cleanse OURSELVES of whatever is "filthy" in our lives. Yes, God forgives us, and the blood of Jesus cleanses us from all sin (see I John 1:7-9), so that we are no longer under the condemnation and penalty of our sin. However, in this context of II Cor. 7:1, WE are the ones who are to separate ourselves from sin, and be "entirely

ready" to ALLOW God to remove our character defects and shortcomings. God will give us the POWER to DO IT, but WE have to do the work of ROOTING OUT each and every defect.

- **Read II Cor. 6:16-18** "And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the _____ of the living God; as God has said, 'I will _____ in them, and _____ among them; and I will be their God, and they shall be _____. Therefore, come out from among them, and be _____,' says the Lord, 'And do not _____ what is _____, and I will receive you, and I will be a _____ unto you, and you shall be My _____ and _____,' says the Lord Almighty."

18. "And do not be **drunk with wine**, in which is **dissipation**; but **BE FILLED with the Spirit**,"

- **Galatians 5:16** "I say then, ' _____ in the _____, and you shall not fulfill the _____ of the FLESH (the "old man", your sinful nature)."
- **Colossians 3:16-17** "Let the _____ of Christ _____ in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in _____ and _____ and _____, singing with _____ in your _____ to the Lord."

Definition: "DISSIPATION" - Dissipation means "**to use up foolishly**", being **WASTEFUL**, aimless living, "extravagant **pursuit of pleasure**", which is **NOT WISE** use of our time here on earth.

Definition: "Filled with the Spirit" - Paul contrasts BEING DRUNK with BEING FILLED with the Spirit. INSTEAD of being drunk, which is to be "UNDER THE INFLUENCE" of alcohol, we are to be "UNDER THE INFLUENCE", or CONTROLLED BY the **Holy Spirit**. In the Bible, it is also called "walking in the Spirit", "letting the word of Christ dwell in you", and "putting on the Lord Jesus Christ." This is NOT a ONE-TIME experience, but a continuous YIELDING of ourselves to the Holy Spirit's control in our lives. The literal translation of the Greek is "keep being filled" with the Spirit.

Third Week's Lesson - Steps 6 and 7

Bible Study

In this week's lesson, we are going to highlight several character defects or shortcomings: being **quick to get angry**, being **quick to judge others**, having a **corrupt mouth (evil speaking)**, **laziness**, and **stealing**. In Step 5, we worked on forgiveness and getting rid of bitterness from long-held anger and resentments. However, a person may have a **character defect or shortcoming of being QUICK to take offense**. We may call it being quick-tempered, or having a short fuse, and the Bible calls it being quick to take an offense, meaning quick to get angry. How a person "takes an offense" may differ according to their temperament, but it may be by becoming outwardly ANGRY (blowing up), becoming DEPRESSED and just wanting to give up (anger turned inward), being TEMPTED to commit a certain sin (acting out on the anger), or by smoldering and holding onto the anger (bitterness). The **person who is easily offended** may need to deal with the underlying spirit: a SPIRIT of OFFENSE. Just as Jesus dealt with a "spirit of infirmity" in a woman (Luke 13), and II Tim. 1:7 talks about a "spirit of fear" as not being from God, there is a "**spirit of offense**" or ANGER (Luke 9:55-56).

- **Luke 9:54-56** "And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, 'Lord, do you want us to command _____ to come down from heaven and

_____ them, just as Elijah did?' But He turned and rebuked them, and said, 'You do not know what manner of _____ you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save them.'

Jesus' disciples had taken offense, and had become angry, wanting revenge on these people. Jesus tells them they are being **motivated by the wrong spirit**, a spirit of offense. Last week, we looked at the "fruit" that the Holy Spirit can produce in our lives **if we let Him**. Satan and his demons (the "wrong spirits") can also influence us **IF we LET them**. This is why putting on the whole armor of God, especially the shield of faith, is so important, because we are in a state of warfare with these evil spirits, and the shield of faith extinguishes the "fiery darts" (thoughts, suggestions) of the evil one (Ephesians 6:10-18).

- **Ephesians 6:12-13** "For we do _____ wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the _____ of the _____ of this age, against _____ hosts of _____ in the heavenly places. Therefore take up the whole _____ of _____, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having _____ all, to _____."
- **James 3:14-16** "But if you have _____ envy (anger) and self-seeking in your _____, do not boast and lie _____ the _____ (God's truth). This wisdom does _____ descend from above (heaven), but is _____, sensual, _____. For where envy and self-seeking exist, _____ and every _____ thing will be there."
- **I Corinthians 14:33** "For God is _____ the author of _____ but of peace...."

Also, II Corinthians 10:3-5 says that we need to **"take EVERY THOUGHT captive to the OBEDIENCE of Christ"**, which means we must deal with our thought-life and emotions, rather than **ALLOWING them to rule us**. If you have an anger problem (are quick to take an offense), then Satan and his spirits know exactly HOW to get at you, and which "buttons to push" **to make you angry - IF you take the bait!** It is YOUR OWN CHOICE to obey what God says in His word, or not. If you obey God and take every thought captive and "guard yourself" (see I John 5:18), the wicked one (Satan) cannot touch you. It is when you DO NOT OBEY, and you **entertain or harbor those thoughts that are contrary to God's word** ("every high thing that exalts itself AGAINST God"), that Satan is allowed an entrance into your life (see Eph. 4:26-27). If you CONTINUALLY entertain wrong thoughts, you give Satan "ground" and ALLOW him to build strongholds in your life. "Ground" means a sphere of jurisdiction that **we VOLUNTARILY give to the enemy**. Many people are MENTALLY LAZY and PASSIVE, and they ALLOW these wrong thoughts to control them, and ALLOW Satan to build his strongholds in their lives. They may be saved, but they are miserable by their own CHOICE. They **ask for OTHER PEOPLE to PRAY FOR THEM**, but they remain in the same condition, because God has told THEM to do something about it, and they REFUSE to do it.

Being quick to get angry or take offense may also have its roots in a person's **being quick to JUDGE OTHERS**. You get ANGRY because you have automatically attributed CERTAIN MOTIVES to the other person's behavior. "They did this because _____" or "She said this because she was _____" or "He just isn't doing this or that because he is _____." Anytime you put in the "because" when you don't really know all the facts, you are judging the other persons' motives. If you get angry at people over motives that you don't even know are true, you are wasting your time and energy, and ultimately **you are taking the place of God!**

- **John 7:24** "Do not _____ according to _____, but judge with _____."
- **James 4:11-12** "Do not _____ of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and _____ his brother, speaks evil of the law and _____ the law [of God]. But if you _____ the law, you are

not a doer of the law but a judge. There is one Lawgiver (God), who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to _____ another?"

- **Read Matthew 7:1-5** (Verses 1-2) "_____ not, that you be not _____. For with what _____ you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure (standard) you use, it will be measured back to you."

Definition: "JUDGE with RIGHTEOUS JUDGMENT" - This is the only kind of "judging" we are allowed to do. **If we see something that is WRONG and a SIN** according to God's word, **we are CERTAINLY allowed to JUDGE** that thing as being SINFUL and WRONG. If we see a BROTHER (fellow Christian) committing a sin, we are to go and try to restore that brother to a godly lifestyle (I John 5:16; Galatians 6:1-2; Matthew 18:15; I Corinthians 5:1-13). According to James 4:11-12, the kind of "judging" we are NOT to do is the kind that involves **"speaking evil" of another person, which is GOSSIP**. If you do not have all the facts, or if you are attributing certain MOTIVES to what a person does, you are NOT judging righteously, but are GOSSIPING. **Only God can know the MOTIVES of a person's heart**, and most of the time, we DO NOT have all the facts.

- **I Samuel 16:7** "But the Lord said to Samuel, 'Do not look at his _____ or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for _____ sees not as man sees, for _____ looks at the outward _____, but the Lord looks at the _____.'"

Read Ephesians 4:26-32.

26-27. "Be **ANGRY and do not sin**; do not let the **sun go down on your wrath**, nor GIVE PLACE to the **devil**."

- **James 1:19-20** "Therefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be _____ to _____, slow to _____, slow to wrath (SLOW to GET ANGRY); for the _____ of man does not produce the _____ of God."
- **Mark 11:25** "And whenever you stand _____, if you have _____ against anyone, _____ him, that your Father in heaven may also _____ you your trespasses."
- **Mark 3:5** "So when He (Jesus) had looked around them with _____, being grieved by the _____ of their _____, He said to the man, 'Stretch out your hand.' And he stretched it out, and his hand was restored as whole as the other."

NOTE: Jesus could be ANGRY and not sin, because his anger was towards those who were corrupting God's message and hindering people from coming to God. We, on the other hand, usually get angry because someone has done something that HURTS US, or INCONVENIENCES US, or for some other SELFISH reason. Then, we tend to HOLD ONTO that anger, and it turns into bitterness and resentment.

Definition: "Do not let the sun go down on your wrath" - This means to **LET GO of all anger**, and FORGIVE before the end of the day, or as soon as possible. If your anger is not against a PERSON, but rather against CIRCUMSTANCES, the Lord COMMANDS us in His word to "REJOICE always and give THANKS in everything, in all circumstances"

- **I Thessalonians 5:16-18** "_____ _____, pray without ceasing, in _____ give _____; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

Definition: "GIVE PLACE TO THE DEVIL" - This means DON'T give the devil an **opportunity** to cause trouble in your life. Holding onto anger and letting it turn into bitterness and unforgiveness is a sure way to ALLOW Satan to MESS UP your life.

- **I Peter 5:8-9** "Be _____, be _____; because your adversary (enemy) the _____ walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom (looking for someone) he may devour. _____ him, steadfast in the faith..."
- **James 4:7** "Therefore _____ to God. _____ the devil and he will _____ from you."

28. "Let him who stole **STEAL no longer**, but rather let him **labor, working with his hands** what is good, that he may have something to GIVE him who is IN NEED."

- **Read II Thessalonians 3:7-12** "For you yourselves know how you ought to follow us, for we were not _____ among you; nor did we eat anyone's bread free of charge, but _____ with _____ and toil night and day, that we might not be a _____ to any of you, not because we do not have authority, but to make ourselves an _____ of how you should follow us. For even when we were with you, we commanded you this: If anyone _____ not _____, neither shall he eat. For we hear that there are some who walk among you in a _____ manner, not _____ at all, but are _____. Now those who are such We command and exhort through our Lord Jesus Christ that they _____ in quietness and eat their own bread."
- **I Peter 4:15-16** (Verse 15) "But let none of you suffer as a _____, a _____, an _____, or as a _____ in other people's matters."

29-31. "Let no **CORRUPT communication** proceed out of your MOUTH, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not **GRIEVE the Holy Spirit** of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all **BITTERNESS, wrath, ANGER, clamor, and all EVIL SPEAKING** be **put away from you**, with all malice."

- **Colossians 3: 8-9** "But now you also must _____ all these: _____, _____, _____, blasphemy, _____ out of your _____. Do not _____ to one another, since you have _____ the _____ with his deeds."
- **Colossians 4:6** "Let your _____ always be with grace, seasoned with salt, that you may know how you ought to _____ each one."
- **Psalms 39:1** "I said, 'I will _____ my ways, lest I _____ with my _____; I will restrain my _____ with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me.'"
- **Psalms 34:13** "Keep your _____ from _____, and your _____ from speaking guile (dishonesty, deceit)."
- **Proverbs 8:13** "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; _____ and _____ and the evil way and the perverse _____ I hate."

Definition: "PERVERSE MOUTH" - A perverse mouth is one of the things God hates! Perverse means "turned away from, or opposing what is right or good; **CORRUPT**; improper, stubborn, obstinate." This doesn't just mean gossiping, swearing, and that kind of talk, it means ANY talk, **ANY WORDS that come out of your mouth that are CONTRARY or AGAINST what God says in His word!** Negative words, words of doubt and unbelief - all these are the opposite of God's truth, and they "exalt themselves against the knowledge of God." This is where **"taking every thought**

captive" is necessary. **The THOUGHT comes first, before the WORDS**, so we must be sure that every thought, and then every word that comes out of our mouths, is in accordance with, or "obedient to" Christ.

- **II Corinthians 10:4-5** "For the _____ of our _____ are not carnal (merely human) but mighty (powerful) in God for pulling down _____, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself _____ the knowledge of God, bringing every _____ into _____ to the obedience of Christ."

Personal Questions

1. Do you put on the whole armor of God and ask the Holy Spirit to take control of your life EVERY DAY? _____ Which of your character defects do you need to deal with by putting up the shield of faith and by taking your thoughts captive?
2. Do you think you are one of those "mentally lazy" people? Do you always want SOMEONE ELSE to pray and resist the devil FOR you?
3. The Bible puts stealing (being a thief) and murder right in there with LAZINESS (refusing to work) and GOSSIPING (being a busybody). In God's sight, there are NO "little" or "big" sins. Sin is coming short of God's perfect standard. Do you tend to minimize your character defects and shortcomings, and say, "They really aren't THAT bad?"

Further Meditations on Steps 6 and 7

Hi, group! Now we are almost finished with Steps 6&7, and Dottie and I need to know how well you feel you are doing. I know you have mixed emotions about these steps - you don't mind so much being referred to as a "character", but it's that "defect" part that sucks!!

Upon further examination, I find this to be very serious business, as these steps are calling for an honest look at ourselves. As if Step 4 wasn't enough, the Bible tells us to judge and examine ourselves, so that we are not judged (I Cor. 11:28-32), and it states that the measure we use to judge others will be the same measure used to judge us (Matt. 7:1-2). You may find that some of your defects of character and shortcomings are not that hard to correct, and some will take a real commitment, but we all have areas we can improve on with the Lord's help! Remember, our gracious God and Heavenly Father is not expecting perfection in this life, but He is preparing a bride fit for His son Jesus Christ, for all eternity. As we examine ourselves, keep in mind that we need to meditate on His Word, on our life's purpose, and on our position in Christ Jesus.

You will have to **surrender your self-will to Him**, and pray and **ask for His will** for your life. Christian, you can be sure God hears your prayers, but do pray properly. I John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness". If you really want answers to your prayers, you must be confessed up, praying to the Father through the Son (in the name of Jesus), in the power of the Holy Spirit. You must pray **believing that God heard you and is acting on your behalf** (Mark 11:24). No "I guess so"s or "I hope so"s, but "I KNOW SO". When God takes over a situation there is no guess work. If you prayed properly, and you asked for His will for your life, He always answers, because you are His child, and he wants you to have the very best. Commit to memory Psalm 37:4-5, "Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass."

Being able to forgive others is sometimes hard, but that **bitterness and anger is the Number One Prayer Killer!** We certainly want the Lord to forgive all of OUR sins! Oh yes!! It is because of His boundless GRACE that He was able to save us and forgive us. What we must do is ask Him for that same glorious GRACE so that we will be able to forgive the vilest

offender. Remember, the Bible admonishes us to hate the sin but love the sinner! You will find if you pray seriously for the very one that has hurt you, you will start feeling much better, and you will start to enjoy some new found freedom. The Bible says that you shall know the truth and the truth shall set you free! And you shall be free indeed (John 8:36). In John 14:6, Jesus says, "I AM the Way, I AM the Truth, I AM the Life, and no one comes to the Father but by me." Okay, I guess the question is do you know this TRUTH? If so, then you have been set free! Yes FREE! Free to forgive and rise above your circumstances.

Dottie and I are here for you 24/7. We love you and we also want the very best for your life. Remember, "Soon this life will be past, and only what's done for Christ will last!"

In His love and care,

Pastor Tom and Dottie

P.S. - Just how much faith does it take to believe and trust in a God who never fails?!!