

## Freedom From Shortcomings – Unconditional Love

### Step 7: Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings.

How do we do such a thing? How do we come before the God of heaven and earth, knowing we fall short of living in His loving way and ask Him to remove our shortcomings? How do we come as people who have felt unsafe and let down, who have acted in certain destructive ways out of coping, out of fear, out of not knowing what else to do? How do we come and ask God to remove these protective shortcomings?

**I sought the LORD, and he answered me; he delivered me from all my fears. Those who look to him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame. This poor man called, and the LORD heard him; he saved him out of all his troubles.** (Psalm 34:4-6)

We can only come to God for removal of our shortcomings if we do so in absolute dependence on something that is still quite unfamiliar to us but in something to which we are coming to hope. That something is unconditional love. The only way any shortcoming will ever become something of our past rather than our present is for our hearts and lives to be so filled with safe and enduring love that we no longer need those destructive and broken behaviours and habits.

So we come asking God to change our beliefs about being loved unconditionally. In the most full-blown episodes of our shortcomings we are loved as deeply by God as we are in the moments when we are most at peace with God and our neighbour. In someone else's worst lashing out against us in the expression of their shortcomings, God's love is available to hold us safe at a level deeper than any wrong can touch. We come asking God to reveal to us how long and wide and high and deep His love for us really is, how available it is for us, and has been for us our entire lives, whether we were aware of it or not.

**I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.** (Ephesians 3:16-19)

We come asking God to apply His unconditional love to our fears to the gaps in our heart, to the pain in our memories. We apply the cross of Jesus to our minds and hearts – the cross that says that every sinful broken act done to us and done by us is carried there by the suffering Jesus. We ask God to remove our shortcomings by giving over to God all the disappointments in others and ourselves, all the judgments of ourselves and others, all the doubts about our ability to commit to one another in faithful love. We come to God asking Him to pour His forgiving love into us, for our wrongs, and a generous supply for others who have wronged us.

**You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you.** (Matthew 5:43-44)

**And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors ... For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins.** (Matthew 6:12, 14-15)

We come to God genuinely desiring Him to remove from our minds and hearts all connection to trauma, to violence, to rejection and abandonment, to harsh words, to abuse of any kind, to hatred, to betrayal, to misunderstanding, and to anything at all that set in motion our destructive thoughts and behaviours. How else could we ever follow the words of Jesus who commands us to bless those who've harmed us? Anything less is a shortcoming.

**Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.** (Luke 6:27,28)

We commit ourselves to the love of God – to receiving that love and staying in the presence of that love and holding our hearts in that love daily until we are filled completely with that amazing love and every other destructive influence is washed out of us. As long as there are remnants of sins done to us or by us that remain in our hearts and minds, we will be prone to acting out our shortcomings in some way.

One of the hardest things for broken people to do is to be humble enough to receive love, and receive love, and receive love until our hearts are filled and healed. We'd rather hold a record of wrongs. We'd rather have a little bank account of resentments that give us excuse to act out. We don't really want to receive unconditional love for ourselves and we certainly don't want to have to pass unconditional love along to others. We want our rights. We want others to make things right with us. We want justice. We want retribution. We want our "pound of flesh." We want grace for our shortcomings but we need to grace others for theirs as well.

**Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.** (Colossians 3:13-14)

God invites us to put on His love – unconditional love that covers a multitude of sins. To humbly ask God to remove our shortcomings is to come to love – really come to a place of receiving enough love that every single hurtful issue in our minds and hearts is covered in His love. Then in the safety and the security of the deepest places of our being filled with abiding love we can go out to bless and be gentle and strong in our human relationships. We can forgive. We can bless those who spitefully use us. We can live in character strengths rather than shortcomings and invite others to the same. In this way God invites all of us to His safe and enduring love – the only expression of life that is without shortcoming.