

Spiritual Warfare --The Invisible World

We live in a world where some things are unseen and yet we are absolutely aware that they exist. Jesus used the example of the wind to help us understand the fact that there is a spiritual world behind all that we see in the visible world and we have to deal with that world if we are to see changes in our hearts,, minds, and circumstances.

"Just as you can hear the wind but can't tell where it comes from or where it is going, so you can't explain how people are born of the Spirit." (John 3:8 NLT)

We are all aware that not only do we have a body that we can see and feel and touch but we also have a soul where we think and feel and choose. We can't see that soul but we experience its effects every day of our lives. We also have a spirit that keeps us alive every day we live and breathe on this earth and that leaves our body when we die. At our death our body remains but something clearly has changed. The spirit is gone. We don't see the spirit leave but the heart stops beating, the lungs stop breathing, the brain stops sending signals. With current medical technology doctors can describe all these effects of the spirit being gone and we can see the signals on monitors that beep and make lines and pictures, but no doctor and no machine has seen the spirit. It's like the wind. We hear it and see the effects but the spirit itself is not seen. However, the spirit is still very real because when the spirit is present, there is life. When the spirit is gone, there is death.

In the same way we cannot see God but we can see all that God has done in creation, how He's changed lives around us - even our own. ***For the truth about God is known to them instinctively. God has put this knowledge in their hearts. From the time the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky and all that God made. They can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse whatsoever for not knowing God.*** (Romans 1:19-20 NLT)

When we invite God to come into our lives, take away our sin and give us a nourishing and uplifting relationship with Him, he does it by filling our lives with the His presence, with His Holy Spirit. We do not see the Holy Spirit enter our life but He definitely comes and we know inside ourselves that something has changed. We ask Jesus to forgive us for our sins because He died on the cross to take our punishment. We give Jesus permission to take control of our lives and make us new people. Jesus does this by filling our spirit with His Spirit. We don't see bad things being washed away. We don't see a new heart being created inside us. We don't see life filling our previously dead spirits but it surely is happening. It's happening in the spiritual world and we are spiritual people. What we "see" is new hope and new joy and a new ability to love and be loved. What we experience is a new ability to say "no" when

we need to avoid harmful addiction and relationships and an ability to say "yes" to forgiving others and taking responsibility for ourselves and our actions. Those are all the signs of the new life of God that has changed us in the core of our being.

Those who are controlled by the Holy Spirit think about things that please the Spirit. If your sinful nature controls your mind, there is death. But if the Holy Spirit controls your mind, there is life and peace. For the sinful nature is always hostile to God. It never did obey God's laws, and it never will. That's why those who are still under the control of their sinful nature can never please God. (Romans 8:5-8 NLT)

We know all this and yet how often in recovery do we feel as though we are in a battle with our thoughts, our emotions, people around us, and even God? The reality is we are engaged in a spiritual battle as long as we live. God is for us. The devil is against us. Jesus summarized this using the picture of a thief, ***The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness.*** (John 10:10 NLT) When we invite God the Holy Spirit to come and live in us, we choose who will be in control. As we surrender ourselves moment my moment to God, we will find ourselves on the winning side of the battle because, ***"The Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world"*** (1 John 4:4 NLT)

God offers us life. The devil offers us activities that will steal, kill and destroy us. Our addictions are ample proof of the empty promises from the devil - temporary pleasure that ends in a fruitless search to simply cover a grinding need and all the way along we lose relationships, hope, and even ourselves. God's offer to us today is life in all its fullness - life controlled by God's Spirit.

Am I alive spiritually? How will I know? Have I invited God to come into my life? Do I have life and peace? Would God be pleased with what I am thinking about myself, others around me, my plans, my dreams? If that's the case, then God's spirit is controlling my mind. Do I have hostility and disobedience, anger and resentment, shame and guilt? Then I have given control of my will to Satan.

God, I invite you to come into my life and make me alive by the power of Your Holy Spirit. Cleanse me from my sin through Jesus' death on the cross and resurrection from the grave. Fill me with power so I can live as a new person.

Questions For Discussion and Reflection

1. How do I decide if I am alive or dead spiritually?
2. What evidence do I see from my daily life to support my claim?

Relapse Prevention -- 3 -- Power To Choose

Once we invite God to come and live in us, by His Holy Spirit everything does change and everything must change. We are alive as we've never been alive before we have power like we've never had before. The Bible describes that power for us. *I pray that you will begin to understand the incredible greatness of his power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God's right hand in the heavenly realms. Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else in this world or in the world to come. And God has put all things under the authority of Christ, and he gave him this authority for the benefit of the church.* (Ephesians 1:19-22)

Not only do we have this incredible power and authority, but we have lots of opportunities to put this power into practice. We've lived by our own thoughts and desires for many years and as we now live according to the Holy Spirit we will see again and again areas where our lives have to change from what they were to what pleases God.

Live according to your new life in the Holy Spirit. Then you won't be doing what your sinful nature craves. The old sinful nature loves to do evil, which is just opposite from what the Holy Spirit wants. And the Spirit gives us desires that are opposite from what the sinful nature desires. These two forces are constantly fighting each other, and your choices are never free from this conflict. But when you are directed by the Holy Spirit, you are no longer subject to the law. (Galatians 5:16-18)

Many times every day we will need to exercise the new power that is in us to choose for the new desires that the Holy Spirit is putting in front of us. The difficult part is that from the left eye we see what the Holy Spirit wants us to do and from the right eye we see the familiar desires that have been our life patterns for years. God doesn't simply rip those pictures out of our mind. God gives us the power of the Holy Spirit to make the choice for what's right. Our part is to make the choice. God will never take that responsibility from us. He's given us the freedom to choose and now the power of the Holy Spirit to choose well.

How will I know if I am making the right choice? Again, God is so kind and helpful. He gives us very clear indicators from daily life that will help us know if we are straying from the path.

When you follow the desires of your sinful nature, your lives will produce these evil results: sexual immorality, impure thoughts, eagerness for lustful pleasure, idolatry, participation in demonic activities, hostility, quarreling, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish

ambition, divisions, the feeling that everyone is wrong except those in your own little group, envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other kinds of sin. Let me tell you again, as I have before, that anyone living that sort of life will not inherit the Kingdom of God. (Galatians 5:19-21)

We can clearly see how our lives in addiction were not lives controlled by God's Spirit. We can also clearly see how much of our lives still need to be transformed through ongoing surrender to God's healing and renewing.

When God comes to live in us, our Spirit is made alive and will live with God forever. Now the process that goes on in us is the transformation of our soul (thoughts, emotions, will to choose). As we practice and grow more skilled in surrendering these invisible areas to God, we will see changes in our visible world - our words, our actions, our attitudes, our work, and our relationships. *He is the Holy Spirit, who leads into all truth. And as the Spirit of the Lord works within us, we become more and more like [Jesus] and reflect his glory even more.* (John 14:17, 2 Corinthians 3:18)

What's the evidence of the new life? *But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have nailed the passions and desires of their sinful nature to his cross and crucified them there.* (Galatians 5:22-24)

Clearly, God makes changes in us. Just as clearly, it is we who have to choose to nail our passions and sinful desires to the cross. We have to die to the things we used to want. In fact, we have to put them to death - actually kill the wrong desires and passions in us. We have to say "no" to them in order to live in love and joy and peace now. And that's where we begin to experience what many have described as spiritual warfare - the battle of the invisible kingdoms.

We have the power to make this choice. We have God's Holy Spirit living in us giving us overwhelming power to choose life. But, the choice is ours. What choice will I make? There is no in between. Either we choose for life or death, for sinful desires or Godly desires.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. In what areas do I see the battle of the natures in me?
2. What am I doing to put to death the sinful desires in me?
3. How am I choosing life by the Spirit of God today?

Relapse Prevention -- 4 - Getting My Priorities Straight

To be "relapse proof" is to be fully committed to a new life that prioritizes our Creator instead of giving first place to anything that is created. To be fully alive we must invite God to come and live in us by His Holy Spirit. Then we must give God, control of our lives, not only on a day to day daily basis, but on a moment by moment basis. A guarantee against relapse is the decision for a new lifestyle where we do those things that God affirms and stay away from those practices that God condemns. We will do what is good and pleasing to God.

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind he will accept. When you think of what he has done for you, is this too much to ask? Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will know what God wants you to do, and you will know how good and pleasing and perfect his will really is. (Romans 12:1-2)

We all want that. We all work hard, especially early in recovery to see that become lived reality. And we all experience a tremendous battle in that process. It's much harder than it appears to live a Godly life. Why is that? The Bible also clearly tells us: "***We are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms.***" (Ephesians 6:12 NLT)

Through our sinful broken lives and practices we've welcomed all kinds of influence from the devil. There are clear connections between demonic activity and the abuse of mind-altering drugs. Similarly, we open the door to the devil through sexual immorality, heavy metal music, gambling, horror and violent movies, fortune telling and occultic practices, as well as through gluttony, lies, anger, envy, and fear ... the list is long. Others have kicked opened doors in our lives through abuse and violence towards us. The devil never waits for much of an invitation. He's always lurking, waiting to steal, kill, and destroy.

Do not let your people practice fortune-telling or sorcery, or allow them to interpret omens, or engage in witchcraft, or cast spells, or function as mediums or psychics, or call forth the spirits of the dead. Anyone

who does these things is an object of horror and disgust to the Lord ... He practiced sorcery, divination, and witchcraft, and he consulted with mediums and psychics. He did much that was evil in the Lord's sight, arousing his anger. (Deuteronomy 18:10-12, 2 Chronicles 33:6)

Jesus, I have chosen you as my Saviour and my Lord. I now have power and authority over all the schemes and attacks of the devil. Jesus, I ask for your forgiveness and cleansing for my involvement in (name any known areas where you've participated in things that might have opened a door to Satan). I turn away from all of these evil practices and turn to You, Lord Jesus, as the only source of freedom and life for me.

In the name of Jesus Christ, I cut myself free from every person and every spirit that was involved with me in when I committed these sins. I cancel all contracts made with the devil and any evil spirits. I take back all areas of my life that I gave away through my sinful behaviours. On the authority of my Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, I proclaim that I now stand free from any and all negative connections to these behaviours.

God, strengthen me by Your Holy Spirit to obey You and stand firm when I am next tempted these areas.
"Greater is He who is in me than he who is in the world."
(1 John 4:4)

The wonderful news is that when we come to God, we get to break free from all the bondages that have been chained around us by these practices and thoughts and all our related choices. When we thought we were depending on created things like chemicals or food or co-dependent relationships to cover our pain, we were actually making those things a higher priority than surrender to the will of our Creator. That upside down priority is what we call an idolatry. We tried to get power to cope and survive from things or people or ideas instead of from following God's clear principles. It was the lie of the devil that told us those things would solve our problems and that we didn't need God or that God didn't care or wasn't there. The devil is behind all choices for something other than God's way of loving obedience and trust in His goodness to heal our pain and give us ultimate satisfaction.

Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour. (1 Peter 5:8 NLT)

In Biblical times people had all kinds of idols that they bowed down to, worshipped and gave spiritual power to. Sometimes we have those too like a statue of Buddha or anything we carry around to which we give power (crystals, rocks, lucky charms etc.) But the most severe idols we live with as addicts are our chemicals, our desire for money, our victim mentality, our inappropriate sexual relationships etc. The Bible is clear about the extreme damage these idols bring into our lives.

You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, too. You cannot eat at the Lord's Table and at the table of demons, too. Dear children, keep away from anything that might take God's place in your heart. (1 Cor. 10:21 NLT) (1 John 5:21 NLT)

The only way to "relapse proof" our new life is to give 100% of our surrender, dependency and obedience to our Creator, the Living God. Anything less is a relapse in the making.

Spiritual Warfare -- Under Attack

Once we have cleaned up our lives from all past involvement in sinful practices we are home free for a life of joy and peace and blessing, right? Wrong! That's the very time the devil will do everything in his power to draw us away from what we are now experiencing with God. When we are growing closer to God the devil hates it. When we take back the ground of our heart or help someone else do the same the devil will do anything he can to stop us. As God is preparing us for a deeper relationship or a greater experience of His blessing and influence, the devil will naturally be afraid of that and try to block it. We have to be on guard.

So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in his good time he will honor you ... Be careful! Watch out for attacks from the Devil, your great enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for some victim to devour. Take a firm stand against him, and be strong in your faith. (1 Peter 5:6-9)

Temptation and Deception: In the Garden of Eden the devil made the apple very appealing to Eve and then had her question what God had really said when he spoke to her. He twisted what God said about spiritual death and applied it to physical death. Similarly, when Jesus was tempted, the devil quoted scripture to Jesus to do it in a twisted way that tried to get Jesus to go against God's plan. The devil will do his best to tempt us with something appealing to us and then give us reasons why it's not so bad or why we deserve it or even remind us that God will forgive us so why not just go ahead. If God has said it's wrong, there's no reason that can make it right. The ultimate deception is to believe that we're safe from deception. We're prone to being deceived every day of our lives and must stay on guard.

Now the Holy Spirit tells us clearly that in the last times some will turn away from what we believe; they will follow lying spirits and teachings that come from demons The human heart is most deceitful and desperately wicked. Who really knows how bad it is? (1 Timothy 4:1, Jeremiah 17:9 NLT)

Accusation and Condemnation: One of the devil's favorite tactics is to get us to sin and then immediately tell us how stupid we are, how much a failure we are, how bad a Christian we are, and how we just aren't getting this Christian life at all. He will try to get us to believe it's too hard, we're too messed up or it hurts too much. ***For the Accuser has been thrown down to earth—the one who accused our brothers and sisters before our God day and night.*** (Revelation 12:10 NLT) Make no mistake about it, the devil is looking for a way today to accuse you for something. Remind the devil that it's no surprise to God that a person fails. ***If we say we have no sin, we are only fooling ourselves and refusing to accept the truth*** (1

John 1:8 NLT) If you have done something wrong, reassure yourself of God's love: ***While we were still sinners, Christ died for us ...*** (Romans 5:8). Ask for and receive God's healing and cleansing ***But if we confess our sins to him, he is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from every wrong.*** (1 John 1:9 NLT)

Isolation and Rationalization: Sometimes we isolate because we feel guilty and ashamed for having thought or done something wrong. At other times, we isolate because we don't like the truth and we're avoiding circumstances where we will be challenged. Often in isolation we are ripe for rationalizing. We either tell ourselves that something wrong isn't so bad or we tell ourselves only half the truth - the pleasure but not the pain. We isolate when our priorities are out of line and we think work or money or something else is what we need now rather than prioritizing God's word, church and Bible study and fellowship with other believers. One of the devil's favourite tactics is to divide Christians from each other because we are easier to defeat on our own. However he can do it, the devil will try to get you off on your own.

Obsessions and Desires: As addicts we have practiced the art of obsession and have it down to a fine science. God can use that ability to help us focus on new priorities but the devil is also very active in us to lure our thoughts away to obsess on anything that will take us away from God. For some it will be the drug or sex or the thrill of winning the pot in gambling. For others it will be guilt, shame, or fear. At other times the obsession will be on work, a game, a problem, a worry, a hidden sin. The devil doesn't care what keeps our mind separated from God's thoughts so long as we're busy in our own little mental world. The Bible is very clear that we need to uproot anything in our mind that takes our focus away from God and His goodness in our life. ***Fix your thoughts on what is true and honorable and right. Think about things that are pure and lovely and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.*** (Philippians 4:8 NLT)

Confusion and Doubt: When all else fails the devil just gets us asking questions and wondering about this and that. The "committee in our head" won't just be talking, they'll all be talking at once. Confusion is not from God. Peace is. ***You will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will guard your hearts and minds as you live in Christ Jesus.*** (Philippians 4:7 NLT) Don't settle for anything less.

Questions For Reflection and Discussion

1. Where am I vulnerable to Satan's attacks?
2. What am I doing to be prepared to face and defeat these strategies?

Spiritual Warfare - My Weapons

A final word: Be strong with the Lord's mighty power. Put on all of God's armor so that you will be able to stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil. We are not fighting against people made of flesh and blood, but against the evil rulers and authorities of the unseen world, against those mighty powers of darkness who rule this world, and against wicked spirits in the heavenly realms. Use every piece of God's armor to resist the enemy in the time of evil, so that after the battle you will still be standing firm.

Stand your ground, putting on the sturdy belt of truth and the body armor of God's righteousness. For shoes, put on the peace that comes from the Good News, so that you will be fully prepared. In every battle you will need faith as your shield to stop the fiery arrows aimed at you by Satan. Put on salvation as your helmet, and take the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. Pray at all times and on every occasion in the power of the Holy Spirit. Stay alert and be persistent in your prayers for all Christians everywhere. (Ephesians 6:10-16 NLT)

God is very clear with us that there is a battle, that we are involved, that we can fight and resist, but that we need help in order to stand firm and win. We need to use every piece. We need to use them consistently and we need to keep on using them. We need to use these weapons prayerfully. Above all, we need to surrender ourselves to the power of the Holy Spirit because ultimately it is His power and authority, not ours, that sends the forces of darkness fleeing.

Here are some prayerful ways to put on the armour of God.

1. God, this morning I put on the **helmet of salvation** to guard my mind. Guard what I think, hear, see and speak. I choose to take every thought captive and make it your Word. Today I renounce all obsessions, all negative thoughts. I declare today that I have the mind of Christ.
2. I put on the **breastplate of righteousness** to guard my heart, my will, and my emotions. I will live right today and do good because the blood of Jesus washes me clean. I can respond to all circumstances and people with love and truth because God's love protects me.
3. Jesus, today I wrap **truth around me like a belt**. You are the way, the truth and the life. Satan is a liar. Today I choose to believe I am a child of God. I have been redeemed by the blood of Jesus. I have been healed by His sacrifice on the cross. I have been filled with the Holy Spirit and today I will live a strong and successful life according to the Word of God which is truth.

4. Lord, today wherever my **feet** take me, I will share the **good news** of Jesus. By my words and actions I will show that Jesus makes a difference in the lives of broken and hurting people and brings them peace.

5. Jesus, today I take up the **shield of faith** which will, stop every negative thought the enemy will throw at me. God is with me. God is in control. I have nothing to fear. Lord, you are the only true and living God and my faith is secure in You. You love me. You will keep me safe. I will live by faith and not simply by my feelings.

6. Lord, today I take up the **sword of the Spirit**, which is the word of God. I will use my words with caution so as not to harm myself or others. I will use my words effectively to tear down lies and curses, fear and shame, and all other negative effects of Satan's words in my life past, present, or future.

The ultimate weapons we carry with us on a daily basis are the name of Jesus and a worshipping heart.

The name of Jesus. We are advised repeatedly in scripture to use the name of Jesus. When we do, the demons respond because they know they that Jesus is in charge. When you don't know what else to do, call out Jesus. When you tell the devil to leave you alone, do it in the name of Jesus. Saying the name of Jesus is not magic. It is our affirmation that we are living under His authority and His ways are the rule for our life.

Praise and Worship: The Bible tells us that God makes his home in the praise of His people. (Psalm 22:3) A great way to send the enemy away is to sing or shout out praise and thanksgiving. Turn on a CD with worship music. Make it a habit to be in meetings and with others who sing and worship God. Let God make His home in your heart as you worship Him.

We have the tools - the armour of God. We have a mind and a voice that can pray. We don't always have for take great strides ahead but what we are responsible to do is to stand and not go back. Whenever we are tempted to turn back to our former life, God's clear command to us is to **stand**. We have power, God's mighty power. We may have to hold on and persevere in prayer and affirming truth but God's clear promise is that we can stand firm against all strategies and tricks of the Devil.

It's time for battle.

Questions for Reflection and Discussion

1. Which tools have I used in the past 24 hours?
2. In what ways do I need to do a better job of inviting God into my day?

Relapse Prevention -- 1 -- Believing the Truth

Truth stands the test of time; lies are soon exposed.
(Proverbs 12:19 NLT)

Jesus wants us to live well in this life. He promised us: ***"and you will know the truth and the truth will set you free."*** (John 8:32 NLT). It is God's plan that we not only know about the truth but that we believe the truth, speak the truth and rearrange our lives so all of our actions support the truth. That's a huge turnaround from a life in active addiction where deception is the rule of the day. Even prior to active addiction for many of us, truth was hard to live because we didn't feel safe where the truth was. We felt we had to hide behind a mask and pretend we were someone other than who we are. We felt we had to say something other than truth so we wouldn't create trouble in our home or even bring abusive actions onto ourselves. Sometimes we were even forced to lie as violent people beat out of us the words they wanted to hear.

For many of us our the first necessary action is to break the lie off us that Satan has wound around our heart and mind, that telling the truth is not safe, not worth it, and will not get us what we need. We do that by **asking God to forgive us** for believing the lie - even though circumstances made it difficult to do otherwise. We **ask God to cleanse us from our sin** of trusting in lies rather than the truth and then we **receive God's healing**. We take authority in the name of Jesus, who was the complete truth-teller, and we **break the power of the lie off us**. In place of that lie we **bless our minds and hearts with the truth** that God's truth active in my life is filled with blessing and comfort and healing and power. It's God's gift of love and care for me. We choose to accept that truth and invite God to fill the empty place in our hearts where the lie used to be with His loving truth.

What lies have we told ourselves or believed that other have told us. There are many. Here are ten beliefs many hold. Following each is God's response from the Bible.

1. Money will give me security, bring me happiness and solve problems. I need money to be okay. **For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil. And some people, craving money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many sorrows.** (1 Timothy 6:10)
2. Mood-altering substances can heal my pain, give me joy, and release stress. ***Wine produces mockers; liquor leads to brawls. Whoever is led astray by drink cannot be wise.*** (Proverbs 20:1)
3. If I look okay, I'll be okay OR I'm nobody unless I look okay. ***Charm is deceptive, and beauty does not last; but a woman who fears the Lord will be greatly praised.*** (Proverbs 31:30 NLT)

4. Feeding my sexual need is normal and will satisfy me. ***Throw off your old evil nature and your former way of life, which is rotten through and through, full of lust and deception.*** (Ephesians 4:22 NLT)
5. I can do what I want and it's no one else's business. ***Pride goes before destruction, and haughtiness before a fall.*** (Proverbs 16:18 NLT)
6. One little sin doesn't matter. As long as no one knows, I can get by. ***You must warn each other every day, as long as it is called "today," so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.*** (Hebrews 3:13 NLT)
7. I can still associate with old friends, go to old places, hang around old neighborhoods, and it won't harm me. ***Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for bad company corrupts good character.*** (1 Corinthians 15:33)
8. Please tell me you like me. I can't really feel settled until you let me know you approve of me. ***Obviously, I'm not trying to be a people pleaser! No, I am trying to please God. If I were still trying to please people, I would not be Christ's servant.*** (Gal. 1:10)
9. I have to do alright, measure up to a certain standard, and then things will be fine OR I can't measure up to that standard so why bother trying. ***Have you lost your senses? After starting your Christian lives in the Spirit, why are you now trying to become perfect by your own human effort?*** (Gal. 3:3 NLT)
10. God is a loving God and would never send anyone to hell so everyone is going to heaven when they die. Death will end my suffering. ***Don't you know that those who do wrong will have no share in the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves.*** (1 Corinthians 6:9 NLT)

When we work the steps we often look at how we have lived in denial. We've blamed others for our problems, made excuses for our behaviours, lashed out in anger on innocent people, minimized the harm caused by our actions, hid the full extent of our addiction, outright lied to others about many things, or just hid behind our addictive behaviour to pretend that everything was alright. Sometimes we thought and spoke the lies for so long they became a whole new pseudo-reality for us. We hardly knew what was true and what was fantasy anymore.

It is God's desire that we be free and that comes by renouncing lies, breaking their power off our lives, receiving the truth and allowing it to replace and replenish our lives where the lie once held us.

Questions For Discussion and Reflection

1. What lies have I believed?
2. What lies am I willing to renounce and break off my life?

Relapse Prevention -- 2 -- What Am I Saying?

"Sticks and stone will break my bones but names will never hurt." Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, physical injuries most often heal much more quickly and completely than emotional wounds. We carry the effects of words with us for months and years and our lives are often dramatically shaped by them

God's word tells us that our words have the power to ensnare us or to bring us to life and health. *The words of the wicked are like a murderous ambush, but the words of the godly save lives.* (Proverbs 12:6 NLT)

There are many ways we are influenced by the words of others. In our past, many of us have heard words like, "You'll never amount to anything", "Stupid", "You'll never be as smart as ?", "You're an alcoholic just like your dad..", "You're just a whore anyway", "Loser" "You can't make it without me". These words can become a curse on our life that blocks us from God's blessing and from flowing in the ministry God created us to accomplish. We often end up being exactly what these words suggested and then we assume they must have been right all along. The truth is, these words became a curse that stole life from us. *And the tongue is a flame of fire. It is full of wickedness that can ruin your whole life. It can turn the entire course of your life into a blazing flame of destruction, for it is set on fire by hell itself.* (James 3:6 NLT)

God wants to free us from every curse spoken over us by others and any we have thought or said against ourselves. God's word is powerful and can re-create in us the conditions for blessing and fruitfulness that God originally intended for us. *And I will give you the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whatever you lock on earth will be locked in heaven, and whatever you open on earth will be opened in heaven.*" (Matthew 16:19 NLT)

A Process For Breaking Curses

1. Identifying Curses in Your Life

Make a list of the following:

- Ask the Holy Spirit to remind you of any negative words, labels, or hurtful remarks that have affected you
- Include any negative comments or thoughts you've had about yourself (Reasons you have a poor self-image). Look at the "I can't ... " "That will never ... " "I'm only ... " "I'm not ... " "I'm just a ... " Add these to your list.

2. Declare These Curses As Lies

What will we choose to believe about these curses? Will we continue to accept them as truth in our lives or are we willing to call them the lies that they are and to reject them. God wants to replace these lies with wonderful truths about who we actually are and who He is forming us

to be as we walk in the light of His love. Truth and lies cannot exist in the same place. We either have one or the other. Which will we choose today?

- A simple prayer such as the following: In Jesus name I renounce these words spoken over me. The word of God says, _____. I take that truth and cut myself free from the lie that _____. (deal with each word specifically). In Jesus name I announce that these words are now null and void over my life. I am set free to live in God's truth.
- Ask God to forgive you for believing lies and letting them steal life from you. Receive God's cleansing and forgiveness.

Renounce the Spirits Behind the Curse

It is the work of Satan and evil spirits to entrap us in these curses. As Christians whose identity and life is found in Jesus Christ we have the authority and power to tell these spirits to leave us alone and to actually break their power off our lives. Pray a simple prayer in Jesus' name where you command all the spirits associated with these curses to leave. Tell them you are reclaiming the ground they have stolen and consecrating all of your life to Jesus Christ..

Fill Up The Empty Place With Blessing

It is God's will that we live in blessing. From early times God spoke blessing into people's lives and He still wants to do it today in our lives. Now is the time to declare God's word over you which is even more powerful to make you creative and fruitful than the devil's curses were to make you miserable and ineffective.

For example, if you previously believed you were stupid now bless yourself and speak over yourself that you have the wisdom of Almighty God flowing through your mind because the Holy Spirit of truth lives in you. If you previously believed that you were "good for nothing" you now can confess the wonderful truth over yourself that you are living in the good works that God prepared for you to do (Ephesians 2:10) and that now that you are a clean vessel God is using you for noble, holy purposes. (2 Timothy 2:20-21). Find truth for every lie that has bound you. Read the Bible. Ask a friend. Use the many resources available. Write the truths down. Affirm them regularly. Renew your mind in the truth.

Forgive and Pray Blessing for the One Who Cursed You

Pray for the happiness of those who curse you. Pray for those who hurt you (Luke 6:28 NLT)

And remember, It's important to also ask ourselves where we have cursed others and to ask for and receive forgiveness for that. Think before you speak.