

**D E V E L O P I N G**

**A F O R G I V I N G**

**S P I R I T**

TRANSFORMING IRRITATIONS INTO

# **SPIRITUAL MOTIVATION**

- God's ultimate purpose for allowing irritations and offenses to occur in our lives is to give us opportunity to become more like His Son Jesus Christ. This is clearly defined in the following passage:

• *"For we know that ALL THINGS (that includes irritations and offenses from others) work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose... that we might be conformed to the image of His Son."*  
Romans 8:28,29

# **CAUSES OF WOUNDS AND OFFENSES**

- Each wound or offense in my life represents an underlying objective of God in my life. The irritations I can control indicate a corresponding responsibility I am to assume (i.e., if a door squeaks, oil it). The irritations over which I have no control indicate God's way of opening avenues of communication with others, increasing my sensitivity to the needs of others and developing certain inward qualities of Jesus Christ in my life.

## WOUNDS AND OFFENSES

The wounds and offenses over which we have no control comes from many sources.

A person is most easily offended by the attitudes and behavior of others toward him. Their thoughtless comments about a person's abilities (or lack of them); unfaithfulness of a mate, betrayal of a friend, are just a few of the means through which offenses come.

# **A P R E R E Q U I S I T E :**

To what degree is God involved in these wounds and offenses? The first requirement for transforming these irritations is a personal relationship with God and a commitment to allow Him to accomplish His purpose in my life.

(Note: The number, intensity and duration of offenses in a growing Christian's life indicates the amount of unfinished work God has to do in that Christian's life in perfecting His own image.)

In spite of the fact that God says He is intricately involved in each detail of our lives, there are many who still picture God as a misty triangle, disinterested and uninvolved. Yet, God relates himself to each person and circumstance around us. These are God's tools in perfecting the inward qualities in our lives.

God likens us to His "jewels" (Mal. 3:17). In the rough, a gem is relatively inexpensive. When the jewel cutter is finished cutting, sanding and polishing, it is of great value!

# WHAT ARE GOD'S TOOLS?

God, like the jewel cutter, needs to work on us. What does He use as tools?

The irritations and reproofs (conflicts, rebukes letting us know we're violating His principles) comes from the people and circumstances around us:

## ● PHYSICAL DEFORMITY - HIS TOOL:

The Apostle Paul acknowledged that his thorn in the flesh was permanent. It was not allowed by God to tear him down but to keep Paul dependent on the Lord ! When Paul realized this then he exclaimed:

" . . . in order to prevent my becoming absurdly conceited, I was given a physical handicap - one of Satan's angels - to harass me and effectually stop any conceit. Three times I begged the Lord for it to leave me, but his reply has been, "My grace is enough for you: for where there is weakness, my power is shown the more completely." Therefore, I have cheerfully made up my mind to be proud of my weaknesses, (NOTE: Paul's new response to his irritation !) because they mean a deeper experience of the power of Christ. I can even enjoy weaknesses, suffering, privations, persecutions and difficulties for Christ's sake. For my very weakness makes me strong in Him. " II Cor. 12: 7-10 (Phillips)

## ● NATURAL ELEMENTS - GOD'S ARMY:

"And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you." Joel 2:25

## ● GOVERNMENTAL LAWS AND AUTHORITIES - OF GOD'S APPOINTMENT:

" . . . all legitimate authority is derived from God's authority, and the existing authority is appointed under God. To oppose authority (even the traffic laws!) then is to oppose God, . . ." Romans 13:1,2 (Phillips)

● PARENTS - THEIR REPROOFS ARE THE WAY OF LIFE:

" . . . for the commandment (father) is a lamp; and the law (mother) is light; and the reproofs of instruction are the way of life." Proverbs 6:20-23

● PEOPLE - IMPOSSIBLE TO HATE PEOPLE AND LOVE GOD:

"If a man say, I love God and hateth his brother, he is a liar; for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen." I John 4:20

● THE WICKED - GOD'S SWORD:

" . . . deliver my soul from the wicked which is thy sword." Psalms 17: 13 b

● MEN OF THE WORLD - GOD'S HAND:

"From men which are thy hand, O Lord, from men of the world . . ." Psalms 17:4

When we react wrongly to His tools we destroy their potential benefit. If we continue to react, God must raise up additional irritations to draw our attention to the negative traits these irritations are intended to reflect so we can correct them in our lives.

● DEALING WITH PERMANENT IRRITATIONS:

God will permit permanent irritations which will have more ultimate benefit in our lives than any present "losses" we may experience. This may be the cross that a Christian is to bear as he follows the Lord.

"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me." Luke 9:2

- ☛ GOD IS NOT SO CONCERNED ABOUT WHERE WE ARE OR WHAT IS HAPPENING, AS WHAT WE ARE LEARNING AND HOW WE ARE RESPONDING IN HIS WORKSHOP OF LIFE!

God is here, His hands are on His tools. If a person slaps or curses the people who irritate him - he is actually slapping the hand of God.

**MOST IRRITATIONS ARE TEMPORARY:**

When we allow God to accomplish the specific purpose for which he allowed the irritation, then he removes that irritation. Our focus should be on the development of the quality rather than the circumstances God used to develop that quality.

"When all kinds of trials and testings crowd into your lives, my brothers, don't resent them as intruders, but welcome them as friends. Realize that they come to test your faith and to produce in you the quality of endurance. But let the process go on until that endurance (quality) is fully developed, and you will find you have become men of mature character with the right sort of independence."

James 1:3,4 (Phillips)

# **RESPONDING TO AN IRRITATION**

- ☛ This is how one man transformed his biggest irritation into a motivation of love for his family.

## "WHAT'S WRONG WITH WANTING TO BE ON TIME?"

A successful businessman came into my office one morning angry and fed up with himself and his family over an experience that had occurred the night before. He felt the problem was that his wife was never on time. "What's wrong with wanting to be on time?" he asked. "The Lord says to do all things decently and in order, doesn't He?"

## HIS WIFE WASN'T READY.

It all began with plans for a family dinner engagement at another couple's home. The husband had reminded his wife that they would have to leave by 6:00 p.m., if they were to make it on time. He arrived home at 5:45, and quickly realized that his wife hadn't even started to bathe the two children! He knew she'd never be ready on time, but he didn't say anything. He sat down and browsed the evening paper until 6:00.

## EVERY MINUTE AFTER SIX HE BECAME MORE ANGRY AND IRRITATED!

At 6:00 p.m., he began to ask, "How soon will you be ready?" When they were finally ready to leave the house at 6:25, he was so mad he couldn't talk.

He had never before been to this couple's home on a farm outside of town. He drove for several miles and came to a dirt road. Two miles further - it was a dead end! Hurriedly he turned the car around and started back. About a mile down the road, he passed a pickup truck which threw two stones on his car, cracking the windshield.

## "THEN I WAS REALLY MAD!"

He told me, "I was so mad I felt like going back home! In the midst of all this, my six-year-old boy leaned over from the back seat and said, 'What did Mommy do wrong, Daddy?'"

He turned to me and said, "When we finally arrived, I was so upset I didn't even feel like talking about spiritual things. I'm sure they noticed my attitude, but I couldn't help it! I can't even remember what we had to eat for supper. What can I do? I really need help with this one!"

APPLICATION OF THE FOLLOWING STEPS TRANSFORMED HIS IRRITATION INTO LOVE FOR HIS WIFE:

"Don't you know how God wants you to respond to these irritations?"  
He answered, "No, I don't. Show me, and I hope this works!"

THERE ARE

# **THREE WRONG RESPONSES:**



☛ Your wife could accuse you and you

1. DEFEND YOURSELF.  
This will result in a conflict between each other.

OR

☛ Your wife will defend herself because you

2. ACCUSE HER.  
This will also result in a conflict between each other.

OR

☛ Your wife accuses you and you

3. HOLD YOUR ANGER IN.  
This will cause tension which will ultimately come out when the pressure has built up. It is amazing how many "small" things are remembered when a situation explodes!

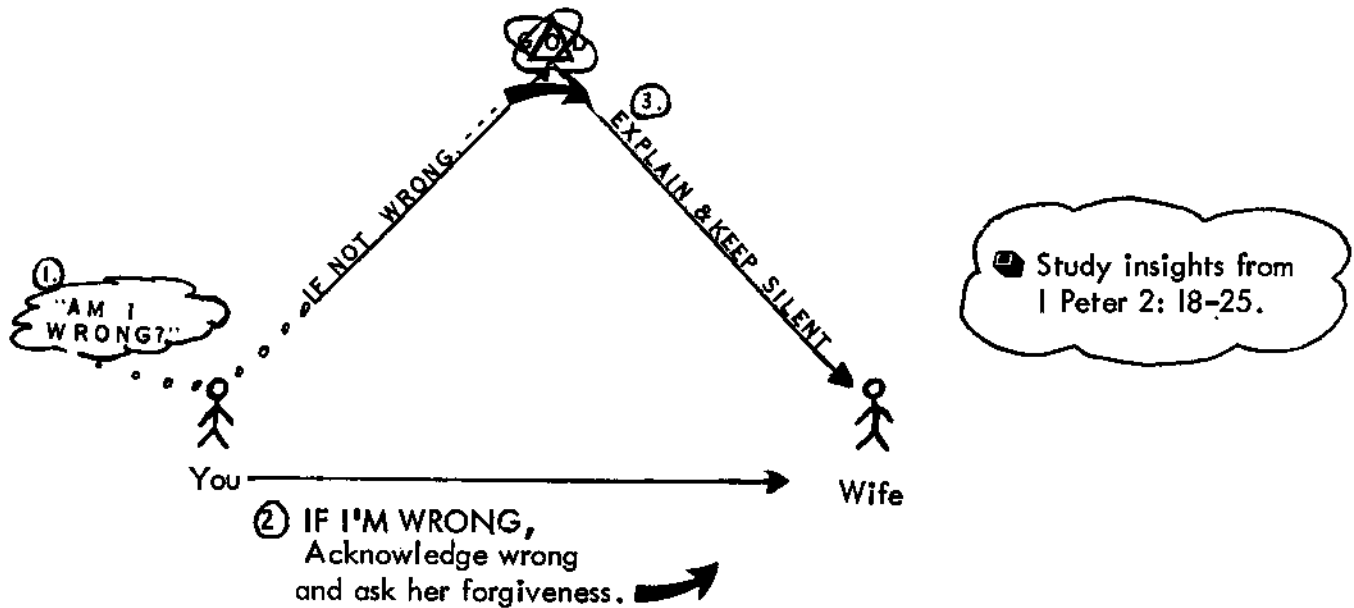


# GOD'S RESPONSE:

● God wants a person to be free from the wrong attitudes and responses so he can be involved with Him in the situation.

● STEP ONE: BE HONEST WITH MYSELF.

When accused, take my thoughts to God and ask, "Am I wrong?"



● STEP TWO: BE WILLING TO ADMIT WHEN I'M WRONG.

If I was wrong in any way, sincerely ask my partner's forgiveness.

But, what if I'm not wrong when accused?

● STEP THREE: If I'm not wrong, BRIEFLY EXPLAIN MY SITUATION AS I SAW IT AND THEN KEEP SILENT.

(Note: It is suggested that the supplementary insights in Chain of Command in Marriage, "Developing Genuine Love," be studied with this material.)

# AMPLIFICATION

- In essence, there is a response of our heart and a corresponding action that takes place when

## RESPONSE TO GOD

1. Recognize that God has allowed this source of irritation for my benefit.
3. Use this irritation to identify the negative traits this irritation caused me to express (anger, impatience, jealousy, insensitiveness, etc.) This is exciting because I can become fully aware of the areas God is concerned about in conforming me to the image of His Son!
5. When I'm not wrong, then I can consciously cooperate with God in being sensitive to the needs of others. "What godly quality does God want me to express to the other person?"

## RESULTING ACTION

2. Therefore, I can thank God for this irritation.
4. Gain a clear conscience by asking forgiveness for the wrong I committed against the other person.
6. I will communicate the fruit of the Holy Spirit to the other person regardless of his offense against me. Galatians 5:22,23

## "NOW I SEE WHAT GOD HAS BEEN TRYING TO SAY!!"

After I had explained the above insights he said, "Now I see what God has been trying to say to me all these times! I never thought of the negative traits I've been demonstrating to everyone. I felt so self-righteous about wanting to be on time."

That afternoon he gathered his family together and first of all addressed his two children. Looking his six-year-old in the eyes he said, "Son, I want you to know that Mommy didn't do anything wrong last night. It was your Dad who was wrong for the way I acted toward Mommy and you." Then he looked to his wife and asked her forgiveness.

VISUALIZING GOD'S PURPOSE FOR THE

# **PEOPLE IN OUR LIVES**

- Have you ever met someone and drawn a snap conclusion that you didn't like him, even though that person never wronged you and you had no occasion to offend him?

This type of situation usually reflects the fact that something about his personality subconsciously reminds me of certain personality traits to which I have reacted in the past.

How I related to each significant person in my developing years is directly related to my present degree of success in EFFECTIVELY RELATING to those God now has in my life. A person will never be able to have everyone like him. In fact, this is warned against in Luke 6:26. Nevertheless, it is important that we know how to respond to each individual in the same way Jesus Christ responded, whether he be an enemy or a friend. Luke 6:27-33.

## "ONE TYPE OF PERSON I CAN'T STAND!"

While sitting at a luncheon one day, a minister sitting beside me said, "There's one type of person I can't stand!" I asked him who that person might be. He replied, "My boss - he's always bugging me about details! He has forms to fill out for everything I do and they're really a waste of time.

## "WHICH OF YOUR PARENTS WAS LIKE THAT?"

As he elaborated, I asked him which of his parents was like that. He answered in surprise, "My mother! She was always bugging me about keeping my room clean, hanging up my clothes, etc."

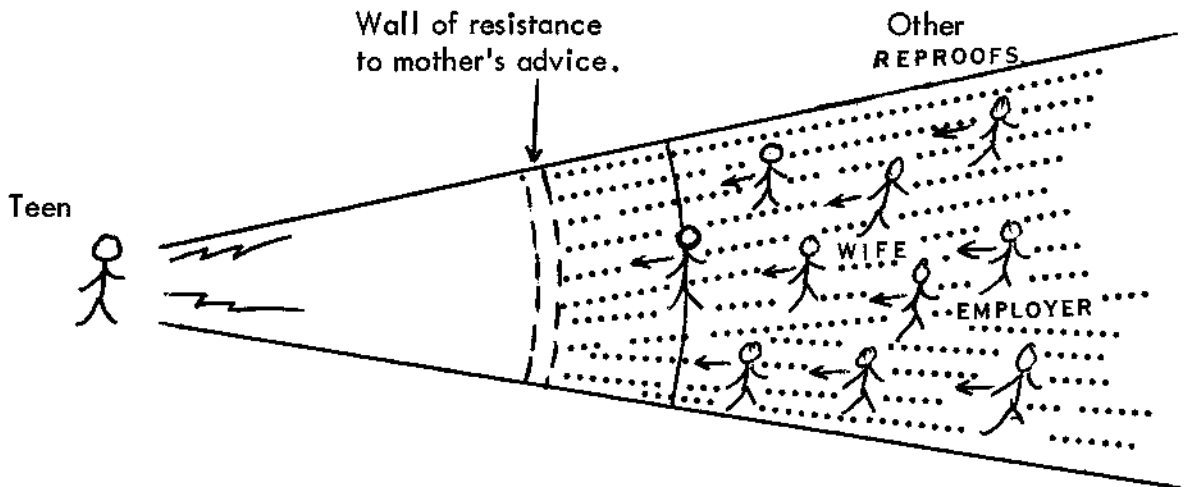
## "I WOULD GUESS YOU MARRIED SOMEONE LIKE THAT!"

After a pause, I said, "I would imagine you married someone like that." He replied, "I did!"

● EACH PERSON REPRESENTS AN UNDERLYING OBJECTIVE OF GOD'S PURPOSE IN MY LIFE.

- "God knew who your employer would be, as well as your life partner. He wanted you to have a successful life. Because he did, he gave you a mother who paid special attention to details."

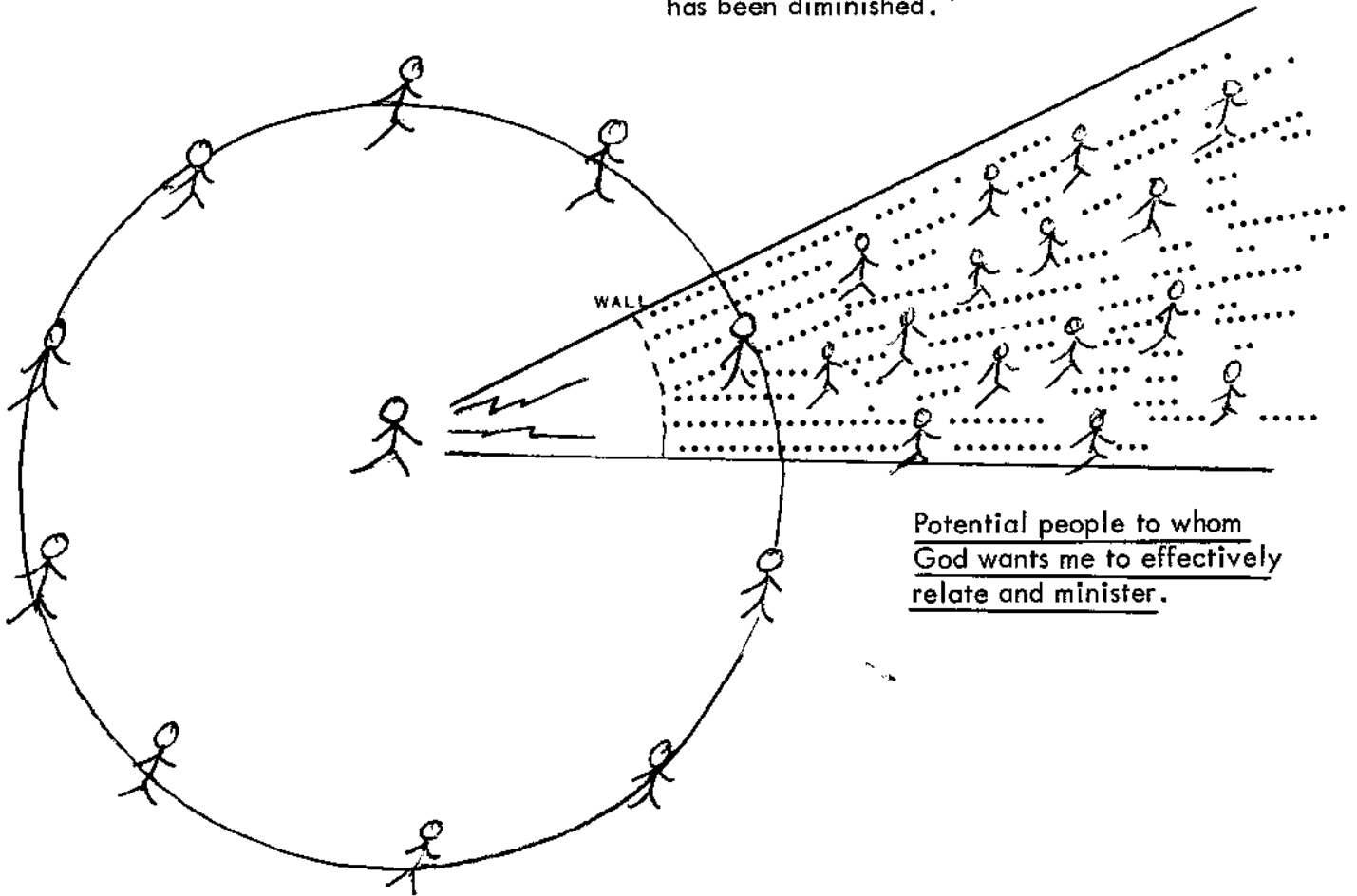
WHEN I REACT:



"When you reacted to your mother's instruction, that did not change God's goals in this area of your life. He raised up others with similar characteristics, most of whom didn't have your best interests at heart as did your mother. You react to them on impulse. As a result - up to this point - the one God intended for you to love (your wife) is a constant irritation to you as are others whom you reject, because you never learned the lesson God was trying to teach you through your mother."

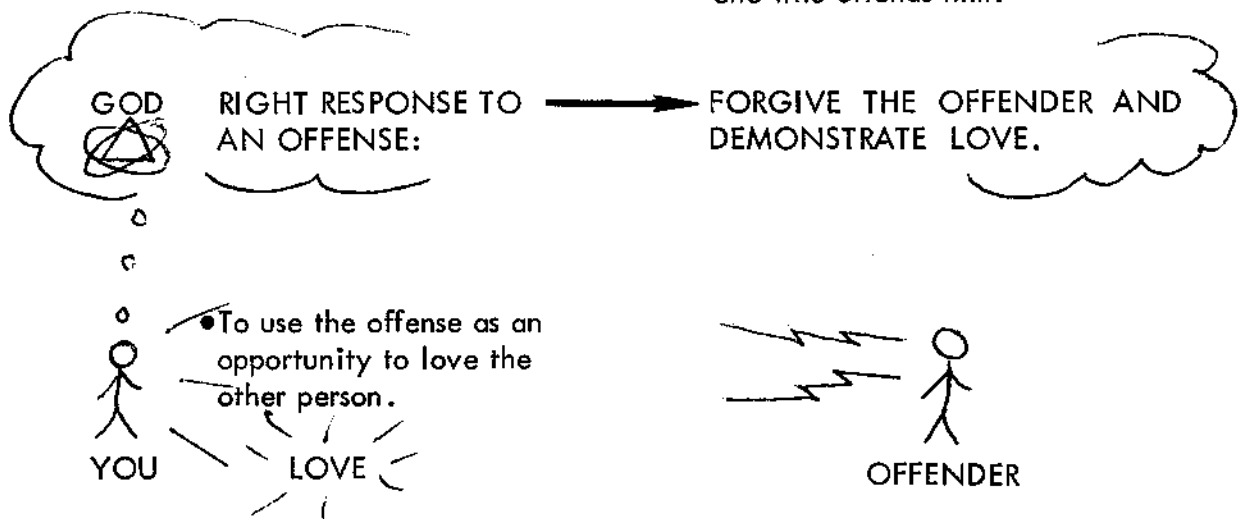
# AN EFFECTIVE MINISTRY?

"Suppose there were ten significant people in your life in your developing years. If you failed to respond to one of those individuals, 10% of your potential ministry in relating to others has been diminished."

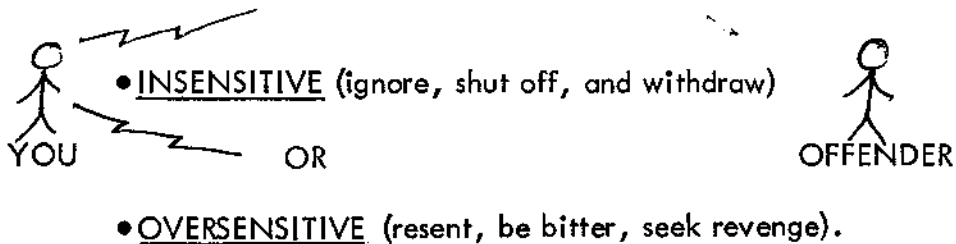


# GOD'S PURPOSE FOR OFFENSES

- ☛ God's purpose in allowing a Christian to be wounded or offended by others is to provide an opportunity for him to be sensitive to the needs of the one who offends him.



☛ WHEN I FAIL TO COOPERATE WITH GOD'S PURPOSES, I WILL EITHER BECOME



One of the most difficult offenses to forgive is betrayal by a friend or unfaithfulness in a mate. Jesus Christ was betrayed by one with whom he had shared the active years of his life. David expressed the terrible hurt of betrayal by a friend in Psalm 55:12-14:

For it was not an enemy that reproached me; then I could have borne it: neither was it he that hated me that did magnify himself against me; then I would have hid myself from him: But it was thou, a man mine equal, my guide, and mine acquaintance. We took sweet counsel together, and walked unto the house of God in company.

In these days unfaithfulness in a mate is prevalent. Heartbroken and embittered, a man or a woman will share what he or she has just discovered or has known for a long time and now can't take any more. Though the offender is wrong for his sin and unfaithfulness, it is important for the offended individual to realize that GOD will deal with the offender's sin.

Now the focus must be turned to the responsibility of the one offended - how he or she will cooperate with God's purposes for his or her life through this great offense.

We have stressed that, when wounded, God requires forgiveness and love. Jesus Christ was our example. He could still say, "Father, forgive them."

Invariably, careful questioning will reveal that the offended mate has been very insensitive in the past to real needs of the offending mate. The offending mate can readily identify areas of insensitivity! God has tried to get the offended mate to be sensitive but to no avail. Now the real shocker has occurred and the Christian must decide: Will I follow the Lord, or use this as an excuse to quit?

A bitter and wounded person must look at the situation from God's point of view. Otherwise, the many consequences of bitterness will eat away at his whole being and affect others as well. Hebrews 12:15-17

Freedom from bitterness comes through forgiveness. But forgiveness is often difficult until we see God's purposes for the offense.

# **INSIGHTS INTO FORGIVENESS**

- The following insights are designed to help a person deal with bitterness in his life:

## 1. LEARN TO DISTINGUISH BITTERNESS FROM WOUNDS.

When a person is offended and becomes bitter, his emotional response toward the offender is to get even and hurt him. Scripture says that forgiveness is the only means to freedom.

The deep hurt that results from a deep wound oftentimes produces frustration in an individual. He may claim to have forgiven the other and then pretend that everything is fine, when it really isn't.

- THE WOUND: When the offended has forgiven the offender by relinquishing his rights to get even and has given love in return, he can be confident that the "hurt" will diminish as his sensitivity toward the offender increases. It will disappear when the wound has been "healed". Healing occurs as the person sees how that experience was used of God in his life and therefore he can thank God for the experience. As one husband said, "What I thought was so devastating that I would never recover was God's tool to get me to wake up to the needs of my wife and family! Since I have gotten my priorities straightened out, we have a love toward one another that will match any happy family."

### • THE HEALING MUST BE FROM THE INSIDE OUT!

If a person is stabbed with a knife, the pain from the wound remains long after the knife has been withdrawn. Whether or not the wound heals properly will depend on the treatment it receives; the presence of harmful germs may cause infection. For a person to try and forgive before he can visualize God's purposes for the offense would be similar to putting a bandage on the surface without dealing with the real problem. A deep wound must heal from the inside out, and that is only possible when the infectious germs have been destroyed.

## 2. DISTINGUISH FORGIVENESS FROM PARDON

- PARDON deals with the consequences of his offense. Unless we have the authority we cannot pardon an offense, but we can always forgive.



- FORGIVENESS:
  - a. Deals with our emotional response toward an offender.
  - b. Means "clearing his record" with us and transferring to God the responsibility for any punishment.
  - c. Will enable us to have the same openness toward him after he offends us as we had before he offended us.
  
- 3. FORGIVENESS INVOLVES FOCUSING ON THE OFFENSE COMMITTED INSTEAD OF THE OFFENDER. The key is to realize that my response to what has happened to me is far more important to God than the offense itself or the person through whom the offense came.
  
- 4. FORGIVENESS IDENTIFIES THE OFFENDER WITH AN UNDERLYING PURPOSE OF GOD IN MY LIFE. David in the Psalms viewed the wicked as God's sword and men of the world as His hand. God's hand is not shortened that he cannot take the greater (apparent) catastrophe and transform it for His glory:
  - "...beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord that he might be glorified." Isaiah 61:3
  
- 5. FORGIVENESS LOOKS AT THE WOUNDS OF THE OFFENSE AS GOD'S WAY OF GETTING THE OFFENDED TO BE SENSITIVE TO THE NEEDS OF THE OFFENDER.
  - "If thine enemy hunger, feed him; If he thirst, give him to drink. For in so doing thou shalt heap coals of fire upon his head. Don't allow yourself to be overpowered by evil. Take the offensive - overpower evil with good." Romans 12:20, 21 (Phillips)
  
- 6. TO FORGIVE YIELDS TO GOD THE RIGHT TO DEAL WITH THE OFFENDER'S OFFENSES.
  - "As far as your responsibility goes, live at peace with everyone. Never take vengeance into your own hands, my dear friends: stand back and let God punish if he will. For it is written: Vengeance belongeth unto me: I will recompense." Romans 12:18, 19 (Phillips)
  
- 7. FORGIVENESS REALIZES THAT THE OFFENDER HAS ALREADY BEGUN RECEIVING THE CONSEQUENCES OF HIS OFFENSE. A person cannot offend another without suffering guilt. The very fact that he offends another illustrates that his life is not in harmony with God's principles. Jesus clearly emphasized that the offenses will be dealt with:
  - "Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh." Matthew 18:7

- "But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea." Matthew 18:6

8. FORGIVENESS INVOLVES COOPERATING WITH GOD IN THE OFFENDER'S LIFE.  
Many an individual has been meant to be ushered into the kingdom of God by the forgiveness of a Christian. Many individuals are in deep despair because they feel they have committed too great a sin for God to forgive. When a human being is willing to forgive them and accept them as they are, it is easy for them to visualize that God would also forgive them.

On the other hand, when a Christian won't forgive another, the offender's ability to conceive of God forgiving him is diminished.