

## **LIVING LIBERATED**

**Are we bound forever to vices,  
bad habits, addictions, and  
other sins that shackle and put  
us in bondage?**

**Today we can learn HOW to free  
ourselves from that bondage by  
the power of Jesus Christ!**

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**Steve Flatt**

**Why Should I Forgive?**

## WHY SHOULD I FORGIVE?

Peter asked Jesus one day a long, long time ago "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" (Matthew 18:21) What's really written between the lines or the thought behind the lines is: Lord, why do I need to forgive? I find it interesting that Peter asked, "how many times do I need to forgive my brother?" Sometimes it's easier to forgive a onetime offense, even if it's something that's as major as an assassination attempt, than it is to forgive those repeated irritations.

Each of us has one, two, maybe three sources of constant irritation in our lives. "Heavenly sandpaper," I call it, just rubs off our rough edges. Who's your heavenly sandpaper?

Peter asked, "'Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother?'" It didn't dawn on me until this week that there's a chance that Peter could be extremely literal here. He may have been talking about his physical brother. I read just a couple of weeks ago that ninety percent of all resentment occurs in our own families. Most of the resentment that we harbor in our lives is toward people who are closest to us.

You know the old adage: "To dwell above with those we love that will be a glory, but to dwell below with those we know, now that's a different story." Sometimes it is the people who are closest to us. Maybe it was Andrew, Peter's brother. It's not out of the scope of the imagination to consider that Andrew kept leaving the milk out, or squeezed the toothpaste from the middle of the tube, or something which was a constant irritant to Peter. But whether it was Andrew or a figurative brother, Peter was having a hard time with this whole forgiveness question.

Peter may have been expecting Jesus to say, "Peter, that's pretty magnanimous of you. I'm impressed." Jewish law only required that you forgive a brother three times. After you forgave him three times of the same offense, you could tell him to get lost. So,

Peter could have thought the law says "I ought to forgive my brother three times, I'll double that and I'll add one for good measure." "Lord, do you think it would be all right to forgive a brother seven times?" Our Lord said, "No Peter, would you believe 70 times seven times" or there is no limit to the number of times you need to forgive.

If it's keeping score, it's not really forgiveness. Have you ever kept score with somebody? After Jesus tells Peter, "No, not seven times, but seventy times seven times." Jesus tells a parable, a story, to explain why we must learn to forgive.

The story begins this way. Jesus said, there is a man who is hopelessly in debt to a king. The Bible says in Matthew 18:23-24, that he owes the king ten thousand talents. Now talents were really more a measure of weight than it was of pure money, so it depends upon what the precious metal was. But the debt here is acknowledging all scholars to be millions and millions of dollars. Now that's a major debt! How do you get that far in debt? How can a servant borrow that much money? In those days, whenever you couldn't pay it back, the bankruptcy principle was simple. They simply took your wife and your children and sold them into slavery and put you into prison. That was bankruptcy.

"The servant fell on his knees before him. 'Be patient with me,' he begged, 'and I will pay back everything.'" (Verse 26) You've got to see the humor in that; it's one of the most hilarious statements I've ever read. A servant owes \$16 million and he says, "give me a few more days". To do what, get a passport and buy a one-way ticket to another country?

I did a little calculation. If he paid back a thousand dollars a day at current interest rates, it would take him 40 years. Now the point of the story, folks, is to show us three reasons that you and I need to forgive other people.

We need to forgive each other because we've been forgiven by God. "The servant's master took pity on him, canceled the debt and let him go." (I've underlined that in my Bible.) Do you know anybody else who will forgive a \$16 million debt? Who will say, all right let's just write it off and let him go? What a king! Completely forgiven. But the point of the parable is: That's nothing compared to the forgiveness that God has given to us, absolutely nothing.

Here's the parallel. I owe a debt to God, and you do, too. The Bible even calls it a sin debt. When I transgress against God, it builds up a debt to owe to him that I can never repay. The Bible says, in Romans 3:23, "*All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.*" The Scripture makes it abundantly clear, I can't pay my debt, you can't pay yours, but God has chosen in His love through the gift of His Son Jesus as the perfect sacrifice to forgive us, to wipe the slate clean, to cancel the debt and say, "Let's just start over." That is the gospel, the Good News. It's all tied up in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus. The good news Jesus has for us when we obediently come to Him confessing, repenting and being baptized in His name asking Him to forgive and wipe our slate clean.

God expects me to do for others what he's done for me. In fact, that's really the message. How would you feel if you just had a \$16 million debt wiped clean? Would you feel relief, joy and freedom? Those words may be too shallow. How about excitement, ecstasy or undying gratitude? How do you think you would treat people if you had just been forgiven of a \$16 million debt that was hovering over your head? Don't you think you'd be easygoing? Don't you think you would say, "Yes, I'm in a great mood? That's all right, I'll forgive you."

Look at this servant's reaction beginning in verse 28. "*But when that servant went out, he found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, equivalent to one hundred days wages. He grabbed him and began to choke him. 'Pay back what you owe me!' he demanded. 'His fellow servant fell to his knees and begged him, 'Be patient with me, and I will pay you back.' 'But he refused. Instead, he went off and had the man thrown into prison'*" Now can you believe that? He owed \$16 million to his boss and he was forgiven. Now his fellow servant owes him a hundred denarii, extremely small compared to the amount he had been forgiven by his master. He refuses to show any mercy instead he throws him into prison.

You say, how in the world can he respond that way? That servant who owed the cancelled \$16 million debt didn't really feel forgiven. He still, for whatever reason, felt like a sword was still hanging over his head. So, he was foolishly trying to collect such a small amount to still pay off this perceived \$16 million debt.

The real tragedy is that a lot of Christians live that way today. They obey the gospel, they came to Christ and the sin debt is cancelled; but they still live their lives feeling, Lord, I'll make it up to you. I know I owe you a lot, so I'm going to pay that off. I'll work off my sin debt knowing that they never can. They are demanding, exacting, and unforgiving to other people around them in their frustrations. Sadly, I've seen all too much of that. That is why it is so important that every Christian understand grace. When you believe you are forgiven, you will be able to forgive others and not until.

Notice the first servant's harshness in the parable. He grabbed and began to choke that second servant demanding that he pay his debt. Under Roman law you could do that. If somebody owed you money, you could go choke him until he paid. But after this guy choked him a while and didn't squeeze anything out of him, he had him thrown into jail.

Whenever you find someone harsh, judgmental, hypercritical, negative, unforgiving, and ungracious, he is carrying with him unresolved guilt. A judgmental and negative person, who is always putting someone else down, never extending to anybody the offer of forgiveness, is carrying unresolved guilt. When we feel unforgiven, we tend to be unforgiving. Sometimes you see that in parents. You see a parent who is demanding, rigid and overbearing. They are reacting to the guilt that they feel as a parent. Sometimes you see it in bosses. Sometimes you see it in coworkers. Paul said in Ephesians

4:32, "*Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.*" The key to forgiveness is to recognize how much God forgives me today.

### **Resentment makes me miserable.**

It's a hell on earth. It tortures you. Look with me in the parable at verse 31, "*When the other servants saw what had happened,*" (this was after the first one had tossed the second one in jail) "*they were greatly distressed and went and told their master everything that had happened. Then the master called the servant in. 'You wicked servant,' he said, 'I canceled all that debt of yours because you pleaded with me. Shouldn't you have had mercy on your fellow servant just as I had on you?' In anger his master turned him over to the jailers to be tortured, until he should pay back all he owed.*" See, when the king found out how unforgiving his servant was, he went to him and said, if you're going to be that way, I'll be that way, too. He then handed him over to the jailer to be tortured.

Somebody asked if this parable is a symbol of hell. Yes, it is, but it's also symbolic of a hell on earth. Because when resentment gets inside you and resentment grows and infects you, it tortures you, and it locks you up in a prison. It destroys you far more than it does the person you hate and won't forgive. The question we need to ask ourselves from time to time is are bitter and unforgiven actions robbing us of happiness? What hurt is still hurting you? If you find one someday, let it go. It's only tormenting you. The other person that you are hating and not forgiving may not even know - they may be totally unaware. All around us are millions of people imprisoned by guilt, enslaved by their own anger and anxiety and tormented by resentment, sometimes year after year after year. The forgiveness of Christ is the only key to unlock that jail. For your own sake, forgive. Learn to ask for forgiveness and learn to offer forgiveness. My motto is: Forgiveness, enjoy it and employ it, or you live a life of misery.

### **I will need future forgiveness.**

*"This is how my heavenly Father will treat each of you unless you forgive your brother from your heart."* (Matthew 18:35)

John Wesley was once told by a man who knew him, "I could never forgive a certain person." Wesley responded, "I hope you never sin." The point of his admonition; if you're going to live the rest of your life in perfection, then perhaps you don't need to forgive anybody else. But if you're going to commit another sin, you'd better make sure forgiveness is ready and willing because forgiveness is a two-way street. Don't dare burn the bridge that you're going to have to walk over to get to heaven.

In what we call the Lord's Prayer in the Sermon on the Mount where our Lord teaches us how to pray; He said, "*Forgive us our debts as we forgive our debtors*" Do you understand what that prayer says? That is praying, "Father, you forgive me as much as I'm willing to forgive the other people around me." Now I ask you, do you really want to pray that prayer? See, the Bible says we can only receive what we're willing to offer to other people.

In that same Sermon on the Mount in the part we call the Beatitudes. Jesus said, "*Blessed are the merciful for they shall receive mercy.*" What we offer to somebody else we are able to receive, but what we're not willing to offer somebody else, we cannot receive. God says, be forgiving because I want to be able to forgive you.

Look at verse 35 again, "unless you forgive from your heart," not lip service, not some little faint intellectual acknowledgment, but from the heart, right down in the core of your spirit. Put simply, the parable is teaching forgiveness is a way of life. It's the only way to live and the reason is we're all imperfect beings. You're going to hurt others, and other people are going to hurt you because we're just imperfect beings, so we have to live in a constant state of forgiveness. You've got to enjoy it and then employ it as a lifestyle.

### **Why do I need to forgive?**

1. Because God has forgiven me.

2. To escape the torment of resentment that's going to shackle me if I don't forgive.
3. Because I don't want to burn the bridge that I'm going to have to walk across. I want to forgive so God will forgive me.

### Who do you need to forgive?

1. Do you blame anyone else in the world for your unhappiness? Do you blame a spouse? If only my husband would get his act straight, then I'd do a lot better. I'd be able to come to church more if he'd come with me. Do you blame your parents? If my parents hadn't done this to me when I was little, if that hadn't been a part of that, then my life would be a lot better today. Do you blame a teacher? If my teacher would have just. Do you blame a boss? If I just had a different boss. If you blame anyone for your unhappiness, that's an indication of resentment. Blame is an indication of an unforgiven wrong, rather real or perceived, it doesn't make any difference, and it's you that's not forgiving. You need to let it go right now. Let it go or it will torture you and harm your future life.
2. Have I been keeping score? Is there a score sheet in my mind with regard to this person so that whenever they're doing something, you're thinking, they owe me? Did your spouse make a major mistake sometime in the past? He or she is sorry, and life has gone on, but you're holding it over his or her head. You've become an unpleasable person because no matter what one does, it's part of a bottomless pit of repayment. No matter how good a person is, you're thinking in your mind, he owes me. I want to tell you something today as straight as I can tell you. As bad as whatever was done, you're the one killing the marriage. You're killing it by your unforgiveness. You've never forgiven, and the spouse may be getting to the point of asking, "What's the use? I can't seem to ever be forgiven."

Marriage is just one of the areas that can apply. You may have been neglected as a child. You may have been abused as a child. You may not have been loved as you should have as a child. I don't know any of us who were loved as we should have been as a child. Why? Because we are not able to love perfectly. We're imperfect beings.

3. Do you find yourself acting a certain way toward someone because he reminds you of someone you resent?

I know that sounds strange, but there are all kinds of people who they will look at a person and say, "He reminds me of someone back in my childhood." So, he will treat them totally different simply because of a past problem they - he never lets go. If we search our souls, a lot of us have a lot more forgiving to do than we give ourselves credit for. We need to do it now!

### Amazing Grace Lesson #1239 Questions:

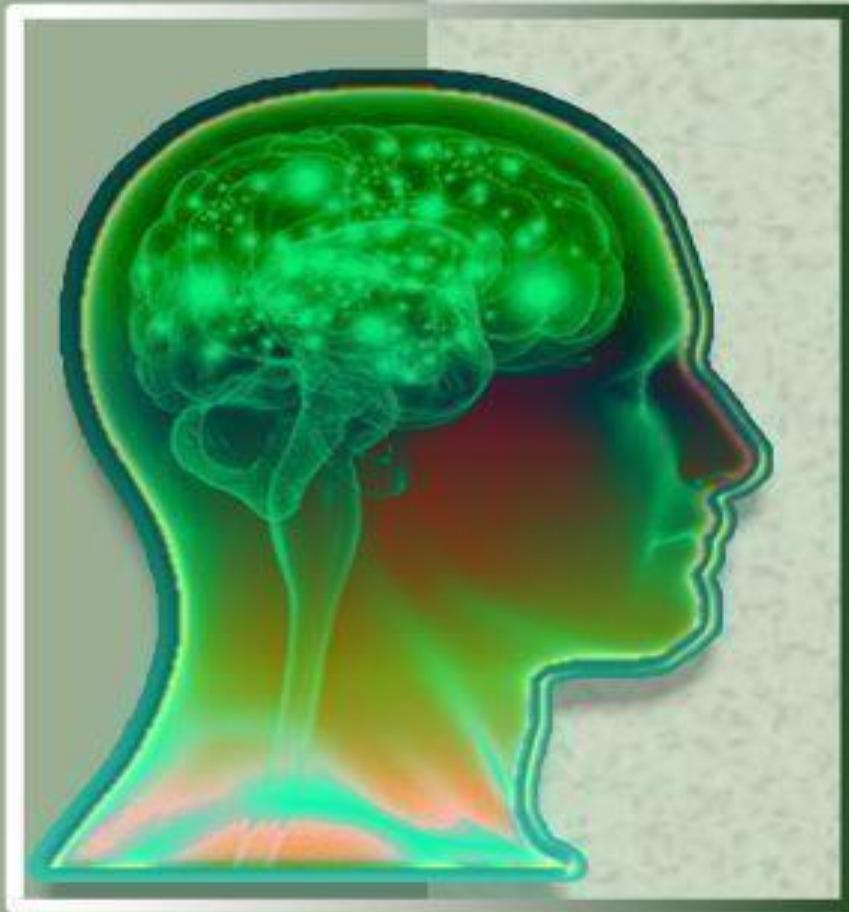
1. God is?
  - a. \_\_\_ Love
  - b. \_\_\_ Righteous (just)
  - c. \_\_\_ Truth
  - a. \_\_\_ Mercy
  - b. \_\_\_ Peace
  - c. \_\_\_ All the above
  - d. \_\_\_ a and c
  - e. \_\_\_ a, c and e
  - f. \_\_\_ a, b and c
2. How many times should you forgive?
  - a. \_\_\_ One
  - b. \_\_\_ Seven
  - c. \_\_\_ One hundred
  - d. \_\_\_ Every time someone ask.
3. When one forgives does he keep score of offenses? Yes \_\_\_ No \_\_\_ 4.
- Obedience to the Gospel cancels our debt to God? True \_\_\_ False \_\_\_ 5.
- When is man's sin and rebellion cancelled?
  - a. \_\_\_ Our physical death
  - b. \_\_\_ Our death to sin

- c.  Our confession that Jesus is Lord
- d.  When we trust God to forgive and obey Him
- e.  a, b and c

6. The key to forgiveness is to recognize how much God has forgiven us? True

False  7. Why do I need to forgive?

- a.  Because God has forgiven me
- b.  To escape the torment of resentment
- c.  I do not want to burn the bridge I will have to walk across
- d.  I want God to forgive me
- e.  All the above
- f.  a and d



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**HUMILITY**

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**PRIDE AND HUMILITY**

Many people desire the answer to the questions (1) how do I free myself from lust, addictions, and hang-ups that mess up life and (2) how do I get the power to make the needed changes, or how do I get God's power in my life?

The beginning point is to admit the problem, not just the physical manifestation of the problem, but the root problem. The root problem is "I'm in charge, and I don't need God." That was the problem Adam and Eve had. Paul wrestled with it in Romans 7, and it's our problem.

The key is found in James 4:6. Everything in the rest of the lesson is going to spring from that great text. James said, "God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble." That's worth repeating. "God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble." The Bible states the key to power in your life is humility and the key barrier to God's power is pride, because a person full of pride cannot see a need to change or to improve. Only when one is full of humility, will he be given the power to change.

The Bible talks about two kinds of pride. There really is a good kind of pride. If you don't believe that, read Galatians 6:4, or 2

Corinthians 7:4. The good kind of pride is synonymous with self-respect, satisfaction for a job well done, and the enjoyment of seeing others succeed. Only two or three times in the Bible do you see pride referred to that way. Ninety-nine percent of the time, you'll find pride referred to in a very negative way, where it's linked with conceit, selfishness, arrogance, or egotism. Somebody said, "Egotism is the only disease that when you've got it, it makes everybody else sick." By looking at a number of famous and important people, one can see how one can easily become a victim.

Remember Muhammad Ali, those of you in my generation or above, and how brash and proud Ali was in his prime? The story is told that Ali was on a plane one time and it was about to take off. The flight attendant came to Ali and said, "Sir, you'll have to buckle your seat belt." Ali in his typical brash, showman-type manner said, "Superman don't need no seat belt." To which the flight attendant responded, "Superman don't need no airplane either." He buckled the belt.

Pride's very easy to see in others, but it's difficult to see in ourselves, but it's there. It's not only the basic human problem, it is your basic problem, and it's my basic problem, too.

### **Pride that leads to other problems.**

#### **1. Pride prevents personal growth.**

You think you've got it altogether and don't need to change, grow or improve. You have pride dwelling in your spirit. Somebody said, "When the head starts swelling, the mind stops growing." The one sure way to know that you need this lesson is if you don't think you do.

Solomon said "Do you see a man wise in his own eyes? There is more hope for a fool than for him." (Proverbs 26:12) "He who heeds discipline shows the way to life, but whoever ignores correction leads others astray." (Proverbs 10:17) These two verses together are saying the proud man or woman only goes by self-evaluation. They think they know everything there is to know and there's no sense getting any counsel.

If you've got marriage problems and you won't talk to anybody about it, that's pride. That's all it is, pure and simple. If you've got financial difficulties and you won't seek counsel about that, that's just your pride. If you're failing at your work, school, or some relationship and you're just trying to cover it up, that's pride. All too often we'd rather look smart than be smart. The way to become smart is by being humble. Pride prevents one from growing.

#### **2. Pride sabotages my relationships.**

Pride is the root of all relational conflict and disharmony. When you act out of pride, you tend to be demanding, unsympathetic, even obnoxious and rude.

Have you ever seen a proud person treat a waiter in a fancy restaurant? It's disgusting, they are demanding and never being satisfied.

Pride makes us hold grudges and keep score. It makes us unable to admit we're wrong. "Pride only breeds quarrels." (Proverbs 13:10) I'm going to repeat that. "Pride only breeds quarrels."

The root of virtually every argument or quarrel in a marriage is pride. You don't want to admit that your husband or wife may be partially right. So many family conflicts could be resolved if we could just swallow our pride.

How many times do you think this scenario has been acted out? A young man gets rebellious and lets loose at his dad and the father loses his temper and says, "Get out of the house and don't come back." They are alienated for who knows how long because neither of them can force out these six most difficult words in the English language, "I was wrong. I am sorry." Pride destroys relationships, and pride also produces stress and anxiety.

They drift apart for who knows how long because neither of them can force themselves to utter these four most difficult words in the language: "I made a mistake. I'm sorry."

The focus of a pride-filled person is on self. It's on my status and my image. Politicians now have spin-doctors. They don't care about the truth; they just want the image to be right. Image is everything. But it really reveals an insecurity and a feeling of inferiority.

Have you ever watched on FOX, CNN or another channel one of the worldwide summits, or a UN meeting? You see these tinhorn dictators and the ambassadors from the tiniest countries come marching in with eight rows of braids and 40 medals and these brightly adorned uniforms, but the presidents and the ambassadors of other countries, come in just in a modest dark suit. Why? They don't need to impress anybody. They're secure.

Have you ever seen on FOX, CNN or another channel one of the world summits, or a UN meeting those dictators and ambassadors of the smaller countries parading in uniforms brightly adorned with eight rows of bars and forty medals? While others enter simply in a modest dark suit. Why? They don't need to impress anyone. They are confident.

Tony Campolo, one of my favorite authors, said, "Pride often destroys those that we love the most." The pride of parents can lead to the destruction of children. People who are out to prove they are better than others often use their children to this end. Campolo goes and explains what we already know. "How many parents have pridefully lived through their children's grades, through their children's sports career, through their children's beauty, and all under the guise upon doing it for their betterment. They're wrecking their psyches, while they're inflating their own personal egos." Campolo concludes by saying, "Happiness is often the casualty of pride."

Proverbs 29:25 says it's a dangerous thing to be concerned about what others think of you. Pride causes anxiety and stress because if I'm trying to live one image, but inside I'm something else, I become stressed, discouraged, and disillusioned. By contrast, the very first thing Jesus our Lord said on the Sermon on the Mount was "Happy are the humble."

### **Happiness through humility**

If you're going to break free of the things that shackle you, there's no way you're going to do it until you begin to develop the mindset of humility. This is the real core of the lesson.

### 1. Recognize your weaknesses honestly.

"He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy." (Proverbs 28:13) If you don't admit your weaknesses, if you do not admit your perpetual areas of spiritual failure, neither you nor God will be able to work on them.

I love the story of the teenage boy who said to his sister, "Sis, I'm afraid I'm guilty of the sin of vanity." She looked at him and said, "You, vanity, how?" He said, "Well because every time I walk by the mirror, I catch myself stopping and looking and saying, 'Wow, what a hunk.'" She laughed and said, "No, that's not vanity, that's just ignorance."

Many of you will bow and pray tonight before we go to sleep, and say, "Lord, if I've committed sin today." Stop right there, just stop and think. Leave off the "if," because there's no question about it, you have committed sin today. Take the time to isolate the sin in your life, particularly the perpetual sin, the sin you're trying to stuff in the closet. Maybe it's your adulterous affair, maybe it's your lying tongue, maybe it's the hatred of a parent, maybe it's a broken relationship at work or maybe it's something you're just pretending doesn't exist. Get it out on the table and stretch it out before God. Until you admit your weakness, you'll not know genuine humility.

### 2. Evaluate your strength realistically.

Pride is based upon a false evaluation of self, but humility is based upon the truth. Jesus said, "You shall know the truth, and the truth shall set you free." Paul said, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment." (Romans 12:3) In other words, be realistic about who you are. Some people think humility is an inferiority complex. Humility isn't saying, "Oh I'm wretched, horrible, worthless or nothing. I'm just an old worm." That's not true. You're not a worm, you're not nothing, you're something. Jesus didn't die for nothing. Every one of us, unique in creation, is made in the image of God. The fact is you have strengths. All of us do. God gave them to us but we're also weak in areas. Humility is being honest about your weaknesses and realistic about your strengths.

I love the story of the little girl who walked in Baskin Robbins. She could barely see up over the counter, and said, "Sir, I want one of those hand-packed pints, no lid, just a spoon." The fellow looked at her and said, "Well little girl, are you sure you can eat all that?"

"Oh, yes sir," she said. "You see I'm much bigger on the inside than I am on the outside."

Pride is pretending you're much bigger on the outside than you are on the inside. "Each man should test his own actions, then he can take pride in himself without comparing himself to someone else." (Galatians 6:4) That is one of my life texts. There is also a good kind of pride. Paul said, you enjoy your own abilities, enjoy your own successes, a job well done, but don't compare. There are two reasons not to compare.

- a. You can always find someone who is not doing as good a job as you and you'll be proud.
- b. You can always find someone who is doing a better job than you and you'll get discouraged.

God says, I don't want you being either of those. I made you absolutely unique. You're like the snowflake, no two are the same. God just wants you to be you. If you're not going to be you, who's going to be you? Don't compare with other people - you'll either be proud or discouraged.

Galatians 6:4 is a difficult command to obey, particularly in a culture where everything is built upon competition. Let's just be honest, in America, we only want top dogs. We only want gold medal winners. We only want the salesman of the year. You watch during the fall when the camera goes down to the sidelines in the football game and they pan that sideline, all the players take that helmet off and turn. What do they say? Their team record may be four and seven, but they'll look at the camera and say, "We're number one, we're number one." How many times have you ever seen a football player turn to the camera and say, "We're number four, we're number four, and we're proud of it."? No! No! Being number one is not

what it's all about, never has been God's standard. It's all about admitting your weakness honestly while recognizing and using your strength.

### 3. Enjoy your successes gratefully.

Paul said "What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did not receive it, why do you boast as though you did?" (1 Corinthians 4:7) Do you know what Paul was saying? Everything you and I have has been given to us by God. We say, I've built my business with my own two hands. It was my idea. Great, but where did you get that mind, your health or your hands? They all came from God. Where did you get the DNA that fashioned your chromosomes that made you like you are? You see the fact is, we all do have designer genes, if you'll pardon the pun. But we didn't design them, God did. How many of you chose your parents, where you were to be born or when you were going to be born? Those are all gifts from God, and what you do with them is your gift back to God. Humility then enjoys success in life, but it does so gratefully, knowing the origin of that success. "Every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father." (James 1:17) We need to remember that and the lesson of the whale. When the whale gets to the top, and starts to blow off, is when he gets harpooned. One minute you can be a hero, and the next minute you can be a zero. Don't ever forget, there's just 12 inches difference between a halo and a noose. What we need to do is enjoy our successes gratefully.

### 4. Serve other people unselfishly.

In October 1989, Psychology Today did a great article about depression. It was focusing on the epidemic that major depression is becoming our culture. It particularly focused on the Baby Boom population, people between ages 30 and 45. Do you realize that people who are in the Baby Boom generation are three to ten times more likely to suffer major depression than their grandparents? That seems bizarre to me because our grandparents were the ones who went through the Depression, the ones who had to struggle to raise ten kids from the milk of one cow. I mean, isn't it amazing?

It continued, "It can be traced to the historical and cultural occurrences which have exalted the individual." In other words, the article said, depression is a result of the "Me" generation---me, my image and my goals. It is plain old selfishness and pride. What they found out, is that a person who's all wrapped up in himself makes a pretty small package.

The article also stated "Just as belief in the nation was crumbling, and belief in God was also fading, the sky-rocketing divorce rate was eroding belief in the family. When people no longer believe that their country is so powerful, that the family can be a source of enduring unity and support, or that a relationship with God is important, what else can they turn to for identity, satisfaction, and hope? People then only have one alternative; they turn to themselves and depression results."

In that same magazine, there was another article called, "Beyond Selfishness." Keep in mind this is Psychology Today. It's not trying to promote any particular Christian value. But it said that helping other people overcomes depression. In fact, the article said that when you help others, it actually creates endorphins in your brain. Some of you who are runners and athletes know what endorphins are. It's the hormone chemical that literally gives runners a high. The article stated that when you volunteer to help somebody else, physically you get that same kind of thing. "Volunteering to help makes people feel good physically and emotionally. Like runner's calm, it's good for your health."

What Psychology Today said in 1989 was simply restating what Paul said in Philippians 2, over 2,000 years ago. "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interest of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus." (Philippians 2:3) Paul is saying humility isn't thinking poorly of yourself, it's just thinking more about others. The focus is off my needs, my desires, my wants, and the focus is on what other people need. I like to put it this way: humility isn't thinking less of yourself; humility is thinking less about yourself. The model is Jesus.

When all the apostles were in that Upper Room, all too proud to wash each other's feet, Jesus walked in, took a basin and towel, and began washing their feet. Oh, it embarrassed them so much. But proud and insecure people can't serve others, they're too wrapped up in themselves. Each of us needs to lighten up on the introspection, i.e., what about me? Let us just dive in and serve other people.

#### 5. Humble yourself voluntarily.

"Humble yourself in the sight of the Lord, and he will lift you up." (James 4:10) I want you to notice that humility is a choice, it's a verb. Nowhere in the Bible are we told to ask God to humble us, it's something we're to choose. We choose to act, speak, and think in a humble way and the promise is, if we humble ourselves, then Christ will lift us up. That's called a paradox. God says the way up is down. The more I humble myself, the more I do admit my weaknesses and recognize my strengths, enjoy my successes in a grateful way, the more I serve others, the more God lifts me up. But the opposite is also true, just as the way up is down, the way down is up.

"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall." (Proverbs 16:18) How many personifications of that proverb have you seen? The moment I start getting filled with pride, the moment I think I've got all the answers, is the moment I begin walking right out to the end of the gangplank. If you're thinking that you don't need God, you will. You will, it's just a matter of time. That's true regardless of whether or not you believe it. It's going to happen. But the longer you wait to see it, the more you'll lose. In a nutshell the worst thing about pride is it cuts off all the wonderful things that God wants to give us. God opposes the proud, but he gives grace to the humble.

Amazing Grace

Lesson #1197

#### Questions:

1. God is  Love
  - Righteous (just)
  - Truth
  - Mercy
  - All the above
2. How many times should I forgive?
  - One
  - Seven
  - One hundred
  - Every time someone asks
3. When one forgives can he keep score of offenses
  - Yes
  - No
4. Obedience to Christ Gospel cancels our debt to God?
  - True

- False
- 5. When is man's sin and rebellion cancelled?
  - Physical death
  - Death to Sin
  - Our confession that Jesus is Lord
  - When one trust God to forgive and then obeys Him
- 6. The key to forgiveness is to recognize how much God has forgiven us. True
  - False
  -
- 7. Why do I need to forgive?
  - To escape the torment of resentment
  - I do not want to burn the bridge I will have to walk across
  - I want God to forgive me
  - 
  - All the above

#### Answers to Questions

1. All the Above
2. Every time someone asks
3. No
4. True
5. When one trust God to forgive and obeys Him
6. True
7. I want God to forgive me