

“Dennis Kizziar has tackled a difficult subject in a clear and concise manner. His practical examples of both positive and negative, biblical and non-biblical attempts to restore fallen brothers and sisters who have repented make this book a great resource for those of us who are called to ‘gently set broken bones’ of a fallen brother.”

*Syd Brestel, Teaching Elder
Foundry Church, Bend, Oregon*

“Early in the process of reading the manuscript of *Fallen, Broken, Restored* I wrote Dennis Kizziar, ‘This book is a gold mine.’ I have watched churches fail when trying to ‘help’ those who have sinned, especially when it has been a pastor. Many churches do not know how to help the fallen. Sadly, some do not want to help those who have fallen, are broken and need to be healed. Sometimes it seems these churches want to get the past behind them instead of restoring the fallen person gently as Paul says in Galatians 6. Whether your church has struggled with knowing the biblical pattern for restoring someone who has stumbled and fallen or not, I commend *Fallen, Broken, Restored* so you can be of maximum help when you do see it happening, because it will happen! And, when it happens ‘the gold mine’ can help.”

Dr. John Vawter, Author and Speaker

“I think that your work is solid in reasoning, clear in presentation, and necessary for our times. I recommend it without reservation.”

*Don Furrow, Pastor
Trinity Bible Church, Surprise, Arizona*

“I think this book is a must read for every pastor or anyone involved in a Christian ministry.”

*Jim Hively, Missionary
Crossworld International*

“Dennis brings a fresh reminder to every believer to be a minister of reconciliation. Too often we ignore the fallen, rather than seek to restore them. This book represents a balanced and practical approach for grace-filled restoration.”

*Randy Myers, Senior Pastor
New Hope Church, Bend, Oregon*

“Excellent explanation of restoring brothers and sisters to the church and fellowship after grievous sin. Very clear biblical guidelines in church discipline and restoration to the glory of God.”

*Doug Nichols, Founder and International Director Emeritus
Action International Ministries*

“I believe the message that people who first are broken can be restored, is a subject that unfortunately has been largely overlooked until now. This book fills that gap and the message is presented in a very clear, biblical and practical manner.”

*Peter Cunliffe, Founder
Christian World Publishers*

“There are far too many examples of fellow pastors who have fallen and are broken, but precious few who have been biblically restored. My good friend, Dennis Kizziar, veteran frontline soldier of the cross, has hit a proper balance between grace and truth in his book, *Fallen, Broken, Restored*. I wholeheartedly recommend it as a must read for pastors and lay leaders. Read it before you need it. The best time to take swimming lessons is before the flood hits.”

*Pete Unrau, Founder/Director
Oasis Retreats, a soul care ministry for those who have fallen
and are broken, but unrestored*

“This book provides a simple to follow, step-by-step guide on dealing with a problem in our churches that is more common than we know. Throwing people out of the church for their misdeeds is easy. It simply is not what Christ would have us to do. We can also choose to ignore the public sins of our brothers and sisters. That would also serve no good purpose. Restoration is certainly not the easy road, but it is the Christian way. God does answer prayer and we need to have faith and trust Him for His mercy, forgiveness and grace.”

*Jerry Kvanvig, Board Member
Chapel of the Pines, Camp Sherman, Oregon*

“Often, the one thing a fallen believer cannot see is hope for their life. Dennis has brought fresh insight and biblical-drawn possibilities for someone desiring to move forward in their walk with the Lord and direction for those who will walk with them through it!”

*Terry VanAntwerp, Executive Director
Central Oregon Men’s Outreach*

“*Fallen, Broken, Restored* is a practical, straight-forward and hard-hitting presentation of a difficult area within the church today. Dennis Kizziar’s approach brings the believer under the authority of Scripture while providing practical steps in dealing with the journey to restoration. The reader will discern Dennis’ heart, weary at times to the difficulty the fallen find in climbing back into service. Yet, one cannot miss Dennis’ relating the glorious hope of a full recovery by the grace of God who has given to His church the ministry of reconciliation.”

*Richard Keeney, Pastor
1st Baptist Church, Grass Valley, Oregon*



Fallen Broken Restored

The Journey *from* Ruination *to* Restoration

Dennis M. Kizziar

FALLEN, BROKEN, RESTORED

Dennis M. Kizziar

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*“If you, O LORD, kept a record of sins, O LORD, who could stand?”
“But with you there is forgiveness; therefore you are feared. I wait for
the LORD, my soul waits, and in his word I put my hope.”*

PSALM 130:3-4

*“The LORD is close to the brokenhearted and
saves those who are crushed in spirit.”*

PSALM 34:18

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Introduction

When you picked up this book, you may have wondered who this guy Kizziar is and what qualifies him to write a book on restoration. The short answer is that I am someone who has been in ministry for more than fifty years and has *fallen*, been *broken* and, by the grace of God, been *restored*.

I know all too well what it means to fall flat on your face—not once, but multiple times—and to have my failures made public. I also know what it is like to be broken and humbled before God and man.

But thanks to God and to some grace-filled friends, my story doesn't end with failure or brokenness. Because of the love, mercy, and grace of God and a team of spiritual and grace-oriented individuals, I have experienced the pure joy of being forgiven and restored.

Over the years I've witnessed the failings of many high-profile Christians such as Ted Haggard, Sandi Patty, Gordon MacDonald, Jim Bakker, and Jimmy Swaggart, as well as personal friends and many other believers. Few of them were ever fully restored in their relationships with people. As a result of their experiences and my own, I feel compelled to address this great and growing need. It is critical that we have a biblical understanding of restoration and are led by the Spirit in implementing it if we are to help those who have fallen, been broken, and want to be restored.

It is always a challenge to balance accurately truth (God's eternal principles stated in His Word) and grace (God's love freely shown toward guilty and undeserving sinners and saints). It's easy to overemphasize one above the other. You will have

to judge for yourself how well I have achieved this delicate balance. You might conclude that I have not taken sin and its consequences seriously enough and will accuse me of dispensing “cheap grace.”

Because of my personal experience, I have a clearer and deeper understanding of both sin and grace than ever before. I realize that sin is a serious offense against a holy and righteous God and has far-reaching consequences. I know and appreciate in a profound way that grace is not cheap, but is free and is freely given to undeserving sinners and saints alike because Jesus paid for our sins once and for all. It costs us nothing because it cost Him everything.

My plea in this book, for those of us who name Christ as our Lord and who have had all our sins forgiven because of His sacrifice on our behalf, is that we become people of grace. I am not suggesting in any way that we compromise the truth of God’s Word. But I am strongly advocating that we quickly reach out to those we know who have fallen into sin and been broken, and that we extend God’s grace to them. We must do all we possibly can to see them fully restored to the Lord and His family so they can continue the journey of rebuilding their lives.

My heart’s desire is to see our churches and ministries become places where God’s Word is accurately and relevantly proclaimed, where God’s grace is not only talked and sung about but where it is also evident and lived out in all our relationships. I believe strongly that wherever there is such a church or ministry, God will focus His blessing upon it and upon those who have been overtaken by sin. Those who long to be restored will be attracted to that place and find healing.

Author Gordon MacDonald underscores the same belief when he writes, “The day the modern church learns that it must be a safe place for people who are dealing with failure—a safe place

where the gospel of the second chance is constantly repeated, a safe place where there is commitment to restore people to kingdom usefulness—will be the day when the church recovers the spiritual fire we long for.”¹

If this book helps one more church or ministry become a more intentional place of grace, I will be grateful. If it helps you as an individual believer become a better dispenser of His restorative grace to fallen and broken people, I will rejoice. And if it gives one more fallen, broken person hope that they can be fully and completely restored, I will praise God.

A grateful recipient of His magnificent grace,
Dennis M. Kizziar

PART I

Fallen

*My conviction is that failure of some kind is common to us all.
And since God had people like us in mind when Christ died,
God's grace is adequate to make the best of any situation.*

ERWIN W. LUTZER

CHAPTER ONE

On the Ground

People – even great people – fall. But people don't have to stay down. The one who made us is there to restore us.

WAYNE GOODALL

Centuries ago, theologian John Chrysostom wrote, “The danger is not that we should fall...but that we should remain on the ground.”¹

The ugly truth is that the Christian landscape is littered with fallen soldiers who are still on the ground. Many are so overwhelmed with guilt and shame that they don't believe God could or would forgive them one more time. They are convinced they have fallen too many times and too deeply ever to be restored fully to wholeness and usefulness. Tragically, Satan reinforces this lie. Many times he uses other believers to confirm this lie and to make sure the fallen ones never get off the ground!

Unfortunately, many ministry leaders and lay Christians don't know how to act or react to fellow believers when they learn of their sin. Either they do nothing or they overreact and punish without mercy or grace. Therefore, the fallen ones stay on the ground and Satan gains a victory in their lives and in the church.

There is a desperate need for the church as a whole and for each individual believer to understand and practice biblical principles of church discipline and restoration. Churches and ministry organizations should be places of spiritual healing where God's loving, restorative grace flows freely. I believe where there is such a ministry, God will pour out His blessing in great measure. Remember, He is the "*God of all grace*" (1 Peter 5:10).

How can churches or organizations become the kind of places that eagerly and biblically help those who have "blown it" get up on their feet and once again move forward to advance the kingdom of God? This is one of the great needs of the hour and, by all accounts, the need will continue to increase. We can no longer ignore it. Biblical restoration can be done...it should be done...it *must* be done if we are going to represent effectively the God of all grace to a lost world.

It is not an easy ministry. There are many facets to church discipline and restoration that we must examine and take seriously. Every situation is unique, with different dynamics at play. However, the basic scriptural principles apply to anyone and any situation where someone has fallen and wants to be restored.

The following two stories are composites of true events that I personally witnessed. They are clear examples of what can go wrong—and right—when believers fall.

Separate Ways

Joe came to saving faith in Jesus Christ when he was a teenager. He loved the Lord and served Him faithfully. He married a wonderful Christian woman, Alicia, and God blessed them with two beautiful children. He had an influential position as the

executive pastor of a growing church, which he greatly enjoyed. Life was good!

There was just one area Joe struggled with: he wasn't happy with the financial package he received from the church. He believed he deserved an increase in salary. After all, he was the one who effectively ran the church and worked an inordinate amount of hours in order to keep everything operating smoothly. Yet his request for a raise was turned down by the church board even though the church was in great fiscal shape.

As executive pastor, one of Joe's responsibilities was to oversee church finances. He began to rationalize that more than anyone else, he was primarily responsible for the growth of the church and for its excellent financial health. Gradually, in his own mind, he justified a scheme that enabled him to take a little cash from the offerings each month to supplement what he thought was an inadequate salary.

The fateful day came when his wrongdoing was discovered by the bookkeeper. Joe was called to an evening meeting with the six-member church board. The hammer came down hard. Frank, the board chair and the man who'd hired Joe, was clearly angry and disappointed.

"Joe, we trusted you," Frank said, his face red. "How could you do this? How could you violate that trust?"

Across the table, Joe looked at his hands folded in his lap. He didn't know what to say.

Frank shook his head. "This isn't how a man of God behaves. You'll have to clean out your office immediately. Your work here is finished. You are no longer to attend this church or have contact with any of the members." The other elders nodded in agreement.

Joe left the meeting with his head spinning and stomach churning. The consequences of his sin began to sink in. This was

more than a small error in judgment. He'd brought shame and humiliation upon himself and his family. How was he going to support them? Would he be able to find another job? Would he have to go to jail?

When Joe reached his home, most of the lights were off. Alicia and the kids had already gone to bed. He dropped into a chair in the living room and buried his face in his hands. Tears filled his eyes.

Lord, he prayed, what have I done? How can I make this right with You? To my family? What am I going to say to Alicia?

Joe tossed and turned all night. He thought about running away. He even thought about taking his own life. But when morning arrived, he found the courage to explain to his wife what had happened. Joe was surprised and strengthened when Alicia, even though she was shocked, pledged to support and stand by him as he worked through this.

With that encouragement, Joe spent the next two days in intense reflection and prayer. He understood he'd offended God and strayed from the heavenly plan for his life. On his knees, he asked for and felt himself receiving the Lord's forgiveness. Joe knew, however, that this was only half of the task before him. He still had to make things right with the church.

The next day, Joe called Frank. In a halting voice, Joe explained that he realized he'd committed a great sin and that he'd asked for and received the Lord's forgiveness. "Frank, I want to do the right thing here," he said. "I'm not asking for my job back. I'm hoping that I can meet again with you and the board to ask for your forgiveness and to offer to make full restitution of the funds. And maybe, someday, be a part of the church again."

The sudden silence seemed endless. Finally, Frank spoke, his tone brusque, "I'm sorry, Joe. We're past that point. It's just

better if we all go our separate ways and move on.” The line went dead.

Joe and Alicia never did reconnect with that church. For several years, they stopped going to church altogether. Disillusioned with the church and God, both struggled with their faith.

The congregation didn’t fare any better. As word about Joe’s situation spread, many believers became disillusioned and attendance gradually declined. Several struggling believers kept their sin issues to themselves. They realized that if they admitted their problems to leaders in the church, they too might be condemned and dismissed.

We will hear more about Joe and Alicia later in the book. Now, let’s look at a similar story, but with a different outcome.

Welcome Home

Becky was a lifelong believer with an upbeat personality. She and her husband, Mark, were active members of First Church. Everyone knew them and loved them. They, along with their three young children, appeared to be the ideal family. Mark and Becky sang in the church choir. Mark served as an usher. Becky worked in the nursery. The family reached out with compassion to those in the community who were especially needy, sometimes delivering a meal or a bag of children’s clothes to a single mom.

But beneath the surface, problems were building in their marriage. Mark was promoted at his computer engineering job, spent more and more hours at the office, and grew distracted and irritable at home. Becky began to feel ignored and unloved by both Mark and God. She was overwhelmed with her responsibilities as a mom. She started going out at night when she needed “a break from all this.”

The day came when Becky announced she could no longer take it. She left Mark and their three children. The real shocker was when she said she was in love with another woman. Becky moved out of her home and in with her new lover.

Mark's world was shattered. The entire church, in fact, was in a state of disbelief. Mark and the church leadership earnestly prayed to God for wisdom and for Becky's repentance and restoration. The First Church pastor, Dave, and other church leaders pleaded with Becky to turn from her sinful lifestyle, but to no avail. She resisted any and all attempts to restore her. Several months went by without any observable change in Becky's life.

Finally, Dave and the elders had no choice but to exercise biblical church discipline. Dave wrote a letter to the congregation explaining Becky's situation and that she was now excluded from the fellowship. But he also asked church members to continue to pray for Becky, for a return to God's will, and for healed relationships with her family.

Dave also called Becky. She didn't want to meet, so he told her over the phone about the letter and the church's decision to separate her from the church. "Becky, this isn't a step we want to take," Dave said. "We love you. We hope that you will repent and be restored to your family. We look forward to the day we can welcome you back to First Church. We'll keep praying daily for you."

"I don't see that happening, pastor," Becky said, "but thank you anyway."

More months passed. Mark, Dave, and other leaders and members of the church did continue to pray for Becky to open her heart to the Lord. One day, Mark answered his phone and was surprised to hear Becky's shaking voice.

"Mark," she said through tears, "I...I've ruined everything. I've hurt you and the kids and messed up everyone's life. I never

should have left. God is showing me how wrong I was. Could you...would you ever find it possible to forgive me? I know it's probably too late, but is there any chance at all that we could try again?"

Mark took a deep breath. He admitted to his own mistakes in their marriage. Yes, they had problems. But he assured Becky of his unconditional love, forgiveness, and desire to rebuild their relationship. They kept talking. Mark wanted them to meet together with Dave. Becky wasn't so sure. Despite their pastor's positive words, she feared criticism and condemnation. She felt so guilty and ashamed.

"After all I've done, after getting kicked out of the church," she told Mark, "how can I ever go back again? How can I face any of those people?" At Mark's continued urging, however, Becky reluctantly agreed to a meeting.

A few days later, Becky sat with Mark in the waiting area outside the pastor's office. She fiddled with a button on her blouse and tried not to think about the fact that she wanted to throw up.

Finally, Dave emerged. To Becky's surprise, he had a warm smile on his face. In two quick strides, he was in front of her and clasping her hand. "Becky, I'm so glad you're here," he said. "Welcome home."

As the three of them sat in Dave's office, the pastor assured Becky that the church would extend grace, forgiveness, and total acceptance to her. Dave looked intently into Becky's eyes. "This will work if you are truly repentant," he said. "It isn't going to happen overnight. It's going to take time to rebuild trust with Mark, with your kids, and with your friends at church. But we are all committed to being there for you and helping you both in every way possible." With the guidance of other members of the church leadership, Dave said they would help her rebuild

her walk with the Lord and heal the relationships that were damaged by her actions.

For the first time in months, Becky felt a sliver of hope. *Maybe, she thought, I haven't ruined everything. Maybe God does still love me.*

Over the next few years, Becky and Mark's marriage grew stronger and more authentic than either imagined was possible. When the two of them renewed their wedding vows in the church, you couldn't find a dry eye anywhere.

First Church also continued to prosper. It became known as a safe place for those struggling with sin, a home full of grace and hope.

What can we learn from these two stories? Both Joe and Becky fell into sin. Both acknowledged their sin and repented. Joe was left to figure it out for himself while Becky was restored to her church family. What made the difference? Will you know what to say and do when it's your turn to respond?

Fallen. Broken. Restored. Let's thank God for His amazing grace as we explore these issues in the chapters ahead.

CHAPTER TWO

Why Do We Do It?

*You and I are capable of indescribable evil.
The potential for every sin lies within us.*

ERWIN W. LUTZER

Three months after graduating from seminary, my wife and I were headed to Brazil as missionaries. During my college years, George was instrumental in our decision to go to that great country, challenging me to be a part of the new team going to make an impact for Christ. George was a dynamic personality, a captivating preacher, and the vice president of the mission with which we became associated.

Upon our arrival in Brazil we entered into study of the Portuguese language with great enthusiasm. A few months later, our field director called an urgent meeting. We gathered at the home of a fellow missionary. I immediately sensed that this wouldn't be the usual gathering—there was no laughter, no coffee, no fellowship. Our field director began the meeting in a low, halting voice.

"I've just received a shocking communication from our mission home office," he said. His hands were shaking and his face was pale. He continued with great emotion to read the letter. The essence of the memo was that George, the highly respected

vice president of the mission, had become sexually involved with the wife of another key leader in the mission. George and this woman were both divorcing their spouses in order to be with each other.

I sat in stunned silence. I was overwhelmed with a myriad of conflicting emotions: anger, sadness, confusion, disillusionment. How could this happen to George, a man so mightily used of God? A man who had made such an impact on my life and on hundreds of others?

I didn't know what to do. I was twenty-six years old and fresh out of seminary. I thought I had all the answers when I graduated from seminary, but suddenly I realized how totally unprepared I was to deal with a fallen brother. Do I confront him? Do I ignore him? Do I call for punishment? Should he be disciplined? If so, how should it be done and who should do it? Was it possible that he could ever be restored? Was he repentant?

The questions flooded my mind. I had no clear answers.

Daily a great number of pastors and prominent Christian leaders will fall, like George, into grievous sin that will become public knowledge. Each month approximately fifteen hundred pastors leave the ministry, many because of moral or ethical failure. No one knows how many church members also fall into sin and public disgrace each month.

Why do they do it? What will happen to them? Who really cares? Didn't they make their own sinful choices and now need to suffer the consequences? Isn't it better to leave them alone and let them figure it out for themselves?

A fallen Christian, whether a leader or not, is a heart-breaking sight. What is even more pathetic is that many remain isolated and defeated because no one cares enough, is knowledgeable enough, or is spiritually mature enough to help restore them to the Lord and to the fellowship of believers. What, if anything,

should you and I do about it, especially if that person is under our influence or authority?

To help us answer that question, first let's examine why so many of us—even when we know better—keep stumbling.

Our Old Sin Nature

Most evangelical believers will readily admit that all of mankind was deeply affected by the fall of Adam and Eve. They would also agree that everyone born since

□ —————
*Even though we
 experience a radical
 change when we place our
 trust in Christ, we still
 carry with us our old sin
 nature and other baggage
 from our past.*
 ————— □

has come into the world alienated from a holy God, with a nature capable of the most horrendous of sins.

They would also agree on the good news that God, through Christ's atoning death and resurrection, has provided a way for mankind to be reconciled to Him. It is gloriously true

that when we embrace the gospel, we become a "new creation in Christ" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The problem is that even though we may experience a radical change when we place our trust in Christ, we still carry with us our old sin nature and other baggage from our past. As author and college professor Dallas Willard said, "When our heart comes to new life in God, the old programs are still running contrary to our new heart."¹

Not only do we have the old sin nature to contend with, but we also have to live our new life in Christ in a broken world filled with unbelievable violence, abuse of every kind, grief, heartache, and temptations around every corner. The world relentlessly tries to squeeze us into its mold. Make no mistake about it—this world is not a friend of grace to help us on to God!

Added to the facts that we have a fallen nature and live in a broken world, our archenemy Satan is still very much a force to be reckoned with. Ephesians 6:12 makes it abundantly clear who our real enemy is. He continually goes about as a “roaring lion” seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). His goal is to discourage, defeat, and bring about the downfall of every believer.

This unholy trinity—our old sin nature, the world, and the devil—is constantly working to lead us into sin and away from a life that pleases God. Once we recognize the forces that are working against us, we shouldn’t be so shocked at the fall of a believer who hasn’t yet learned or hasn’t chosen to walk consistently in the Spirit or to utilize the spiritual armor God provides.

The apostle Paul certainly understood and experienced the intensity of this struggle. He admitted that his old nature was cunning, baffling, and powerful. He stated it with agonizing clarity Romans 7:15-20:

“I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good. As it is, it is no longer I myself who do it, but it is sin living in me. I know that nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature. For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. For what I do is not the good I want to do; no, the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Now if I do what I do not want to do, it is no longer I who do it, but it is sin living in me that does it.”

Most believers can readily identify with the sentiments Paul expressed in these verses. At times we all feel like a walking civil war.

Paul was in no way giving justification in these verses for wrongdoing, but he did offer an explanation for why we do

wrong. He wasn't trying to escape moral responsibility, but he recognized that the sin nature was still a powerful force within him. He knew there was something in him that answered to the seduction of sin.

Closet Pariahs

We need to be honest and acknowledge that in our midst are many struggling and defeated Christians, people who have stumbled and fallen many times. Many of them fear that if their fall becomes a matter of public knowledge, particularly if it is of an egregious nature, they will be shunned or judged by those who seem to have it all together. Therefore, they make sure that they continue to project a good Christian image.

John White addresses this reality when he writes:

What is the reason for the sort of church schizophrenia in which we believe (or else pretend we believe) that all is well apart from a few unmentionable people, when all the time our ranks are infiltrated by the defeated and the impotent, grappling hopelessly with their besetting sins? They are our wounded brothers and sisters. They are the church's closet pariahs.²

You probably know some of these people. They are in your Bible study, your row at church, and maybe even your own family.

Some of us are better actors than Christians because we're afraid to reveal our true selves. Our spiritual growth is stifled because we never address the reality of our lives. I think one of the reasons for this behavior has to do with our attitude toward sin and sinners.

Our Sin Dilemma

The old sin nature can erupt in a variety of ways. There can be either a manifestation of the sins of the flesh or the sins of the spirit (2 Corinthians 7:1). Both types of sins are clearly illustrated in the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32). You know the story—the younger of two sons demands his inheritance and wastes it on wild living before repenting and returning home, where his father holds a feast to celebrate his return despite the protests of the jealous older brother. The younger son succumbed to the sins of the flesh when he squandered his inheritance on “wild living” (v. 13). The elder brother succumbed to the sins of the spirit when he grew jealous over his father’s attention to his brother (vv. 28-30).

It is true that the sins of the flesh usually have greater immediate consequences than the sins of the spirit, but both are equally sinful in God’s sight. Pastor Erwin Lutzer states it well:

Of course, overt acts of sin have greater consequences than sins of the heart. In that sense, all sins are not equal. If David had only lusted after Bathsheba instead of committing the act of adultery, the consequences which followed his sins would not have occurred. But *legally* and *judicially* sins of the mind and overt acts are the same in God’s sight.³

Dallas Willard makes the same point in different words:

Malfeasance with money is less acceptable than anger, and sexual misconduct is less tolerated still. But is the inner condition (the heart) all that different in these cases before God?⁴

We get in serious trouble when we begin to rank or differentiate sins. As ministry leaders, if we lose sight of the fact that we “*all stumble in many ways*” (James 3:2), we are bound to

fail our brothers and sisters just as the elder brother failed his younger brother.

Some of us take great pride in making lists of the sins we will not tolerate, usually sins of the flesh that someone else is committing, while conveniently leaving off sins of the spirit. If we are going to make lists, we should be sure to include God's. For example, *"There are six things the LORD hates, seven that are detestable to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness who pours out lies and a man who stirs up dissension among brothers"* (Proverbs 6:16-19).

Another list that includes both sins of the flesh and of the spirit is enumerated in Galatians, *"The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like"* (Galatians 5:19-21).

Author Philip Yancey makes this observation:

We Christians have our own grouping of "acceptable" and "unacceptable" sins. As long as we avoid the most egregious sins, we feel pretty good about our spiritual status. The problem is, our understanding of egregious sins keeps changing.⁵

Anatomy of a Fall

It's hard to analyze all the factors that lead up to a major fall for an individual believer. We are complicated human beings. We are all wired differently. When a Christian's sin becomes public and is of the type that creates a major scandal, however, one thing is certain: long before, there were many private struggles and failures. No one wakes up one day and suddenly has a major

fall. You can be certain that many precipitating factors were in play for a long time. As author Paul Little once said, "failure in the Christian life is never the result of a sudden blowout, but is always caused by a slow leak."

Jeff Leeland is a man who understands this concept all too well. He was raised in a fine Christian home and was a solid believer who desired to please God. He had a great wife, Kristi,

□—————
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PAUL LITTLE

—————□ and his wife founded a significant ministry, Sparrow Clubs USA, that by God's grace grew into a national organization touching thousands of lives. He had a nice home, a good salary, and many friends. Life was good! Jeff was a blessed and highly respected man.

Yet while all this was going on, a slow leak was taking place in Jeff's inner man. I'll let him tell you the story.

October 2011 I was in the deepest, darkest hole I could imagine. I had lost it all, even the desire to live. Drinking was no longer fun, but a necessity to feel somewhat normal, relieving me from the shakes and feelings of despair. The inside of my body was a desert wasteland of nutritional deficiency. Worse yet, my heart, mind and soul were an even greater wasteland. How could this possibly have happened? ... And to a decent guy like me?

After graduation from college, marriage to the love of my life, five wonderful children and a successful teaching career, two major events occurred in 1991: our fourth

child Michael was born and I was accepted as athletic and activities director, teacher and coach at a junior high school in Kirkland, Washington.

Seven months after Michael was born our world was turned upside-down. Our baby was diagnosed with a rare and very fatal form of leukemia. He needed a bone marrow transplant to live. Our six-year-old daughter Amy was a rare perfect match! Due to my job change, our new insurance would cover the cost after a waiting period of one year. But we couldn't wait. Michael's deteriorating condition meant he required a transplant as soon as possible. Without insurance the hospital required \$175,000 cash – up front – to admit Michael. Needless to say, we were devastated. For a family of six on one income, that amount was impossible. God miraculously provided the needed funds through the students at the school where I taught. It all started when Dameon, one of my special education students, emptied his personal bank account of \$65 and brought it to me. (You can read the complete story in my book, *One Small Sparrow*.)

Michael was hospitalized for fifty days that summer – buffeted by chemo and radiation and blessed to receive his sister Amy's marrow. Now as I write, Michael is a sophomore at the University of Oregon on a full scholarship awarded for character and leadership.

As a result of our experience with Michael's illness, we founded a non-profit organization called Sparrow Clubs USA (www.sparrowclubs.org). Michael's story inspired us to launch a kids-helping-kids organization through the schools which "adopt" sick and disabled children. In January 2001, with Kristi's heartfelt support, I dedicated my career to fulltime work with Sparrow Clubs.

I redoubled my efforts as the organization grew. The work we did was wonderful and desperately needed. Yet over time, a subtle shift took place in my heart and mind. Pride in my own ability replaced dependence on the empowerment of the Holy Spirit to do God's work. I took over the job of keeping the cause alive. As I wrote books, traveled, attended meetings, and jumped through hoops, my focus drifted away from sensing and meeting the quiet but very real needs of Kristi and our children. My heart was dedicated to loving, providing, nurturing, and caring for our family, but in reality there was not enough of me to go around.

In the meantime, an "old friend" from college days named alcohol (which I hadn't touched in 20 years) was introduced back into my life—one harmless half glass of wine at a business function—yet cunning, baffling and powerful still. As Sparrow Clubs and pressures grew, I began "tipping" more than a few. During those early years there were hardly any visible signs that I had a problem. Accompanying my busyness with Sparrow Clubs came more opportunities to drink socially—fundraisers, meetings, dinners, etc. It was just the thing to do. I "overdid it a little" on a few occasions.

Subtly and slowly, alcohol was becoming an easy, quick and deceptive fix for me to ease the stress and escape my pain. And by doing that, instead of waiting for the Lord to act on our behalf, I was taking matters into my own hands and growing weaker mentally and morally. My spiritual roots were dying.

Over the next four years, my life spun out of control. By May 2010 Kristi and I had been forced to file for bankruptcy and received notice that our home was being foreclosed. I had two court appearances for a DUI. I paid a high price: big fines, alcohol treatment, losing my driving

privilege for over two years, having my car repossessed. I was asked to step down from having my position as director of Sparrow Clubs – my passion, the organization we had founded.

While in my second alcohol treatment program, I relapsed again. Due to my drinking, Kristi and our two teenage boys moved out at the end of June 2010. What Kristi was counseled to do in hopes that it would be a wake-up call for me, only drove me into a deeper numbness and disbelief.

I felt abandoned, full of loneliness and self-pity. At home, I was a squatter waiting for an auction and the bank or sheriff to move me out. I couldn't handle being by myself, with myself. I used my unemployment check for utilities, occasional food and to escape from the man in the mirror I didn't recognize anymore. Alcohol, sexual sin, and gambling machines at bars tightened the noose of addiction. I was forced to borrow from old friends and had little or no money left over to provide for Kristi and the kids. Deep down I was ashamed and disappointed with myself, but felt helpless to do anything about it.

Could I have shared my troubles with my pastor and other Christian friends? Could I have asked for help? Of course. But I found reasons not to. Sometimes I figured I could handle it myself. Other times, I feared that people would criticize and judge me if they found out.

I did go to church off and on. One Sunday morning as I walked to church, my cell phone rang. It was a close friend and fellow believer, though I hadn't heard much from him lately.

"Hi Jeff," he said. "I just got out of church. The sermon was on forgiveness, and it prompted me to call you."

I was glad to hear his voice. With all I was going through, I felt more than ready for a dose of forgiveness. That wasn't where our conversation was going, however.

“You know, I used to call you my best friend,” he continued. “Now, after what you’ve done to your family, I don’t see you as a friend anymore.” My friend hadn’t called to forgive me, but to confront me and tell me how badly I’d screwed up.

When our talk ended, I turned away from the church, headed to the nearest bar, and started drinking again.

My unemployment soon ran out. I had no money to pay rent. Through the rest of the summer and fall I lived like a vagabond from couch to couch, staying with friends, building fences on ranches, doing maintenance work at a local pub, landscaping, or any other odd job I could finagle for cash. I lost my cell phone and was out of contact most of the time.

I was in the deepest, darkest hole I could imagine, and I saw no way out.⁶

Failure Need Never Be Final

There were times in Jeff’s journey that he could relate to this comment by theologian and martyr Dietrich Bonhoeffer:

He who is alone with his sins is utterly alone. It may be that Christians, notwithstanding corporate worship, common prayer, and all their fellowship in service, may still be left to their loneliness. The final breakthrough to fellowship does not occur because, though they have fellowship with one another as believers and as devout people, they do not have fellowship as the undevout, as sinners. The pious fellowship permits no one to be a sinner. So everyone must conceal his sin from himself and from their fellowship. Many Christians are unthinkable horrified when a real sinner is suddenly discovered among the righteous. So we remain alone with our sin, living in lies and hypocrisy. The fact is we are sinners!⁷

The great message of the Bible is that failure of any kind never needs to be final for the one who has succumbed to the sins of the flesh or to the sins of the spirit, been attacked and defeated by the enemy, and overwhelmed by the world's system. We don't need to be defined by our past. Instead, we can be prepared by it for our future. As someone once said, "Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead-end street."⁸

God is relentless in His pursuit of His wayward children. Jeff realized this when he said,

□—————
*The great message
of the Bible is that failure
of any kind never needs
to be final.*
—————□

God has not forgotten you either—or the people in your life. No matter who is in your congregation or ministry and no matter what they or you have done, God wants to restore everyone fully. To travel the road to restoration, however, we must first go through *brokenness*.

PART II

Broken

“He [God] heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds.”

PSALM 147:3

CHAPTER THREE

From Broken to Beautiful

*No matter what your past may have been,
the future is brighter than you can imagine. Why? Because our God
specializes in using broken vessels. That's His preferred plan.*

CHARLES SWINDOLL

The tears flowed freely. Between his sobs, Robert said over and over, “What a fool I have been. Please forgive me. I am so sorry.”

Robert was chairman of the elder board of a mega-church back east and a leader in the community. Everyone knew and respected him. He was married to a lovely woman and had three great children in their teens. All were deeply involved in the life of the church.

Joshua, the pastor, was in a state of disbelief as his long-time friend sat in his church office and poured out his sordid story of alcohol and drug addiction, adultery, and embezzling company funds to support his sinful lifestyle. Robert confessed to Joshua and asked for his forgiveness for being such a hypocrite. He said he wanted help in making things right with God, his family, the church, and his employer. Joshua believed Robert was truly broken and desperately wanted to be restored to God and to others against whom he had sinned.

Few sights are more gut-wrenching than a once-proud and

self-assured man humbled and in tears, begging for forgiveness. Yet nothing is more pleasing to God than seeing one of His wayward children desperately wanting to return home. He waits with open arms to welcome His child back into fellowship, *“The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit”* (Psalm 34:18).

God is never closer than when we are sweeping up the pieces of our shattered world and wondering what to do next. In our world, and too often in our churches, broken people are considered tragedies deemed worthless and, therefore, are cast aside.

□ —————
*God is never closer
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It takes a great deal to break the strong, stubborn, and rebellious wills of some people. When that finally does take place, it is usually painful beyond description to witness. It often involves much trauma and excruciating emotional and spiritual pain. The end of self-reliance happens

in a variety of ways. It doesn't always take place after the humiliation of public exposure of sin, yet that is often what's required for the process of brokenness to begin.

The Lord in His mercy gives each of us countless opportunities to humble ourselves and repent, to turn away from our sin and return to His loving arms. It is so much better to learn the easy way rather than the hard way. But if we continually resist His pleadings, He has ways of humbling and breaking us.

God chastises and humbles us because He loves us too much to allow us to continue in our self-destructive ways. As Scripture tells us, *“The Lord disciplines those He loves...No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces*

a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it" (Hebrews 12:6, 11). As heart wrenching and devastating as God's discipline oftentimes is, it can also be the best thing that could possibly happen to us. Because He loves us, God breaks our pride and brings us to our senses so that He can bless us and use us for His glory and the good of His other children. And when God breaks someone in our congregation or ministry this way, our job is to help—not hinder—His work.

Dwight Small gives an accurate picture of God's working in order to bring about brokenness.

The divine Potter can feel the hard spots of resistance through His very fingers as they mold the vessels of our lives. Before our secret sins can be detected by others, He knows they are there. But the amazing thing is that He continues to work with us even though He knows there will be a shattering experience, an inward crumbling, a broken life.¹

What Is Brokenness?

Brokenness involves death to: our reputations, our agendas, our pride, our self-protection. It is the end of self-will and of attitudes and actions that do not honor the Lord. Brokenness begins when the Holy Spirit convicts us of our wrongdoing and inadequacy. It softens our hearts and makes us more responsive to the Holy Spirit. That in turn produces in us a deep and painful recognition of our sin which leads to genuine repentance. We begin to grieve over the fact that we have made a hopeless mess of our lives and have sinned against a holy and righteous God who loves us. We are devastated by the damage and shame that our sin has brought to the cause of Christ. We also are broken when we reflect on the unintended consequences of our sin: the

pain we have inflicted on our loved ones, the end of friendships, financial loss, the death of trust...and the list goes on.

If the pain and regret are only for the *consequences* of our sin, however, then true brokenness has not taken place. Instead, damage control is our mindset and the reality of brokenness before God and man will not be authentic. What God is looking for is genuine brokenness and humility before Him. After all, our sin is primarily against God, even though it has negatively impacted many others, *“Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight”* (Psalm 51:4).

David wrote the powerful fifty-first psalm after his sins of coveting, stealing, adultery, and murder were exposed in a confrontation by the prophet Nathan. David acknowledged his sin and received God’s forgiveness, although he had to experience severe consequences. In that psalm, David makes it clear what God is after, *“The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise”* (Psalm 51:17).

Brokenness is not something we alone have the power to achieve. Gordon MacDonald makes that clear when he writes:

The act of repentance is actually a gift from God in at least two ways. First, repentance is a gift in the sense that insight into our own broken-world need and awareness that something has to change is undoubtedly initiated by God’s Spirit. Need and change are issues we simply would not see or appreciate on our own. Jesus said that was the task of the Holy Spirit, who would convict and point out sin, stimulating insight and the desire to change. (See John 16:8)²

In 2006, a male escort and masseur alleged that Ted Haggard, pastor of New Life Church in Colorado Springs and president of the National Association of Evangelicals, paid to have sex with

him and buy drugs from him. Haggard soon admitted to some of the allegations and resigned from his positions.

In her book *Why I Stayed*, Gayle Haggard, Ted's wife, relates her experience of his brokenness being questioned:

Just before we boarded our plane, I stopped by an airport restroom. I gasped in surprise when I turned the corner and met the wife of a prominent Christian leader. "Gayle," the woman said, her voice soft with pity. "Has Ted been broken yet?"

"B-broken?" I stammered, thinking of the tears that had been shed, the long talks, the suicidal thoughts, and the unrelenting media attention. "How could he not be broken?"

The woman murmured a soothing consolation and continued out the door, but I stood as though rooted to the spot. What on earth was she thinking? Did she believe what she'd read in the paper or heard through the rumor mill? Did she honestly think that Ted was resisting help or fighting for his right to continue sinning?

Our side of the story, however, was not being heard. Very few people knew the reality of our situation.³

What a self-righteous, arrogant attitude is revealed when people talk about fallen believers and decide from afar whether they are repentant or broken. To make such pronouncements is cruel, irresponsible, and insensitive. It indicates an absence of love and no personal understanding of and appreciation for the restorative grace of God.

A friend of mine, "Bill," went through the painful and humiliating ordeal of an affair with a woman he worked with, which became public knowledge. The fallout was huge, costing him his marriage. Bill suffered the consequences of his sinful

actions, but by God's grace came to realize the gravity of his sin. He dealt with it before God, his family, and his friends.

Several months later an acquaintance said to me, "I don't think that Bill has been truly repentant." I asked how he came to that conclusion. This man's reply stunned and angered me: "Because I saw him recently laughing and having a great time with some friends. I don't see how he can go around smiling and having a good time after what he did!"

I had to forcefully remind my acquaintance that he had no idea of the lonely hours Bill had spent weeping before God and agonizing over his sin and the repercussions and damage it had caused.

Was this man upset because God is merciful and compassionate and was restoring to Bill the joy of his salvation? Isn't that what we should want for our brothers and sisters in Christ? Our job is to do everything in our power to assist those who have acknowledged their sin and who desire to get back into fellowship with God and their family. We should walk alongside of them and not hold them at arm's length and make judgments about their sincerity or lack thereof.

In Matthew 12:20, Matthew quoted the prophet Isaiah concerning the Messiah, "*A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out*" (Isaiah 42:3). We shouldn't either! Whenever there is the slightest indication of brokenness and repentance, we should do everything in our power to support and encourage those people. We should provide guidance to practical and biblical steps they can take to be restored and to rebuild their relationship with the Lord and other people who have been hurt by their wrongdoing.

"Breaking" is a process which involves many factors. These have nothing to do with gaining merit with God or with

trying to fulfill manmade requirements. Broken believers will demonstrate their desire to cooperate with the Holy Spirit and experience inner healing by pursuing the biblical principles that lead to restoration. These are not to be interpreted as mechanical steps that are laboriously worked through one at a time or hoops to be jumped through. I'm not talking about a rigid formula. The work of the Holy Spirit and the path to restoration is unique in each individual's life. At some point in the broken person's journey to wholeness, he will need a great deal of prayer support and encouragement as he takes the following steps.

A Place to Start for the Broken One

Now a word to the one who wants to begin this journey. It is important for you, the fallen and broken one, in dependance upon God, to work through these following things . . .

Return to the Lord

You have been walking away from the Lord. Make a conscious, deliberate decision to turn from your sin and back to the Lord—to repent. The Prodigal Son is the classic example of repentance and restoration, *“Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; make me like one of your hired men.” So he got up and went to his father*” (Luke 15:17-20).

The message of hope God gave to Jeremiah for Israel is also apropos for anyone who has fallen into sin, *“Return, faithless Israel,’ declares the LORD, ‘I will frown on you no longer, for I am merciful.”* (Jeremiah 3:12).

Acknowledge Your Sin to the Lord

You have sinned against a holy God—no excuses, no rationalizations. Take full responsibility for your wrongdoing.

Own your own stuff! As David wrote, *“Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not cover up my iniquity. I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to the LORD’—and you forgave the guilt of my sin”* (Psalm 32:5).

It is essential that you freely and fully acknowledge to God your sin and rebellion against Him. Hold nothing back. Pour out your heart to Him. After Jeremiah exhorted Israel to return to the Lord, he gave them these instructions, *“Only acknowledge your guilt—you have rebelled against the LORD your God, you have scattered your favors to foreign gods under every spreading tree, and have not obeyed me,’ declares the LORD”* (Jeremiah 3:13).

This should be the response of anyone who has fallen into sin. It represents the consistent advice of Scripture (Psalms 32 and 51, Proverbs 28:13, 1 John 1:9). Take ownership of your sins. Acknowledge that the root cause was the sin of not submitting to His Lordship and not living consistently in dependence on the Holy Spirit.

When you do the confessing, God does the cleansing. When you uncover your sins, He covers them. If you don’t acknowledge your sin and agree with God that it was wrong, you will continue to live with the guilt of your actions and be out of fellowship with God. You will not be cooperating with the Holy Spirit in bringing about the brokenness and life changes He desires.

Gordon MacDonald gives a good word picture of sin that is not acknowledged and dealt with:

Unaddressed guilt is like a huge block of ice. Kept in a dark, cold place, it remains hard. But brought into the light, identified, and confessed, it begins to melt, and soon it is gone. And free is the soul that no longer is frozen by unaddressed guilt.⁴

Forsake Your Sin

In the process of confessing and renouncing your sin, all provisions for repeating the sin must be done away with (Romans 13:12-14). The alcoholic must throw out the bottles hidden in the garage; the porn addict must cancel the post office box and toss the magazines kept in the camping gear; the philanderer must get rid of the address book. Only definite, drastic action will demonstrate the sincerity of your desire to turn from your sin. Only continual reliance on the Spirit of God will enable and empower you not to return to it, *“He who conceals his sins does not prosper, but whoever confesses and renounces them finds mercy”* (Proverbs 28:13).

Accept God’s Love, Grace, and Forgiveness

Rejoice in the fact that God’s love for you is never ending and that by His grace He has forgiven you and cleansed you from all your sin. You must choose to receive and respond to this great truth and bask in His forgiving love. As you do, sin’s hold on you will be lessened. This is what the Bible is all about. Jesus Christ died for all your sins—past, present, and future—because He loves you and desires your fellowship.

Christian psychologist Dr. David Allen expresses it this way:

No matter what our failure may be, we have to choose to receive God’s forgiveness and to forgive ourselves.

Mature spirituality requires the dethronement of guilt and bitter feelings as we recognize the total forgiveness provided through God’s love. That means emptying our negative feelings daily at the cross and allowing the grace of God to fill the gap between the real and ideal levels of our life.⁵

No matter what our failure may be, we have to choose to receive God’s forgiveness and to forgive ourselves.

DR. DAVID ALLEN

People who have walked this road to repentance have been helped greatly by meditating deeply on the following Scriptures until God's total forgiveness becomes a reality:

- *"As far as the east is from the west, so far has he [God] removed our transgressions from us."* (Psalm 103:12)
- *"I [God] have swept away your offenses like a cloud, your sins like the morning mist."* (Isaiah 44:22)
- *"You [God] will tread our sins underfoot and hurl all our iniquities into the depths of the sea."* (Micah 7:19)
- *"God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins."* (Colossians 2:13)

Reaffirm Your Position in Christ

There is great value in dwelling on your security and standing in Christ. Ephesians 1 is a good place to start in reaffirming who you are and what you have in Christ:

- He has blessed you with every spiritual blessing (v. 3)
- He chose you before the foundation of the world (v. 4)
- He adopted you as His child (vv. 4-5)
- He freely bestows His grace on you (v. 6)
- He has redeemed you and forgiven you (vv. 7-8)
- He works everything for you in conformity with His will (v. 11)
- He has sealed you in Christ by the Holy Spirit (v. 13)

Review and reaffirm these truths, then pray through Paul's powerful prayer for illumination in Ephesians 1 so that they will be a reality in your personal experience.

Resist the Devil

Satan wants to put you on a guilt trip and keep you there. He is the accuser of the brethren. He is the one who accuses you before God day and night (Revelation 12:10).

Remind yourself and Satan that you have scripturally dealt with your sins and have accepted and reaffirmed God's love, grace, and forgiveness. Praise God that the blood of His Son has cleansed you from *all* sin. Recognize that even after doing all of this, Satan will not quit harassing you. He doesn't want you to be free from guilt and guilt feelings. He desperately desires to keep you from becoming an effective instrument in the Lord's service. He constantly will do all he can to remind you, God, and others of your sin.

Satan also uses other people. Unfortunately, many Christians who do not understand grace or have not experienced it and are not clear on what the Scripture teaches about restoration of a fallen and broken believer will unwittingly cooperate with Satan by reminding you of your failures. They believe the above Scriptures are too simplistic and that you are getting off too easy for your sins. They piously feel it is their responsibility to keep you, God, and others reminded of how much damage and disgrace your sins have caused.

Some Christians just cannot handle the fact that it is possible for those who have fallen to have all their sins and guilt removed and the joy of their salvation restored. They imply by their attitudes and actions that they should go around forever in sackcloth and ashes and not experience the joy and freedom that God gives to those whose sins have been forgiven.

One fallen individual, who had been broken and had dealt with his moral and ethical wrongdoing, commented recently that at times, because of the continual rejection he felt from other believers, the only thing that would have satisfied some people

that justice had been done would have been for him to die a horrible death or to commit suicide.

After David dealt with his sin, he boldly declared, *“Blessed [happy] is he whose transgressions are forgiven, whose sins are covered”* (Psalm 32:1).

One of the most difficult things you will have to deal with is the continual accusations that come from the enemy of your soul. Do not be too preoccupied with Satan. By the power of the Holy Spirit and by the Sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, learn to resist Satan and every guilt trip he seeks to put you on through your own feelings or the suggestions of others, *“Resist the devil, and he will flee from you”* (James 4:7). Only in this way will you be able to experience fully the freedom and joy that is rightfully yours in Christ.

Make Any Necessary Restitution

With your “vertical” relationship with God restored, you are now in a good place spiritually. It is important now to do all you can to restore your “horizontal” relationships. It is time to follow the directives of Jesus from the Sermon on the Mount, *“Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift”* (Matthew 5:23-24).

It could be any number of things that you need to make right: return property you stole, pay child support you owe, correct gossip you’ve spread. The principle is that it is always your move. You are to take the initiative. Go in the power of the Holy Spirit. Be humble when you approach the person you’ve wronged, but also direct and to the point:

- Name the offense as specifically as you can
- Make no excuses or try to justify anything you have done

- Acknowledge that you were wrong
- Ask for forgiveness

WARNING: God always desires to forgive and restore you. This may not be the case for others you have wronged. Sometimes their conditions for forgiveness and restoration are much more complicated and demanding than God's. All you can do is to deal with your own "stuff" and try to make peace with those whom you have offended, realizing that some individuals may not want to make peace with you. Romans 12:18 says, *"If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, [emphasis mine] live at peace with everyone."* You may even be accused of not being sincere or honest or repentant enough. No wonder David said to God after he had sinned in counting the number of his fighting men, *"I am in deep distress. Let us fall into the hands of the LORD, for his mercy is great; but do not let me fall into the hands of men"* (2 Samuel 24:14).

What can you do when people won't accept your apologies and they refuse to be reconciled with you? You must rest your case with God. This is what Jesus did, *"When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly"* (1 Peter 2:23). Pray for the individuals involved, trusting God to work in their hearts on your behalf, knowing that you have sought to be obedient to God and His Word. You can't make anyone live at peace with you who doesn't want to, but you are to do all you can to reconcile with the people you offended.

Acknowledge Your Weaknesses and Vulnerabilities to a Trusted Christian Friend

There is tremendous value in this. We all have our areas of weaknesses. You can't and shouldn't share them with everyone, but it is biblical and necessary to share with someone who is

a trusted friend and has demonstrated unconditional love for you, wants God's best for you, and is committed to pray with you and for you. It will be therapeutic and helpful in preventing further sinning, *"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective"* (James 5:16).

Become Accountable

If you are sincerely seeking to put sin out of your life, finding someone or several people who are committed to journeying with you can be tremendously valuable. Whether an individual or a restoration or rebuilding team, these accountability partners should be people who aren't afraid to ask you hard questions on a regular basis, such as:

- How are you doing spiritually?
- What steps are you taking to rebuild your walk with the Lord?
- Are you having victory in your thought life?
- Where are you struggling?
- How specifically can I pray for you?

Accountability that is forced on you by those who think it is their responsibility to keep you in line never works. The fact is, we cannot hold anyone accountable who resists such accountability.

□—————
God delights in making something useful and beautiful out of someone who is broken.
—————□

If you want help in this area, you must take the initiative and make it known. The best candidates to partner with may be those you've shared your weaknesses with. Presumably, these will be people you trust implicitly. You are convinced of their love for you and their desire to see

you experience God's best, *"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness"* (Hebrews 3:13).

Get On with Life

No more guilt trips. No more rehashes of past sins. God wants to give you a fruitful and satisfying life. You don't have to settle for second best. Celebrate that you are exceedingly valuable to God. Allow Him to lead you and use you for His glory. The years ahead can be the most deeply meaningful you've ever experienced. God delights in making something useful and beautiful out of someone who is broken.

Because of God's incredible love and grace after experiencing genuine brokenness, you are at your best for God. Remember when Jacob wrestled with God, resulting in a wrenched hip (Genesis 32:22-32)? While thinking of this incident, someone once wryly commented, "I never trust a man without a limp." When Jacob was at his weakest, God blessed him and changed his name to Israel.

We should be greatly encouraged and rejoice when fallen ones work through the preceding steps. As ministry leaders, we want to be their advocate; therefore, to the best of our ability, we have a responsibility to confirm the genuineness of their repentance.

Discerning Authenticity

If you are a pastor or ministry leader and are trying to decide if any people under your care are truly broken and repentant, please remember this caution: It is impossible for anyone to judge accurately the depth of repentance of another person. You may observe indicators of brokenness, but only God knows the

heart. Don't take on the role and responsibility of judge—this is not the position you want to be in, but you do want to be able to confirm that they have done all they could to restore their relationship with God and with others. Only then can we help those people move forward.

The preceding biblical principles will help not only fallen and broken ones get back on track, but these principles also give guidance to those who are seeking to help them in that journey and interacting with them.

Depending on the relationship the ministry team has with the fallen and broken ones and how willing they are to delve into the issues, it would be helpful to discuss some of the preceding principles in detail. Ask God for a spirit of discernment. He will impress upon you whether or not brokenness is genuine.

To make sure you are properly and spiritually prepared to discuss another person's sin, it's also wise to ask yourself a few questions first. Do *you* have any unconfessed sin? Are *you* genuinely repentant and broken for the sins *you* have committed? Do *you* need to work through these principles yourself? Ask God to show you the right road to restoration—not only for those in your care, but also for yourself.

Last Chance

The process that leads to brokenness can be difficult and painful. It certainly was for Jeff Leeland. When we left Jeff, his wife and children had moved out and he was trapped in a devastating cycle of alcohol, sexual sin, and gambling. In spite of the depths of these sins—or maybe because of them—God lovingly allowed Jeff's life to get even worse. Jeff continues his story:

The evening of Wednesday, November 2, 2011, I sat curled in a ball, my back against the brick wall of an alley,

a hood over my head. Rain pounded down, soaking me to the bone. I was the picture of a homeless derelict.

The world hates me, I thought. I hate me too. I can't stand who I've become. I've thrown away everything and everyone that was precious to me. "I don't care," I said aloud, "if I live or die."

Later that evening, my brother and friends found me, loaded me into a cab, and took me to another friend's place for the night. The next morning I offered an apology for worrying my friends. I cracked another beer and headed out. My brother's meager social security check came that day, so we rented a dirt-bag motel downtown. He drank as he propped his head and lay on the bed to watch TV while I got enough beer in my system to make my world feel normal again. Then I went to a nearby bar. Friday was a repeat of Thursday, except for waking up in the motel with a bad cough. I noticed small globs of blood when I spit, but I drank my worsening cough away by noon on each of the next few days.

Since I had no health insurance, I dodged doctors like the plague. I self-diagnosed the blood in my spit as a broken vessel in my bronchioles. My oldest daughter dropped by with cough syrup and medicine for me. A kind local bartender brought a care package—juice, vitamins, and other nutritional stuff I normally avoided.

The next morning, I woke up to a gorilla pounding on my chest. My shallow breaths were heavy, the cough bloody. My heart fluttered every so often, like a butterfly was trapped inside it. My daughter insisted on taking me to the hospital.

I drifted into semi-consciousness. The vague memories I had in the critical care unit were torturous. With tubes down my mouth and throat, gasping for air like I was sucking through a straw, I felt like I was being

held prisoner, with my hands in cuffs. I'm sure now that the enemy wanted me dead and was doing his best to torment me—and it was agonizing.

I knew I was in a battle, fighting to see my daughter's loving eyes in those brief moments mine opened, fighting for my very life and soul. Unable to speak, I tried desperately to communicate my need for help with a look. God was using the physical breaking of my body to begin breaking my hardened heart.

I finally began to realize that this was my last chance. Maybe—if I lived through this—He could show me the way out of the painful prison I'd made for myself.⁶

Jeff's story of brokenness is, to be sure, extreme. Yet each of us has something in common with Jeff. We all possess a strong, stubborn will that needs to be broken. When sincere brokenness characterized by the signs we've discussed does take place, God steps into our ruins and picks up the pieces. He reassembles our mistakes, failures, and hurts in ways that are wonderful and surprising, *"God heals the brokenhearted and binds up their wounds"* (Psalm 147:3).

Not every fallen believer wants to turn back to God. Some, rather than being broken and repentant, continue in rebellion and sin even after being gently approached by family, friends, and other spiritual believers who love them and sincerely want to see them restored.

What happens when the fallen one isn't broken and continues to maintain a defiant spirit? What course of action should the church take? Read on to find out how Scripture answers these vital questions.

CHAPTER FOUR

Biblical Discipline

*Discipline sometimes must be severe
because the consequences of not disciplining are much worse.*

JOHN MACARTHUR

Early in my ministry, as a young and inexperienced pastor, I faced a difficult challenge. Clyde and his family were a vital part of the founding of our new church. He was at every meeting and enthusiastically promoted our church whenever and wherever he could. As the church grew he became less and less involved but was still in regular attendance at Sunday morning worship services.

One Sunday just before the service began, his wife approached me, tears in her eyes. She said that Clyde had just told her he was sexually involved with other women. I took a deep breath. How was I going to handle this one?

After church, I went over to their home. Clyde was in his recliner in the living room, eyes glued to a football game. He barely glanced up at me.

“Clyde,” I said, “could you turn off the television? There’s something important I need to talk to you about.”

“No,” Clyde said. “I’m watching the game.”

He obviously knew why I was there. I persisted.

“Clyde,” I said, “I know about the affairs. I’m here to help you. You don’t want to keep going like this. What about your marriage? What about your relationship with the Lord?”

He didn’t even look up from the TV. “I don’t need any help, pastor,” he said. “You can go on home.”

Even after continued pleading, it became very clear Clyde was not ready to deal with his sin. I left his house discouraged and bewildered. Questions filled my mind. As a pastor, I had never faced a situation like this. It was my introduction to the messy world of church discipline.

In Clyde’s case, I prayed and pondered long and hard over what should be done and how it should be done. I knew that restoration was the ultimate goal.

Other leaders in the church and I made many more attempts to reason with Clyde and convey to him our love and our desire to see him deal with his sin and be restored. We told him we were committed to help in every way possible. Yet every attempt to minister to him was refused. Clyde let us know in no uncertain terms that he didn’t want or need our help and that he intended to continue in his sin. He walked away from his family and from the church.

Now what were we supposed to do?

After carefully reviewing the Scriptures, I reluctantly concluded this was a situation that called for biblical church discipline. Even though he’d walked away, Clyde was still a member of our church.

Church Discipline

Evangelical leader John Stott points out that:

Nowadays church discipline is rare, and where it does take place, it is often administered clumsily. Churches

tend to oscillate between the extreme severity that excommunicates members for the most trivial offenses and the extreme laxity that never even remonstrates with offenders. Yet the New Testament gives clear instructions about discipline, on the one hand its necessity for the sake of the church's holiness, and on the other its constructive purpose, namely, if possible, to "win over" and "restore" the offending member. Jesus himself made it abundantly plain that the object of discipline was not to humiliate, let alone to alienate, the person concerned, but rather to reclaim him or her.¹

I didn't want to approach church discipline with Clyde "clumsily." I wanted the right balance between grace and truth so that, if possible, restoration would eventually take place. Church discipline is never carried out perfectly, but we proceeded with disciplining Clyde, trusting God to use our desire to follow Scripture to accomplish His sovereign purposes.

After advising Clyde of the action we were going to take and giving him another opportunity to repent, which he again refused, the night came when we called for a meeting of the church membership. I carefully explained the situation about Clyde, the attempts we'd made to restore him, and his repeated resistance. We considered together the relevant biblical texts. Some of his family members were present when we unanimously agreed to remove Clyde from our membership. We agreed that we would continue to pray for his repentance, but we would no longer spend time with him until there was some indication on his part that he was broken and wanted to be restored.

We all left with heavy hearts, yet with a peace that we had done what God had asked of us. It was a time of deep reflection and self-examination for each of us. We had to take inventory of our own lives (see Galatians 6:1-2) knowing that we, too, were

capable of untold evil and hardness of heart. Biblical church discipline has a sobering and purifying effect on a church body. (See Appendix II, p. 115, “Why Get Involved with Those Who Have Messed Up Their Lives?”)

Where to Start?

Without a doubt, exercising church discipline is one of the most difficult matters a church will ever have to confront because of the multitude of emotions that are involved and the different perspectives people bring to the issue. There are many significant questions that surface whenever the subject of church discipline arises. Where do you start? What sins should be disciplined? When should it take place? Who should administer it? Why should it be done? These are just some of the difficult questions that surround the topic. No wonder it is rarely administered and when it is, so many mistakes are made. There are many challenges to be faced when we start talking about church discipline. For example:

- What sins are personal and private and must be dealt with by the individual and God?
- What sins affect others and, therefore, must include others in the actions of repentance and restitution?
- What sins are designated in the Bible as those which call for action by the leaders and/or the congregation of the local church?
- What are the processes and procedures when disciplinary action is called for?

It is a delicate balancing act. Theologians have a hard time balancing God’s justice and mercy. Parents often find it difficult to balance firm discipline and loving acceptance of their children.

In a similar way, church leaders may struggle to balance truth and love when a member sins. Either they are all about truth and come down hard on those who step out of line, treating them with a complete absence of love, or they go to the other extreme, essentially saying, “Anything goes because we love everybody and, after all, who are we to judge anyone?” The truth of God’s Word is completely disregarded. Truth without love is brutality and love without truth is hypocrisy.

Dr. J. Robertson McQuilkin, former president of Columbia Bible College, once observed:

The purifiers who are weak on love and the unifiers who are weak on faithfulness are wreaking havoc with the image of God seen by a lost world. Furthermore, they are creating a climate that makes growth to spiritual maturity exceedingly hard. Amid this strong polarization, is biblical balance possible?

Imbalance does not come from an over-emphasis. It is impossible to have too much love or too much faithfulness. However, it is quite possible to have *unfaithfulness* masquerading as love. When God’s people compromise through sentimentality or self-love or for some other reason are unwilling to exercise church discipline, they are unfaithful though they speak much of love. Again, it is quite possible to have *unlove* masquerading as faithfulness. When God’s people create schism by disciplining the wrong person, or with the wrong motive, or in the wrong way, they are unloving though they speak much of faithfulness. I do not ask the ecumenist to be less loving. I urge him to be more faithful. I do not ask the separatist to be less faithful. I urge him to be more loving.²

Sins that Call for Church Discipline

The question always arises as to what specific sins call for church discipline. Again, before attempting to answer that question, I must repeat that any and all sin can and should be dealt with by the one who has done wrong before God and, as necessary, before those the person has specifically offended. Only those who persist in sin should be disciplined. The issue is never that person's sinfulness but continued stiffness in refusing to deal with the sin (Jeremiah 17:23, Acts 7:51-52).

Hopefully, it is clear by now that we all stumble in many ways. Perfect performance is never the issue. The Christian life sometimes feels like one step forward and two steps backward. We are all people in process who are daily in need of the grace of God. We acknowledge with the apostle Paul that "*nothing good lives in me, that is, in my sinful nature*" (Romans 7:18).

Therefore, we need to be careful we don't become spiritual detectives snooping around for flaws and sins in other believers so that we can expose them. Also, we are not to become "truth detectors," sniffing out those whose doctrinal positions don't line up exactly with ours so we can brand them as heretics and call for their expulsion from the fellowship. Nevertheless, there are some sins, if persisted in, which do call for action on the part of church leadership.

Many Christians seem to recognize an unspoken hierarchy of wrongdoing in which sexual sins and certain others are judged severely, while sins like pride, anger, greed, dishonesty, arrogance, jealousy, and gossiping are barely noticed.

C. S. Lewis makes this point in his classic book *Mere Christianity*:

Finally, though I have had to speak at some length about sex, I want to make it as clear as I possibly can that the

center of Christian morality is not here. If anyone thinks Christians regard unchastity as the supreme vice, he is quite wrong. The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing and spoiling sport, and back-biting; the pleasure of power, of hatred. For there are two things inside me, competing with the human self which I must try to become. They are the Animal self, and the Diabolical self. The Diabolical self is the worst of the two. That is why a cold, self-righteous prig who goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But, of course, it is better to be neither.³

Let Scripture answer the question as to which sins, **when persisted in**, call for church discipline.

According to 1 Corinthians 5 and 6:

- Immorality
- Incest
- Sexual immorality, in general
- Adultery, in particular
- Homosexuality
- Covetousness (greed with the intent of taking advantage of others)
- Idolatry
- Swindling
- Reviling (continually abusing others verbally)
- Drunkenness

According to Titus 3:10-11 and Romans 16:17:

- Factiousness (a divisive person)

According to 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15:

- Living an undisciplined life
- Not working (a lazy person who is capable of working)
- Being a busybody (a gossip who wants to know everyone's business)

According to 2 John 7-11; 1 John 4:1-3; Galatians 1:6-9:

- False doctrine (as it pertains to the person of Christ and the teaching regarding salvation)

When one or more of these sins are present and persisted in, and when you have followed each of the steps discussed in this chapter, only then is it time to implement the final action of church discipline.

What Is the Process?

The biblical foundation for implementing church discipline rests in Jesus' words to His disciples in the Gospel of Matthew. They should always be the starting point.

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."

Matthew 18:15-17

It is vital to review and see this passage in its immediate context before proceeding with the steps outlined. Jesus is talking to the disciples about grace and forgiveness. In verses 10-14, we see the parable of the lost sheep. Out of love and concern, the shepherd goes after the one sheep that has wandered off. He doesn't just ignore the sheep or go after him to punish him but pursues him because he loves him, because he is valuable

to him. Apply that to a Christian brother or sister who wanders off. What is our responsibility? Out of love and concern for those people, we must pursue them in order to restore them to the fold where they can be healed, fed, and protected.

The other parable in this chapter is equally instructive. It is the parable of the unmerciful servant found in verses 21-35. A servant pleads for his king to forgive a great debt, which the king does. But when the servant refuses to do the same for one of his slaves and has him thrown into prison, the king orders the servant to be imprisoned as well.

This parable drips with themes of grace and forgiveness. The bottom line is that the forgiven must forgive. It is the picture of how much God has forgiven us because of what Jesus did for us on the cross. The message is that in light of the huge debt that was forgiven us, we should be quick to forgive those who have sinned against us. Anything they have done to us pales in comparison with the offenses we have all committed against a holy God.

I don't think it is accidental that the teaching of Matthew 18:15-17 is sandwiched between these two parables. We must keep in mind with every step that the goal is to bring the one who has wandered off and gotten in trouble back to the safety of the fold. Total forgiveness and restoration are theirs for the asking.

With this understanding, let's take a look at each step in Matthew 18:15-17:

Step One: Individual Encounter

"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you [emphasis mine]. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over." (v. 15)

The purpose of this private meeting is to help the fallen deal with their sin and turn back to grace-filled living before they cause deeper problems for themselves by continuing in their sin. Before you go, it is wise to do some personal evaluation. Ask yourself the following questions:

- Am I walking with the Lord? Letting the Holy Spirit be in control?
- Are my motives pure?
- Is restoration my goal?
- Do I have all the facts?

Step Two: Additional Witnesses

*“But if he will not listen, **take one or two others along** [emphasis mine], so that every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.” (v. 16)*

The purpose of this step is to confirm that sin has actually taken place and has been confronted properly by the one who went privately to the one doing wrong. It is also to enlist other godly individuals to add their voices to yours in encouraging the offender to deal with sin before it becomes a public matter. The one who failed needs to be assured of their love and desire to help deal with the sin issues.

Step Three: Congregational Involvement

*“If he refuses to listen to them, **tell it to the church** [emphasis mine].” (v. 17)*

The purpose of this step is not to embarrass, humiliate, or punish the offender; it is to instruct the congregation concerning their responsibility to pray for the individual and to help understand the seriousness of unrepented sin. Also it is to explain from Scripture the action that must be taken if the offender continues in sin.

Step Four: Exclusion from the Fellowship

“And if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector [emphasis mine].”
(v. 17)

Church discipline is always a last resort. It is to be administered only where there is flagrant, ongoing sin that has been confronted biblically and the response has been willful and persistent pursuit of a sinful lifestyle. *Only* after all attempts at restoration have been exhausted is church discipline appropriate. If the process of church discipline is not properly understood and applied, it will have consequences that will be destructive to the health and well-being of the church, as well as to the rebellious believer.

Author John White observes, “Corrective church discipline would heal the wounded more and be less distasteful if all of us had a broader understanding of discipline—its value and purpose.”⁴ Church discipline is never to be viewed as punishment or as a means of making the offending party an example. Rather, it is a loving action that God has ordained to be used by the church in cases where a professed believer continually refuses to leave a life of wrongdoing.

Response to the Unrepentant Person

After biblical church discipline has been exercised, what is to be our response and interaction with those who have been disciplined and still continue arrogantly in sin? Again, we must let Scripture be our guide. The teaching may seem harsh, unkind, even unrealistic. We must remember, however, that the purpose behind all discipline is to help restoration take place and to protect the church. At first it may be hard for us to realize that these are loving acts. But when these are accompanied by fervent prayer for those who are under discipline, God will

use them to bring the unrepentant to their senses so that full restoration can take place.

Our response to the unrepentant should never be disgust or a self-righteous, condemning attitude. We must always remind ourselves, "There but for the grace of God go I." However, the Scriptures are clear:

- *"Treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."*
(Matthew 18:17)
- *"Put out of your fellowship the man who did this."*
(1 Corinthians 5:2, 13)
- *"Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord."*
(1 Corinthians 5:5)
- *"Do not associate with sexually immoral people [Christians]."*
(1 Corinthians 5:9, 11)
- *"Warn a divisive person once, and then warn him a second time. After that, have nothing to do with him."* (Titus 3:10)
- *"Watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them."* (Romans 16:17)
- *"We command you . . . to keep away from every brother who is idle and does not live according to the teaching you received from us."* (2 Thessalonians 3:6)
- *"Take special note of him. Do not associate with him."*
(2 Thessalonians 3:14)

It should be obvious by now that the Scriptures have much to say about church discipline. At times it was needed in the early church and sadly has been needed down through church history. It is probably more necessary in our churches today

than ever before. But it is certainly more difficult to exercise today in our tolerant and litigious society. It can easily become a divisive issue surrounded by confusion and emotional upheaval. Church members may take sides with the one being disciplined (thinking that person had been treated unfairly or harshly) or with the elders (thinking that person had it coming because of his flagrant sin). After a church has had a bad experience with church discipline, it is easier to ignore continued, flagrant sin. This helps no one and does not please God or advance the cause of Christ in the world.

It is vitally important for the congregation of a local church, and especially the leadership, to understand clearly what the Bible has to say about church discipline and restoration *before* a situation arises that calls for such action. It should be the subject of teaching for the whole church and, especially, for those in leadership positions. Without this, the leaders and congregation will be totally unprepared when confronted with a crisis. People become emotional when sin has to be dealt with publicly. They easily lose all objectivity. Emotions run high, confusion and dissension are rampant. The enemy of our souls loves it!

Recently, a thriving church in the southwest suffered through this experience. The lead pastor, “Richard,” was known for his effective Bible teaching. The congregation was more than a thousand members strong. But when Richard had an affair and his sin came to the attention of church leaders, the wheels started coming off.

The elders, shocked and angry, asked Richard to resign, but offered no restoration plan. They also failed to communicate what was happening and why to the congregation, leading to rumors and mistrust. Soon many in the body of the church were regularly criticizing the elders over their handling of Richard’s dismissal. Many elders eventually resigned. An ad hoc committee

formed to try to resolve the sudden divisions in the church, but its efforts were futile. The church split into factions, at least one leaving to form its own church, taking more than half a million dollars in church funds with them.

Today, the thriving church that Richard once led no longer exists. Not surprisingly, the “new church” did not survive either. Many people are still bitter and disillusioned. Richard, meanwhile, is on his own, trying to find what role he still has to play in God’s kingdom, if any.

We’ve been talking about how to handle discipline of an unrepentant sinner within the church. You may, however, be wondering how this relates to a parachurch ministry. “What do I do if this happens at my ministry?” you’re asking. “How should I respond if someone on my staff is consistently sinning in one of the ways you’ve described?”

The principles outlined in Matthew 18 still apply. You should sit down one on one with your staff member, gently point out the sin, and encourage a change of heart and behavior. If that person won’t listen, enlist an appropriate friend or two to join you and try again. If your staff member persists in sin, it’s time to bring it to the attention of the ministry leadership and to the pastor and the elders of that person’s church. If they don’t have a church, you must take the matter to the leadership team of your ministry. Encourage them to pray and offer help, and let your staff member know what will happen if your counsel continues to be ignored.

Finally, if all of these steps have been taken and nothing has changed, it’s time for you to dismiss this person from your ministry. Continue to pray and work closely with the ministry leadership as well as the church pastor and elders to offer the opportunity to repent. You may well be God’s instrument for

guiding this person to a restored life.

When discipline is humbly carried out according to the guidelines of Scripture, God often uses it to bring about brokenness in the lives of the rebellious. It gives everyone the wonderful opportunity and privilege to see the repentant completely restored and the church and Christian ministries strengthened.

God at Work

In the case of Clyde, my friend who was having a series of affairs, church discipline was the right answer. Several months after he was dismissed from the church body and was alienated from his family, we heard that Clyde was to have major back surgery. We intensified our prayers, asking God to use this event to bring him to a place of brokenness and repentance.

One Sunday morning just before the worship service was to begin, an usher told me a man on the phone desperately needed to speak with me right then. Much to my surprise, it was Clyde calling from his hospital bed. He was in tears. Through his sobs, he asked if I and two of the elders would come to the hospital to see him after the service. I readily agreed because I sensed that God had been mightily at work in his life.

A couple of hours later, the elders and I walked into Clyde's hospital room. Everything had changed from the last time I saw him. His cheeks were wet with tears. Instead of avoiding eye contact, he reached out to take my hand. The tone of his voice was no longer hard, but welcoming.

"Pastor, thank you so much for coming, thanks to all of you," he said. "I couldn't wait another minute to talk to you. I've been lying in this hospital bed, thinking about all I've done and how much time I have left on this earth." He shook his head. "This

morning, I...well, I talked to God. About all of it. I asked Him to forgive me...and He has.”

Clyde turned his head and seemed to stifle a sob.

“But now I need to tell you how sorry I am. You’ve tried to point me in the right direction even though I didn’t deserve it. I’ve made a real mess. I wonder if...if you could forgive me.”

Clyde’s repentance certainly seemed genuine to me. “Of course,” I said with a smile. “I’m sure I speak for all of us when I say we love and forgive you.”

After a period of time meeting with Clyde to help him rebuild his life, he was reinstated as a member of our church and reunited with his wife. He faithfully walked with the Lord the rest of his life. Many times he thanked me for the action the church had taken and told me how God had used it in his life. It had been a hard journey, but one that ended with all that we could have hoped for. When we follow God’s instruction on dealing with sin among our brothers and sisters, we open the door for Him to act in wonderful ways.

Author Martin DeHaan has written:

What is important about the wounded people of the Bible [and in our world], however, is that even those who have themselves to blame are not ignored by God. Neither does He say, “They made their bed. Let them lie in it.” Instead, time after time, without removing the scars, the losses, or the telltale limp, the Father of heaven shows His willingness to put His fallen children back on their feet.⁵

That which we would like to avoid at all cost (brokenness) is used powerfully and constructively by God to restore broken ones and make them usable again for Him.

May God help us learn to cooperate with Him in the wonderful work of restoration. When we become loving conduits of

His grace to those who have fallen and been broken, we will experience the lasting joy of seeing them fully restored.

PART III

Restored

“He refreshes and restores my life; He leads me in the paths of righteousness and right standing with Him for His name’s sake.”

PSALM 23:3 AMP

CHAPTER FIVE

Grace for the Guilty

One of the amazing things about the human being is that it is capable of restoration, and indeed of a restoration that makes it somehow more magnificent because it has been ruined.

DALLAS WILLARD

I have a particular fondness for classic cars. One of my favorite models is the '65 Ford Thunderbird, or T-Bird, known for its distinctive look and turn signals that blinked in sequence. I once visited the auto shop of a friend of mine, Ed, and saw two of these beauties side by side, one a hardtop and the other a convertible, both dark green with black leather upholstery. From a distance, both cars looked great. I couldn't wait to view them up close. When I did, however, the contrast was striking.

The hardtop was in mint condition, not a scratch or defect on it. Ed told me he'd spent hours installing original parts, applying the finest paint, adding whitewall tires, and buffing the exterior until it gleamed. For him, restoring classic cars was a labor of love. It was also profitable—his investment added tremendous value to the original product.

When I looked at the convertible, on the other hand, I noticed that it wasn't nearly as impressive as I'd first thought. The previous owner had used putty in an attempt to cover up scratches in the door panels and fenders. I saw cracks in the

spots where he'd done his hasty work. I also noticed that the wheel covers were "knockoffs" rather than original parts and that the paint job was inferior, evidenced by hundreds of small, "orange peel" bumps. I'm sure the old owner meant well, but he obviously didn't know what he was doing. He didn't have the skill or expertise to do the job right. Ed would need to invest many additional hours to bring this T-Bird back to its former glory.

Restoring a fallen and broken believer is infinitely more important and valuable than restoring a car! It is delicate surgery and must be done with the utmost care and sensitivity. I have seen and experienced attempts at spiritual restoration become counterproductive and create more pain and harm than one can possibly imagine. Sometimes it was well-intentioned people who were simply in over their heads. They didn't have the spiritual maturity, biblical knowledge, love, empathy, or sensitivity needed to see the fallen believers completely restored in all their relationships. Other times it was people who had their own issues and, for whatever perverted reason, were determined to keep the fallen and broken ones under their control. I personally know of one pastor who, after six years of trying to be restored, said with a great deal of sadness, "I don't feel like I have ever been completely restored." He was referring to relational restoration to the body of believers. In either case, the result was more confusion, heartache, and disunity than when the restoration process began.

Many who have fallen, been broken, and wanted to be restored have instead become greatly disillusioned and discouraged. They have given up because they see no clear path to being restored fully and completely. They lose hope, and when hope is gone, it is a downward spiral.

Restoration is one of the most desperately needed ministries in the Body of Christ today. Handled in the biblical way, it will

produce a warm, vital, healing community of believers. Handled in the right way, the fallen will be better in every way than they were before their fall and will be a powerful witness to a watching world that there is grace for the fallen and that restoration can take place. If restoration and rebuilding are neglected or carried out poorly, however, the individual needing to be restored and rebuilt will be damaged and the cause of Christ will suffer.

What Is Restoration?

We need to be clear as to what we mean by restoration. Gordon MacDonald has defined it this way:

Restorative grace is God's action to forgive the misbehavior and to draw the broken-world person back toward wholeness and usefulness again. It is God's response to the acts of repentance and brokenness.¹

God's restorative grace is truly amazing. He is the "God of all grace" (1 Peter 5:10) and His desire is to see every one of His wayward and fallen children fully restored to Him and to His Body.

The Greek word *restore* is used in Scripture to describe the work of a fisherman mending his nets (Matthew 4:21) and the work of a doctor setting a broken bone. In both cases the idea is returning to *usefulness*. The intention of restoration is to bring the fallen person back into a grace-based way of living for the glory of God.

□—————
*God's desire is to see
 every one of His
 wayward and fallen
 children fully restored to
 Him and to His Body.*
 —————□

Having broken my right leg three different times, I know about having something restored that was broken. There are several ways people could have taken care of my broken limb.

They could have lectured me, telling me how wrong and stupid I was for not being more careful and that I should never jump off roofs or play football again. They could have ignored me. They could have said, "That's too bad. I really feel for you, but you need to suffer the consequences of your foolish actions." They could have reported me to the authorities for being careless and walked away. They could have amputated my leg since it was no longer useful. They could have shot me because I was no longer useful!

I'm glad none of these strategies was implemented when I was in terrific pain with a broken leg. I was taken instead to a qualified doctor who carefully set the broken bone and restored it to a condition of usefulness. It is now stronger than ever. Needless to say, the Body of Christ today suffers from many broken bones which have never been properly tended with the result that many stumble through life when instead they could be running marathons for Christ.

God is committed to restoring the lives of His children that have been damaged and wrecked by sin. We need to be committed to what He is committed to—the ministry of restoration and rebuilding.

I am convinced that biblical restoration is the need of the hour. However, it is easier to ignore or banish those who have failed than it is to ask God to use us to bring healing and hope. In our world and in our churches, broken things—and people—are replaced rather than repaired. Broken people too often are viewed, even by believers, as tragedies, no longer of any use.

Because of our discomfort in dealing with sinning Christians, we tend to go to one of two extremes. We neglect the problem, hoping that somehow, some way, they will see the error of their ways and will get squared away with the Lord. Or we jump on

them with both feet and ruin them, leaving boot prints on their lives as well as on the lives of many others.

How we need God's guidance to reinstate in our churches this missing ministry of restoration and rebuilding. Thank God He has not left us alone to figure it out for ourselves.

Center-Stage Grace

When pastors, ministry leaders, and fellow believers refuse to show grace (because either they don't understand grace or haven't fully experienced it), and when they act and talk as if they could never do the awful things that fallen people have done, the broken ones become discouraged and Satan capitalizes on it to keep them hopeless and defeated. According to author Helmut Thielicke, "All of us in the church need 'grace-healed eyes' to see the potential in others for the same grace that God has so lavishly bestowed on us. 'To love a person,' said Dostoevsky, 'means to see him as God intended him to be.'"²

A good friend of mine, "Alex," was caught accessing pornography on the church computer. He was confronted. He acknowledged his sin and was genuinely repentant. Instead of receiving grace and help in dealing with his sin issue, however, he was ostracized and treated as if he'd committed the unpardonable sin. No one in his church reached out to him. It was made clear to him that he was not welcome at the church after what he had done.

Alex grew discouraged and went into a deep depression. Instead of receiving the help he should have from his church family, he left the area in total defeat and with a feeling of hopelessness. He moved to a remote area in another state where no one knew him. Isolated and overwhelmed with guilt, shame, and sorrow, he went into a deeper depression and became

suicidal. Even though he knew what the Scriptures taught about God's love, grace, and forgiveness, he didn't experience it from his church. How sad! How unbiblical! And how detrimental to the one who desperately wanted to be restored.

Sometimes churches and individual believers are reluctant to become engaged in helping a fallen person to be restored for fear of being accused of showing "cheap grace." This was defined by Dietrich Bonhoeffer as "the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance... Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate."³

Theologian Lewis Smedes comments on this concern:

Grace-based churches are not dispensing cheap grace. They call sinners to repentance, and they call saints to service. But they put grace up front, center stage, at the raising of the curtain and keep it there until the curtain falls.⁴

Sometimes believers think a fallen person has not suffered enough or been repentant enough. Befriending a fallen person, they think, might appear as though they were taking a soft approach to sin. They say, "After all, if people sin, shouldn't they have to pay for it? If they're restored too easily, we could be giving the impression that sin isn't all that serious."

We forget that the church is a fellowship of forgiven sinners. Our sins, whatever they might be, are just as offensive to God as their sins, whatever they might be.

We would do well to review on a regular basis the words of Tim Keller in his excellent book, *The Prodigal God*:

God's love and forgiveness can pardon and restore any and every kind of sin or wrongdoing. It doesn't matter who you are or what you've done. It doesn't matter if

you've deliberately oppressed or even murdered people, or how much you've abused yourself. The younger brother knew that in his father's house there was abundant "food to spare," but he also discovered that there was grace to spare. There is no evil that the father's love cannot pardon and cover, there is no sin that is a match for his grace.⁵

We preach about grace, we sing about grace, we talk about grace, we read about grace, but for some inexplicable reason, often we fail to extend grace to those who have fallen and are broken. We don't know what to do with them, so we do nothing and hope they'll just go away.

There is no more difficult place for wounded and repentant warriors to be than in limbo. They are not under church discipline, but neither are they restored. Someone who observed a loved one in just that situation once commented, "He was a castaway, adrift on a sea of uncertainty, and few people seemed to care."

Where does that leave these people? It leaves them completely off balance and uncertain about how to proceed with life. This quenches the Spirit and makes others wonder what would happen to them if they were to fail.

Author Jerry Cook gives us this reminder:

Within the community of the gathered church, then, people need to be saved, healed, brought to wholeness in every area of their lives. But before there can be a coming to wholeness, certain guarantees must be made to people. Otherwise they will not risk themselves to be open with us enough to receive healing.

The minimal guarantee we must make to people is that they will be loved—always, under every circumstance, with no exception. The second guarantee is that they will be totally accepted, without reservation. The third thing

we must guarantee people is that no matter how miserably they fail or how blatantly they sin, unreserved forgiveness is theirs for the asking with no bitter taste left in anybody's mouth.

If people are not guaranteed these three things, they will never allow us the marvelous privilege of bringing wholeness to them through the fellowship of the church.⁶

Misconceptions of Restoration

It's a tragedy when a fallen, broken believer is left in limbo instead of being restored. The responsibility for this grievous situation too often lies at the feet of those charged with the duty and privilege of overseeing the restoration process. They are either inept, unspiritual, wrongly motivated, or do not understand and apply the basic biblical principles of spiritual restoration. In any of these cases, the result is disastrous for the one who wants to be restored. It also has a negative effect on many others.

Malcolm Smith encourages those who have been abused by would-be restorers:

It's hard to believe God loves us when His people reject us...Although some of God's misguided children have thrown you out as a useless reed and written you off as a burned out, embarrassing flax, God hasn't. He says, "Now you are ready to let Christ be your life."⁷

No matter how much broken and repentant believers do to be restored, sometimes it seems it will never be enough. Others are always raising the bar. They leave the distinct impression that they believe their responsibility is to make the ones who have failed pay a price, suffer, be kept in their place, and be continually reminded about all the awful, horrible things they did. The result is that the ones who need to be restored never

know where they stand. The rules keep changing. They feel like a pawn and begin to lose hope that they'll ever be restored. They assume that for the rest of their lives they will have to live with the guilt and shame of their sin. They view themselves as second-class citizens in the family of God.

In her book about the Ted Haggard scandal, Gayle Haggard reports that after her husband's sins were made public and Ted resigned, the church overseers insisted that the Haggards have no contact with members of the church congregation or staff. The overseers also instructed members of the church not to contact the Haggards. Later, the overseers presented Ted and Gayle with a contract requiring them to move out of Colorado, have no communication with church employees, trustees, or elders, and not engage in any ministry whatsoever.

Though the agreements included generous financial provisions and provided opportunities for counseling, Gayle was left feeling cut off from the very friends who could best offer spiritual encouragement and support. She raises a serious question:

Ted had already repented. He had found the probable source of his problem and was seeking counsel and treatment. So why were we being permanently exiled instead of forgiven and offered the possibility of relational restoration?⁸

When believers become confused about God's grace and forgiveness, Satan rejoices and the Body of Christ suffers. The broken are put on a shelf and left to try to figure things out for themselves.

When fallen people, whoever they are and whatever they have done, are repentant and broken, those charged with their care have a responsibility to see that they are restored to the Lord

and to the church. The fallen must not be treated as substandard believers or constantly reminded of their sin.

Unfortunately, some people have their own agenda for the ones who have been broken. They want to impose their unbiblical criteria before they are willing to declare the person fully restored.

Attempts at restoration often fail because we neglect to follow a biblical process. We act as if our role is to punish and to implement and enforce unbiblical accountability. As John White has written, "Perhaps we are too obsessed with the ax and too little with the head that will roll when it falls."⁹

God calls us to a different emphasis. It's called grace.

CHAPTER SIX

The Road to Restoration

When God forgives, He at once restores.

THEODORE EPP

When believers confess their sin, accept God's forgiveness, and purpose in their hearts to make amends and restitution where necessary, they are restored instantly to fellowship with Him. No probation period needed. No penance required. No groveling necessary. Their restoration to the Lord is complete. The sin is no longer an issue in God's eyes, *"If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness"* (1 John 1:9). The barrier to fellowship with the Lord has been removed.

At this point, the bigger challenge is how to be restored to the people the fallen ones sinned against. While restoration to God is immediate and wonderful, being restored to people is usually a process, often long and painful. Rebuilding trust takes time and effort.

This is why it is invaluable to have a team of mature, spiritual believers assisting the fallen ones in experiencing relational and functional restoration with people. That team needs to understand and accept that sin has been dealt with before

the Lord, and that their relationship with God is completely repaired. Each team member must commit to helping repentant believers in every way possible to rebuild their personal lives and their relationships and usefulness. They should desire above all else to build up the repentant, to give them hope and guidance in rebuilding their broken world. At the same time, the restoration and rebuilding team should help them to have realistic expectations. Some relationships may have been damaged forever. In others, it may take a very long time to reestablish trust.

God has made it abundantly clear in His Word exactly how restoration and rebuilding should take place. When we follow these clear, concise, and comprehensive guidelines in dealing with a fallen brother or sister, much damage will be averted, Satan will be defeated, the Body will be edified, and God will be glorified.

Paul's letter to the Galatians contains the clearest verse we have in Scripture on how we should go about helping fallen and broken believers, "*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted*" (Galatians 6:1).

The instructions in this verse are not complicated. In fact, they are quite straightforward. You don't have to be a Greek scholar to understand them. That does not mean they are easy to implement! Every word is highly significant and must be taken seriously by those who would attempt to guide the fallen to a place of complete restoration.

Author Charles Stanley reminds us of the responsibility we all have toward fallen believers:

Herein, though, is where many of us falter. We do not want to be associated with the sin the brother has been entangled in. We want to keep our distance. But we

cannot mend bones from afar, and we cannot restore a shattered life from a prayer closet. If we are acquainted with the one who has sinned, however flagrantly or subtly, and we have a genuine, abiding relationship with the Savior, living as best we can under the dictates of the Spirit, we have a mandate from on high to be a part of helping administer the forgiveness of God.¹

We need to remind ourselves that in this verse Paul is writing to “brothers,” those who belong to the family of God. Restoration and rebuilding are family matters. The instruction Paul gives is designed to instruct the church as to how they should deal with one of their own who has sinned. Martin Luther applies the command in Galatians 6:1 this way, “Run unto him, and reaching out your hand, raise him up again, comfort him with sweet words, and embrace him with motherly arms.”²

Let’s focus our attention on what the biblical text actually says.

“If someone is caught in a sin” — The word *caught* can also be translated *overtaken*. The word may refer to being caught in the act of sin or to being taken by surprise. Caught is a word the commentators do not agree on. They are not sure if this means we become aware of a person committing a sin or if they were tempted and a sin took them by surprise. Either way, a brother or sister is in serious trouble and needs our help.

It is vitally important that guilt be confirmed beyond a doubt. We are not to operate on the basis of rumor or circumstantial evidence, nor is it our job to run around trying to catch someone sinning. It is by the way God arranges the circumstances that we become aware of the wrongdoing and get involved. When this is the case, we must make certain the act in question is an actual sin, a clear violation of God’s truth, His principles, and His standards of Christian living. We miss the mark if we base

our conclusions on personal prejudice or preconceived ideas of what is or isn't acceptable Christian behavior. For example, even though we may not personally feel free to partake of alcoholic beverages, it doesn't mean fellow believers are sinning if they feel the liberty to do so.

Who then should respond to meet the need of the one caught in sin? The next phrase makes it clear.

“You who are spiritual”—Only spiritual people can restore fallen and broken people! We can be right in our observations and right in what we say but wrong in our approach and attitude. If we do not base our actions on God's truth, and if we are not controlled and directed by the Spirit, we will cause more harm than good to fallen people and to the church. The restoration process calls for and requires expert skill, for it is a person's soul that is involved.

Who are the spiritual people? How is it possible to determine who is spiritual and who is not? One of the clearest ways to determine who is spiritual and who is not in tune with the Lord is by their response to the fallen and broken ones. The immediate response of unspiritual people will be criticism, judgment, and self-righteousness.

Spiritual people, on the other hand, will be sorrowful and compassionate. They will take the initiative to reach out in love. Grace will be extended to those who have fallen and been broken. The spiritual people attempting the restoration process will be ones who live under the direction of the Holy Spirit. They will know what to say, when to say it, and how to say it so it will have the maximum positive effect.

Ideally, the restorers and rebuilders should be the elders of the local church. Sadly, elders are not always so spiritual. It isn't imperative that the elders do the restoring and rebuilding—the important thing is that those who engage in the process must

be people who live under the control of the Holy Spirit and in whose lives the fruit of the Spirit is evident.

The nine aspects of the fruit of the Spirit listed in Galatians provide an excellent checklist to help determine who is most qualified as spiritual. Is there evidence of these qualities, *“love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control”* (Galatians 5:22-23)? When people are filled with the Spirit and walking consistently in dependence on the Spirit, they are in the best position to help the fallen and broken move toward full restoration and rebuilding.

“Should restore him”—The goal must constantly be kept in mind. Fallen and broken people need to be restored to fellowship and usefulness. Sometimes a restoration team is more focused on protecting the church than on bringing the fallen back to spiritual health. Both are possible.

Gayle Haggard seemed to feel that the people charged with restoring her husband after his sin lost sight of the goal:

The more I thought about it, the more I became convinced that our being severed from New Life was contrary to what the Bible instructs the church to do. Though I was grateful for the professional counseling, I had yet to hear a concrete plan about how the overseers and restorers planned to restore us—and to what: to the church? to ministry? So far, their plan seemed more about removing us from the church and keeping us quiet.³

“Should restore him gently”—Gentleness is a key aspect of the fruit of the Spirit. Restoration and rebuilding are to be carried out without harshness or severity. We need to be mindful and considerate of the pain and shame fallen people are already experiencing. Just as proper healing of a broken leg depends on

the proper setting of the bone, healing of fallen people depends on the manner in which they are handled. Tender care is needed.

In Scripture, when a group of Pharisees brought a woman caught in the act of adultery before Jesus, He provided us with a model of how to approach the fallen. Instead of accusing her or humiliating her further, Jesus simply writes with His finger in the sand. When the Pharisees continue questioning Jesus, He says, *“If any one of you is without sin, let him be the first to throw a stone at her”* (John 8:7). Jesus keeps the woman’s sin in perspective, pointing out that all of us are sinners. The Pharisees gradually scatter. Only when they are alone does Jesus address the woman and her sin.

I imagine Him speaking in His softest, most compassionate voice. *“Has no one condemned you?”* He asks. *“No one, sir,”* she answers. *“Then neither do I condemn you,”* Jesus says. *“Go now and leave your life of sin”* (John 8:10-11). The sin must end, but the matter is handled quietly, with kindness, and with a reminder that even this sin is not too much to separate the woman from God.

Author F. F. Bruce has written, *“One test of true spirituality is a readiness to set those who stumble by the wayside on the right road again in a sympathetic and uncensorious spirit.”*⁴

“But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted”—Restorers and rebuilders must be vigilant. There is no room for spiritual pride or a self-righteous attitude in this process. It is a humbling task that requires great watchfulness. The realization of one’s own personal vulnerability to temptation should prevent a smug attitude while dealing with those who have yielded to sin and were caught. The phrase *“watch yourself”* means more than just seeing; it involves a steady concentration, like looking at a target before releasing a shot.

Each of us must realize that we are capable of committing every sin in the book. We would do well to heed Paul’s warning, *“So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall!”* (1 Corinthians 10:12). Spiritual people are aware of their own susceptibility to sin and walk humbly before God, recognizing how easily they could be in the fallen person’s shoes.

If you are facing the spiritual challenge of restoring fallen and broken believers in your church or ministry, I urge you to return again and again to Paul’s counsel in Galatians 6:1. Pray over each phrase and word. As you do, ask God to raise up a team that will take seriously the responsibility of living out the wisdom of Scripture. This will enable that team to provide maximum help for the broken ones to be restored in all of their relationships to the greatest extent possible and to rebuild their lives for the glory of God and the good of the Body of Christ.

The Restoration and Rebuilding Team

The initial meeting between people who need to be restored and helped in rebuilding their lives and those who would aid and guide them in this process is absolutely crucial. If we enter into the restoration process with any other motive than genuine love and compassion for them, all our efforts will be in vain. Those desiring to be restored are vulnerable and emotionally fragile. They need to be approached in the most sensitive and kind way possible. Doubts, fears, and questions will be running through their mind, such as:

- Can I really trust them? Will they maintain confidentiality?
- Have they already totally lost respect for me?
- If they knew everything about me, would they write me off permanently?

- Do they genuinely care about me?
- Are they just fulfilling an assignment/obligation or are they really committed to helping me get back on track?
- Can they actually help me? Are they spiritual individuals who are competent to deal with my issues or to direct me to professional care, if necessary?
- Are they mature, godly individuals who have dealt with their own stuff?
- Will they speak the truth in love?
- Are they gentle and loving?

The intention should be to make the restoration and rebuilding process a positive and meaningful experience for all who are involved, most particularly for those who are being restored. (See Appendix IV, p. 121, “Restoration and Rebuilding Team”)

One biblical passage is especially helpful in giving insights on how we should respond to repentant people. Paul is speaking to the believers in Corinth, and in all probability, he is referring to the individual who sinned sexually (1 Corinthians 5). It appears the church disciplined him, putting him out of the fellowship, and that the man repented. The church now has a very different and critical responsibility toward him:

“The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him. The reason I wrote you was to see if you would stand the test and be obedient in everything. If you forgive anyone, I also forgive him. And what I have forgiven—if there was anything to forgive—I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us. For we are not unaware of his schemes.”
(2 Corinthians 2:6-11)

Let's look more closely at this passage to discern the specific responsibilities that restorers have in order to bring healing and closure.

First and foremost is the need to...

Be Sensitive

*“The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is **sufficient** [emphasis mine] for him.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 2:6

Paul is sensitive in that he never names the individual who was disciplined by the church and now needs to be restored. He doesn't want him to bear that stigma down through church history by having his name engraved in Scripture!

The caution to the church is that we not prolong the discipline. Enough is enough. The discipline is to be remedial, not retributive. Great damage can be done to fallen people, as well as to the church, if church leaders do not remain sensitive and responsive to what God is doing in the life of the disciplined individuals.

The church must be ready to restore quickly and gently the fallen and broken as soon as there are signs of genuine repentance. It is imperative that the team and the church...

Be Forgiving

*“Now instead, you ought to **forgive** [emphasis mine] and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 2:7

Forgiveness needs to be verbalized publicly if the discipline was public. Gordon MacDonald emphasizes this point when he writes:

Restoration requires an official declaration when it is accomplished. A specific time must come when one is

released from discipline. Perhaps this is a public occasion, a time when the advocates of a person’s restoration are prepared to say to the world or to those who care: this person is ready once again for responsibility. This can be a small or large service for Christian people. The news of what has happened should be widely circulated since it is usually true that bad news travels far and wide, but good news crawls. It needs to be declared.⁵

There needs to be full and final forgiveness modeled after God’s forgiveness, *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you”* (Ephesians 4:32); *“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you”* (Colossians 3:13).

Evangelist Alan Redpath states it forcefully:

The one thing God will not overlook is an unforgiving spirit. For a Christian to be merciless is one of the worst of all sins, yet we see it all the time in our fellowships. We have a gospel of forgiveness for the sinner, but none for our brother or sister who stumbles!⁶

This declared forgiveness is also an opportunity for closure.

□—————
*God never reintroduces
 sin that is confessed
 and repented of ...
 we should do likewise.*

The case is closed and is not to be brought up ever again for discussion. It is a good time to remind people that God never reintroduces sin that is confessed and repented of, and that we should do likewise, *“For*

—————□
I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more” (Jeremiah 31:34). Rebuilding can now take place.

Once genuine forgiveness has been extended, there is a need to ...

Be Comforting

*“And **comfort** [emphasis mine] him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 2:7

This is a very important step. By providing comfort, we are not condoning the sin. Remember, it has been totally and completely forgiven. The broken have been deeply wounded by their sin and by the fiery darts of the enemy of their soul. They have felt the sting and pain of guilt, personal failure, shame, rejection, and loneliness. In a word, they feel worthless – comfort is needed now, and lots of it.

Sometimes forgiveness is offered verbally, but with a coolness and aloofness that continues to keep the repentant ones off balance and at arm’s length. They are never completely comfortable because they have never been comforted. We must reach out to them and let them know that they are okay, that they are accepted, that they belong, that they are useful, that they will be secure and protected by church leaders and the church body.

In all the dealings with the fallen and broken one, it is good to remind everyone to...

Be Loving

*“I urge you, therefore, to **reaffirm your love** [emphasis mine] for him.”*

2 CORINTHIANS 2:8

Love needs to be continuous and tangible. Heart and eye contact are essential. The fallen and broken need to hear those small yet powerful words, “I love you” and “We love you.” They need to feel and see love in action. They have felt alienated long enough. Now they need to hear and experience the unconditional love of their fellow believers in Christ. This will be a powerful healing force in their life, *“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins”* (1 Peter 4:8).

In 1989, in the wake of a sex scandal, former televangelist Jim Bakker was convicted of fraud and conspiracy charges. In his book *I Was Wrong*, he relates that while in prison, he desperately needed to know someone still loved and cared for him. One day he was summoned from his cell, too ill from the flu to even care that his face was unshaven, his hair was uncombed, and his tennis shoes had holes in them. A guard took him to the administration building. To his surprise, he learned that he had a special visitor. Bakker relates his experience:

As I walked through the door, Billy Graham turned toward me and opened his arms wide. Immediately, I felt his total acceptance and love. I wanted to run into his arms like a little boy would run into his daddy's arms. As I looked at him, the tall, distinguished gentleman looked back at me with absolute compassion. I had not seen such compassionate eyes in a long time.

We stepped toward each other and embraced. "Hello, Jim," he said in his rich Carolina accent. "How are you?"

"Hello, Dr. Graham. I'm sorry you have to see me like this." Billy Graham simply waved my apology away.

We sat down beside each other at the conference table and began to talk. The room was still swirling with people, but I felt as though Dr. Graham and I were in our own separate world. We talked quietly but freely. He told me that he was glad to be able to see me. "I wanted to come sooner," he said almost apologetically.

His wife, Ruth, was in Mayo Clinic for some tests, which is why they were in Minnesota in the first place. He told me Ruth was especially insistent that he come to visit me...

Before he left, Billy Graham offered to pray with me, and as he began, the activity in the room instantly ceased.

Time seemed suspended during Dr. Graham’s visit, so I have no idea how long he stayed. Probably not long, but I will never forget that the man who had just been voted one of the most influential men in the world and who has ministered to millions of people took time out of his busy schedule to come minister to one prisoner. Amid my depression, flu, filth, and hopelessness, Billy Graham had come.⁷

No matter what you think of Jim Bakker, don’t miss the point— Billy Graham extended love and grace to one who desperately needed it. That is spiritual leadership! What a comfort that was to Jim Bakker. Someone of Billy Graham’s stature loved him and thought he was still valuable enough to take time out of his busy schedule to visit him in prison. We should do the same.

Satan is always looking for ways to take advantage of the restoration process, so it is incumbent upon the restoring and rebuilding team to...

Be Alert

*“In order **that Satan might not outwit us** [emphasis mine].*

For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

2 CORINTHIANS 2:11

Misunderstandings, miscommunication, confusion, division, and ugly displays of the flesh often occur during times when church discipline or restoration and rebuilding are exercised. Satan loves it!

We need to be especially alert because the church is so vulnerable at these moments. The restoration team may be doing an outstanding job, but Satan makes sure the rumor mill runs at full speed. The team must make communication with the church a priority while maintaining respectful confidentiality. Satan destroys some churches when leaders do not deal biblically

with flagrant sin. Other churches are decimated when leaders postpone or neglect altogether restoring and rebuilding the life of someone who has sinned and repented. These pastors, elders, and staff are either unaware of the directives in 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 or are unwilling to take the actions specified in those verses for fear of being too easy on the one who has sinned. Don't fall into these traps.

What have we just learned? That a repentant sinner is in a vulnerable position, and that it's our responsibility as restorers always to keep this in mind. Before each meeting with the one you are helping, I recommend that the team read 2 Corinthians 2:6-11 together and commit themselves to its clear directives.

Now let's imagine what such a meeting might look like, while relying on another passage of Scripture that has much to teach us.

Meeting with Your Prodigal

We've already seen how the familiar story of the Prodigal Son provides an example of both sins of the flesh and sins of the spirit. It also, however, is a model for how we ought to respond to such sins when we are in the position of restorer and rebuilders.

Remember the story at the beginning of this book about Joe, the executive pastor who stole from the offering and was dismissed from the church even as he tried to make amends? Frank, the head of the elder board, never gave Joe the chance to be restored to the church.

But what if Frank and the other elders had chosen to follow the standard set in Scripture by the father of the wayward son? How might the scene have been different?

I think it would have gone something like this:

The fateful day came when Joe’s wrongdoing was discovered. He was called to an evening meeting with the six-member church board. He entered the room, apprehensive about how the board—and Frank, the board chair who’d hired Joe—would react.

Frank had been angry and disappointed. He’d trusted Joe and felt betrayed. The moment Joe walked in with his head down, Frank realized his own anger and initial response was wrong. He was overcome by a wave of empathy. Joe *was* wrong, but he had dealt with it before the Lord. If he’d been in Joe’s shoes and felt the church was taking advantage of him, how would he have handled it? Joe had made a terrible mistake—but Frank realized he’d made a few of his own. *“But while he [the Prodigal Son] was still a long way off, his father saw him and was filled with compassion for him”* (Luke 15:20).

Ignoring the rest of the board members sitting at the table, Frank jumped up from his seat, rushed over, and gently squeezed Joe’s shoulder. *“This is tough, Joe,”* he said with what he hoped was a sympathetic smile, *“but somehow we’re going to get through this together. I appreciate you coming tonight.”* *“He ran to his son, threw his arms around him and kissed him”* (v. 20).

At the meeting, Joe and the elders agreed that he would have to step down from his position as executive pastor. But Frank and the other elders emphasized that they cared for Joe and that when he was ready to seek the Lord’s forgiveness, they would be ready to talk about a plan for restoring Joe in some form to the church.

A few days later, Joe called Frank. In a halting voice, Joe explained that he realized he’d committed a serious sin.

For a moment, Frank was tempted to jump in and say, *“No kidding! Stealing money from the offering?”*

What were you thinking?" But he immediately decided against it. Joe was confessing, which was never easy. The last thing Joe needed was another reminder of his guilt. *"Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. I am no longer worthy to be called your son"* (v. 21).

Joe continued, explaining that he'd asked for and received the Lord's forgiveness. "Frank, I want to do the right thing here," Joe said. "I'm not asking for my job back. I'm hoping that I can meet again with you and the board to ask for your forgiveness and to offer to make full restitution of the funds. And maybe, when you think I'm ready, be a part of the church family again."

"Joe, that's great news," Frank said. "Having dealt with your sin and getting right with the Lord couldn't make me happier. I'll have to talk with the rest of the board about it, but I think what you've proposed is a great idea. Let's plan to get together in the next few days and see if we can work out a restoration and rebuilding plan for you, the sooner the better." *"But the father said to his servants, 'Quick! Bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet. Bring the fattened calf and kill it'"* (v. 22-23).

Six months later, the church held a ceremony for Joe right after the usual service. Most of the congregation stayed to participate. Frank beamed as he announced that Joe had been completely restored and was in the process of rebuilding his life, and he was rejoining the church as a full-fledged member. Though Joe would no longer serve as executive pastor or be given financial responsibilities at the church, he would be invited to join in the church's community outreach program and other ministry opportunities.

The congregation responded with a standing ovation and a lengthy applause. Later, many came up to Joe to welcome him back. With a big smile, Joe thanked them for their kind words, but was quick to give the credit for his renewed standing to God and His amazing grace. *“Let’s have a feast and celebrate. For this son of mine was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.” So they began to celebrate”* (v. 23-24).

This is what grace-based restoration looks like. Just as the father felt compassion for his prodigal, Frank felt compassion for Joe as soon as he saw him. He realized that Joe was already suffering plenty for his sin. Like the prodigal’s father, Frank also quickly made a physical demonstration of his concern. A human touch can mean more than a thousand words to a person who is hurting.

When his son confessed his foolishness, the prodigal’s father had the perfect opportunity to reprimand him. Yet he chose to keep silent, as did Frank when Joe confessed to his own sin. Our silence in those moments may be the first step to healing.

□—————
*A human touch can mean
 more than a thousand
 words to a person
 who is hurting.*
 —————□

Frank was also reaffirming. Like the prodigal’s father, he was quick to let Joe know that he was still concerned about him and valued him. Finally, both the prodigal’s father and the elders of Joe’s church left no doubt in the minds of everyone that the return of their wayward “sons” was something to celebrate. In both cases, they demonstrated undeniable joy over the fact that *“this brother of yours was dead and is alive again”* (v. 32).

Can you imagine if more of our churches and parachurch organizations would respond like the prodigal’s father to those

who have fallen and been broken? It would heal many wounds in the Body of Christ and be a powerful witness of God's love to a needy and broken world.

Bringing public closure is, in fact, one of the most vital steps of the restoration process.

Celebrating Restoration

When church and ministry leaders fail to respond to fallen and broken people in a godly and gracious way, it creates uncertainty for the congregation and staff because they are taking their cues from the leaders. It raises questions in their minds: Where is the grace? What happens if I fall—will I also be banished and treated like a second-class citizen? Will I be regarded as damaged goods for the rest of my life? If I can no longer trust and respect the leaders because of the harsh and ungracious way they deal with fallen and broken people, is it time for me to leave this church?

In their minds, the church or ministry is no longer a safe place for the wounded and the weary. It becomes a place of superficial relationships, where we're more concerned with looking good than becoming more like Christ. Failure to restore someone biblically is costly and damaging for everyone, including the world that needs to see grace in action.

Many questions arise when a believer's fall (especially a leader) becomes public knowledge. Each situation has its own challenges and ramifications. But whoever they are, whatever their standing in the church or Christian community, and no matter the circumstances, when these believers have repented, been broken, and been restored, this should be celebrated publicly.

We all get excited when unbelievers repent and receive God's gift of grace and forgiveness in Christ. We should—even the

angels in heaven rejoice (Luke 15:7, 10). Why not also celebrate and rejoice when repentant believers experience the restorative grace of God? We must learn to take grace as seriously as we do sin!

A counselor, David Seamands, summed up his career this way:

Many years ago I was driven to the conclusion that the two major causes of most emotional problems among evangelical Christians are these: the failure to understand, receive, and live out God's unconditional grace and forgiveness; and the failure to give out that unconditional love, forgiveness, and grace to other people...We read, we hear, we believe a good theology of grace. But that's not the way we live. The good news of the Gospel of grace has not penetrated the level of our emotions.⁸

I know a man, "Dean," who held a responsible position in a vibrant and growing church in Ohio. He served faithfully in ministry for a number of years. One day, however, a neighbor revealed to the church that she and Dean had been having an affair for more than a year.

God used this sudden exposure of Dean's sin to break him. His spiritual, mental, and emotional anguish were heartbreaking to watch. Dean went through counseling and a church-designed restoration and rebuilding process. He responded well. He took full responsibility for his sin and turned from it. Dean was restored to his Lord and to his family. He did not want or even suggest that he be restored to his former position of leadership. He was humbled and desired only to be welcomed and accepted by the church body.

More than a year after the news of Dean's transgressions went public, others and I witnessed the change in this man. One day I suggested to the church pastor that it would be

a wonderful thing for Dean and his family, as well as for the church, to publicly acknowledge and celebrate the fact that he was fully restored to the Lord and to the church. Since Dean had been publicly censured, I thought it would be appropriate to announce publicly his restoration.

I will never forget the pastor's response, "No, that wouldn't work. That would be too dramatic." I'm not sure what the pastor was afraid of. Perhaps he feared that some in his congregation would think he had gone soft on sin. Whatever the reason, he missed an incredible opportunity to magnify the grace of God and to edify the Body of Christ. He left Dean still uncertain as to whether or not he had been fully restored.

God's grace is dramatic! We should be glad and rejoice in it. As Philip Yancey writes, "How is it that Christians called to dispense the aroma of grace instead emit the noxious fumes of ungrace?"⁹

The failure to follow through with a public restoration service has cost that church a great deal in power and effectiveness. Other repentant believers who were never restored to that body have left that church; others who witnessed that travesty of ungrace have also left that church. They all have had to deal with their disillusionment with church leadership and have had to work through their feelings of bitterness toward those who should have been channels of God's restorative grace.

We should never, under any circumstance, leave fallen believers in limbo. Either they are under church discipline, or in a loving grace-filled restoration process, or they are fully restored and it is openly and joyfully acknowledged. This doesn't mean that every relationship in their lives has returned to what it was before their sin. A wife may never be able to trust again. A congregation may not be able to place its faith in their leadership and judgment again. They may have more work

to do to rebuild their lives. It does mean, however, that the repentant believers are right with God and have done what they can to restore damaged relationships. (See Appendix V, page 125, “Questions for Consideration in Bringing Restoration to Completion”)

So be joyful! Rejoice with the restored! Church leaders should lead the celebration. This will help greatly the restored individuals experience the joy of renewed relationships and will help them on the journey of rebuilding their lives. The fact is, without public acknowledgment, they are still uncertain where they stand and are left in limbo.

In the 1990s, Sandi Patty was one of Christian music’s most popular performers. Then she had an affair, divorced her husband, and married Don, one of her backup singers. She confessed her sin to God and struggled through the process of brokenness and repentance before finally finding restoration. Her experience with her church illustrates how this should feel to the restored:

My pastor was clear when Don and I came to the point of putting closure on our past: there is an end to the restoration process. What a concept! There came a point when he encouraged us to stop apologizing and start living; to quit looking behind us and focus on today and tomorrow. To quit holding the lowly “I made a bad mistake” posture and hold our heads up again as fully restored kids of the King.

Our church helped us as we made a choice to step into the river of joy. They do not bring up the past. They treat us the same way they treat every married couple in our church. They love our blended bunch of kids. They gave away our “sickbed” a long time ago and encouraged us to get our minds off our past and onto the tasks that would bring a bit of heaven down to earth again – serving others in need.¹⁰

God’s grace is truly amazing! Charles Spurgeon said it so well when he wrote, “Abundant sin is no barrier to the superabundant grace of God.”¹¹ May our churches be good reflections of His superabundant grace to unbelievers and repentant saints alike.

Jeff Leeland is a man who has experienced the superabundant
 □————— grace of God. As you may recall, pride
 and alcohol had taken him down. He
Abundant sin is no barrier to the super- abundant grace of God.
 CHARLES SPURGEON
 —————□ barelly. He was a new and broken
 man. It was my privilege to participate in his journey toward
 restoration. Jeff relates his experience:

My body was a frail shell as I prepared to leave the hospital. I resembled a bony POW barely able to walk on my own, with no home or job to return to, no money, over \$100,000 in uninsured medical debt, and no car or even a driver’s license.

More devastating was the loss of my most cherished treasure on earth. Though my wife had graciously forgiven me, the pain in Kristi’s heart was too much for her to consider reconciliation. In her eyes, I was no longer the Jeff she married and knew in Christ before my drinking—a godly man, daddy, and husband who would sacrifice his life for her, a man who would place her needs above his own desires. Her love for me as a wife, along with her trust in me, had died. She bore the image of being married to a burden: “Jeff the cheating drunk,” untrustworthy, manipulating, threatening, good with words, a man of many promises and no action.

Despite all this, I realized that God in His mercy was giving me a second chance on life. I knew each day of moving forward was a gift. I committed then and there to give it back to Him, to be open to His best shot at what remained.

I was dressed and more than ready to go home with my daughter that sunny, chilly December afternoon. I sat in a wheelchair as we waited patiently for a volunteer to arrive and push me out to the car. When the volunteer came to the door, I was surprised it was someone I knew – Pastor Dennis Kizziar. It had been years since we'd been in touch. Our family had visited his church several times, and I always appreciated his messages filled with grace, truth, and God's love. I'd heard that he'd been through some tough times too.

"Hey, Dennis," I said. He looked taken aback, clearly not recognizing this scraggly, skinny patient.

Dennis peeked at my discharge card and smiled. "Jeff!" he said.

I packed my story into the five-minute wheelchair ride. Dennis shared that after a three-month break from volunteering at the hospital, I was his first patient. I knew then our meeting wasn't an accident.

I sensed in Dennis a warm and welcoming spirit, something I'd grown unaccustomed to the past few years. My heart was instantly filled with a huge dose of God's love and compassion. We exchanged phone numbers, hugged, and wondered what God was up to.

Though we lived twenty miles apart, Dennis and I began speaking often on the phone and meeting weekly. He became my spiritual mentor and friend through the most rugged months of my life. He also introduced me

to four of his friends, wonderful men of God: Doug, a retired pastor; Guy, a retired school athletic director; Sam, a retired stockbroker; and Tom, a local business owner. That group had formed a friendship and bond in Christ, meeting every Tuesday morning for coffee, Bible study, and fellowship. Eventually, I was invited to join them.

I found this group to be informal, accepting, and supportive, open to what anyone wanted to share. What an honor to be surrounded by these men of integrity, character (or more accurately, “characters” with no holds barred), and the love of God. They became Jesus’ hands and feet to me—especially in the driver’s seat of a car. They offered me rides at all hours, shared meals with me, and helped me through money problems without me even asking. When it came time for me to move out from my daughter’s home, Guy and his wife, Sally, offered the studio apartment above their garage. They made me feel welcome, never asking for a dime. It was beautiful—more than I could have asked or paid for.

These men ventured into the deepest, darkest valley of my life. It still doesn’t make sense to me. I certainly didn’t deserve it, nor could I have orchestrated it. There was definitely nothing in it for them. Most important, they immersed me in God’s grace and encouragement. I knew well the feelings of rejection and failure. But upon that dark backdrop in my soul, these men painted a beautiful image of hope in the love and power of Christ. Through brokenness and the loss of nearly everything dear in my life, I’m finding that what matters most now is my relationship with Jesus Christ.

Now, in quietness and confidence, I know exactly where I must be today: abiding with my Lord. As I stay faithfully rooted in God and He sees fit, He will make me into a tree that bears beautiful and bountiful fruit—firmly planted, withstanding any storm life brings, providing much shelter to those in need. God will make me useable for His kingdom and glory in ways I could never dream of.¹²

This, I believe is the heart of restoration and rebuilding.

As we come to the end of this book, I hope you’ve gained an expanded and deeper appreciation of God’s grace that is indeed greater than all our sins. J. I. Packer had it exactly right when he wrote:

No need in Christendom is more urgent than the need for a renewed awareness of what the grace of God really is. Christians long to see reformation and revival in the churches; today as yesterday, it is only from a rediscovery of grace that these blessings will flow.¹³

That sums it up well. When dealing with believers or nonbelievers, each one a sinner, our motto is to be “grace above all”—this is what Jesus modeled for all those who follow Christ.

I leave you with this verse from 1 Peter 5:10 (PHILLIPS):

“The God of all grace, who has called you to share His eternal splendor through Christ, will Himself make you whole and secure and strong. All power is His forever and forever, Amen!”

Appendix

APPENDIX I

A Place to Start for the Fallen One

1. Confess and forsake all sin (Psalm 32, 38, 51; Proverbs 28:13; 1 John 1:9).
2. Receive God's gift of love, grace, and forgiveness. Remember...
 - Christ died for *all* your sins—past, present, and future (Colossians 2:13; 1 John 2:2). *Thank Him!*
 - God will not punish you for your sins—He will discipline you (Hebrews 12:4-11). *Cooperate with Him!*
 - God does not become weary of your confession (Psalm 103:13). *Come to Him!*
 - God loves you. You are secure in Him (Romans 8:31-39). *Rest in Him!*
 - Christ's blood continually cleanses us from all sin (1 John 1:7). *Praise Him!*
3. Make it your aim to have a clear conscience and to live at peace with everyone while remembering you can't force them to live at peace with you (Acts 24:16; Romans 12:18).
4. Initiate contact with the people you have offended. Even if they didn't follow Matthew 18:15-17, you need to follow Matthew 5:23-24. It's always your move!
5. Acknowledge your weaknesses (faults) to trusted people (James 5:16).
6. Surround yourself with a few spiritually-mature individuals who genuinely care for you, want you to experience God's

best, and who will lovingly and firmly challenge you to live a godly life (Hebrews 3:13, 10:24-25).

7. Practice the spiritual disciplines (2 Peter 3:18).
8. Get on with life (Philippians 3:13-14):
 - No guilt trips
 - No rehashes
 - No more “pound of flesh”
9. Meet regularly for fellowship and encouragement with other believers (Proverbs 27:17; Hebrews 10:25).
10. Praise God continually for His forgiveness, goodness, and grace. (Psalm 103).

APPENDIX II

Why Get Involved with Those Who Have Messed Up Their Lives?

1. Because it demonstrates to a world filled with people who cannot get along with each other that the Holy Spirit's power brings healing and reconciliation to broken relationships.

"May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

JOHN 17:23

2. Because it demonstrates to the world our love and care for each other.

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

JOHN 13:34-35

3. Because Scripture instructs us to restore the fallen humbly and gently.

"Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently."

GALATIANS 6:1

4. Because we can play a vital role in healing the wounds of our brothers and sisters in the Body of Christ.

"Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous man is powerful and effective."

JAMES 5:16

5. Because of the way God has dealt with us.

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

COLOSSIANS 3:12-13

6. Because to know to do right and not to do it is sin.

“Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it, sins.”

JAMES 4:17

7. Because we are called to admonish each other.

“Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God.”

COLOSSIANS 3:16

8. Because we are called to bear one another’s burdens.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.”

GALATIANS 6:2

9. Because God commands us to build up one another and not to tear each other down.

“Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.”

ROMANS 14:19

10. Because we have been called to speak truth into each other’s lives.

“Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ.”

EPHESIANS 4:15

APPENDIX III

Questions and Answers on Church Discipline and Restoration

1. **Who are we to judge? Didn't Jesus say in Matthew 7:1-2, "Do not judge, or you too will be judged"?**

A sharp distinction must be made between judging people's motives and their actions. Actions that are a clear violation of God's Words are to be judged. We can't accurately judge another person's motives, only God knows the heart. A good example of judging actions, not motives, is found in 1 Corinthians 5:

*"What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church?
Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside.
'Expel the wicked man from among you.'"*

1 CORINTHIANS 5:12-13

2. **When are we supposed to expel sinning believers from the church?**

Only after that person has been lovingly confronted and they willfully continue in their sin, Matthew 18:15-17:

*"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;
and if he refuses to listen even to the church,
treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector."*

MATTHEW 18:17

3. **When are we supposed to welcome them back in the church?**

As soon as they repent and ask forgiveness, they are to be immediately forgiven and restored to fellowship in

the church. Failure to do so will give Satan a tremendous advantage in the life of repentant people and also in the life of the church.

“The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow.

I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him...

in order that Satan might not outwit us.

For we are not unaware of his schemes.”

2 CORINTHIANS 2:6-8, 11

4. What if we think repentance isn't genuine in the fallen ones?

We must take them at their word. Who can accurately judge the depth of another person's repentance? Our responsibility is to forgive, show grace, and accept them. Only God can judge the sincerity of the heart.

“So watch yourselves. If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him. If he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times comes back to you and says, ‘I repent,’ forgive him.”

LUKE 17:3-4

5. If we forgive too easily, won't it seem that we don't take sin seriously enough?

When we forgive and restore, it doesn't mean we don't view sin as serious. It is all in the way we communicate the action we are taking and why. We must call sin sin and judge it. But above all, we must magnify the grace of God. We must learn to take grace as seriously as we do sin!

“If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.”

1 JOHN 1:9

6. What if we think the fallen have not suffered enough for their sins?

If we maintain that position, we are demanding that they atone for their own sins (penance) instead of humbly and gratefully receiving God's gracious and total forgiveness. We are no judge as to how much others have suffered. Only they and God know the depths of mental and emotional anguish they have experienced and the losses they have sustained.

"Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you."

EPHESIANS 4:32

7. What if they repeat the same sins and fall back into old patterns?

The chances are greater of that happening if they aren't forgiven and restored than if they are. They need encouragement, support, and accountability so that they will live a life that honors God and will not lapse back into sin. If they do go back to a life of sin, the directives of Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1 must be followed.

"But encourage one another daily, as long as it is called Today, so that none of you may be hardened by sin's deceitfulness."

HEBREWS 3:13

8. Won't our church be "contaminated" by welcoming back the one who has committed a serious sin?

We all want a "pure" church, but we are all sinners in the process of being sanctified. If we want an untainted church, we must judge everyone and every sin continuously, including our own. What about gossip, envy, jealousy, pride, and hypocrisy? If people

have repented and confessed their sins, they must be welcomed back and given a fresh opportunity to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ together with the rest of the Body, no matter what they have done.

*“Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you,
in order to bring praise to God.”*

ROMANS 15:7

9. What if people involved in sin remain unrepentant and leave the church?

Public rebuke is still appropriate. We also have a responsibility to the Body of Christ at large. If they attend another church, that church needs to be informed if they remain unrepentant and continue in their sin.

*“If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter,
take special note of him. Do not associate with him,
in order that he may feel ashamed.”*

2 THESSALONIANS 3:14-15

10. What if fallen believers are not members of the church, but attend and are living in sin?

Admonition is still appropriate since they are associating themselves with the church and their actions affect the church Body. As professed believers, they must still be lovingly and compassionately approached according to the guidelines found in Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1-2.

*“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood
and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for
we are all members of one body.”*

EPHESIANS 4:25

APPENDIX IV

Restoration and Rebuilding Team

DESCRIPTION

The restoration team should be composed of a group of spiritually mature Christians who commit themselves to support and assist fallen, broken, and repentant people who desire to be restored to the body of believers and to rebuild relationships with those who have been damaged by their sin. They are to help them in their journey of becoming restored to their family and fellow believers and to usefulness in God's kingdom.

COMMITMENT

Desiring to be agents of God's limitless grace to a fallen believer,

We realize that we live in a broken world and that all of us will at times be broken in relationship to God, self, and others,

We recognize our own weaknesses and constant need of God's grace, forgiveness, and cleansing,

We recognize that our own pride and judgment can seriously hinder the process,

We realize that we are called to admonish, exhort and restore one another, to spur one another on to love and good deeds, to bear one another's burdens, and to encourage one another,

We recognize with gratitude that the restoring and healing power of our Lord Jesus Christ is sufficient and effective for every life,

Therefore, we, as members of the restoration and rebuilding team, purpose and commit ourselves to a restoring and rebuilding ministry, doing only that which helps fallen and broken people.

Continually reassure broken people with these words of encouragement from G. Campbell Morgan:

Nothing is so important to the Christian as to forget the sins of the past. One of Satan's subtlest methods with the saint is to keep a consciousness of sin present, after Jesus Christ has said, "Thy sins are forgiven thee."

There are men and women haunted by despair concerning past sins, who, if they could but see it, are dishonoring their Lord by their despair, and are preventing themselves, by this self-same despair, from developing Christian character and running the heavenly race. You cannot run so long as you will persist in looking upon that sin of the past. Heinous it was, awful it was, but if there is not grace to pay that debt, if there is not blood to put away that sin, then all the dying of Jesus was a mockery and a sham. If you cannot be forgiven, neither can I; and if you and I cannot be forgiven, no man can be forgiven.

We must forget the sins of the past by not permitting them to fill us with despair. We must forget, because we cannot undo. The past is with God whether you admit it or not. Yesterday is gone. What you have written you have written. You cannot get it back. Where is it? With God. Because it is with Him, you had better forget and trust Him, who in infinite mercy says to every penitent

and believing soul, “Your sins and your iniquities will I remember no more.”¹

PURPOSE

- To demonstrate love, show grace, and bring hope to those who are broken and who desire to be restored and rebuild their lives
- To give emotional and spiritual support
- To provide gentle guidance and direction on how to facilitate healing and reconciliation to those wounded by the sin of broken people
- To provide prayer support

GOALS

Encourage broken people who desire to rebuild their lives:

- To rejoice in God’s love and forgiveness
- To understand their vulnerabilities
- To reestablish spiritual disciplines
- To restore broken and damaged relationships
- To have an open and teachable spirit
- To demonstrate truth and honesty in all things
- To develop integrity in all the details of life
- To keep short accounts with the Lord and people
- To listen well without becoming defensive
- To live in dependence on the Holy Spirit, not self
- To get healthy—physically, spiritually, emotionally, and mentally

APPENDIX V

Questions for Consideration in Bringing Restoration to Completion

Some questions for the restoration and rebuilding team to consider before bringing relational restoration to completion:

1. To the extent you are able to discern, do you believe the fallen and broken people in your care have repented of, confessed, and forsaken their sins?
2. Have they asked forgiveness of those they have sinned against and have they attempted to make restitution where appropriate?
3. Are you aware of any unresolved issues with which they need to deal? If so, what are they?
4. Do you consider them at this time to be restored to the Lord and to the church body? If not, why not?
5. Do you have peace in your heart and mind that there is complete and final closure to the restoration process? If not, why not? What still needs to take place?
6. Are you ready and willing to publicly announce that they are restored? If not, why not?
7. Do you trust them and are you willing to stand by them and put your own reputation on the line for them? If not, why not?
8. Is there currently anything in their life that would keep you from putting your full blessing on their return to the church? If so, what specifically are your reservations and will you discuss your concerns with them?

APPENDIX VI

To Minister or Not to Minister

A question that causes concern and controversy among many believers is this: Should leaders, or anyone, in public ministry who have failed morally or ethically be allowed to return to public ministry?

If the answer to that question is *yes*, then what are the conditions, if any? Do they need to wait for a specified period of time? Should they be allowed to return to their former position or be allowed to minister only in certain venues? Should they minister only after a period of intensive counseling? Do they need the approval of an authority group to which they are accountable before they minister once again as a representative of a church or other organization?

If the answer to that first question is *no* and they should not be allowed to minister publicly, what happens to them? Are they permanently sidelined? Has God revoked their gifts and calling? Can they be restored to the body of believers but not to ministry? Have they forfeited the privilege to ever minister again publicly? Are they “damaged goods”?

Personally, I believe those who have fallen, been broken, and repented can and should be allowed to minister publicly, with certain appropriate restrictions. To understand why I have taken this position, it is instructive to look at the lives of some men in Scripture. The Holy Spirit faithfully records their failures and also faithfully records God’s unconditional love, restorative grace, and ability to use broken and repentant people for His

glory, *“For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope”* (Romans 15:4).

- **Abraham** (Genesis 12:10-13; 16): He lied, committed adultery, and grew impatient with God. Yet he became the father of Israel and is referred to as *“a friend of God”* (James 2:23) and *“the father of all who believe”* (Romans 4:11).
- **Moses** (Exodus 2:11-14): He murdered a man and had a serious anger problem. Yet he became the leader of God’s chosen people, taking them out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land. The Word says of Moses, *“No prophet has risen in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face”* (Deuteronomy 34:10).
- **Jonah** (Jonah 1:1-3): He was rebellious and disobedient, yet when he repented, God used him to bring revival to Nineveh (Jonah 3).
- **David** (2 Samuel 11): The king of Judah broke four of the last five commandments: he coveted, he stole, he committed adultery, he murdered. Yet after he repented and confessed his sin, he wrote some of his best Psalms and is known as a *“man after God’s own heart”* (Acts 13:22).
- **Manasseh** (2 Chronicles 33): He basically committed every sin in the book. It is hard to find another man in all of Scripture who committed as many vile and vicious sins as Manasseh. Yet after he was captured by an Assyrian king and imprisoned, *“In his distress he sought the favor [grace] of the LORD his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to him, the LORD was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he [God] brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom”*

(vv. 12-13). From that point on, God used him mightily for His own glory.

- **Peter** (Matthew 26:69-75): He denied Christ, not once but three times! How bad is that? Yet less than a week after his denial of Christ, he experienced the restorative grace of God and was commissioned to feed His sheep (John 21:15-17). Peter preached a powerful sermon on the day of Pentecost with three thousand coming to faith in Christ (Acts 2:14-41). This leader of the early church also wrote two powerful epistles that bear his name, exalting the magnificent grace of God.

Each case is different, but the grace of God is the same for everyone. God wants to and will use any person who is clean today and has been restored to a consistent walk with Him.

It is true that some sins have greater consequences than other sins and some opportunities for public ministry should be denied to those who have fallen. Pedophiles should not work in children's ministry. Embezzlers should not keep the church books. Those who have had affairs should not counsel people alone. Pastors who stumble may not be able to win back the trust of their congregation, or any congregation, and will need to follow God's leadership into different avenues of ministry.

I do believe fallen people, even when repentant, should be removed from public ministry for a period of time so they may focus on renewing and rebuilding their relationship with the Lord and others who have been damaged by their sin. Intensive counseling may also be beneficial to help them get in touch with character deficiencies and baggage from the past that contributed to their fall. Should the break be six months? A year? Two years? The length will depend on each unique situation and should be determined by the restoration and rebuilding team only after careful evaluation and prayer.

When repentant servants are restored, their ministry may need to take a different form. Yet, because of their brokenness leading to humility, God may give them a greater ministry than before—greater in terms of spiritual impact and lasting spiritual fruit.

Author Beth Moore says of the fallen who repent, “Don’t wait too long to use them so they will not lose heart...Don’t take away their right to serve God. That’s not your right. That’s not my right. It is God’s alone.”¹

I agree.

May God bless and use each of us to become effective conduits of His grace in the lives of His children.

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Jeff – whose story is woven throughout the book has been an incredible inspiration to me. He is a living illustration of God’s restorative grace. It has been one of life’s great privileges for me to walk with him through his fall, brokenness, and restoration. He actually suggested the title for this book.

Drew – a faithful friend, a great encourager and an excellent help in editing this book. Thanks, Drew, for catching all my “split infinitives.” Sorry, but I am still not quite sure what they are!

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Jim Lund – your keen editing eye, comments and suggestions have made the book much more readable and user friendly. Many thanks to you as well!

And there are countless others who have been great prayer warriors, faithful friends, and encouragers to me in my journey through life. You never gave up on me – thank you!

And above all, my deepest gratitude and praise to **God** for His kindness and faithfulness to me. He never gave up on me. He sustained and provided for me during a time of *brokenness* in my own life. He is truly a God who heals and *restores*. Praise His Holy Name!

World Leadership Ministries

Dennis Kizziar is a graduate of Biola University and Western Seminary. He has served as a missionary in Brazil and has been a church pastor for over thirty-five years. Dennis has also served as Director of the Ministers Department for a large national Christian organization.

Dennis is founder of World Leadership Ministries, which was born out of a personal desire to use the gifts and life experiences God has given him to minister to Christian leaders in all parts of the world. He has worked with a number of Christian organizations in conducting conferences and seminars. The primary purpose of WLM is to prepare, train, and encourage leaders worldwide in their ministries.

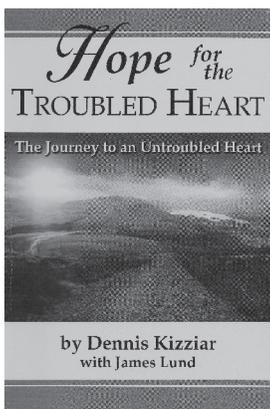
A few years ago the Lord led Dennis to develop a seminar titled "The Untroubled Heart." Dennis strongly believes that in these troubled times, Christians need practical and biblical help on how to live out Jesus' words in John 14:1, "*Do not let your hearts be troubled.*" He has since written the book *Hope for the Troubled Heart*.

To learn more about Dennis' ministry through World Leadership Ministries and to schedule a seminar or a speaking engagement, contact him at:

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Or visit him on the web at:
www.worldleadershipministries.org

Other Books by Dennis Kizziar



In *Hope for the Troubled Heart* Dennis explains the heart from a biblical perspective, identifies the three common obstacles to a life of freedom: guilt, bitterness, and anxiety, and shows how to rediscover God's joy and peace.

(Available through Amazon.com;
Barnesandnoble.com; Westbowpress.com)

Some comments on the book...

I was anxious to read *Hope for the Troubled Heart*. In no way was I disappointed. Your honesty and vulnerability made the read interesting. The simplicity of the message and its application to my life made it important and meaningful. I am currently on my second reading of the book. This book should be a must read for anyone who is seeking to mature in their faith, yet has trouble constantly controlling their heart. I guess that means everyone, except those who see their life without sin, should read and enjoy this book.

– Guy

I am in jail right now and I came across your book. Your book is amazing. Could you please send a copy of it to my wife?

– A Prisoner

I really liked your book, and I think the topics, examples, and biblical answers are clear and easy to apply. I'm planning on having much less worry issues after seeing what the cause and solutions are!

– Jim

I intended to spend 15 minutes perusing your book to determine if it would be appropriate for our purpose. I spent 45 minutes totally engrossed. Send as many copies as you can, this book will change lives. An office worker also has been reading the copy you sent and is impressed with the message contained in the book. We both believe that this book is badly needed and will be a valuable asset for chaplains and inmates.

– *Director of Prison Book Project, serving 1,672 confinement facilities in all fifty states, 32 countries via missionaries, and the troops in Iraq and Afghanistan*

I started reading your book and I could not stop – I was riveted. I read the whole book at one sitting – I couldn't put it down! It was as if you were speaking directly to me. I was greatly impacted.

– *Richard*

We just finished a book that you [the chaplain] sent me called *Hope for the Troubled Heart*. Awesome book! I learned a lot by it.

– *A Group of Prisoners*

My encounter with *Hope for the Troubled Heart* has taken me on a journey of tremendous healing and victory through life-crippling issues in my personal life... I have found new freedom for my heart... Outside of the Bible, your words in this book have had more impact on my life than any other book I have read.

– *Teen Challenge Student*

Our approach to helping men who enter our Teen Challenge program is to move them toward freedom in their lives by facilitating a process that allows them to experience God and His wisdom, and being shown the driving force which has controlled their life – their true heart condition! *Hope for the Troubled Heart* has played an instrumental role in this process. Our center has added this tool to our curriculum base and it is the first book they read as part of their educational program.

Our experience has been that our students are able to begin to search for the root issues in their lives. I could not recommend a book more appropriate for those struggling with life (heart) controlling issues!!

– Terry VanAntwerp, Executive Director,
Teen Challenge, Central Oregon Men's Outreach

I read your book through once but it's the kind a person can read many times - a good reminder and resource book. I'm sure it will be a great help to many people - new believers as well as those of us who have been on this journey a long time and want to "finish well."
– Kris

I want you to know the impact your book has had on me. I approached it from an academic standpoint expecting a discussion of others' problems but not really applying to me. I thought I had a life pretty much in order, loaded with blessings, and certainly not "troubled." Then as I read it, I began to relate the concepts of guilt, bitterness, and anxiety to my own life. And the way to being a better person, Christian, husband, and friend is taking shape. With me this won't happen in a brilliant moment, but with ongoing study and prayer. But now I have the process.
– LaMont

We have received your book and find it very helpful! It addresses many of the issues we have had over our fifty-four plus years of marriage. We have long term heart problems that still need healing and are using your excellent book for our study right now. We know several couples who will benefit from your book.
– Ken

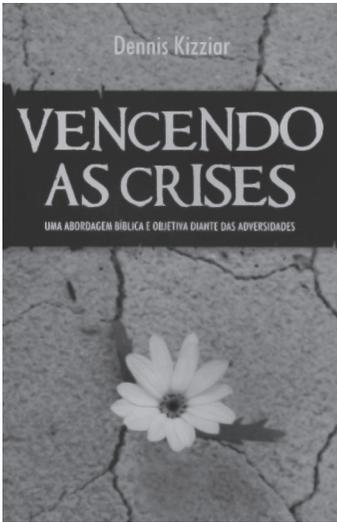
We have finished our first time through Dennis' book. I ingested it and now am ready to go back again and digest it! It is wonderful. Dick was especially excited about the portion on prayer and he said he's looking at the importance of prayer

in a new way. He was impressed with all of it, really, and said it sounded just like Dennis...easy to follow, understand and apply. – Terry

I finally started reading Dennis' book this morning at 4:00 A.M. after a very frustrating night and realizing that my heart is indeed troubled. I started out to recognize how Steve saw himself in the first chapter when I found myself there, only the names were changed to protect the innocent. I have all those questions about God's plan for me and I find it difficult to rely on his Grace when all I see is bleak. Thanks for the book. – Jim

Thank you for your ministry and your kind heart in providing me copies of your book every time I asked for them. We have been selectively sharing them, as the Holy Spirit leads, with inmates at the Deschutes County Adult Jail and the prisons throughout the State of Oregon. The impact of *Hope for the Troubled Heart* on the spiritual lives of these men and women is enormous. Your book truly brings them real hope from a Godly perspective. We continue to receive heartfelt feedback from so many of these inmates telling us how your book has ministered to them in a life-changing way. They often tell that it even inspires them to pass it along to other inmates in their facility to also bless them. We are told that the pass on factor can be as high as six or seven additional inmates. It is one of the most powerful tools next to His Word that we use for inmates.

– Henry Porter, Chaplain



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