

# QUIETING A NOISY SOUL

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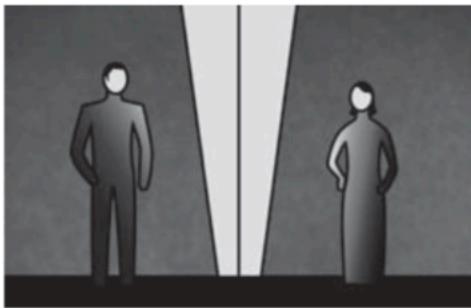
## Part Three: The Way Out

### Session 14B

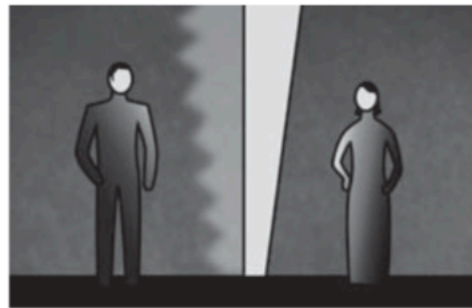
### Dealing with Your Side of the Wedge

*“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. 35 By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” John 13:34-35*

- Of all people, we as disciples of the Lord Jesus should be experts in the area of \_\_\_\_\_ (Matthew 6:12-15; 18:21-35). After all, this is what the gospel itself is all about—the reconciliation of men to God (II Corinthians 5:14-21; Ephesians 2:17; Colossians 1:20).
- The word reconciliation means that an \_\_\_\_\_ has taken place. The estranged parties have exchanged a previous relationship of animosity for a whole new relationship of friendship, kindness, peace, and good will. The new relationship is to be more than just an agreement “to get along from now on” or a mere adjustment or boundary-setting exercise. It is to bear all the hallmarks of the primal relationship of the believer with Christ when “old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new” (II Corinthians 5:17).
- The offenses that divide one person from another can be best understood as a two-part \_\_\_\_\_ (Figure 1). God commands each party in the relationship to examine his own heart, do something about his side of the wedge, and initiate action that prompts the other party to deal with his side of the wedge (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15).
- Once the wedge is removed through repentance and forgiveness, the relationship is to be reinforced and enhanced to such a degree that it reflects to the world the identity of the parties as disciples of Jesus Christ (John 13:34-34).



**Figure 1**



**Figure 2**

#### Steps to Seeking Forgiveness from Others:

1. Since your sin is first against \_\_\_\_\_ when you wrong others, you must first ask \_\_\_\_\_ to forgive you for the wrong you have done to others (I John 1:9). Figure 2 shows the part of the wedge you must work on first—your own.
  - a. Joseph saw clearly that if he were immoral with Potiphar’s wife it would not only betray Potiphar but was first of all a sin against God (Genesis 39:9).

- b. David's adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of Uriah were first of all a sin against God (Psalm 51:3-4).
  - c. The prodigal son's independent spirit was primarily a sin against God (Luke 15:18).
  - d. The deception of Annanias and Sapphira to the church was first of all a sin against God (Acts 5:9).
  - e. Paul's persecution of believers was first of all a sin against God (Acts 9:4-5).
  - f. Every theft, lie, immoral act or thought, disrespect and disobedience to human authority,<sup>1</sup> bitterness, unkind word, profanity, covetous thought, worry, angry spirit, rudeness, worldly indulgence, act of laziness, and so forth is a sin against God even when the action wrongs another person since God has forbidden all of these.
2. Confess the sin to the \_\_\_\_\_ you \_\_\_\_\_ and ask for forgiveness (Luke 15:18-19); Matthew 5:23-24).
- a. When confessing your wrong, do not use the following phrases. They often sound like mere excuses.
    - 1) "I apologize" or "I'm sorry."
    - 2) "If I offended you, I'm sorry" or "I wronged you when you wronged me."
    - 3) "If you can find it in your heart to forgive me..."
  - b. Rather, own up to what you have done and ask forgiveness by saying, "God has shown me I was wrong when I \_\_\_\_\_. Will you forgive me?"
    - 1) State the offense in terms the other party would agree with. "Confess" means "to say the same thing."
    - 2) State the \_\_\_\_\_ offense as well as the more \_\_\_\_\_ offense.
      - ☞ Example 1: "Sam, God has convicted me about my critical spirit to others about the way you lead this ministry. I have talked with each person I gossiped to and have asked their forgiveness. God showed me that my gossip merely revealed how selfish a person I am. I was willing to disobey God and speak evil of you before others to advance my own agenda of appearing superior to you. Will you forgive me?"
      - ☞ Example 2: "Mary, God has convicted me that I did not treat you with a godly love when we were dating. I used the relationship to gratify my own desires without regard to you or God. I deeply wronged you, and God has convicted me about it. Will you forgive me?"<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Of course, there are times when we must "obey God rather than men," but most of our disobedience to employers, parents, government regulation, school teachers and officials, and church leaders does not fall into the category of choosing God over a human authority. The issue is usually choosing self over a human authority.

<sup>2</sup> Never clear up moral offenses in writing. You are trying to clear up the problem, not document it for others to know. Take care of these issues in person or on the phone.

- Example 3: “Mr. Smith, as my employer you have probably noticed my resistance to your expectations and orders over the past several weeks. God has convicted me of my self-centered heart, which justified my actions in my own mind. I am asking you to forgive me for my disobedience and disrespect, and I assure you that with God’s help my responses will be different in the future.”
- 3) Confess the sin only as \_\_\_\_\_ as the offense.<sup>3</sup> The exception to this general rule is when the sinning party’s actions have changed the terms of agreement for employment, enrollment, and so forth.
- Example 1: Christopher and Megan, Christian parents, have been arguing a great deal in front of the kids. They need to ask their children to forgive them for being bad examples and tolerating fleshly actions and attitudes in their lives if the children are old enough to perceive the problem. The couple would not need to confess this publicly to the church if the church is not aware of it, but they might need to see the pastor for help in their marriage.
  - Example 2: Joshua, who was arrested for shoplifting, needs to ask forgiveness from the store manager and must make restitution. He must also ask forgiveness from his parents and from his church if the matter is public knowledge through the local newspaper or if the news of it is getting around the youth group. He must also confess it to his school if it has changed the terms of his enrollment and disqualified him from being a student.
  - Example 3: Charles, who has been unfaithful to his wife, Lynn, needs to ask Lynn’s forgiveness for breaking the covenant of their marriage even though she does not know it. Lynn certainly has been affected, and perhaps confused, by the change in the relationship. Furthermore, if the affair becomes known later, Lynn should not be the last to know.
- Before Charles asks Lynn’s forgiveness, however, it would be wise for him to get his pastor involved so that Lynn can see that Charles is serious about change. It also gives the pastor and his wife an opportunity to minister to Lynn if she is having trouble handling the news.
- After Charles has met with his pastor and told his wife, he also needs to work with the pastor to determine a wise way to ask forgiveness from the woman with whom he was immoral and from her husband for being a party to the breaking of that man’s marriage covenant. If the woman and her husband are members of another church, Charles’s pastor needs to bring the pastor of the other couple into the picture.
- Example 4: Susan has been stealing from work. It is not enough for her to merely restore the goods, sneak money into the cash

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 18:15-21 teaches that in personal offenses—where someone has sinned against you personally—the circle of knowledge of the offense expands only if the offender is unrepentant when you meet with him privately. Others are brought in to help persuade him to repent so that he is not left living out of fellowship with God and unreconciled to you.

register to pay for the merchandise, or work a compensatory number of hours without clocking in. She was hired on the basis of her trustworthiness and good recommendations from a previous employer. That has changed, and her employer has the right to make a decision about whether he should retain her.

The same violation of terms of agreement is in effect when a student in a Christian school breaks a rule that has major consequence—especially if it would affect his enrollment. The school accepted him because he met the qualifications for enrollment. If those qualifications have changed, the student and his parents must notify the school, which has every right to consider what they must do now that the student's qualifications have changed.

A similar breach of trust is involved when a woman's fiancé has been indulging in pornography, has been immoral, is arrested for shoplifting, or so forth. The knowledge of that sin may make a huge difference in her and her parents' decision to proceed with the marriage on the same schedule, if at all. To cover the sin to avoid any consequence demonstrates a lack of genuine repentance.

3. Be willing to accept the \_\_\_\_\_.

☞ A truly repentant sinner does not negotiate the \_\_\_\_\_ of his actions. King Saul revealed his insincere repentance by trying to get Samuel to honor him anyway (I Samuel 15:30). This is a great contrast to the genuine repentance of King David (II Samuel 12:7-23).

☞ The qualities of a truly repentant heart are spelled out for us in II Corinthians 7:8-12.

a. \_\_\_\_\_ (Luke 19:8)—You cannot remain in the state of having profited from your sin.

b. \_\_\_\_\_

- 1) Just because the sin has been forgiven does not mean that further \_\_\_\_\_ should not follow. In God's providence, the consequences are often needed for motivation to make lasting change. Restoration to fellowship and restoration to trust and leadership are two entirely different matters involving two entirely different sets of qualifications. The restoration of fellowship requires a change of heart about the sin—confessing; the restoration to trust or leadership requires a change of character—forsaking (Proverbs 28:13). Even then, though character may be changed, God may still forbid a position of trust and leadership—such as the return of an adulterous man to the pastorate.
- 2) Adam and Eve were never allowed to return to Eden even though they obviously accepted the skins of covering God gave them symbolizing His forgiveness.
- 3) Moses was never allowed to enter the Promised Land as the leader of Israel even though his relationship to God was restored after striking the rock and even though God used him in the ministry after the sin.

- 4) David was used by God to write many psalms and to lead Israel after his heinous sins, but the consequences continued his entire life. Even after God granted forgiveness, God allowed his concubines to be violated and his family to remain divided as long as he lived. Those continued consequences were designed by God to wean David from an adulterous heart. They were not signs that God had not forgiven him.
  - 5) The prodigal son was restored to fellowship with the father, but his inheritance was not restored. He had already spent it. There are some things you lose when you sin that you can never get back.
- c. Radical amputation<sup>4</sup>
- ☞ This may mean \_\_\_\_\_ (i.e., radically amputating) friends who have a negative influence; getting rid of sensual music recordings, fleshly television programming or reading materials from the home; avoiding any time alone (particularly if an addiction is involved); changing a work schedule that keeps you away from home or church; destroying credit cards; canceling internet access or a cable or satellite subscription (or removing the television or computer altogether); setting up an accountability program with another believer who will monitor your internet activity; and so forth.

**CONCLUSION:** The loudest noises in the soul are the agitations of a \_\_\_\_\_ conscience. “The Way Out” starts with confession and cleansing so that we can have *“a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men” (Acts 24:16).*

Your soul is not supposed to be at rest when it is at war with God. Isaiah 57:20-21 says, *“But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when **it cannot rest**, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. **There is no peace**, saith my God, to the wicked.”*

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<sup>4</sup> This term is used by Jay E. Adams to show the action Jesus is demanding is “radical” because it involves doing whatever is necessary to make it hard to sin again—metaphorically taught by plucking out an eye or cutting off an arm (amputation). See *Ready to Restore* (Grand Rapids: Baker 1981), 58-59.