

Steps to Freedom in Christ

It is my deep conviction that the finished work of Jesus Christ and the presence of God in our lives are the only means by which we can resolve our personal and spiritual conflicts. Christ in us is our only hope (see Col. 1:27), and He alone can meet our deepest needs of life: acceptance, identity, security and significance. The discipleship counseling process upon which these steps are based should not be understood as just another counseling technique that we learn. It is an encounter with God. He is the Wonderful Counselor. He is the One who grants repentance that leads to a knowledge of the truth which sets us free (see 2 Tim. 2:25, 26).

The Steps to Freedom in Christ do not set you free. *Who* sets you free is Christ, and *what* sets you free is your response to Him in repentance and faith. These steps are just a tool to help you submit to God and resist the devil (see James 4:7). Then you can start living a fruitful life by abiding in Christ and becoming the person He created you to be. Many Christians will be able to work through these steps on their own and discover the wonderful freedom that Christ purchased for them on the cross. Then they will experience the peace of God which surpasses all comprehension, and it shall guard their hearts and their minds (see Phil. 4:7, *NASB*).

Before You Begin

The chances of that happening and the possibility of maintaining that freedom will be greatly enhanced if you read *Victory over the Darkness* and *The Bondage Breaker* first. Many Christians in the western world need to understand the reality of the spiritual world and our relationship to it. Some can't read these books or even the Bible with comprehension because of the battle that is going on for their minds. They will need the assistance of others who have been trained. The theology and practical process of discipleship counseling is given in my book, *Helping Others Find Freedom in Christ*, and the accompanying *Training Manual and Study Guide* and Video Training Program. The book attempts to biblically integrate the reality of the spiritual and the natural world so we can have a whole answer for a whole person. In doing so, we cannot polarize into psychotherapeutic ministries that ignore the reality of the spiritual world or attempt some kind of deliverance ministry that ignores developmental issues and human responsibility.

You May Need Help

Ideally, it would be best if everyone had a trusted friend, pastor or counselor who would help them go through this process because it is just applying the wisdom of James 5:16: "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."

Another person can prayerfully support you by providing objective counsel. I have had the privilege of helping many Christian leaders who could not process this on their own. Many Christian groups all over the world are using this approach in many languages with incredible results because the Lord desires for all to come to repentance (see 2 Peter 3:9), and to know the truth that sets us free in Christ (see John 8:32).

Appropriating and Maintaining Freedom

Christ has set us free through His victory over sin and death on the cross. However, appropriating our freedom in Christ through repentance and faith and maintaining our life of freedom in Christ are two different issues. It was for freedom that Christ set us free, but we have been warned not to return to a yoke of slavery which is legalism in this context (see Galatians 5:1) or to turn our freedom into an opportunity for the flesh (see Galatians 5:13). Establishing people free in Christ makes it possible for them to walk by faith according to what God says is true, to live by the power of the Holy Spirit and to not carry out the desires of the flesh (see Galatians 5:16). The true Christian life avoids both legalism and license.

If you are not experiencing freedom, it may be because you have not stood firm in the faith or actively taken your place in Christ. It is every Christian's responsibility to do whatever is necessary to maintain a right relationship with God and mankind. Your eternal destiny is not at stake. God will never leave you nor forsake you (see Hebrews 13:5), but your daily victory is at stake if you fail to claim and maintain your position in Christ.

Your Position in Christ

You are not a helpless victim caught between two nearly equal but opposite heavenly superpowers. Satan is a deceiver. Only God is omnipotent, omnipresent and omniscient. Sometimes the reality of sin and the presence of evil may seem more real than the presence of God, but that's part of Satan's deception. Satan is a defeated foe and we are in Christ. A true knowledge of God and knowing our identity and position in Christ are the greatest determinants of our mental health. A false concept of God, a distorted understanding of who we are as children of God, and the misplaced deification of Satan are the greatest contributors to mental illness.

Many of our illnesses are psychosomatic. When these issues are resolved in Christ, our physical bodies will function better and we will experience greater health. Other problems are clearly physical and we need the services of the medical profession. Please consult your physician for medical advice and the prescribing of medication. We are both spiritual and physical beings who need the services of both the church and the medical profession.

Winning the Battle for Your Mind

The battle is for our minds, which is the control center of all that we think and do. The opposing thoughts you may experience as you go through these steps can control you only if you believe them. If you are working through these steps alone, don't be deceived by any lying, intimidating thoughts in your mind. If a trusted pastor or counselor is helping you find your freedom in Christ, he or she must have your cooperation. You must share any thoughts you are having in opposition to what you are attempting to do. As soon as you expose the lie, the power of Satan is broken. The only way that you can lose control in this process is if you pay attention to a deceiving spirit and believe a lie.

You Must Choose

The following procedure is a means of resolving personal and spiritual conflicts which have kept you from experiencing the freedom and victory Christ purchased for you on the cross. Your freedom will be the result of what *you* choose to believe, confess, forgive, renounce and forsake. No one can do that for you. The battle for your mind can only be won as you personally choose truth. As you go through this process, understand that Satan is under no obligation to obey your thoughts. Only God has complete knowledge of your mind because He is omniscient—all-knowing. So we can submit to God inwardly, but we need to resist the devil by reading aloud each prayer and by verbally renouncing, forgiving, confessing, etc.

This process of reestablishing our freedom in Christ is nothing more than a fierce moral inventory and a rock-solid commitment to truth. It is the first step in the continuing process of discipleship. There is no such thing as instant maturity. It will take you the rest of your life to renew your mind and conform to the image of God. If your problems stem from a source other than those covered in these steps, you may need to seek professional help.

May the Lord grace you with His presence as you seek His face and help others experience the joy of their salvation.

Neil T. Anderson

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

We acknowledge Your presence in this room and in our lives. You are the only omniscient (all-knowing), omnipotent (all-powerful), and omnipresent (always-present) God. We are dependent upon You, for apart from You we can do nothing. We stand in the truth that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to the resurrected Christ, and because we are in Christ, we share that authority in order to make disciples and set captives free. We ask You to fill us with Your Holy Spirit and lead us into all truth. We pray for Your complete protection and ask for Your guidance. In Jesus' name, amen.

Declaration

In the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, we command Satan and all evil spirits to release (name) in order that (name) can be free to know and choose to do the will of God. As children of God seated with Christ in the heavenlies, we agree that every enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ be bound to silence. We say to Satan and all your evil workers that you cannot inflict any pain or in any way prevent God's will from being accomplished in (name's) life.

Preparation

Before going through the Steps to Freedom, review the events of your life to discern specific areas that might need to be addressed. For a more detailed review of your life, complete the Confidential Personal Inventory in the Appendix.

Family History

Personal History

- θ Religious history of parents and grandparents
- θ Eating habits (bulimia, bingeing and purging, anorexia, compulsive eating)
- θ Home life from childhood through high school
- θ Addictions (drugs, alcohol)
- θ History of physical or emotional illness in the family
- θ Prescription medications (what for?)
- θ Adoption, foster care, guardians
- θ Sleeping patterns and nightmares

- θ Rape or any other sexual, physical, emotional abuse

- θ Thought life (obsessive, blasphemous, condemning, distracting thoughts, poor concentration, fantasy)

- θ Mental interference during church, prayer or Bible study

- θ Emotional life (anger, anxiety, depression, bitterness, fears)

- θ Spiritual journey (salvation: when, how, and assurance)

Now you are ready to begin. The following are seven specific steps to process in order to experience freedom from your past. You will address the areas where Satan most commonly takes advantage of us and where strongholds have been built. Christ purchased your victory when He shed His blood for you on the cross.

Realizing your freedom will be the result of what you choose to believe, confess, forgive, renounce and forsake. No one can do that for you. The battle for your mind can only be won as you personally choose truth.

As you go through these Steps to Freedom, remember that Satan will only be defeated if you confront him verbally. He cannot read your mind and is under no obligation to obey your thoughts. Only God has complete knowledge of your mind. As you process each step, it is important that you submit to God inwardly and resist the devil by reading aloud each prayer—verbally renouncing, forgiving, confessing, etc.

You are taking a fierce moral inventory and making a rock-solid commitment to truth. If your problems stem from a source other than those covered in these steps, you have nothing to lose by going through them. If you are sincere, the only thing that can happen is that you will get very right with God!

Step 1 **Counterfeit vs. Real**

The first Step to Freedom in Christ is to renounce your previous or current involvement with satanically inspired occult practices and false religions. You need to renounce any activity or group that denies Jesus Christ, offers guidance through any source other than the absolute authority of the written Word of God or requires secret initiations, ceremonies or covenants.

In order to help you assess your spiritual experiences, begin this step by asking God to reveal false guidance and counterfeit religious experiences.

Dear Heavenly Father,

I ask You to guard my heart and my mind and reveal to me any and all involvement I have had either knowingly or unknowingly with cultic or occult practices, false religions or false teachers. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Using the Non-Christian Spiritual Experience Inventory on the following page, carefully check anything in which you were involved. This list is not exhaustive, but it will guide you in identifying non-Christian experiences. Add any additional involvement you have had. Even if you innocently participated in something or observed it, you should write it on your list to renounce, just in case you unknowingly gave Satan a foothold.

Non-Christian Spiritual Experience Inventory

Please check all those that apply.

- Astral-projection
- Ouija board
- Table or body lifting

- θ Dungeons and Dragons
- θ Speaking in trance
- θ Automatic writing
- θ Magic Eight Ball
- θ Telepathy
- θ Using spells or curses
- θ Seance
- θ Materialization
- θ Clairvoyance
- θ Spirit guides
- θ Fortune-telling
- θ Tarot cards
- θ Palm reading
- θ Astrology/horoscopes
- θ Rod/pendulum (dowsing)
- θ Self-hypnosis
- θ Mental manipulations or attempts to swap minds
- θ Black and white magic
- θ New Age medicine
- θ Blood pacts or self-mutilation
- θ Fetishism (objects of worship, crystals, good-luck charms)
- θ Incubi and succubi (sexual spirits)
- θ Other _____
- θ Christian Science
- θ Unity
- θ The Way International
- θ Unification Church
- θ Mormonism
- θ Church of the Living Word
- θ Jehovah's Witnesses
- θ Children of God (Love)
- θ Swedenborgianism
- θ Unitarianism
- θ Masons
- θ New Age

- θ The Forum (EST)
- θ Spirit worship
- θ Other _____
- θ Buddhism
- θ Hare Krishna
- θ Bahaim
- θ Rosicrucianism
- θ Science of the Mind
- θ Science of Creative Intelligence
- θ Transcendental Meditation (TM)
- θ Hinduism
- θ Yoga
- θ Echkankar
- θ Roy Masters
- θ Silva Mind Control
- θ Father Divine
- θ Theosophical Society
- θ Islam
- θ Black Muslim
- θ Religion of martial arts
- θ Other _____

1. Have you ever attended a New Age or parapsychology seminar, or consulted a medium, spiritist or channeler? Explain.
2. Do you or have you ever had an imaginary friend or spirit guide offering you guidance or companionship? Explain.
3. Have you ever heard voices in your mind or had repeating and nagging thoughts that were foreign to what you believe or feel, as though a dialogue was going on in your head? Explain.
4. What other spiritual experiences have you had that would be considered out of the ordinary?
5. Have you ever made a vow, covenant or pact with any individual or group other than God?

6. Have you been involved in satanic ritual or satanic worship in any form?
Explain.

When you are confident that your list is complete, confess and renounce each involvement whether active or passive by praying aloud the following prayer, repeating it separately for each item on your list:

*Lord,
I confess that I have participated in _____, and I renounce
_____. Thank You that in Christ I am forgiven.*

If there has been any involvement in satanic ritual or heavy occult activity, you need to state aloud the following special renunciations which apply. Read across the page, renouncing the first item in the column of the Kingdom of Darkness and then affirming the first truth in the column of the Kingdom of Light. Continue down the page in this manner.

All satanic rituals, covenants and assignments must be specifically renounced as the Lord allows you to recall them. Some who have been subjected to satanic ritual abuse may have developed multiple personalities in order to survive. Nevertheless, continue through the Steps to Freedom in order to resolve all that you consciously can. It is important that you resolve the demonic strongholds first. Every personality must resolve his/her issues and agree to come together in Christ. You may need someone who understands spiritual conflict to help you maintain control and not be deceived into false memories. Only Jesus can bind up the brokenhearted, set captives free and make us whole.

Kingdom of Darkness

Kingdom of Light

I renounce ever signing my name over to Satan or having had my name signed over to Satan.

I announce that my name is now written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

I renounce any ceremony where I might have been wed to Satan.

I announce that I am the bride of Christ.

I renounce any and all covenants that I made with Satan.

I announce that I am a partaker of the New Covenant with Christ.

I renounce all satanic assignments for my life, including duties, marriage and children.

I announce and commit myself to know and do only the will of God and accept only His guidance.

I renounce all spirit guides assigned to me.

I announce and accept only the leading of the Holy Spirit.

I renounce ever giving of my blood in the service of Satan.

I trust only in the shed blood of my Lord Jesus Christ.

I renounce ever eating of flesh or drinking of blood for satanic worship.

By faith I eat only the flesh and drink only the blood of Jesus in Holy Communion.

I renounce any and all guardians and satanist parents who were assigned to me.

I announce that God is my Father and the Holy Spirit is my Guardian by which I am sealed.

I renounce any baptism in blood or urine whereby I am identified with Satan.

I announce that I have been baptized into Christ Jesus and my identity is now in Christ.

I renounce any and all sacrifices that were made on my behalf by which Satan may claim ownership of me.

I announce that only the sacrifice of Christ has any hold on me. I belong to Him. I have been purchased by the blood of the Lamb.

Step 2

Deception vs. Truth

Truth is the revelation of God's Word, but we need to acknowledge the truth in the inner self (see Psalm 51:6). When David lived a lie, he suffered greatly. When he finally found freedom by acknowledging the truth, he wrote: "Blessed is the man in whose spirit is no deceit" (Psalm 32:2). We are to lay aside falsehood and speak the truth in love (see Ephes. 4:15, 25). A mentally healthy person is one who is in touch with reality and relatively free of anxiety. Both qualities should characterize the Christian who renounces deception and embraces the truth.

Begin this critical step by expressing aloud the following prayer. Don't let the enemy accuse you with thoughts such as: *This isn't going to work* or *I wish I could believe this, but I can't* or any other lies in opposition to what you are proclaiming. Even if you have difficulty doing so, you need to pray the prayer and read the Doctrinal Affirmation.

Dear Heavenly Father,

I know that You desire truth in the inner self and that facing this truth is the way of liberation (see John 8:32). I acknowledge that I have been deceived by the father of lies (see John 8:44) and that I have deceived myself (see 1 John 1:8). I pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ that You, Heavenly Father, will

rebuke all deceiving spirits by virtue of the shed blood and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. By faith I have received You into my life and I am now seated with Christ in the heavenlies (see Ephes. 2:6). I acknowledge that I have the responsibility and authority to resist the devil, and when I do, he will flee from me. I now ask the Holy Spirit to guide me into all truth (see John 16:13). I ask You to “search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way” (Psalm 139:23, 24, NASB). In Jesus’ name, I pray. Amen.

You may want to pause at this point to consider some of Satan’s deceptive schemes. In addition to false teachers, false prophets and deceiving spirits, you can deceive yourself. Now that you are alive in Christ and forgiven, you never have to live a lie or defend yourself. Christ is your defense. How have you deceived or attempted to defend yourself according to the following? Please check any of the following that apply to you:

Self-Deception

- ⊖ Hearing God’s Word but not doing it (see James 1:22; James 4:17)
- ⊖ Saying you have no sin (see 1 John 1:8)
- ⊖ Thinking you are something when you aren’t (see Galatians 6:3)
- ⊖ Thinking you are wise in your own eyes (see 1 Cor. 3:18, 19)
- ⊖ Thinking you will not reap what you sow (see Galatians 6:7)
- ⊖ Thinking the unrighteous will inherit the kingdom (see 1 Cor. 6:9)
- ⊖ Thinking you can associate with bad company and not be corrupted (see 1 Cor. 15:33)

Self-Defense

(Defending ourselves instead of trusting in Christ)

- ⊖ Denial (conscious or subconscious refusal to face the truth)
- ⊖ Fantasy (escaping from the real world)
- ⊖ Emotional insulation (withdrawing to avoid rejection)
- ⊖ Regression (reverting back to a less threatening time)
- ⊖ Displacement (taking out frustrations on others)
- ⊖ Projection (blaming others)
- ⊖ Rationalization (making excuses for poor behavior)

For each of those things that you have checked, pray aloud:

*Lord, I agree that I have been deceiving myself in the area of _____.
Thank You for forgiving me. I commit myself to know and follow Your truth.
Amen.*

Choosing the truth may be difficult if you have been living a lie (being deceived) for many years. You may need to seek professional help to weed out the defense mechanisms you have depended upon to survive. The Christian needs only one defense—Jesus. Knowing that you are forgiven and accepted as God’s child is what sets you free to face reality and declare your dependence on Him.

Faith is the biblical response to the truth and believing the truth is a choice. When someone says, “I want to believe God, but I just can’t,” they are being deceived. Of course you can believe God. Faith is something you decide to do, not something you feel like doing. Believing the truth doesn’t make it true. It’s true; therefore, we believe it. The New Age movement is distorting the truth by saying we create reality through what we believe. We can’t create reality with our minds; we face reality. It is what or who you believe in that counts. Everybody believes in something, and everybody walks by faith according to what he or she believes. But if what you believe isn’t true, then how you live (walk by faith) won’t be right.

Historically, the Church has found great value in publicly declaring its beliefs. The Apostles’ Creed and the Nicene Creed have been recited for centuries. Read aloud the following affirmation of faith, and do so again as often as necessary to renew your mind. Experiencing difficulty in reading this affirmation may indicate where you are being deceived and under attack. Boldly affirm your commitment to biblical truth.

Doctrinal Affirmation

I recognize that there is only one true and living God (see Exodus 20:2, 3) who exists as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit and that He is worthy of all honor, praise and glory as the Creator, Sustainer and Beginning and End of all things (see Rev. 4:11; Rev. 5:9, 10; Rev. 22:13; Isaiah 43:1, 7, 21).

I recognize Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us (see John 1:1, 14). I believe that He came to destroy the works of Satan (see 1 John 3:8), that He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public display of them, having triumphed over them (see Col. 2:15).

I believe that God has proven His love for me because when I was still a sinner, Christ died for me (see Romans 5:8). I believe that He delivered me from the domain of darkness and transferred me to His kingdom, and in Him I have redemption—the forgiveness of sins (see Col. 1:13, 14).

I believe that I am now a child of God (see 1 John 3:1-3) and that I am seated with Christ in the heavenlies (see Ephes. 2:6). I believe that I was saved by the grace of God through faith, that it was a gift, and not the result of any works on my part (see Ephes. 2:8, 9).

I choose to be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might (see Ephes. 6:10). I put no confidence in the flesh (see Phil. 3:3) for the weapons of warfare are not of the flesh (see 2 Cor. 10:4). I put on the whole armor of God (see Ephes. 6:10-20), and I resolve to stand firm in my faith and resist the evil one.

I believe that apart from Christ I can do nothing (see John 15:5), so I declare myself dependent on Him. I choose to abide in Christ in order to bear much fruit and glorify the Lord (see John 15:8). I announce to Satan that Jesus is my Lord (see 1 Cor. 12:3), and I reject any counterfeit gifts or works of Satan in my life.

I believe that the truth will set me free (see John 8:32) and that walking in the light is the only path of fellowship (see 1 John 1:7). Therefore, I stand against Satan's deception by taking every thought captive in obedience to Christ (see 2 Cor. 10:5). I declare that the Bible is the only authoritative standard (see 2 Tim. 3:15, 16). I choose to speak the truth in love (see Ephes. 4:15).

I choose to present my body as an instrument of righteousness, a living and holy sacrifice, and I renew my mind by the living Word of God in order that I may prove that the will of God is good, acceptable and perfect (see Romans 6:13; Romans 12:1, 2). I put off the old self with its evil practices and put on the new self (see Col. 3:9, 10), and I declare myself to be a new creature in Christ (see 2 Cor. 5:17).

I trust my heavenly Father to fill me with His Holy Spirit (see Ephes. 5:18), to lead me into all truth (see John 16:13), and to empower my life that I may live above sin and not carry out the desires of the flesh (see Galatians 5:16). I crucify the flesh (see Galatians 5:24) and choose to walk by the Spirit.

I renounce all selfish goals and choose the ultimate goal of love (see 1 Tim. 1:5). I choose to obey the two greatest commandments: to love the Lord my God with all my heart, soul and mind, and to love my neighbor as myself (see Matthew 22:37-39).

I believe that Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth (see Matthew 28:18) and that He is the Head over all rule and authority (see Col. 2:10). I believe that Satan and his demons are subject to me in Christ since I am a member of Christ's Body (see Ephes. 1:19-23). Therefore, I obey the command to submit to God and to resist the devil (see James 4:7), and I command Satan in the name of Christ to leave my presence.

Step 3

Bitterness vs. Forgiveness

We need to forgive others in order to be free from our pasts and to prevent Satan from taking advantage of us (see 2 Cor. 2:10, 11). We are to be merciful just as our

heavenly Father is merciful (see Luke 6:36). We are to forgive as we have been forgiven (see Ephes. 4:31, 32). Ask God to bring to mind the names of those people you need to forgive by expressing the following prayer aloud:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I thank You for the riches of Your kindness, forbearance and patience, knowing that Your kindness has led me to repentance (see Romans 2:4). I confess that I have not extended that same patience and kindness toward others who have offended me, but instead I have harbored bitterness and resentment. I pray that during this time of self-examination You would bring to my mind those people that I need to forgive in order that I may do so (see Matthew 18:35). I ask this in the precious name of Jesus. Amen.

As names come to mind, list them on a separate sheet of paper. At the end of your list, write “myself.” Forgiving yourself is accepting God’s cleansing and forgiveness. Also, write “thoughts against God.” Thoughts raised up against the knowledge of God will usually result in angry feelings toward Him. Technically, we don’t forgive God because He cannot commit any sin of commission or omission. But we do need to specifically renounce false expectations and thoughts about God and agree to release any anger we have toward Him.

Before you pray to forgive these people, stop and consider what forgiveness is, what it is not, what decision you will be making and what the consequences will be. In the following explanation, the main points are in bold print:

Forgiveness is not forgetting. People who try to forget find they cannot. God says He will remember our sins no more (see Hebrews 10:17), but God, being omniscient, cannot forget. Remember our sins no more means that God will never use the past against us (see Psalm 103:12). Forgetting may be the result of forgiveness, but it is never the means of forgiveness. When we bring up the past against others, we are saying we haven’t forgiven them.

Forgiveness is a choice, a crisis of the will. Since God requires us to forgive, it is something we can do. However, forgiveness is difficult for us because it pulls against our concept of justice. We want revenge for offenses suffered. However, we are told never to take our own revenge (see Romans 12:19). You say, “Why should I let them off the hook?” That is precisely the problem. You are still hooked to them, still bound by your past. **You will let them off your hook, but they are never off God’s.** He will deal with them fairly—something we cannot do.

You say, “You don’t understand how much this person hurt me!” But don’t you see, they are still hurting you! How do you stop the pain? **You don’t forgive someone for their sake; you do it for your own sake so you can be free.**

Your need to forgive isn't an issue between you and the offender; it's between you and God.

Forgiveness is agreeing to live with the consequences of another person's sin. Forgiveness is costly. You pay the price of the evil you forgive. You're going to live with those consequences whether you want to or not; your only choice is whether you will do so in the bitterness of unforgiveness or the freedom of forgiveness. Jesus took the consequences of your sin upon Himself. All true forgiveness is substitutionary because no one really forgives without bearing the consequences of the other person's sin. God the Father "made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21, *NASB*). Where is the justice? It's the cross that makes forgiveness legally and morally right: "For the death that He died, He died to sin, once for all" (Romans 6:10, *NASB*).

Decide that you will bear the burdens of their offenses by not using that information against them in the future. This doesn't mean that you tolerate sin. You must set up scriptural boundaries to prevent future abuse. Some may be required to testify for the sake of justice but not for the purpose of seeking revenge from a bitter heart.

How do you forgive from your heart? You acknowledge the hurt and the hate. If your forgiveness doesn't visit the emotional core of your life, it will be incomplete. Many feel the pain of interpersonal offenses, but they won't or don't know how to acknowledge it. Let God bring the pain to the surface so He can deal with it. This is where the healing takes place.

Don't wait to forgive until you feel like forgiving; you will never get there. Feelings take time to heal after the choice to forgive is made and Satan has lost his place (see Ephes. 4:26, 27). **Freedom is what will be gained, not a feeling.**

As you pray, God may bring to mind offending people and experiences you have totally forgotten. Let Him do it even if it is painful. Remember, you are doing this for your sake. God wants you to be free. Don't rationalize or explain the offender's behavior. Forgiveness is dealing with your pain and leaving the other person to God. Positive feelings will follow in time; freeing you from the past is the critical issue right now.

Don't say, "Lord, please help me to forgive" because He is already helping you. Don't say, "Lord, I want to forgive," because you are bypassing the hard-core choice to forgive which is your responsibility. Focus on each individual until you are sure you have dealt with all the remembered pain—what they did, how they hurt you, how they made you feel: rejected, unloved, unworthy, dirty, etc.

You are now ready to forgive the people on your list so you can be free in Christ, with those people no longer having any control over you. For each person on your list, pray aloud:

Lord, I forgive (name the person) for (verbally share every hurt and pain the Lord brings to your mind and how it made you feel).

After you have forgiven every person for every painful memory, then finish this step by praying:

Lord, I release all these people to You, and I release my right to seek revenge. I choose not to hold on to my bitterness and anger, and I ask You to heal my damaged emotions. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Step 4

Rebellion vs. Submission

We live in rebellious times. Many believe it is their right to sit in judgment of those in authority over them. Rebelling against God and His authority gives Satan an opportunity to attack. As our commanding General, the Lord tells us to get into ranks and follow Him; He will not lead us into temptation, but will deliver us from evil (see Matthew 6:13).

We have two biblical responsibilities regarding authority figures: Pray for them and submit to them. The only time God permits us to disobey earthly leaders is when they require us to do something morally wrong before God or attempt to rule outside the realm of their authority. Pray the following prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

You have said that rebellion is like the sin of witchcraft and insubordination is like iniquity and idolatry (see 1 Samuel 15:23). I know that in action and attitude I have sinned against You with a rebellious heart. Thank You for forgiving my rebellion, and I pray that by the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ all ground gained by evil spirits because of my rebelliousness will be canceled. I pray that You will shed light on all my ways that I may know the full extent of my rebelliousness. I now choose to adopt a submissive spirit and a servant's heart. In the name of Christ Jesus, my Lord, amen.

Being under authority is an act of faith. You are trusting God to work through His established lines of authority. There are times when employers, parents and husbands are violating the laws of civil government which are ordained by God to protect innocent people against abuse. In these cases, you need to appeal to the state for your protection. In many states, the law requires such abuse to be reported.

In difficult cases, such as continuing abuse at home, further counseling help may be needed. And, in some cases, when earthly authorities have abused their position and are requiring disobedience to God or a compromise in your commitment to Him, you need to obey God, not man.

We are all admonished to submit to one another as equals in Christ (see Ephes. 5:21). However, there are specific lines of authority in Scripture for the purpose of accomplishing common goals:

Civil government (see Romans 13:1-7; 1 Tim. 2:1-4; 1 Peter 2:13-17)

Parents (see Ephes. 6:1-3)

Husbands (see 1 Peter 3:1-4) or wives (see Ephes. 5:21; 1 Peter 3:7)

Employers (see 1 Peter 2:18-23)

Church leaders (see Hebrews 13:17)

God (see Daniel 9:5, 9)

Examine each area and confess those times you have not been submissive by praying:

Lord, I agree I have been rebellious toward _____. I choose to be submissive and obedient to your Word. In Jesus' name, amen.

Step 5

Pride vs. Humility

Pride is a killer. Pride says, "I can do it! I can get myself out of this mess without God or anyone else's help." Oh no, we can't! We absolutely need God, and we desperately need each other. Paul wrote: "For it is ^{we} who worship by the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). Humility is confidence properly placed. We are to be "strong in the Lord and in his mighty power" (Ephes. 6:10). James 4:6-10; and 1 Peter 5:1-10 reveal that spiritual conflict follows pride. Use the following prayer to express your commitment to live humbly before God:

Dear Heavenly Father,

You have said that pride goes before destruction and an arrogant spirit before stumbling (see Proverbs 16:18). I confess that I have lived independently and have not denied myself, picked up my cross daily and followed You (see Matthew 16:24). In so doing, I have given ground to the enemy in my life. I have believed that I could be successful and live victoriously by my own strength and resources. I now confess that I have sinned against You by placing my will before Yours and by centering my life around myself instead of You. I now renounce the self-life and by so doing cancel all the ground that has been gained in my members by the enemies of the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that You will guide me so that I will do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but

with humility of mind I will regard others as more important than myself (see Phil. 2:3). Enable me through love to serve others and in honor prefer others (see Romans 12:10). I ask this in the name of Christ Jesus, my Lord. Amen.

Having made that commitment, now allow God to show you any specific areas of your life where you have been prideful, such as:

- ⊖ Having a stronger desire to do my will than God's will;
- ⊖ Being more dependent upon my strengths and resources than God's;
- ⊖ Too often believing that my ideas and opinions are better than others';
- ⊖ Being more concerned about controlling others than developing self-control;
- ⊖ Sometimes considering myself more important than others';
- ⊖ Having a tendency to think that I have no needs;
- ⊖ Finding it difficult to admit that I was wrong;
- ⊖ Having a tendency to be more of a people-pleaser than a God-pleaser;
- ⊖ Being overly concerned about getting the credit I deserve;
- ⊖ Being driven to obtain the recognition that comes from degrees, titles and positions;
- ⊖ Often thinking I am more humble than others;
- ⊖ These other ways: _____

For each of these that has been true in your life, pray aloud:

Lord, I agree I have been prideful by _____. I choose to humble myself and place all my confidence in You. Amen.

Step 6

Bondage vs. Freedom

The next step to freedom deals with habitual sin. People who have been caught in the trap of sin-confess-sin-confess may need to follow the instructions of James 5:16, "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." Seek out a righteous person who will hold you up in prayer and to whom you can be accountable. Others may only need the assurance of 1 John 1:9: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (NASB). Confession is not saying "I'm sorry"; it's saying "I did it." Whether you need the help of others or just the accountability to God, pray the following prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

You have told us to put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lust (see Romans 13:14, NASB). I acknowledge that I

have given in to fleshly lusts which wage war against my soul (see 1 Peter 2:11). I thank You that in Christ my sins are forgiven, but I have transgressed Your holy law and given the enemy an opportunity to wage war in my physical body (see Romans 6:12, 13; Ephes. 4:27; James 4:1; 1 Peter 5:8). I come before Your presence to acknowledge these sins and to seek Your cleansing (see 1 John 1:9), that I may be freed from the bondage of sin. I now ask You to reveal to my mind the ways that I have transgressed Your moral law and grieved the Holy Spirit. In Jesus' precious name, I pray. Amen.

The deeds of the flesh are numerous. Many of the following issues are from Galatians 5:19-21. Check those that apply to you and any others you have struggled with that the Lord has brought to your mind. Then confess each one with the concluding prayer.

Note: Sexual sins, eating disorders, substance abuse, abortion, suicidal tendencies, perfectionism and fear will be dealt with later in this Step.

- θ Stealing
- θ Lying
- θ Fighting
- θ Jealousy
- θ Envy
- θ Outbursts of anger
- θ Complaining
- θ Criticizing
- θ Lusting
- θ Cheating
- θ Gossiping
- θ Controlling
- θ Procrastinating
- θ Swearing
- θ Greediness
- θ Laziness
- θ Divisiveness
- θ Gambling
- θ Other _____

Dear Heavenly Father,

I thank You that my sins are forgiven in Christ, but I have walked by the flesh and therefore sinned by _____. Thank You for cleansing me of all

unrighteousness. I ask that You would enable me to walk by the Spirit and not carry out the desires of the flesh. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

It is our responsibility not to allow sin to reign in our mortal bodies by not using our bodies as instruments of unrighteousness (see Romans 6:12, 13). If you are struggling or have struggled with sexual sins (pornography, masturbation, sexual promiscuity, etc.) or are experiencing sexual difficulty in your marriage, pray as follows:

Lord,

I ask You to reveal to my mind every sexual use of my body as an instrument of unrighteousness. In Jesus' precious name, I pray. Amen.

As the Lord brings to your mind every sexual misuse of your body, whether it was done to you—rape, incest or other sexual abuse—or willingly by you, renounce every occasion:

Lord,

I renounce (name the specific misuse of your body) with (name the person) and ask You to break that bond.

Now commit your body to the Lord by praying:

Lord,

I renounce all these uses of my body as an instrument of unrighteousness and by so doing ask You to break all bondages Satan has brought into my life through that involvement. I confess my participation. I now present my body to You as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto You, and I reserve the sexual use of my body only for marriage. I renounce the lie of Satan that my body is not clean, that it is dirty or in any way unacceptable as a result of my past sexual experiences. Lord, I thank You that You have totally cleansed and forgiven me, that You love and accept me unconditionally. Therefore, I can accept myself. And I choose to do so, to accept myself and my body as cleansed. In Jesus' name, amen.

Special Prayers for Specific Problems

Homosexuality

Lord,

I renounce the lie that You have created me or anyone else to be homosexual, and I affirm that You clearly forbid homosexual behavior. I accept myself as a child of God and declare that You created me a man (woman). I renounce any bondages of Satan that have perverted my relationships with others. I announce that I am free to relate to the opposite sex in the way that You intended. In Jesus' name, amen.

Abortion

Lord,

I confess that I did not assume stewardship of the life You entrusted to me. I choose to accept your forgiveness, and I now commit that child to You for Your care in eternity. In Jesus' name, amen.

Suicidal Tendencies

Lord,

I renounce suicidal thoughts and any attempts I have made to take my own life or in any way injure myself. I renounce the lie that life is hopeless and that I can find peace and freedom by taking my own life. Satan is a thief and he comes to steal, kill and destroy. I choose to be a good steward of the physical life that You have entrusted to me. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Eating Disorders or Self-Mutilation

Lord,

I renounce the lie that my value as a person is dependent upon my physical beauty, my weight or size. I renounce cutting myself, vomiting, using laxatives or starving myself as a means of cleansing myself of evil or altering my appearance. I announce that only the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ cleanses me from sin. I accept the reality that there may be sin present in me due to the lies I have believed and the wrongful use of my body, but I renounce the lie that I am evil or that any part of my body is evil. My body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and I belong to You, Lord. I receive Your love and acceptance of me. In Jesus' name, amen.

Substance Abuse

Lord,

I confess that I have misused substances (alcohol, tobacco, food, prescription or street drugs) for the purpose of pleasure, to escape reality or to cope with difficult situations—resulting in the abuse of my body, the harmful programming of my mind and the quenching of the Holy Spirit. I ask Your forgiveness. I renounce any satanic connection or influence in my life through my misuse of chemicals or food. I cast my anxiety onto Christ Who loves me, and I commit myself to no longer yield to substance abuse, but to the Holy Spirit. I ask You, Heavenly Father, to fill me with Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Driveness and Perfectionism

Lord,

I renounce the lie that my self-worth is dependent upon my ability to perform. I announce the truth that my identity and sense of worth are found in who I am as Your child. I renounce seeking the approval and acceptance of other people, and I choose to believe that I am already approved and accepted in Christ because of His death and resurrection for me. I choose to believe the truth that I have been saved, not by deeds done in righteousness, but according to Your mercy. I choose to believe that I am no longer under the curse of the law because Christ became a curse for me. I receive the free gift of life in Christ and choose to abide in Him. I renounce striving for perfection by living under the law. By Your grace, Heavenly Father, I choose from this day forward to walk by faith according to what You have said is true by the power of Your Holy Spirit. In Jesus' name, amen.

Plaguing Fears

Dear Heavenly Father,

I acknowledge You as the only legitimate fear object in my life. You are the only omnipresent (always present) and omniscient (all-knowing) God and the only means by which all other fears can be expelled. You are my sanctuary. You have not given me a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. I confess that I have allowed the fear of man and the fear of death to exercise control over my life instead of trusting in You. I now renounce all other fear objects and worship You only. I pray that You would fill me with Your Holy Spirit that I may live my life and speak your Word with boldness. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

After you have confessed all known sin, pray:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I now confess these sins to You and claim my forgiveness and cleansing through the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. I cancel all ground that evil spirits have gained through my willful involvement in sin. I ask this in the wonderful name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Step 7

Acquiescence vs. Renunciation

Acquiescence is passively giving in or agreeing without consent. The last step to freedom is to renounce the sins of your ancestors and any curses which may have been placed on you. In giving the Ten Commandments, God said: "You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the

fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me” (Exodus 20:4, 5, *NASB*).

Familiar spirits can be passed on from one generation to the next if not renounced and if your new spiritual heritage in Christ is not proclaimed. You are not guilty for the sin of any ancestor, but because of their sin, Satan may have gained access to your family. This is not to deny that many problems are transmitted genetically or acquired from an immoral atmosphere. All three conditions can predispose an individual to a particular sin. In addition, deceived people may try to curse you, or satanic groups may try to target you. You have all the authority and protection you need in Christ to stand against such curses and assignments.

Ask the Lord to reveal to your mind the sins and iniquities of your ancestors by praying the following prayer:

Dear Heavenly Father,

I thank You that I am a new creation in Christ. I desire to obey Your command to honor my mother and my father, but I also acknowledge that my physical heritage has not been perfect. I ask you to reveal to my mind the sins and iniquities of my ancestors in order to confess, renounce and forsake them. In Jesus' name, I pray. Amen.

Now claim your position and protection in Christ by making the following declaration verbally, and then by humbling yourself before God in prayer.

Declaration

I here and now reject and disown all the sins and iniquities of my ancestors, including (name them). As one who has been delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son, I cancel out all demonic working that has been passed on to me from my ancestors. As one who has been crucified and raised with Jesus Christ and who sits with Him in heavenly places, I renounce all satanic assignments that are directed toward me and my ministry, and I cancel every curse that Satan and his workers have put on me. I announce to Satan and all his forces that Christ became a curse for me (see Galatians 3:13) when He died for my sins on the cross. I reject any and every way in which Satan may claim ownership of me. I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ who purchased me with His own blood. I reject all other blood sacrifices whereby Satan may claim ownership of me. I declare myself to be eternally and completely signed over and committed to the Lord Jesus Christ. By the authority I have in Jesus Christ, I now command every spiritual enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ to leave my presence. I commit myself to my heavenly Father to do His will from this day forward.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

I come to You as Your child purchased by the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are the Lord of the universe and the Lord of my life. I submit my body to You as an instrument of righteousness, a living sacrifice, that I may glorify You in my body. I now ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit. I commit myself to the renewing of my mind in order to prove that Your will is good, perfect and acceptable for me. All this I do in the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Once you have secured your freedom by going through these seven steps, you may find demonic influences attempting reentry, days or even months later. One person shared that she heard a spirit say to her mind, “I’m back,” two days after she had been set free. “No, you’re not!” she proclaimed aloud. The attack ceased immediately. One victory does not constitute winning the war. Freedom must be maintained. After completing these steps, one jubilant lady asked, “Will I always be like this?” I told her that she would stay free as long as she remained in right relationship with God. “Even if you slip and fall,” I encouraged, “you know how to get right with God again.”

One victim of incredible atrocities shared this illustration: “It’s like being forced to play a game with an ugly stranger in my own home. I kept losing and wanted to quit, but the ugly stranger wouldn’t let me. Finally I called the police (a higher authority), and they came and escorted the stranger out. He knocked on the door trying to regain entry, but this time I recognized his voice and didn’t let him in.”

What a beautiful illustration of gaining freedom in Christ. We call upon Jesus, the ultimate authority, and He escorts the enemy out of our lives. Know the truth, stand firm and resist the evil one. Seek out good Christian fellowship, and commit yourself to regular times of Bible study and prayer. God loves you and will never leave or forsake you.

Aftercare

Freedom must be maintained. You have won a very important battle in an ongoing war. Freedom is yours as long as you keep choosing truth and standing firm in the strength of the Lord. If new memories should surface or if you become aware of lies that you have believed or other non-Christian experiences you have had, renounce them and choose the truth. Some have found it helpful to go through the steps again. As you do, read the instructions carefully.

For your encouragement and further study, read *Victory over the Darkness* (or the youth version *Stomping Out the Darkness*), *The Bondage Breaker* (adult or youth version) and *Released from Bondage*. If you are a parent, read *Spiritual*

Protection for Your Children. Walking in the Light was written to help people understand God's guidance and discern counterfeit guidance. Also, to maintain your freedom, we suggest the following:

1. Seek legitimate Christian fellowship where you can walk in the light and speak the truth in love.
2. Study your Bible daily. Memorize key verses.
3. Take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Assume responsibility for your thought life, reject the lie, choose the truth and stand firm in your position in Christ.
4. Don't drift away! It is very easy to get lazy in your thoughts and revert back to old habits or patterns of thinking. Share your struggles openly with a trusted friend. You need at least one friend who will stand with you.
5. Don't expect another person to fight your battle for you. Others can help, but they can't think, pray, read the Bible or choose the truth for you.
6. Continue to seek your identity and sense of worth in Christ. Read *Living Free in Christ* and the devotional, *Daily in Christ*. Renew your mind with the truth that your acceptance, security and significance is in Christ by saturating your mind with the following truths. Read the entire list of who you are "In Christ" (p. 00) and the Doctrinal Affirmation (in Step 2) aloud morning and evening over the next several weeks (and look up the verses referenced).
7. Commit yourself to daily prayer. You can pray these suggested prayers often and with confidence:

Daily Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father,

I honor You as my sovereign Lord. I acknowledge that You are always present with me. You are the only all-powerful and wise God. You are kind and loving in all Your ways. I love You and thank You that I am united with Christ and spiritually alive in Him. I choose not to love the world, and I crucify the flesh and all its passions.

I thank You for the life that I now have in Christ, and I ask You to fill me with Your Holy Spirit, that I may live my life free from sin. I declare my dependence upon You, and I take my stand against Satan and all his lying ways. I choose to believe the truth and I refuse to be discouraged. You are the God of all hope, and I am confident that You will meet my needs as I seek to live according to Your Word. I express with confidence that I can live a responsible life through Christ who strengthens me.

I now take my stand against Satan and command him and all his evil spirits to depart from me. I put on the whole armor of God. I submit my body as a living sacrifice and renew my mind by the living Word of God in order that I

may prove that the will of God is good, acceptable and perfect. I pray these things in the precious name of my Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Amen.

Bedtime Prayer

Thank You, Lord, that You have brought me into Your family and have blessed me with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ. Thank You for providing this time of renewal through sleep. I accept it as part of Your perfect plan for Your children, and I trust You to guard my mind and my body during my sleep. As I have meditated on You and Your truth during this day, I choose to let these thoughts continue in my mind while I am asleep. I commit myself to You for Your protection from every attempt of Satan or his emissaries to attack me during sleep. I commit myself to You as my Rock, my Fortress and my Resting Place. I pray in the strong name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Cleansing Home/Apartment

After removing all articles of false worship from home/apartment, pray aloud in every room if necessary:

Heavenly Father,

We/I acknowledge that You are Lord of heaven and earth. In Your sovereign power and love, You have given us/me all things richly to enjoy. Thank You for this place to live. We/I claim this home for our/my family as a place of spiritual safety and protection from all the attacks of the enemy. As children of God seated with Christ in the heavenly realm, we/I command every evil spirit claiming ground in the structures and furnishings of this place, based on the activities of previous occupants, to leave and never return. We/I renounce all curses and spells utilized against this place. We/I ask You, Heavenly Father, to post guardian angels around this home (apartment, condo, room, etc.) to guard it from attempts of the enemy to enter and disturb Your purposes for us/me. We/I thank You, Lord, for doing this, and pray in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

Living in a Non-Christian Environment

After removing all articles of false worship from your room, pray aloud in the space allotted to you:

Thank You, Heavenly Father, for my place to live and be renewed by sleep. I ask You to set aside my room (portion of my room) as a place of spiritual safety for me. I renounce any allegiance given to false gods or spirits by other occupants, and I renounce any claim to this room (space) by Satan based on activities of past occupants or me. On the basis of my position as a child of God and a joint-heir with Christ who has all authority in heaven and on earth, I command all evil spirits to leave this place and never to return. I ask You, Heavenly Father,

to appoint guardian angels to protect me while I live here. I pray this in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen.

From Ministering the Steps to Freedom in Christ, by Neil Anderson. (reproducible from this book or order from **www.ficm.org**)