

Freedom From Addictions

by Neil T. Anderson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of bonding with God and having a reparenting experience for true freedom and transformation.

Duration: 40:33

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Romans 8:2, 2 Corinthians 5:17-18, Ephesians 4:16, Philippians 3:8, Hebrews 10:10

Topics: "Addictions"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker, Dick, emphasizes the importance of learning in committed relationships. He shares a powerful experience where he gathered a group of people in a mountain setting and had them express appreciation for one another while washing each other's feet. He also discusses a man who struggled with discipling others because he did not have a personal connection with them. Dick highlights the need for community and relationships in the process of learning and transformation, rather than just acquiring knowledge.

Transcript

Do you think his problem is canonicity? No. I mean, I was stopped at lunch today when asked basically kind of the same question. A guy had been teaching our material, and he said, there's always one in there that doesn't get it.

You know, and the objection is always some theological question. I don't agree on this theological point, or I'm a Calvinist, or something like that. And I said, it's not the issue.

I almost can tell you a hundred percent, it's not the issue. I could talk to this guy all night long about canonicity would not resolve this problem. Now, I knew that, and so how do you get off of that as quick as I could? And so I just started asking me a story.

You know, tell me about your background, your family, whatever else. And what I heard was no bonding. And so I brought that out.

I said, let me tell you what happens. When somebody in their human relationship like that have no bonding, and they do come to Christ, what happens? What's their relationship with God like? It's just all intellectual. And, of course, that's not satisfying, and so what happens when you get married? Well, he's on his second marriage, and that one's starting to fail.

And I said, so I got his attention, and I said, well, what do you mean by bonding? I said, well, you know, we have an opportunity, you know, as new creations, to be new creations in Christ, to bond with God. And the one who supposedly wasn't backslidden looked at his watch and said, it's getting late. I think we need to go to bed.

And I said, see, that's what you do. As soon as we get too close to you, you're looking for a way out. He smiled and left.

And the other guy was so sobered by this that he knew exactly what I was talking about, I mean, and didn't run. He said, I could walk out of here too. He said, but I know what's going to happen.

I'll just walk away from my marriage, whatever else. And it was getting late, and I had to speak the next day. And he said, what do you do? And at that time, to be honest with you, I just said, here, you don't need me.

You need God at this stage of the game. I want you to just sit down and go through that. I gave him the steps to freedom.

But there is a case where I'm petitioning God, me, personally, I'm petitioning God. And I didn't know what was going to happen. I didn't even have high expectations, to be honest with you.

But when I showed up in the morning, there he was with a guitar hanging around his shoulder. He used to lead music in church. All red-eyed.

And I said, he asked me, he said, could I sing this morning? I said, I don't know, can you? And the Spirit at that time said, you know, go ahead and let him. Well, I had a little ministry that weekend. That guy had a real ministry.

And he shared in his own heart. But he bonded with God. I mean, I really believe in my heart.

He didn't. He did. He told me that.

He said that was the first time as a Christian that he felt he had an alpha father relationship. And, you know, it just helped him come to terms and repentance. Now, getting back to what we're talking about, what is repentance? It's change of mind.

Why are we stuck? Well, we come into this world, we have neither the presence of God in our life, nor the knowledge of God's ways. And so we learn to live our life independent of God. We all did.

Now, you can have some very good human relationships and experience. You can have a loving mom and dad. You can get close to them.

I think one of the real tragedies we went through in the 60s and 70s was substituting the mother's breast with formula. It did, however, give rise to the need for throwaway diapers. If you've ever raised a child who had formula, let me tell you, that's enough said.

Anyway, but it wasn't just that the mother's milk had some antibiotics and stuff like that. They're things that the child would need. I think there was a closeness there and a bonding that was intended to take place that we've walked away from.

And I think that's very tragic in our experience. But I've just seen this a number of times. I've just seen students at our seminary come.

They've never had that relationship. Let me tell you, you know, the relational connection. The most artificial thing you have is a seminary experience.

I mean, I come to know that. I happen to have a doctorate in education. Most of it's educational psych as well.

And I realized at that time that the very thing that I was teaching I couldn't model just like you've done for two days. And you know it. I mean, he knows it.

But, you know, he wants it on tape so you go home and listen to it and absorb it. We both sell a lot of tapes that way. You talk so fast.

I sell a lot of tapes that way. It's in the contract with ICBC, I think. But, see, here's the issue.

People come, get out of their car, go and take class, take notes, and leave. There is no community. None whatsoever.

And so I decided, it was about the last year I taught at the seminary, that here I am trying to teach you to do something. But what I was teaching I couldn't model. So I took 24 students.

Dick Day is a friend of mine. And for 10 years he's been down at the Julian Center. And Dick had a theory.

He's a psychologist by background. He's a very close friend of Josh McDowell. And old friend of mine.

And he had this place called the Julian Center. That was kind of a live-in thing. And he would take, I think, about 12 or something like that for three months.

Kind of a reparenting type of a process. And he kind of saw himself as a Francis Schaefer and even wore some of that outfit, you know. But it got so burnt out experience for him because everybody said just nothing but sick people.

He wanted to have more people he could kind of intellectually dialogue with. But I took 24 students down there. And my daughter was about ready to move out of the house.

And so I invited my daughter to come along. It was a great experience with Heidi. Invited her to come along and take care of the kids while we were meeting.

And so we met together. We ate together. We lived together.

I kind of lectured in the morning. And then in the afternoon we had a little time off for play and stuff like that. And then we broke all the students up into groups of six.

And that worked out very well because we had six couples with kids. Or three couples with kids. We had three couples with no kids who were married.

And the rest were single. And we divided them up into groups of six. Well, there was a guy that came with his mountain bike and his beautiful wife and a Jeep Cherokee and running shoes and all that kind of thing.

He bought this thing, folks, for two and a half weeks. I mean, that group experience for him was the most painful deal in the world. And he started to be honest about that with me.

And he said, well, I'm discipling these men. I said, tell me about those men. Are they married? I think so.

Do they have kids? I mean, he didn't know those people at all. Nor did they know him. We were sitting and discussing data, information.

Well, it took two and a half weeks, but it finally broke down. And he just, in his group, got real with them. Well, that was the most life-transforming experience.

But Dick's belief was, and mine to this day, is that learning best takes place in committed relationships. And to a person, at the end of that time, we finished our experience by - it was a nice mountain setting, and we had a fireplace there. And we sat all the people in a semicircle like this, and somebody had to sit in the chair with the fireplace in their back.

And I had one person changing the water, and I chose to wash their feet. And while they were sitting there, we had all the rest, say, after these four weeks together, this is what I like about you or what I appreciate about you. And then the rest of the group would come up and lay their hands down and pray for them.

Now, frankly, by nature, I'm not a high-touch person, but I kid you not, that was one of the most powerful experiences I've ever gone through. And we had a - I had them all share at our chapel, at the seminary. And they all got up, and just one person after the other.

But this particular guy went back to a Sunday school class that he'd been the president of in a high-tech kind of a community and said, You don't know me. I've never let you know me. Let me tell you a few things about myself that you would need to know if you really knew me.

And just at a very gut level, shared his life. Well, that was a life-transforming experience for him. It just scares the socks off to me that he had never had that experience.

What kind of a pastor would he be? Like a lot of pastors, I'm not here trying to pick on anybody, but you can go to seminary and graduate purely on the basis that you answered most, not even all the questions right. You can do that and be a nonbeliever. But I've seen students who've never really, on a personal level, encountered Christ.

To them, their walk with God is an intellectual experience. The tragedy of that is, if you look at Bloom's taxonomy, the lowest level of learning is just rote memory. Now, this is all supposed to be an addiction, but let me get to that in a moment, because what happens when somebody experiences pain early on and they choose drugs or alcohol as a means of dealing with that pain? What happens to their emotional development? Totally arrested.

And what happens when they start going in that direction to somehow narcotize their pain or whatever? I said, if you look at just alcohol alone, you can basically say, why do they do it? You can put it in three categories. One is kind of a party time issue. It's to get rid of inhibitions.

I mean, dull your conscience, in a sense. And they start acting like a fool, whereas before they kind of didn't. Or it's a means of coping.

I can quiet those voices in my mind, or I can relieve some of the tension. That's the happy hour kind of a concept. Or you get somebody who's never learned to deal with pain, and so consequently the prescription medication kicks in, and pain is the enemy.

Pain is not. I mean, one of the best books you can read on this issue is *Pain, the Gift Nobody Wants*. Suppose I had the power to take away the sensation of pain and offered it to you as a gift.

Would you receive it? You'd be a hopeless mass of scars within a matter of hours and weeks, honestly. And so pain is something that God has given us, but learning to deal with pain, you know, and Paul Brand, who just passed away here some time ago, felt the answer. He wrote a great book, by the way.

Describes his whole experience in India and how much better equipped as a culture they are in dealing with pain than we are. Well, all of that to say that in this development, as we come into this world, you know, as we grow up and learn our language and have our experiences. Let me just never share this.

My sister's here. Before, I've shared this some in class. But when I look back at our experience, I had a dad who was dysfunctional.

His dad came from Norway, settled on the farm. I never heard my father mention his dad until my dad was 75 years old. Never mentioned, never talked about it, never mentioned his name.

It was like I didn't have one. And when he did, he said, that man. That was the first time, 75 years old, I heard my father ever refer to his dad.

And all those years, you know, carried that bitterness. To this day, he's 89 years old, he's a bitter man. Goes to church or had until he's basically half blind or whatever else.

Now, let me apply that to our own family situation. You know, I often believe in a lot of ways young girls need a father, in a sense, to kind of bond with, and boys need their mother. Now, this isn't a fixed rule.

I mean, if you're a single parent, you know, all that stuff can be overcome. But I always kind of felt sorry for my sisters. I think our family situation was more damaging to them than it was to my brother and I. And part of the reason is this way.

I did bond with my mother. In a lot of ways, you're looking at my mother. I'd say if anybody in my family that I would gravitate to, who I respected, who I would look up to, who I went to.

I never went to dad. He's my boss. He was a taskmaster.

What helped me was that I didn't raise, wasn't raised in just that family. I was raised in a community. It was a farming community.

It was a church community. It was a 4-H community. I had other role models.

I never looked to my dad as a role model. I mean, I can remember one time he said something to me. I thought, gee, that's stupid.

And, you know, it's a sad thing to be able to say that about your dad, but I never did. I never once in my life looked to my dad as somebody I'd like to emulate or be like when I grew up. Good news is, is that, you know, when my parents moved off the farm, I moved back onto the farming community and finished high

school with another family.

I had the best role model you could have. I mean, we ran. We arm wrestled.

In a lot of ways, I kind of look at that in the sense, as far as my father was concerned, that was my father. That was the one, at that time in my life in high school, I looked up to, I'd like to be like. And so I was very fortunate.

And I just, my sisters have all had their day in court with dad, and the relationship with him was all based on fear. And it's a sad thing in one sense. I said, but is there any answer for this? Yes, that's the good news.

There is a new creation in Christ. There is a reparenting. And now look at those levels of growth and whatever else.

And I said, Paul starts out by saying, having been firmly rooted in Christ, now growing in him. But it all comes back to in him. I have a new in him relationship.

That's why the whole gospel is so critical here. If all I understand is good Friday, that my sins are forgiven, and I'm the same old person I were before, and you enter into some kind of a legalistic intellectual relationship with God, and there is no sense of Abba Father, which is what I found for every person I was dealing with who had unresolved conflicts in their life, what's going to happen? You're going to be a legalist. It's just going to be an external conformity to a bunch of rules and regulations.

But inward, you're dying. In one sense, in your own perception, you're the same old person you were before. That's not true.

And you pointed that out also. That is not true. You are not acting according to who you really are right now.

And what's going to happen? Deep conviction. And part of it is because the Holy Spirit is within you. You are not acting through your true nature.

And so you get into the whole theological argument. You have two natures. Well, you know, the word nature only occurs twice.

You were past tense by nature, children of wrath. You are now a partaker of the divine nature. So the whole unbelievable truth that Paul is so repetitively trying to tell is that you're in him.

You're in him. You're in him. Thank God he's in me.

But for every verse that talks about him being in me, there are ten about me being in him. And once you connected with God, once you bonded with him, there is going to be a sense of Abba Father. And this is the joy that we've had in ministry is once the repentance is there, the change of mind.

And that's why just salvation isn't enough because there needs to be a sense of repentance. Truth itself can go right over your head. But what makes you experience that is a sense of repentance in your life.

And once that is accomplished, once you have submitted to God to resist the devil, that connection is Abba Father's there. Why? True self. It's who you really are.

Beloved, now you are a child of God. It means he's received him. To them he gave the right to become children of God.

I mean, in one sense, he's bringing you back to what Adam and Eve had originally in the garden. That potential does now exist there. But there's a whole growth process.

For Paul, you have to be firmly rooted. Is it a good assumption that I can teach people how to behave, you know, how to live, assuming that they're all firmly rooted and being built up in order to do that? That's a bad assumption, folks. It's a bad assumption.

In fact, there are estimates that only about 50% of our Bible-living Christians are living a free, productive life in Christ. You know, and I said we've had teaching and training in righteousness, but no reproof, no correction. In other words, no repentance.

And so consequently, in their own belief, they're just the same old person they were before, just forgiven, maybe. But they'll never have the certainty of that either, because the assurance of that comes with a bonding. Now, John comes along and describes us in three ways.

Now, writing unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven. In other words, you've overcome the penalty of sin. Now, writing unto you, old men, because you've known the Father from the beginning.

Now, this is, I believe, is implying a very deep, reverential, experiential knowledge of who the real Father is, who the Heavenly Father, that their spiritual identity is so established that there is no question in their mind anymore, I know who I am, I'm a child of God, and I know who my Father is. I'm writing unto you, young man, says it twice, because you've overcome the evil one. I think you could substitute and almost say that you've overcome the power of sin.

You are now able to realize that I'm alive in Christ, dead to sin. I can live a righteous life. Could any addicted person say that? No.

No. No, I'll just tell you right now, they can't. Now, what is one of the major problems that I see with legalism or a program orientation to any kind of recovery? Can any program set you free? No.

Well, that's what you hear. Work the program. The program works.

Folks, there's a program in the world that can set you free. And almost across the board, the number one problem is, is that they have the wrong goal. If I could just get you to abstain.

Now, after you've been listening to Jim all these years, why wouldn't that be enough? Nothing has changed up here. I mean, that's kind of like saying, here's an old mule, and he's going the wrong direction, and he's drinking contaminated water, and finally, he plops over out of fear, fatigue, and everything else. Look at all the different ways that you can treat that old thing.

You can come along and hose him off. There, you look better. So the thing I want you to do is to appear good.

So put on a good mask and function well in society. You can come along and take that old mule and grab him by the tail and turn him around. There, you're going in the right direction right now.

He's still dead, folks. He needs life. That's what Adam and Eve lost.

That's what Jesus came to give us, was life. Life. You ever been in a dead church? Man, I have.

Where is the life? Would you ever experience that without bonding to God? No. Can you be in His kingdom and be forgiven, but so bloom and carnal that you dare make no growth and process in your life at all? Yes, you can, unfortunately. And so we just got a tremendous amount of defeated Christians.

They haven't got a clue who they are in Christ. They never really had a bonding experience in their life. You can't get close to them.

If I've been disillusioned in my own Christian walk, I'd have to say it is higher Christian education. I have never seen such arrogance. And try to get close to them.

I'd like to get to know you. You're psychoanalyzing me. I'm not psychoanalyzing you.

I'd just like to have some kind of a meaningful relationship with you. And you just can't. It's all a discussion of theology.

And they'll use their theology as a smoke screen from letting me get too close to you. Well, I don't agree with you on this one little point. So we can't be friends.

I said, isn't that a tragic thing? You know, the tragedy part about it is that you've got to be right. I remember telling the guy one time, I said, listen, I'll tell you what. Let's have a little contest right now.

You find every verse in the Bible where you've got to be right. And I'll find every verse in the Bible where I've got to be loving and kind. And go.

And he smiled at me. I can't think of one right now. I said, man, there are all kinds of verses flooding my mind about how I should behave and who I should be and everything else.

And I said, this whole struggle that we have of working with people, well, what should I do? I said, you know, really foundationally, it's who should you be. Well, that's scary. But it's easier.

And a lot of these people would prefer the law over grace. And simply because it's much easier for you to tell me what's right and what's wrong. And I'll try as best I can.

And promise you'll scold me if I'm doing wrong and encourage me when I'm doing right. And that kind of a law-based, folks, will never give you a relationship where the law kills. But the Spirit gives life.

Now, is there a predictable addiction cycle? Oh, it's very predictable. Because I've got this pain or whatever else. And I've got this baseline experience.

And all of a sudden, I feel that euphoric experience. I mean, look at the sexual thing for a moment. You know, I remember the first time I dated a girl and took her out.

And she reached over almost inadvertently and put her hand on my knee. Oh, I thought I was going to fly out the window, folks. I mean, you talk about high.

Well, that won't be enough. I mean, you know, then you may kiss her. Boy, that was, you go home just feeling like I've arrived, you know.

Would that be enough over long haul? No, what do you want next and next and next and next? I mean, this, you know, in our book, we've got two books that deal with this. One is Finding Freedom in a Sex-Obsessed World. And the other one is Overcoming Addictive Behavior.

And what frustrates me so bad, if I could just stop you from masturbating or if I could just stop you from looking at pornographic, if I could just stop you from taking drugs, you've got to dry drunk. All the pain is still there. He doesn't know how to deal with his issues.

And his whole emotional development is arrested. What a sad answer that is for these poor people. And it's like trying to say, if I could only get that bone away from that dog, go ahead, try to take it away, folks.

You're going to have a dog fight. And I think as Christians, we have an opportunity to throw a mistake. What do you think would happen to that old bone? But until you throw a mistake, you know, I actually suggest, and, you know, Mike could talk to this much more better than I could, but I think to a lot of people, I would simply say, how long have you been drinking, 15, 20 years now? I said, if you need to, just go ahead for a while.

Let's just work over here and see if we can reinforce an answer that is so good that after a while you won't even need that anymore. I really believe that's true, by the way. But if your initial thrust is that we've got to stop this.

Now, when you look at this addictive cycle, some euphoric experience comes along, but it never lasts. Any false attempt to meet legitimate needs in our life is going to crash. You wake up the next morning, and the buzz wore off, and it's there.

And there's always going to be a little sense of guilt and shame. Well, you don't like to live that way. And frankly, that experience was so good, you want to go back to it.

And if I could just go back to that euphoric experience again, it does give me a temporary relief or a high. But unfortunately, it's like a jigsaw that just goes like this. It takes more and more.

And so you develop this thing they call tolerance. It's that one beer gave me a little buzz, but no more. I need a case now, and I need a chaser.

And I used to get a high kissing a girl, but now that won't do it anymore. And so you get into all kinds of bizarre stuff, and the pornography has to get rougher and grosser and on and on. You know that whole cycle.

And it's such a false way to meet people's legitimate needs for intimacy and for bonding. And could you imagine what it would be like for a girl to think, gosh, this guy asked me out. And he asked me out because he likes me, and it was a date rape.

And I found out all he loved was my body. And the real person got totally, utterly rejected. How do you think you'd feel the next day? Wouldn't you feel dirty and used? Now theologically, this is a total departure from here, but I've got to add this because sexual problems are so perverse around this world that it's just destroying marriages and ministries and you name it.

And I just rancor at the notion we made love last night. That was not love. That was just an animal act that gave you a temporary high or fix or whatever it was.

But what I've discovered is that if you look at what Paul is saying in Romans 6, where clearly we are identified with Christ, his life, his death, his burial, and later on his resurrection and ascension, and to know that truth that you're in him, the old man is dead, the new man is here, in order that the body's sin may be done away with. And then it says, Therefore consider yourselves, keep on believing the truth that you're alive in Christ and dead to sin. Is sin still here? Still powerful? Still appealing? Sure.

That's why Romans chapter 8, 1 and 2, Therefore there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Don't forget that in, folks. That's your new bonding relationship right there.

That's the new you. For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus will set you free from the law of sin and of death. Question, is the law of sin and death still here? Sure.

That's why he calls it a law there. Can you do away with the law? No. So how in the world do you solve this problem? You overcome it by a law greater than that.

So is there a law greater than the law of sin and death? Yes. Because it's the law of life in Christ Jesus. Folks, there's our answer.

You know, so to get a person back in that bonding relationship. But truth will set them free. They have to know that truth.

Now, therefore, it says, Consider yourselves to be alive in Christ, dead to sin. Why do you consider it so? Because it is so. Remember the old King James? Reckon yourselves to be made no more dead unto sin.

If you think it's a reckoning that makes you dead unto sin, you'll reckon yourself into a wreck. Why do you consider it so? Because it is so. Well, I don't feel that way.

That's not going to get you out of here right now. You believe it because God said it is true. Therefore, do not allow sin to reign in your mortal body.

Whose responsibility is that? Clearly ours. How are you going to do that? Don't use your body as an instrument of unrighteousness. But present yourselves to God.

Why wasn't that over there? Because you belong to God. So, consecrate yourself or commit yourself to God and your bodies as an instrument of unrighteousness. Now, reason with me for a moment.

Can you commit a sexual sin without using your body as an instrument of unrighteousness? Well, I don't know how. A lot of kinky stuff out there. But if you commit a sexual sin, you've used your body as an instrument of unrighteousness, what's happened? You've allowed sin to reign.

How did you resolve that? Well, I confessed it. Didn't resolve it, did it? I'll tell you right now, I won't. Confession is the first step to repentance, but it is not complete repentance.

Now, tie that in with 1 Corinthians 6. Don't you know that your body is a temple of God, that the Spirit of God dwells in you? Join yourself to a heart that lets you become one flesh. Now, they don't use the word bonding here. And I've heard soul ties, all kinds of things.

But I can tell you what. You made a connection. You've joined yourself to a heart.

Let you become one flesh, for you are one spirit with the Lord. Now, do you think that would create some internal conflict if you bonded to a heart, at the same time you're one spirit with the Lord? Sure. Show me anybody who's committed a sexual sin that's joined peace.

They're not, folks. Nobody caught in addictive behavior. Nobody.

Nobody likes it, folks. They may pretend. They may hit that euphoric high and be joyful for a moment.

But that's that release. You see, that's why they keep going back to that, because the same rhythm you're talking about has to be there. I can't keep living in this pit, so I need this release, this high.

But it crashes, so guess what you've got to have again? The high again. And it's all a sick counterfeit to what God wants you to have. And what we've learned to do is to have this person pray and ask the Lord to reveal every sexual use of their body as an instrument of unrighteousness.

God does. He does. Starts with the first one, usually.

And then we say, I renounce the use of my body, and I give my body to God as a living sacrifice. Why are we urged by the mercies of God to do that? We are Romans 1. What I found out, if you don't break that bond, you can't do Romans 2, where it's being transformed by the renewing of our mind. Where does sin wage war? In your members, in your physical body.

And so, what I've observed, and I'm probably sure you have too, is that if people then have had sex outside the will of God before marriage, without some sense of resolution, what happens after marriage? The man has a lust problem that he's hoping his wife will satisfy. Can she? No. The more she tries, the more she feeds it, actually.

We can meet one another's sexual needs, but you cannot expect a spouse to resolve your problem of lust. That's got to go to God somehow. What will happen to a woman who had sex with somebody else before marriage? A bonding took place.

She'll actually feel dirty. She doesn't enjoy sex. She can't stand to be touched sometimes.

What God wanted them to have in marriage won't be there. Have you ever had a nice young girl in your church go off with the wrong guy, have sex, and for the next two years they've got this sick relationship, he treats her terrible, and people say, get rid of the bum, and she doesn't. Why doesn't she? Bonded.

I remember this pastor called me one time and said, if you don't help her, we're going to have to commit her. And she said, she can't understand why we can't hear the voices she's hearing. I mean, it was that pronounced.

And so, I went out there and spent about three hours, is all, with her, and I asked her a story, and her story was that she had gotten involved with a sick man who ran drugs and they lived together for a while, and she's now living at home, it's a very abusive relationship. I remember asking her up front, I said, what would you say if I said you had to make a commitment never to see her again? She said, I'd probably get up and leave. I wanted the pastor to hear that, and I want you to hear that.

There's a bonding that has taken place there. And I said, that's okay, we're not going to ask you to do that. I said, would you like to resolve this issue? Well, can I? Yeah, get rid of the voices.

And so we sat down, walked her through this thing, she came to that prayer, she asked God to reveal that, out came other things, she renounced that use of her body, you know, with so and so, asked God to break that bond, gave her body to God as a living sacrifice, and the voices, when we were done, were all gone. And we were just sitting there talking, and she said, I'm never going to see that guy again. Now, where did that conviction come from? You know, you know what's interesting about this process, what we're helping people do is bond with God, not ourselves.

That would be a mistake, in my estimation, at that stage of the game. When that happens, what happens to relationships this way? I said, why is marriage this constant struggle? And I'd have to tell you why I think we're failing on the marriage thing is we've got all these things we want marriage couples to do. Gee, if you'd only do that and do this.

And I said, what would happen, however, if you got both of these, bonded to God, alive and free in Christ, what do you think would happen to their oneness in Christ? It would be there. That's exactly what we've noticed. It would be there.

But when we come in and just give, well, if you do this or do that, I said, folks, you know, you've got people who haven't had a bonding experience, and they've never gone through the kind of original development. Another thing I was really stimulated, Jim, by what you said was the brain was never created by God to deal with death. Now, if joy is what God wants me to experience, what's the opposite of joy? Depression, right? What's the number one cause for depression? It's a reaction to losses in our life.

Could you deal with that by pure medication? No. Come on, folks. This is something, this is a great learning experience for all.

All of us have to learn to overcome losses in our life, and I'll tell you why you better learn it quick, because everything you have right now, someday you're going to lose. Then Paul came to that point. Now, I want you to think about this for a moment.

Here's Paul, Pharisee of Pharisees. Boy, he knew the law, leading candidate for theologian of the year, right? Bonded? No, probably not. You can't by the law, but I mean, you know, I mean, this guy was zealous, too.

You know, and what happened? Struck him down a Damascus rope and encountered Christ, and everybody seems to agree he went away for three years. I've heard more explanations of that, and a lot of them have come, he went away and renewed his mind and developed his theology, whatever. Honestly, I think he went away to grief.

I want you to just consider for a moment what he lost. Like, everything. Everything up to that point in his life had value.

His establishment in the community, his respect, his friends, his... He lost everything. And what was his commentary on that later on in Philippians? I count everything but loss apart from the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord. But in bonding with God, every act of reconciliation in the church today all begins here.

Now, we have a whole book on reconciliation. That was the most fascinating study I think I've ever done in my life. God has given us the ministry of reconciliation, right? How many books have you seen on that? I couldn't find one.

Found a couple Catholics, but they were dealing with social reconciliation. And what I discovered out of that was never mentioned in the Old Testament. Why not? Can't have it.

I mean, there is no reconciliation apart from life in Christ. So that's purely a New Testament message. It's never given to the state.

Most of what we call reconciliation is conciliation and peacekeeping, agreeing not to shoot each other anymore. But if reconciliation was complete, it can't happen unless there is complete forgiveness and repentance. Now, we have been reconciled to God.

God didn't have to repent, but He had to find a means by which He could forgive us. And He did. That's the gospel.

But I think He can make a case that everybody in this world is forgiven. He died once for all, didn't He? Have all been reconciled to Him. So what's our ministry? It's reconciliation.

Now, if I want to experience that, would I need to repent? Yes. Can you be reconciled with another human down here who won't repent? Who won't admit he's wrong? No. No, you can agree to live together.

You'll never have that kind of harmony. And that's why forgiveness is such an absolutely critical issue in terms of this relationship and then this one. When you realize what Paul is saying in Colossians 2, you're neither Jew nor Gentile, bozeman nor freeman, barbarian or Scythian, but Christ is all in all.

Therefore, put on a heart of compassion, be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving. Immediately, it hits the whole character issue. And where do you think He's going to work that out? He hits the family and the work.

Notice that? And He does the same thing in Ephesians. Why? Committed relationships. Slave, master, husband and wife.

And in the context of that committed relationship, almost always beginning, put on that heart of compassion, but forgiving, because there's no reconciliation with that. But if you were fully reconciled, and see, this is kind of a painful thing for my sister Peg and I. Have any of our children been reconciled to Dad? No. Will we be? Probably not.

I mean, I don't doubt that God can do anything, but the heart's pretty hard. And we're all aware of that. He's probably going to die here pretty soon.

And is this an issue between me and my mother? Not me personally. I love my mom. I think she's just terrific.

But she's going through a painful experience too, living with this all these years. Is my mother fully reconciled to Dad? No. Can she be? Not without Him.

So, you know, relationships are so critical here. But I think we've got an adequate theology that God has given us a means by which we can be alive in Christ and dead to sin. If you want to experience that, you've got to be fully reconciled to God.

That's not going to happen without repentance. But if there's genuine repentance, and I'm bonded with God, I mean, watch what God can do through you. Watch what happens in the transformation, the renewing of your mind.

Suddenly the Word of God comes alive. I've had more people couldn't read the Bible. And when they found their freedom in Christ, once they connected with God, well, the Bible just came alive to them.

But the tragedy of our church age today, without having that relationship, we settle for something far less than what we could have, instead of having a genuine community where we're members of one another. Where, by the way, I want to amplify another thing that you said. We don't have just a personal relationship with God.

We have a corporate relationship with Him. We are a body of Christ, and you cannot be fully sanctified apart from the body. That's why He hasn't given anybody one particular gift.

That's why we need the perspective of each other. We're supposed to build one another up. But if the church was functioning like it would, you'd have a bunch of people who had first bonded to God, and then everything flows out of that.

You give mercy as you've received mercy. You forgive as you've been forgiven. You love because He first loved you.

I'm done. What was your first hint on that one? Let's go eat. Did I really talk that long?

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