

breakthroughs

**finding freedom and true
fulfillment in jesus**

Lesson 13: Live Out Loud

We've treaded through tough waters together to reach this point in our journey. The path to healing and freedom is life-changing, and one far worth walking, but it is not easy. It has required faith, perseverance, courage, fight and a passion to be free. Grace. It has required God's grace.

As we come to the close of this study, we have this promise from God. He is faithful to continue working in our lives. God tells us:

“Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 1:6 (NIV)

Remember that God's work in our lives is not to make us better for Him, because He loves and accepts us just as we are right now. God continues to work in our lives because He loves us, and His plan is for us to walk more and more in Truth and Freedom. The journey with Him will continue all the days of our lives until we meet Him face to face.

Your Story....

At the beginning of our workbook, I shared a part of “My Story.” I shared with you about my time in 6th grade in a bathroom stall hiding in pain and darkness. I've shared with you throughout our journey in Breakthroughs of how God has worked in my life to heal and free me. I hope and pray that as you've read parts of my story, you were pointed to “His Story.” It is the story of Christ coming to earth... to save us, rescue us from darkness and to set us free from pain and darkness.

I am a visual learner and it has helped me to think of my life as a book. Within the book are characters, and chapters, and stories within each chapter. Some of the stories are sad, while others are funny, happy, adventurous or even boring at times.

What about you? Have you ever considered your life a book with chapters and characters?

Think about it. If we considered our lives as a book with chapters, then we would more than likely view ourselves as the main character. The book would be about us,

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and the events in our life, how the events shaped us, and how the book ends. Was it a book with a good or bad ending? Was it a book that was worth reading? Did we even like the main character?

We live in a world that teaches us at a young age that we are the main character in the book titled “Our Life Story.” We are bent on being self-focused, so it is easy to fill the role as the main character of our story. We all want a happy ending, so we do what we can to write chapters that create a character that readers love. Of course, we would rather be a hero, or perhaps a villain, as long as we get the credit due us for playing such a vital role in the story. The problem with us writing our own story is that we have intruders. We have uninvited characters and uninvited events that enter the pages of our book...our story. Still, we attempt to create some sort of story line that will keep the main character in their rightful place. Remember, we’ve been taught that the book must have a main character, so we can’t allow the uninvited characters or events to take the spotlight.

You may be wondering what a book and story has to do with healing and freedom in Christ. So how does this book, “Our Life Story,” connect with the freedom of Christ that we’ve spent the last 12 weeks learning about? Well, if we consider our lives a story, then obviously there will be people who read our story. The people that God puts in our lives will be the ones who read our story. It may be a spouse who reads the book in its entirety, a friend who reads a few chapters or an acquaintance who reads a few lines.

Considering our lives a story leads to a question that profoundly affects our continued freedom AND the freedom of those included in our story. Do we want to continue to be the main character in the book, or do we want God to become the main character? When others read our life story, who do we want them to see as the main character? Do we want our spouse, our friends, our co-workers, acquaintances to see more of us, or do we want them to see more of Christ in us?

The people in our lives need Christ as desperately as we need Christ. They need God’s love, forgiveness and grace just as we need God’s love, forgiveness and grace. Before we quickly take on the task of saving the world (or those presently in our story), let’s remember that there is only one Savior. Jesus is the only One who can save us. However, God’s plan is to use our story to tell HIS STORY.

Our Lives... HIS Story

Let's again consider that our life is a book with one main character. This time the main character in the book is God. Does this sound confusing? A book about our life, but the main character is God? Think about it. If we choose the narrow path that requires help from God, then won't others see God's strength in our life? What about when we experience healing from the sin and pain in our lives? Won't others see God's grace in our lives? What about when we are free from the bondage of addictions? Surely then others will see the power of Christ in our lives.

God loves us and His passion is to heal our hearts, and set us free (Isaiah 61:3). If we never invited anyone to read our story, then He would still be passionate to heal and free us. However, God's plan is for others to see Christ in our lives. When others see that our lives have been transformed, and that we are set free, it gives other people hope. Our transformed lives tell the story of God's great mercy and grace. The mercy and grace that is weaved throughout every page of our lives will point to the main character... the One who saved us... Jesus.

How do you think seeing your life as a story with God as the main character is different than seeing yourself as the main character?

If God is the main character in our life story then what does that say about our life story?

Live Out Loud – Your Pain

As we continue to walk with God down the narrow path, He will put people in our lives that need to hear our story. He will put some people in our life that read our story from a distance, and He will put others in our life that we sit with over coffee and read the words of our story aloud.

2 Corinthians 1:3-4 tells us:

“Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God.”

According to 2 Corinthians 1:3-4, what is God saying to us about the painful experiences we have in our life story?

God uses our pain when we chose to live out loud. God will put people in our life and direct us to share what He has done in our lives. Of course, it takes courage to share our story, because we risk being rejected and judged by others. It is extremely important to ask God for wisdom about what we share, how much we share, and with whom we share our story.

Have you experienced a time in your life when someone shared part of their life story that helped you in some way? If so, how did it help you?

Have you been comforted in your pain by someone who shared how God helped them with their pain (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)? If so, how did God work in that situation?

How does it make you feel to think that God may use the pain you've experienced in your life to help someone with their pain?

Live Out Loud – Your Story

There is a story in Mark 5:1-20 about a man who was in severe bondage and Jesus set him free. This man's darkness was extreme. People were so afraid of his darkness that they tried to keep him in physical chains. It didn't work because the power of darkness was greater than the physical chains. Jesus showed up and He saw the man's spiritual chains that were keeping him in bondage, and He set the man free. Jesus broke the spiritual chains off the man and set him free from the power of darkness. Then Jesus told the man to go and tell his story.

“Go home to your own people and tell them how much the Lord has done for you, and how he has had mercy on you.” Mark 5:19 (NIV)

When Jesus sets us free from any amount of darkness, we have a story to tell. Our story focuses the reader's attention to the main character of our lives and gives them hope.

Live Out Loud – With Other People

It is difficult to allow other people to see our weaknesses. We want to hide our pain, sin, insecurities and fears from other people. Everyone experiences rejection in life, but some of us have experienced more than others. For those of us who have been deeply wounded by rejection, it is extremely difficult to allow others to see our weaknesses. We develop ways to hide our weaknesses such as wearing a mask and pretending we are someone we are not, or pretending that we are strong when we feel weak.

Acknowledging our own weaknesses and admitting them to ourselves is a huge first step towards living out loud. We can't share our hearts, our story, and certainly not our weaknesses when we are afraid of rejection. We will continue to hide and protect ourselves to avoid the pain of rejection. This is another place where God's grace steps into our story. God will help us and teach us how to have healthy relationships with other people. God did not create us to live in isolation physically, emotionally or spiritually. God also did not create us to hide behind a mask by pretending we are strong when we are weak, or happy when we are sad or brave when we are afraid.

Hopefully you have been a part of a small group during Breakthroughs where you have felt safe and accepted. A significant part of our healing and freedom comes from living our lives with people who can help us experience God's grace. When we share our pain and struggles with others, and they show us acceptance and encourage us, we are strengthened. When we hear someone share their pain and struggles, we realize that we are not alone. The shame of living in isolation is lifted and we have courage to be more transparent.

If you've been a part of our discussion the past 13 weeks, how has it helped you?

When I entered a treatment facility for alcohol addiction at the age of 22, I wanted nothing to do with the other patients. I was not interested in hearing their story and they certainly were not going to hear mine. I had lived with secrets and in emotional isolation for years, and had thick walls around my heart. Nobody was getting in, and nothing was getting out. That is until God's grace showed up.

As part of the treatment, we were required to attend a small group where we shared parts of our life story. Each day the patients gathered in a small group that was led by one of their staff counselors. The purpose of the group was to share your heart in an environment that was safe. Each time someone shared their heart the others in the group said something of God's grace. They may not have mentioned God's name but God's grace was present. After a short time, I slowly shared bits and pieces of my life story. Each time I shared, a section of the wall around my heart came down. I can't say that after 30 days in the treatment facility, the entire wall around my heart was removed. And after 27 years, there are still walls around some areas of my heart. I am still growing and learning how to live out loud. However, because of the people that God has placed in my life over the years, I have experienced His grace. I have experienced God's unconditional love and acceptance, which has helped me remove the walls around my heart.

Proverbs 4:23 tells us, **“Above all else, guard your heart, for it is the wellspring of life.”**

There is a difference between us placing walls around our hearts and us asking God to guard our hearts. Walls are man-made with tools such as fear, control, insecurity and pride. Man-made walls keep us in bondage. When God guards our hearts, His wisdom is directing us towards emotional health and spiritual freedom.

As you continue to walk in truth and the light, God will direct your steps. God will help you discern the difference between man-made walls and wisely guarding your heart. The purpose of Breakthroughs has been to lead you to Christ. It has been our goal to present the Truth of God's Word to you, through this workbook, the lessons, and our stories. As you continue your journey to live in Truth and in the light of God's presence, learn more about God's Word and share part of your story with others and where you can experience God's grace.

THE LAST PAGE

Writing Breakthroughs has been quite the story for me personally. I have walked through the pages of my life, visiting its many chapters and rejoiced and cried along the way. I came to know people whose faces I've yet to see. I've cheered, prayed, and cried for the ones who are still hiding, believing the darkness is their friend. To you, the brave ones, I can't wait to hear your story one day. It may be after all of our books are completed, but there will be a time. Until then, thank you for walking with me. Our time together has taught me much about God's grace.

- Susan

LORD,

You have blessed me by giving me the honor of visiting your child's heart through the pages of this workbook. I have felt Your love for them and Your pain. I have felt You urging them out of their darkness and calling them to Your side. I have felt Your joy as they took steps towards you. Lord, thank You for this person who has chosen to believe You and follow You. Thank You for giving them courage to face pain and darkness. Thank You for giving them faith to stand on the battlefield, with Your shield and Your Word. Thank You for the Cross that took all of our sins and paid our debt in full. Lord, continue to heal their heart of the pain and restore all that was taken from them. Give them eyes to see You clearly, and to see that they were created in your image. Help them to have wisdom and discernment to quickly recognize the work of the enemy and give them faith to stand firm against his work. Protect them and continue to destroy the strongholds in their life. May they continue to seek refuge in You alone. Increase their love for You as you continue to pour Your love into their heart and life. Give this child of Yours a passion to know You and follow You all the days of their life. In Jesus name, Amen.

Connecting with God through Christ

For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23 ESV)

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23 ESV)

But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8 ESV)

Because, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. For with the heart one believes and is justified, and with the mouth one confesses and is saved. (Romans 10:9-10 ESV)

For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith - and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God - not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9 NIV)

Prayer of Salvation

“Jesus, I know that I am a sinner. I need your forgiveness for the things I have done. I believe that you are the Son of God and that you died for me. I know you rose from the dead and have complete victory over death. Come live in my heart and take my life. Cleanse me and make me whole. Thank you for what you have done for me. I love you. In Jesus’ name I pray, Amen.”

God's Love for ME

The steadfast love of the LORD never ceases; His mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. (Lamentations 3:22-23)

For God so loved the world, that He gave his only Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. (John 3:16)

The LORD appeared to him from far away. I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore I have continued my faithfulness to you. (Jeremiah 31:3)

But God shows His love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (Romans 5:8)

Give thanks to the God of gods, for His steadfast love endures forever. (Psalm 136:2)

In this is love, not that we have loved God but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. (1 John 4:10)

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 8:37-39)

And from His fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. (John 1:16)

The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; He will rejoice over you with gladness; He will quiet you by his love; He will exult over you with loud singing. (Zephaniah 3:17)

For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his treasured possession, out of all the peoples who are on the face of the earth. (Deuteronomy 7:6)

See what kind of love the Father has given to us that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. (1 John 3:1)

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace. (2 Thessalonians 2:16)

All verses on pg 173 from English Standard Version

Prayer

Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful. (Colossians 4:2)

What other nation is so great as to have their gods near them the way the Lord our God is near us whenever we pray to Him? (Deuteronomy 4:7)

Be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer. (Romans 12:12)

As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you. And I will teach you the way that is good and right. (1 Samuel 12:23)

And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people. (Ephesians 6:18)

And Elisha prayed, "Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see." Then the Lord opened the servant's eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. (2 Kings 6:17)

But we prayed to our God and posted a guard day and night to meet this threat. (Nehemiah 4:9)

Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: May those who love you be secure. (Psalm 122:6)

Pray continually. (1 Thessalonians 5:17)

But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you. (Matthew 5:44)

The end of all things is near. Therefore be alert and of sober mind so that you may pray. (1 Peter 4:7)

Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up. (Luke 18:1)

I urge you, brothers and sisters, by our Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. (Romans 15:30)

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land. (2 Chronicles 7:14)

Therefore I want the men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or disputing. (1 Timothy 2:8)

For the eyes of the Lord are on the righteous and his ears are attentive to their prayer, but the face of the Lord is against those who do evil. (1 Peter 3:12)

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. (Philippians 4:6)

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective. (James 5:16)

Then you will call on me and come and pray to me, and I will listen to you. You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. (Jeremiah 29:12-1)

Truth Treasures

I am blessed and surrounded by God's favor (Psalm 5:12).

The Lord is at my right hand, I will not be shaken (Psalm 16:8).

I am the apple of God's eye (Psalm 17:8).

Because I look to the Lord, I am radiant and my face is never covered with shame
(Psalm 34:5).

I am fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14).

Nothing can separate me from the love of God in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:38-39).

Because I love God, He is working things out in my life for my good and His purpose
(Romans 8:28).

The Lord delights in me; He will quiet me with His love and rejoice over me with
singing (Zephaniah 3:17).

The Lord is the potter and I am the clay – the work of His hands (Isaiah 64:8).

My name is engraved on the palm of God's hands (Isaiah 49:16).

I am God's treasured possession (Deuteronomy 7:6).

God has lavished His great love on me and I am His child (1 John 3:1).

I have been called out of darkness and into God's wonderful light to praise Him
(1 Peter 2:9)

I have been marked and sealed with the Holy Spirit who is a deposit guaranteeing my
inheritance (Ephesians 1:13-14).

Christ set me free so that I could live in freedom (Galatians 5:13).

God is my Father and I am His child and He has made me His heir (Galatians 4:6-7).

The Lord is with me to fight for me against my enemies to give me victory
(Deuteronomy 20:4).

God gives me His abounding grace so that I can abound in His good work
(2 Corinthians 9:8).

God's grace is enough for me because His power is made perfect in my weakness
(2 Corinthians 12:9).

I have been given every spiritual blessing in Christ (Ephesians 1:3).

God chose me and I am holy and blameless in His sight (Ephesians 1:4).

God's word is in my mouth and in my heart so I may obey it (Deuteronomy 30:14).

I am no longer controlled by my sinful nature but by the Spirit of God (Romans 8:9)

I am a New Creation! I have been given a new life in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17).

God's love for me is great; His compassions never fail; they are new every morning
(Lamentations 3:22-23).

The Lord has given me authority to overcome all the power of my enemy (Luke
10:19).

God showed he loved me by sending Jesus to die for me when I was living in sin
(Romans 5:8).

There is no condemnation for me because I am in Christ (Romans 8:1).

I have been given the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16).

I have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love and a sound mind
(2 Timothy 1:7).

I am God's workmanship, created for good works (Ephesians 2:10).

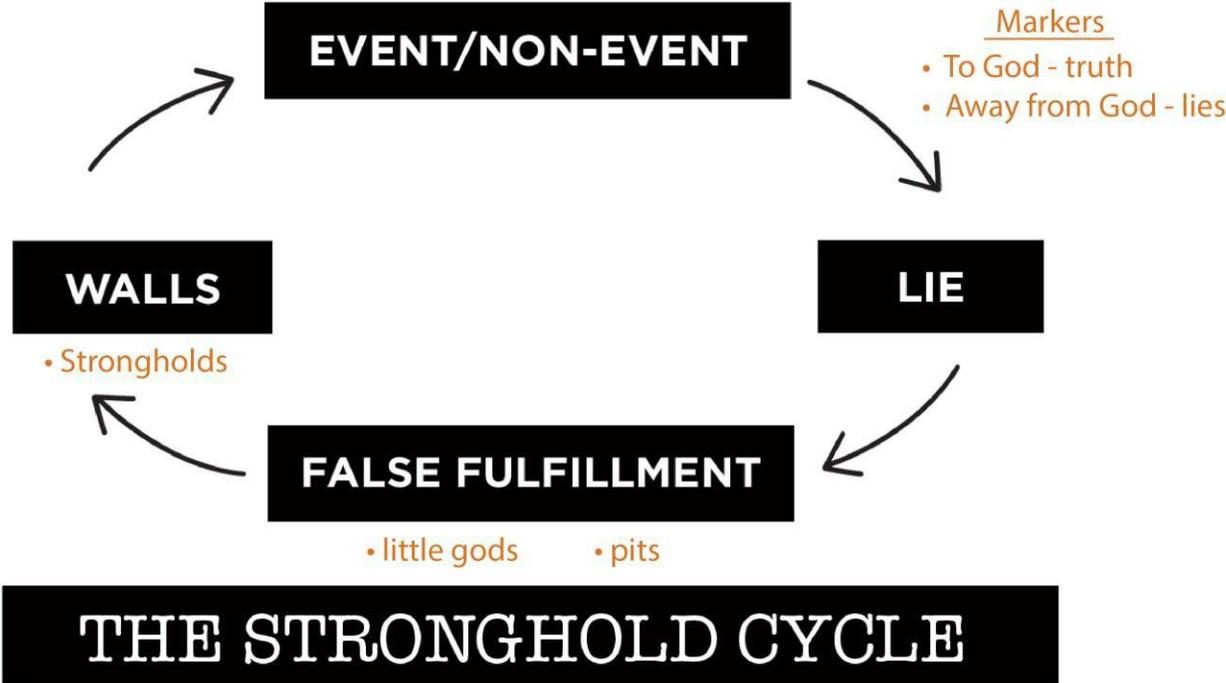
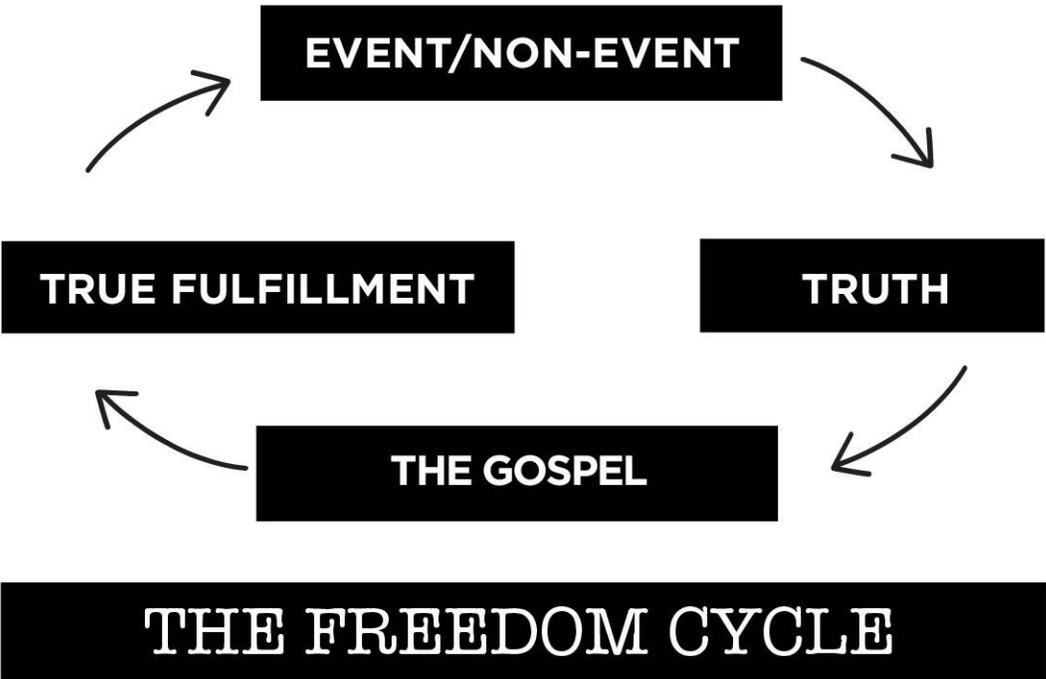
God loves me so much that He sent His only Son to die for me (John 3:16).

Daily Prayer

Father, I declare that You are a good and faithful God, so today I choose to place my hope and my confidence in You. I receive and welcome Your presence, and I thank You for promising that You will never leave me nor forsake me. Your promises are always true. So even when I feel alone, I will choose to believe in Your constant, abiding presence. I am not alone. Thank You for holding me close to You.

Thank You for the freedom You have given me in Jesus. You have washed me clean and filled me with Your Holy Spirit. Help me to keep my heart open and turned to You. Help me to abide in You, confident in Your promise I will bear much fruit. Because You have loved me, forgiven me, and saved me, I reject and renounce wicked and shameful ways. I will run in the path of Your commands, for You have set my heart free. I will look to You alone as my source for truth, and I reject every lie from the enemy. You alone are my comforter, my strength, and my shield. I renounce all of my efforts to comfort or protect myself. My life is now hidden in Christ, and I trust that You will finish the good work You have begun in me.

Lord, I realize my struggle is not against flesh and blood, so I choose to put on the full armor of God. I will stand against the devil's schemes knowing that the One who is in me is greater than the one who is in the world. Lord Jesus, thank You for Your promise that nothing and no one can snatch me from Your hand. I offer myself to You as a living sacrifice, and I ask You to transform me by renewing my mind. Thank You for loving me and setting me free. I love You, and I praise You. In the powerful name of Jesus, Amen.



A Prayer for Sexual Healing

Healing for your sexuality is available; this is a very hopeful truth! But you must realize that your sexuality is deep and core to your nature as a human being. Therefore, sexual brokenness can be one of the deepest types of brokenness a person might experience. You must take your healing and restoration seriously. This guided prayer will help immensely. You may find you need to pray through it a few times in order to experience a lasting freedom.

A bit of explanation on the reasons for the prayer: first, when we misuse our sexuality through sin, we give Satan an open door to oppress us in our sexuality. A man who uses pornography will find himself in a very deep struggle with lust; a woman who was sexually promiscuous before marriage may find herself wrestling with sexual temptation years afterward. So it is important to bring our sexuality under the lordship (and therefore protection) of the Lord Jesus Christ and seek his cleansing of our sexual sins.

Second, sexual brokenness—whether through abuse of our sexuality by our own actions or by the actions of others—can create sexual difficulties and also opens the door for the enemy to oppress us. Quite often forgiveness is needed—both the confidence that we are forgiven by the Lord and the choice we make to forgive others. This will prove immensely freeing.

Let us begin by bringing our lives and sexuality under the lordship of Jesus Christ:

Lord Jesus Christ, I confess here and now that you are my Creator (John 1:3) and therefore the creator of my sexuality. I confess that you are also my Savior, that you have ransomed me with your blood (1 Corinthians 15:3, Matthew 20:28). I have been bought with the blood of Jesus Christ; my life and my body belong to God (1 Corinthians 6:19–20). Jesus, I present myself to you now to be made whole and holy in every way, including in my sexuality. You ask us to present our bodies to you as living sacrifices (Romans 12:1) and the parts of our bodies as instruments of righteousness (Romans 6:13). I do this now. I present my body, my sexuality [“as a man” or “as a woman”] and I present my sexual nature to you. I consecrate my sexuality to Jesus Christ.

Next, you need to renounce the ways you have misused your sexuality. The more specific you can be, the more helpful this will be. God created your sexuality for pleasure and joy within the context of the marriage covenant. Sexual activity outside of marriage can be very damaging to a person and to their relationships (1 Corinthians 6:18–20). What you want to do in this part of the prayer is confess and renounce all sexual sin—for example, sexual intimacy outside of marriage: not only

intercourse, but other forms of sexual intimacy such as mutual masturbation or oral sex. Many people assume these “don’t really count as sin” because they didn’t result in actual intercourse; however, there was sexual stimulation and intimacy outside marriage. Keep in mind there is the “spirit of the law” and the “letter of the law.” What matters are issues of heart and mind as well as body. Other examples of sins to renounce would be extramarital affairs, the use of pornography, and sexual fantasies. You may know exactly what you need to confess and renounce; you may need to ask God’s help to remember. Take your time here. As memories and events come to mind, confess and renounce them. For example: “Lord Jesus I ask your forgiveness for my sins of masturbation and using pornography. I renounce those sins in your name.” After you have confessed your sins, go on with the rest of the prayer.

Jesus, I ask your Holy Spirit to help me now remember, confess, and renounce my sexual sins. [Pause. Listen. Remember. Confess and renounce.] Lord Jesus, I ask your forgiveness for every act of sexual sin. You promised that if we confess our sins, you are faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). I ask you to cleanse me of my sexual sins now; cleanse my body, soul, and spirit, cleanse my heart and mind and will, cleanse my sexuality. Thank you for forgiving me and cleansing me. I receive your forgiveness and cleansing. I renounce every claim I have given Satan to my life or sexuality through my sexual sins. Those claims are now broken by the cross and blood of Jesus Christ (Colossians 2:13– 15).

Next comes forgiveness. It is vital that you forgive both yourself and those who have harmed you sexually. LISTEN CAREFULLY: forgiveness is a choice; we often have to make the decision to forgive long before we feel forgiving. We realize this can be difficult, but the freedom you will find will be worth it! Forgiveness is not saying, “It didn’t hurt me.” Forgiveness is not saying, “It didn’t matter.” Forgiveness is the act whereby we pardon the person, we release them from all bitterness and judgment. We give them to God to deal with.

Lord Jesus, I thank you for offering me total and complete forgiveness. I receive that forgiveness now. I choose to forgive myself for all of my sexual wrongdoing. I also choose to forgive those who have harmed me sexually. [Be specific here; name those people and forgive them.] I release them to you. I release all my anger and judgment toward them. Come, Lord Jesus, into the pain they caused me, and heal me with your love.

This next step involves breaking the unhealthy emotional and spiritual bonds formed with other people through sexual sin. One of the reasons the Bible takes sexual sin so seriously is because of the damage it does. Another reason is because

of the bonds it forms with people, bonds meant to be formed only between husband and wife (see 1 Corinthians 6:15–20). One of the marvelous effects of the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ is that it breaks these unhealthy bonds. “May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me and I to the world” (Galatians 6:14).

I now bring the cross of my Lord Jesus Christ between me and every person with whom I have been sexually intimate. [Name them specifically whenever possible. Also name those who have abused you sexually.] I break all sexual, emotional, and spiritual bonds with [name if possible, or just “that girl in high school” if you can’t remember her name]. I keep the cross of Christ between us.

Many people experience negative consequences through the misuse of their sexuality. Those consequences might be lingering guilt (even after confession) or repeated sexual temptation.

Consequences might also be the inability to enjoy sex with their spouse. It will help to bring the work of Christ here as well. Many people end up making unhealthy “agreements” about sex or themselves, about men or women or intimacy, because of the damage they have experienced through sexual sin (their sin, or the sin of someone against them). You will want to ask Christ what those agreements are and break them!

Lord Jesus, I ask you to reveal to me every “agreement” I have made about my sexuality or this specific struggle. [An example would be “I will always struggle with this” or “I can never get free” or “I don’t deserve to enjoy sex now” or “My sexuality is dirty.” Pause and let Jesus reveal those agreements to you. Then break them.] I break this agreement [name it] in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ, and I renounce every claim I have given it in my life. I renounce [name what the struggle is—“the inability to have an orgasm” or “this lingering shame” or “the hatred of my body”]. I bring the cross and blood of Jesus Christ against this [guilt or shame, every negative consequence]. I banish my enemy from my sexuality in the mighty name of the Lord Jesus Christ. I invite the healing presence of Jesus Christ to cleanse me and restore me as a sexual being in fullness of joy and wholeness. I ask you, Jesus, to fill my sexuality with your holiness, to strengthen me and restore me in your name.

Finally, it will prove helpful to consecrate your sexuality to Jesus Christ once more.

Lord Jesus, I now consecrate my sexuality to you in every way. I consecrate my sexual intimacy with my spouse to you. I ask you to cleanse and heal my sexuality and our sexual intimacy in every way. I ask your healing grace to come and free me from all consequences of sexual sin. I ask you to fill my sexuality with your healing love and

goodness. Restore my sexuality in wholeness. Let my spouse and me experience all of the intimacy and pleasure you intended a man and woman to enjoy in marriage. I invite the Spirit of God to fill our marriage bed. I pray all of this in the name of Jesus Christ, my Lord. Amen!!

We could report many, many stories of stunning redemption that have come as a result of individuals and couples praying through this type of prayer. Now remember—sometimes the wounds and consequences take time to heal. You might want to revisit this prayer several times over if lasting healing has not yet taken place. You may recall actions that need confession later; return to this prayer and confess those as well. Some of you will also benefit from seeing a good Christian counselor. Hold fast to these truths:

You, your body, and your sexuality belong to Jesus Christ. He has completely forgiven you. He created your sexuality to be whole and holy. He created your sexuality to be a source of intimacy and joy. Jesus Christ came to seek and save “what was lost” (Luke 19:10), including all that was lost in the blessings he intended through our sexuality!

Prayer for Freedom from Habitual Sins

(from *The Utter Relief of Holiness*)

Renouncing the Sin

Freedom comes only as we bring these unsanctified and unholy places under the rule of Jesus Christ, so that he can possess these very places deeply and truly. Therefore, part of this first step involves sanctifying to Christ the place of bondage. If it's sexual, you sanctify your sexuality to Christ; if it's emotional (as with rage, or fear, or even grief), you sanctify your emotions; if it involves addiction, you sanctify your appetite, your obsession, and your body. At the retreats we do, we walk through this process in prayer, and many people are shocked to realize that they have never taken the first, simple step of sanctifying their sexuality (or emotions, or appetites) to Jesus Christ. But if you want to be free in this place, it must come under the total, intimate, ongoing rule of God.

Lord Jesus, forgive me. I confess I have been offering myself over to sin, and now I am its slave. I renounce it; I renounce my sins. [Be very specific here. For example, "I renounce the ways I have presented my sexuality to sin; I renounce my sexual sins. I present my sexuality to Jesus Christ. I sanctify my sexuality to Jesus Christ. I present the members of my body and my sexuality as instruments of righteousness. I renounce the ways I have presented my appetite and my drinking to sin; I renounce my sins with alcohol. I present my appetite and my drinking to Jesus Christ. I sanctify my body to Jesus Christ."] I renounce every way I have given myself over to sin. I dedicate and I consecrate my life [and this specific area] once more to the rule of Jesus Christ, to be his and his alone. May your atoning blood cover my sins and cleanse me. May your holiness possess me totally and completely.

You will also find it helpful to renounce the "sins of your fathers." Often in these places of lasting bondage you will find that a father (or mother, or brother, or grandparent) struggled with the same issue. The scriptures present to us the reality that sin is often passed down within a family line, and the effects of those sins are also passed down generation to generation (see Exodus 20:5, 34:7, Leviticus 26:39-42, Nehemiah 9:2).

Lord Jesus, I also renounce the sins of my fathers here [or my mother, my grandmother, what have you]. I renounce their sins of [be specific, as in, "their rage, their sexual sins, their alcoholism."] I utterly renounce and break with the sins of my family line. I plead the blood of Christ over those sins, so that they may not have a hold on me. I renounce them and break with them utterly.

Breaking the Stronghold

We begin to break the enemy's hold on us through the presence of "agreements." By this I mean places in our own hearts that have made a deep agreement with a feeling, a thought, a sentence. If you have struggled with something for years now, there are probably agreements along the lines of: "I'll never get free of this," "I am such a \$%#@," "Who cares anyway?" "It's too late," and a host of others. Those are agreements, and they serve as a kind of permission for the enemy to keep you in bondage. So you must break them. In addition to these, there are the agreements with the sin itself: "I am filled with rage," "I am a drunk," "I am gay." They can even "feel" biblical but, friends, you do not want to be making agreements with your sin. You are dead to sin and alive to God. You are the dwelling place of Jesus Christ. You are forgiven and dearly loved. So you must break the agreements you've been making here, in this area. Some will be obvious to you; others require the presence of the Holy Spirit to reveal them.

Spirit of God, search me, know me, reveal to me the agreements I have been making in this area. I renounce those agreements now. [Be very specific.] I renounce the agreement that [What is it? "I'll never get free?" "Rage is just a part of me?" "It's too late?"] I break these agreements in the name of my Lord Jesus Christ. I renounce them. I renounce every claim they have given the enemy in my life. Jesus, my Deliverer, come and break these strongholds. Set me free in this very place.

Lord Jesus, show me every companion agreement operating here. I renounce the agreement that I'm alone, that no one will protect me. I renounce the agreement that I am dirty and disgusting. I renounce every agreement with shame. I renounce the agreement that I can never be forgiven. Spirit, show me what to pray, reveal these agreements.

This is how we undo that dynamic about letting the sun go down on these things and the enemy getting a foothold (Ephesians 4:26-27). Bit by bit you are recovering parts of your heart. You are taking them back from when you gave them away. This erodes the claim that you gave the enemy in your heart. Yes, terrible things may have happened to us, but we are the ones who made these agreements, these resolutions, these vows, and we're not going to see victory in that area until we renounce them.

I will be honest—if you've given your heart over to something many times over, you've given it a good stronghold, and if it is also tangled up in issues of wounds and sin, it's going to take some time to untangle and heal this, but it is worth the work. Don't just bury it. It's worth going into those dark places and those murky waters

and working through it. The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us of everything. Everything.

Having broken the agreements and renounced the sin, we often find that we have to be quite intentional in commanding the enemy to leave. “Submit therefore to God,” wrote James the brother of Jesus, “resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). Much of what we have been doing up to this point is submitting to God, bringing these specific issues under the rule of Jesus by renouncing the sins, breaking the agreements, sanctifying these places back to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Now comes part two of this verse: resist.

I bring the blood of my Lord Jesus Christ right here, in this very place. I renounce every claim I gave the evil one to my life right here, in this very place. And I bring the blood of Christ now against the strongholds and against the spirits operating here. [Sometimes you will need to be firm and specific: I bring the blood of Jesus against all spirits of addiction, of alcoholism, all spirits of rage, of homosexuality, and so on]. I banish these enemies from my life now—from my body, my soul, and my spirit. “Resist the devil and he will flee from you” (James 4:7). I resist the devil here and now and I command these spirits to flee in the name of Jesus Christ my Lord.

Ask the Spirit to guide you. If you will stick with this and let the Holy Spirit guide you, you can be free.

Lord, forgive me for giving place in my heart to resentment, to lust, to anger, to alcohol. Forgive me for giving place in my life to resignation and self-reproach and shame, to fear and doubt and control. I renounce it now. Come, Jesus Christ, and take your rightful place in my heart and in my life here. Come and set me free here, in these very places. I plead your blood over these sins, and I break every hold I gave my enemy here, in the name of Jesus Christ.

As you do this, you erode your enemy’s claims to keep you in bondage. By the way, your enemy is not going to like the fact that you are about to get free. He will try to discourage you from praying like this. He will try to distract you (the phone will ring, you’ll suddenly be hungry, you’ll feel like doing it tomorrow). He’ll try to make you feel like, *this is so stupid, I can’t believe I’m doing this out loud*. He’s going to make you feel like *this isn’t working* or *this isn’t going to work; now I’m becoming one of those nuts*. Just push through all of that.

I bring the work of Jesus Christ once more against you [shame, rage, fear, sexual sin, resignation, etc.] and I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to go to the throne of Jesus Christ in his mighty name. “It is for freedom that Christ has set you free” (Galatians 5:1). I claim my freedom now in the name of Jesus Christ. Jesus, I ask you to sanctify me through and through. May my whole spirit, soul, and body be kept

blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Thessalonians 5:23–24). Sanctify me through and through, in this place, in this issue.

Healing the Brokenness

Now for the best part: the healing. God wants to make you whole and holy. He promises to heal the brokenhearted. So now you invite Jesus in to heal the wound, to love you in this place, to restore your soul, to heal this memory. You invite him into your past.

Lord Jesus, I invite you into my wounds and my brokenness. [Again, don't be vague and general; be very specific.] Jesus, I invite you into the day I was abused. Come into my shattered heart, my shame, come into that moment in my life. I ask you to cleanse me here, to heal my broken heart and make me whole.

Linger in this place in prayer. Listen. Pay attention. Often Jesus will bring up something necessary to your healing. For example, suddenly you feel the anger toward your abuser—Jesus is showing you that you need to forgive.

Jesus, I forgive my brother for abusing me. I release him from my rage and I give him over to you.

Sometimes you'll feel the shame and self-rejection.

Lord Jesus, come into this shame. I renounce self-rejection. I renounce despising myself because of all that has happened. I forgive myself as well. Come and heal me.

Sometimes you will feel the young places in your heart crying out for love or for protection.

Lord Jesus, gather the young and frightened place in my heart into your loving arms. Come and find me here, in these very places. Gather my heart into your love and make me whole.

As you are inviting Jesus into your wounds, what is so very beautiful is the fact that quite often—not every time, but more than you'll expect—Jesus will show you what he is doing; you will see him come. Call it seeing with your mind's eye or Christ using your imagination or seeing with the eyes of your heart or your spirit—however you want to describe it. Often you will see Christ come back into your past. He may take you by the hand and lead you out of that room. You might see him step between you and the one who wounded you, or he might simply tell you, "You are forgiven, you are safe, I love you."

Healing doesn't necessarily have to be dramatic. Oftentimes it is very quiet. Jesus simply comes as we invite him to, and though we may not "see" him or "hear" him, he comes, and we sense a new peace or quietness in our soul. Our heart feels better somehow. The important thing is for us to give him permission to these wounded places, invite his healing love, and wait in prayer for him to come. Do this with each memory of wounding, with each event (ask the Holy Spirit to guide you). Often I will pray Isaiah 61 as I do this:

Lord Jesus, you have come to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor and the day of vengeance of our God. Come and heal my brokenness right here, Lord; free me from this captivity, release me from all darkness, bring your favor here in my soul and bring your vengeance here against my enemies. Lord, you came to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion—to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. I ask you to do this in me—comfort me where I am hurting; bestow on me a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. Come in this memory, in this wound. I receive you here.

Many times Jesus simply says, "Let me love you." We need to open our hearts up to his love. As we do, it allows him to come to this very place. Linger there and listen; ask for the healing grace of Jesus Christ over and over again. He comes, dear friends, he comes.