



breakthroughs

**finding freedom and true
fulfillment in jesus**

LESSON 6: PITS

We learned last week that markers give us direction in life and point us in one of two directions. Markers that are written by the enemy point us down a destructive path and are based on lies. Markers that are written by God are from His Word and point us toward Him. We also learned that markers from the enemy are arrows that the enemy uses to target places in our hearts where we have experienced pain.

Looking at the deception that is in our hearts and life is difficult. We learn at a young age to hide our pain and hiding is a form of deception because when we hide we are avoiding the truth. When we don't know and accept how much God loves us and what His grace means for us, hiding will seem safer than facing the truth. This week, we will look at what God's Word tells us about His love for us and about His grace. **As we begin to understand and accept God's love and grace, it will give us the courage to face what we try desperately to hide.**

Before we dive into this week's lesson, please take a few minutes and write a prayer to God. Ask God to help you open your heart and mind to His truth. Ask Him to give you courage to face the deception in your life and walk away from it.

For a quick review of last week's lesson, please answer the following question. What is the significance of markers when we are standing at a crossroad?

Hopefully your answer included that when standing at a crossroad, the markers we follow will either lead us into darkness and bondage or they will lead us to healing and freedom. For us to experience victory in our journey, we must learn to daily identify the markers set along our path. We also must pay attention to the arrows on the battlefield of our minds. The material that you are learning in this workbook may be very new to you. It can feel overwhelming if you expect to remember all of this and apply it to your life immediately. It takes time to learn to walk this new path. **God will help you and the walk will get easier. Keep asking God to help you and He will help you.**

PITS

There are several definitions of a pit and each definition helps give us a mental picture. A pit can be defined as:

- 1) a naturally formed or excavated hole in the ground
- 2) a covered or concealed excavation in the ground, serving as a trap
- 3) a cistern once full of water, now empty
- 4) a place of hopeless doom

This week we will take a look at our path. Our goal is to see the pits located on our path and how we can avoid stepping into them. As we look at pits, you may discover that you are currently in a pit. Perhaps you don't even need to look any further because you already know that you are in a pit and you just want to know how to get out of it. We will learn how to get out of the pit, but this week we will focus more on

how we get into pits so that we can avoid future ones. We absolutely can wise up and learn how to keep our feet from stepping into traps that result in falling into a pit. It does not matter how many pits we've been in during our lives, we can learn to recognize them before our feet step into them. This hope is one that I can personally share as my feet were once a magnet to pits. If there was a pit along the path, then my feet would find it. **Thank God that He sets our feet free to follow Him.**

There are two very different ways that we can enter a pit. One way is voluntarily walking into it, and the other way is being involuntarily pushed into a pit. Please read the following examples:

EXAMPLE of being pushed into a pit:

A little girl is pushed into a pit of darkness when her father robs her of what is sacred by sexually abusing her. As the little girl sits in the dark pit, the enemy writes markers upon her heart that say "it was your fault", "you are dirty", "you are a bad girl." The little girl believes these lies, because it matches the pain that she feels within her heart. This little girl grows up and finds herself struggling with unhealthy relationships with men, self-hatred and lots of 'little gods'. She wonders how she got to this place in life. She never stopped to notice all of the markers along the journey. She just followed the markers' direction.

EXAMPLE of being pushed into a pit:

A little boy comes home to an empty house again. He doesn't understand why he was the only boy in his class whose parents didn't come to watch his class play. When his father comes home from work that night he runs to see him and tell him about his class play. His father interrupts him and tells him "plays are stupid and will never get him anywhere in life." The little boy walks back to his bedroom, which now feels like a dark pit. The enemy joins him and writes markers that tell him, "I will never amount to anything in life," and "I don't matter," and "I am so stupid." The markers direct him on a mission in life. He will prove his father wrong. Even if he has to work 12 hours a day and spend little time with his children, the mission will be accomplished. The little boy sets out on a course in life to prove that he is significant.

EXAMPLE of following a marker into a pit:

The markers tell me ‘not to trust people.’ The markers tell me that ‘I can’t let people really know who I am or they would reject me.’ The markers tell me that ‘if I tell God or anyone how I really feel, it would make things worse.’ The markers tell me that I have to deal with these feelings of insecurity, loneliness and at times self-hatred on my own. The markers tell me that ‘if I was a better Christian that I would not have these issues.’ The markers all point to further isolation. Who would have known one fight with a friend or one poor decision at work would cause a person to feel like giving up? Who would have ever imagined that the attractive, successful and popular one could be sitting alone in a dark pit? The enemy takes his seat next to you in the dark and whispers ‘you are a failure.’

EXAMPLE of following a marker into a pit:

He knew he should have listened when his pastor challenged the men to join an accountability group. He really thought he could handle his struggle with pornography. He had been attending church more regularly and the problems at work had gotten better. He was even beginning to connect more with his wife and children. Things were going in the right direction. Why did that crazy advertisement have to end up on his computer? At first it was just a peek out of curiosity but now he can’t get the image out of his head. He decides that if he just takes a few minutes to look and get it out of his system he can get back on track. As he sits alone in a dark pit he tells himself that he is an awful husband and father. He is gripped with shame and prays that nobody will ever find out his secret.

You may or may not be able to relate to these examples. However, most people are either pushed into pits or walk into pits along life’s journey.

Write about a time when you were pushed into a pit.

Write about a time when you walked (followed markers) into a pit.

Pits and 'little gods'

The experiences that lead us into a pit may differ, but the pit itself feels the same. A person sitting in a dark pit feels alone, afraid, defeated and hopeless. A pit can be so painful that a person will try anything to pull himself out of it. This is where the enemy's markers connect with the 'little gods.' After writing some markers on our heart, he presents us with a 'little god', which he tells us will help us get out of the pit.

In our pit we are confronted with:

- 1) Just drink this and you will feel better
- 2) Just take a pill one last time to get you out of this, so you can get through the day
- 3) Just look at a few of these pictures... it won't harm anybody
- 4) Just buy a couple of things and it won't be a huge deal
- 5) Just call _____, and they will fix this
- 6) Just keep working so you don't have to think about it
- 7) Just eat this and you can start a diet tomorrow

Circle the numbers of the things above you turn to when you feel angry, defeated, and alone. These are possibly a dark pit.

What other 'little gods' attempt to get you out of your pits?

Not many people will step into a pit and sit with us and try to help us out. It's too difficult for them, and we usually don't really want their help. A pit is a lonely place, so we tend to find people who are sitting in their own pits so that we are not alone. Pits can become a place where very unhealthy but comfortable friendships and relationships are formed. This can make getting out of our pits difficult because we often leave those people behind when we step out of our pits. When we step out of a pit, we may not have other people waiting to greet us and that is scary. Breakthroughs is a place where you have people waiting for you as you step out of the pit. God created us to connect with Him and with other people, but we need connections with people who want to live outside of pits.

Who do you have in your life that will encourage you to stay out of the pits in your life?

Do you have people in your life who encourage you to stay in the pits in your life? If so, ask God to help you know what changes need to take place so that you are not pulled back into a pit by these people.

Psalm 40:2 tells us:

“He lifted me out of my slimy pit, out of the mud and mire; He set my feet on a rock and gave me a firm place to stand.”

How does God describe our pits?

How difficult do you think it is to get ourselves out of a slimy pit?

God describes our pits as slimy for a purpose. It is impossible to pull ourselves out of a slimy pit. As soon as we climb up a few inches we are destined to slip back down. This is for good reason. We are never intended to pull our self out of a pit. God’s hand is the only One who can pull us out of our pits and keep us out of our pits.

Look back at Psalm 40:2. Where does God place us after He pulls us out of the pit?

“He brought me out into a broad place; he rescued me, because he delighted in me.” (Psalm 18:19 ESV).

“He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of his beloved Son.” (Colossians 1:13 ESV).

How do you think God sees you after He pulls you out of one of your pits?

How do you view yourself after God has pulled you out of a pit?

How do you think your experiences with your father/mother affect how you answered the last two questions?

If we had parents that showed us unconditional love when we made mistakes, then it is easier to accept that God's love for us is unconditional. If we had parents that were distant, critical and withdrew their love for us when we messed up, then we probably view God as distant, critical and unloving when we mess up. We have markers that point us away from the truth.

How do you think the markers in your life affect your understanding of how God responds to you after you've been in a pit?

God's Word tells us that:

“He brought me out into a spacious place; He rescued me because He delighted in me” (Psalm 18:19 CSB).

It is important to recognize that when we are pulled out of the pit we are not in the best condition. We've been sitting in a dark and filthy place. Humanly speaking, there is nothing delightful about us when we are in a pit or when we step out of a pit. However, Psalm 18:19 tells us that 'God finds us delightful.' Of course, God is not delighted that we are in a pit, but His love for us does not depend upon our actions or our conditions. God's love for us is completely unconditional.

Markers and Sin

The word 'sin' can create a negative response in us for a variety of reasons. We can associate the word 'sin' with painful experiences and perhaps have been hurt by people who pointed out sin in our lives. We may even immediately feel a cloak of shame around us when we even hear that word. God's plan is to heal us and free us from the power of sin in our lives, but we need to face sin and not hide from it regardless of how we feel about it. This means we need to ask God to help us and teach us what His Word tells us about sin.

When we **SIN** it will make a huge impact on us which **MARKERS** we choose to follow.

- 1) The Marker from the enemy – condemnation
- 2) The Markers from God – forgiveness and grace

CONDEMNATION

We are told in Romans 8:1 (ESV):

“There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”

When we feel condemned after we mess up (sin), it is not from God. God disapproves of our sin but He does NOT disapprove of us. Condemnation is a personal attack against the person – not the action. In other words, to condemn a person means to reject strongly and seek to punish a person.

The reason that God does not condemn us is because the punishment that we deserve as a result of our sins was placed upon Christ.

“Surely He took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God, smitten by Him, and afflicted. But He was pierced for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon Him, and by His wounds we are healed”
(Isaiah 53:4-5).

When we follow arrows and fall into a pit and turn to ‘little gods,’ we deserve harsh punishment. God is Holy and payment for sin is required in order to receive forgiveness. The payment was made. It was made at the Cross. The payment for all of our sins (past, present, future) was paid for by the brutal death of Jesus on the Cross. The enemy (Satan) knows this, and he hates it. He will grab as many markers as he can fit in his hands and drop them at our feet when we sin. Satan can’t do one thing to change what happened at the Cross. But Satan will do any and everything he can to keep our eyes off the Cross. When we sin, it is a perfect time for him to attempt to fill our minds with lies that will cause us to feel condemned. He hopes that we will turn and run from God.

Consider your own life. How do you feel after you sin? What kind of thoughts do you have about yourself and God after you sin?

How do you think God’s marker in Isaiah 53:4-5 could affect the steps you choose to take after you sin?

FORGIVENESS AND GRACE

It hurts the heart of God when we sin. It hurts our hearts and oftentimes other people's hearts when we sin. Scripture tells us that God hates sin. There are consequences when we sin and depending upon the sin, those consequences can be severe. This does not change the meaning of Isaiah 53:4-5. The payment for sin was paid in full. However, we are not exempt from the consequences of following bad arrows and turning to 'little gods.'

Forgiveness means that we are pardoned for our offenses and excused from the payment for a debt that we owe.

Grace has several specific meanings in scripture. The general meaning of the word grace is "undeserved acceptance and love received from another, granted by a superior to an inferior."

Forgiveness and grace are partners. God forgives us (pardons us from sin and has made the payment through the death of His Son) out of the abundance of His grace (giving us unconditional love and acceptance that we don't deserve). In order for us to receive forgiveness and grace we must:

- 1) Acknowledge that we need it and,
- 2) Ask for it.

When we ignore our sins and pretend that we don't need God's grace and forgiveness, we are NOT following some of the most precious and life-saving markers God has ever given us.

Please read the following markers from God's Word.

"For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, and are justified by His grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus." (Romans 3:23-24 ESV)

“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 John 1:9 ESV)

Both of these verses speak of our sins and our need for God’s grace and forgiveness.

In order for us to find freedom from the pain that is caused from following the enemy’s markers, seeking after little gods and the dark pits in our lives, we **MUST** acknowledge that we have sin in our lives. We will never experience forgiveness and grace if we don’t see our need for it. We will also never experience forgiveness and grace if we believe that God would rather condemn us than free us.

Please take some time in prayer. Ask God to show you what markers you focus on when you sin. List those markers below.

Remember that God loves you and wants to forgive you of ALL of your sins. Ask God to show you the sins that you need to confess to Him, and list them on the space provided. If you are not comfortable listing them on paper... then, just voice them aloud to God. List or voice each sin aloud and ask God to forgive you. After confessing each sin, then ask God to forgive you and to help you accept His forgiveness.

Note: Take all the time that you need to complete this prayer. You can add to the list as God reveals things to you in the days ahead.

We all experience pain in life. We will visit pits along the journey. It is to God's glory and our best interest to learn how to get out of pits quickly. It certainly is not God's will for us to be in pits, but He can use our time in them, and our journey out of them, to teach us more about His forgiveness and grace.

It is important to understand that the darkness of a pit affects our vision. We don't see well in the dark. Our minds and hearts are easy targets for the enemy when we aren't seeing things clearly. He will often come with pen in hand, ready to create markers that have the ability to set the rest of the course of our lives down a destructive path.

If we want to shorten our time in the pits and avoid many of them that are along the path, then we must CHOOSE to think and believe the markers that are written by God while in a pit, regardless of how we FEEL. In other words, the emotions that we have while in a pit cannot direct us or we will never get out of the pit. We must be determined to focus our thoughts on the markers that point us to God.

In closing, please read the following words from God and write down what God is telling you about your darkness and your pit AND His forgiveness and grace.

Some sat in darkness and in the shadow of death, prisoners in affliction and in irons, for they had rebelled against the words of God, and spurned the counsel of the Most High. So he bowed their hearts down with hard labor; they fell down, with none to help. Then they cried to the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them from their distress. He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and burst their bonds apart. Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wondrous works to the children of man! For He shatters the doors of bronze and cuts in two the bars of iron.

(Psalm 107:10-16 ESV).

My Prayer

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).