

**Joni Eareckson Tada,
Suffering & Sexual Abuse**



With Tim Keller, A. W Pink & John Gill

Joni Eareckson Tada has never suffered sexual abuse, but she has suffered physical abuse to her body as a result of the accident which left her in a wheel chair. Joni Eareckson Tada has been living with the ongoing effects on that moment in time when through no fault of her own her world changed forever. Joni Eareckson Tada is an inspiration to all women who are suffering the trauma of childhood sexual abused because she too lives with the physical and emotion scares of her trauma.

Joni can give you hope because she has learnt to rejoice in God through her pain and suffering and to lean heavily on King Jesus her strong tower and defender. Through learning to live with her trauma as a vital Christian she is being molded into His image – to be fit for heaven where there is no more pain or sorry or death. You too can become like Join If you have been sexually abused as a child come. The Lord loving says to you His precious hurting daughter;

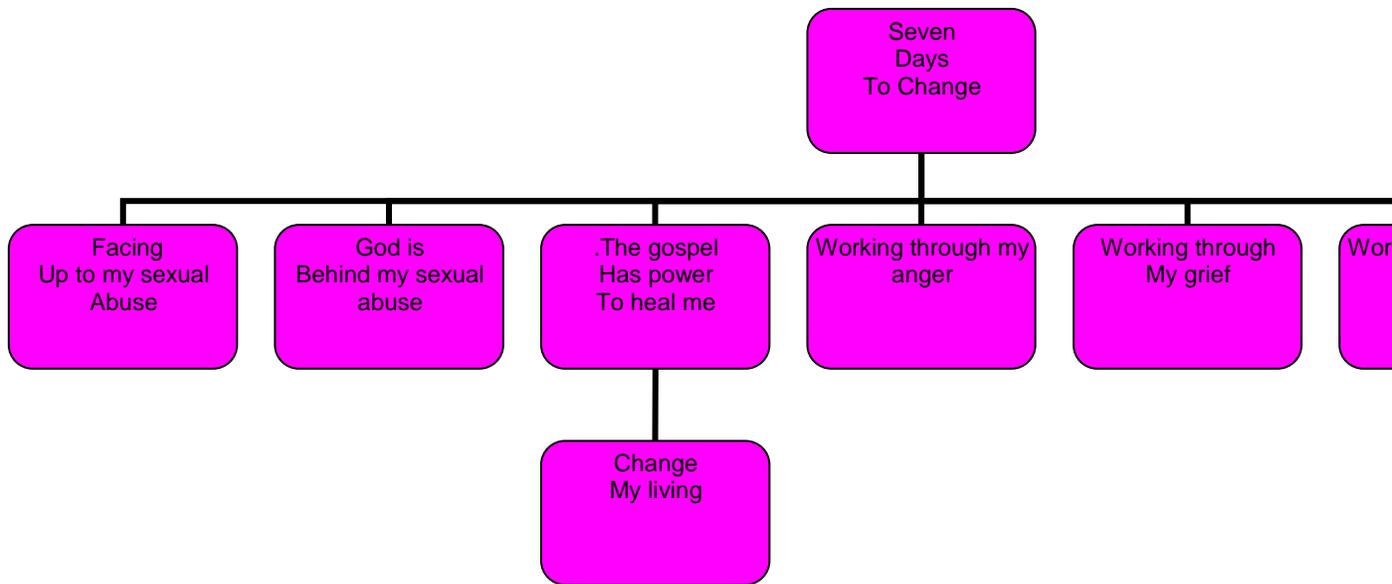
“For I know the plans I have for you, declares the LORD, plans for wholeness and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope.” Jeremiah 29:11

“I can do all things through him who strengthens me.” Philippians 4:13

Are you a sexually abused Christian women or man? God has plans for you! To be a whole thinker who has both a future and hope. If it was true for the suffering Paul it can be true for you. On a moment by moment basis you too can know Christ's strength in all the areas of your life through His mighty resurrection power. God not only plans for you He has brought you into relationship with Jesus to make you strong in God in the midst of you weakness that is childhood sexual abuse.

Let's Pray

“Father God thank you that I am your child. Help me now by the power of your Holy Spirit and the Word of God to begin the healing from my sexual abuse. Oh Father I so desperately need this more than anything. You made me and you know me better than I know myself. Father I don't know why you allowed this terrible thing to come into my life. What I do know is that I long to be healed so I can grow in my relationship with you and your Son Jesus Christ. Thank you that Jesus died for my offenses and that he has set me free from sin. That He brought me into a new loving relationship with you. Thank for the cleansing, healing, forgiving power of the gospel. Thank you that you have made me a new thinker in Jesus and given me you're Holy Spirit. Oh Father help me now to be very brave and honest and open to be healed and changed and grow through the abuse I suffered as a child.” Amen



Day One - Facing up to my sexual abuse

The harsh reality is that if this is the first time you have faced up to being sexually abused as a child, you have been living with it's affects whether you are aware of it or not. Here are some of the effects you may be experiencing;

- Guilt;
- Repressed anger;
- Depression;
- Trust issues;
- Fear;
- Feelings of being “second hand”
- Boundaries problems;
- Role confusion;
- Low self esteem

These can be expanded upon and separated into two broad practical categories;

Emotional Problems	Sexual Symptoms
1. Strong anger & rage that erupts suddenly	1. Lack sexual desire - inhibitions
2. Strong mood swings – From depression to hyper activity	2. Dysfunctional sexual relations
3. Deep chronic depression	3. Intercourse is painful
4. Forgotten youars, months or days	4. You don't enjoy certain sexual activity (i.e Oral Sex)
5. Extreme anxiety – fear or phobias	5. You are promiscuous
6. Insomnia, sleep walking, waking same time each night	6. You are attracted to your sex
7. Addiction to food, drugs, alcohol	7. You are attracted to harmful sexual activity – Pornography & Prostitution

8. Obsessive/compulsive behavior- over-eating/shopping/cleaning	8. Negative reactions to public displays of Affection – Nudity – Skimpy Dress
9. Battling with anorexia or bulimia	9. You use sexual manipulation to get what you want
10. Flashbacks & Hallucinations which seem real	10. You are addicted to sex
11. Suicidal – Self Manipulation or Substance abuse	

One or several of these could be present. In reading these symptoms you may be saying, “You! This is me!” At the end of this article who gives advice on how to find trained counselors who can help you work through your abuse to Christian healing.

1. I Feel so Unworthy – How can I be whole?

It’s natural to feel dirty or unworthy and therefore ask, “Am I less of a thinker because I was abused as a child?” The answer is NO! It is common for those who commit sexual abuse to make their victims feel guilty. They blame shift to deceive yourselves and not face up to their terrible crimes.

As a child you probably lived in fear.

2. Is it my fault?

3. How can I overcome my abuse?

Four Big Questions

1. Why was I sexually abused?

Day Three - God is behind your sexual abuse

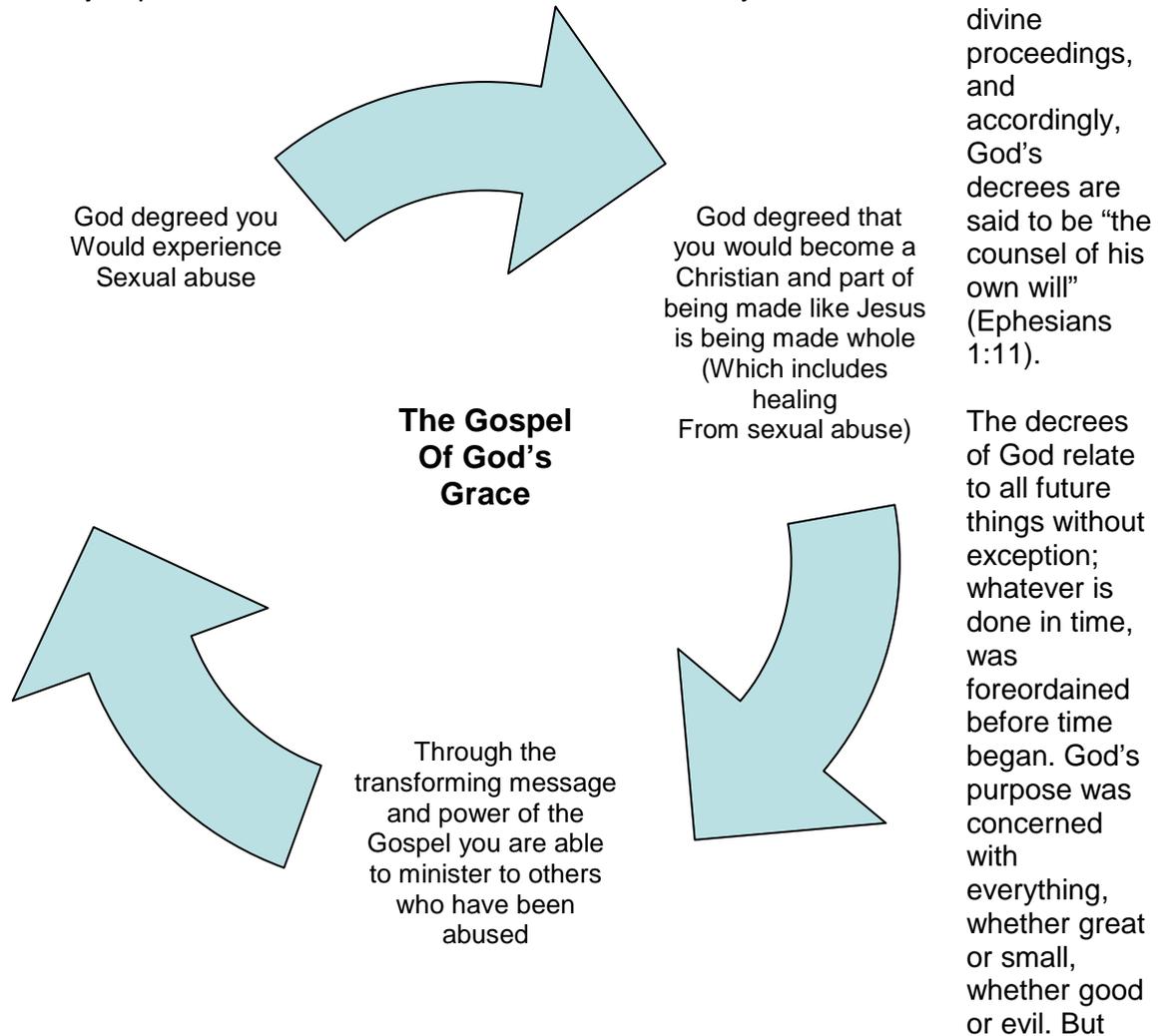
To suggest that God was behind my sexual abuse may sound strange or even horrifying. But if we step back for a second and consider the big picture and our place in God’s plan we are amazed that God through such an evil and painful event has much good to come from it and that ultimately in is working for my good. (Romans 8:28; Ephesians 3:11)

Author A.W Pink has some insight things to say about God working things for our good.

“Because our minds are only capable of thinking of successive revolutions, as thoughts and occasions arise, or in reference to the various objects of His decree, being many, they seem to us to require a distinct purpose for each. But an infinite understanding does not proceed by steps, but from one stage to another:

“Known unto God are all His works, from the beginning of the world” (Acts 15:18).

The Scriptures mention the decrees of God in many passages, and in a variety of terms. The word “decree” is found in Psalm 2:7. In Ephesians 3:11 we see His “eternal purpose;” in Acts 2:23, His “determinate counsel and foreknowledge;” in Ephesians 1:9, the mystery of His “will;” in Romans 8:29 that He also did “predestinate;” in Ephesians 1:9, His “good pleasure.” God’s decrees are called His “counsel” to signify they are consummately wise. They are called God’s “will” to show He was under no control, but acted according to His own pleasure. When a man’s will is the rule of his conduct, it is usually capricious and unreasonable; but wisdom is always associated with will in the



with reference to the latter we must be careful to state that while God is the Orderer and Controller of sin, He is not the Author of it in the same way that He is the Author of good. Sin could not proceed from a Holy God by positive and direct creation, but only by decretive permission and negative action. God’s decree, as comprehensive as His government, extends to all creatures and events. It was concerned about our life and death; about our state in time, and our state in eternity. As God works all things after the counsel of His own will, we learn from His works what His counsel is (was), as we judge an architect’s plan by inspecting the building erected under his direction. God did not merely decree to make man, place him upon the earth, then leave him to his own uncontrolled guidance. Instead, He fixed all the circumstances in the lot of individuals, and all the particulars which comprise the history

of the human race from commencement to close. He did not merely decree that general laws should be established for the government of the world, but He settled the application of those laws to all particular cases. Our days are numbered, and so are the hairs of our heads.

We may learn what is the extent of the divine decrees from the dispensations of providence in which they are executed. The care of Providence reaches to the most insignificant creatures, and the most minute events — the death of a sparrow, the fall of a hair.

Let us now consider some of the properties of the divine decrees.

First, they are *eternal*. To suppose any of them to be made in time, is to suppose that some new occasion has occurred, some unforeseen event or combination of circumstances has arisen, which has induced the Most High to form a new resolution. This would argue that the knowledge of the God is limited, and that He grows wiser in the progress of time — which would be horrible blasphemy. No man who believes that the divine understanding is infinite, comprehending the past, the present, and the future, will ever assent to the erroneous doctrine of temporal decrees. God is not ignorant of future events which will be executed by human volitions; He has foretold them in innumerable instances, and prophecy is but the manifestation of His eternal prescience. Scripture affirms that believers were chosen in Christ before the world began (Ephesians 1:4), yes, that grace was “given” to them then (2 Timothy 1:19).

Second, the decrees of God are *wise*. Wisdom is shown in the selection of the best possible ends and the fittest means to accomplish them. That this character belongs to the decrees of God is evident from what we know of them. They are disclosed to us by their execution, and every proof of wisdom in the works of God is a proof of the wisdom of the plan, in conformity to which they are performed. As the psalmist declared,

“O LORD how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all” (Psalm 104:24).

It is indeed but a very small part of them which falls under our observation, yet, we ought to proceed here as we do in other cases, and judge of the whole by the specimen, of what is unknown by what is known. He who sees the workings of admirable skill in the parts of a machine which he has an opportunity to examine is naturally led to believe that the other parts are equally admirable. In like manner should we satisfy our minds as to God’s

Jonathan Edwards said: Whether God has decreed all things that ever come to pass or not, all that own the being of a God, own that He knows all things beforehand. Now, it is self-evident that if He knows all things beforehand, He either doth approve of them or doth not approve of

works when doubts obtrude themselves upon us, and repel the objections which may be suggested by something we cannot reconcile to our notions of what is good and wise. When we reach the bounds of the finite and gaze toward the mysterious realm of the infinite, let us exclaim,

“O, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!” (Romans 11:33).

Finally, attempt to assume and then contemplate the opposite. To deny the divine decrees would be to predicate a world and all its concerns regulated by undesigned chance or blind fate. Then what peace, what assurance, what comfort would there be for our poor hearts and minds? What refuge would there be to fly to in the hour of trial? None at all. There would be nothing better than the black darkness and abject horror of atheism. How thankful we should be that everything is determined by infinite wisdom and goodness! What praise and gratitude are due unto God for His divine decrees. Because of them,

“We know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose” (Romans 8:28).

Well may we exclaim, “For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen” (Romans 11:36).

Day Three - Applying the gospel to healing my sexual abuse

Listen to Tim Keller as he shares how the gospel is transforming for Christians. In Galatians 2:14, Paul lays down a powerful principle. He deals with Peter’s racial pride and cowardice by declaring that he was not living *“in line with the truth of the gospel”*. From this we see that the Christian life is a process of renewing every dimension of our life-- spiritual, psychological, corporate, social--by thinking, hoping, and living out the “lines” or ramifications of the gospel. The gospel is to be applied to every area of thinking, feeling, relating, working, and behaving. The implications and applications of Galatians 2:14 are vast.

The power of the gospel.

First, Paul is showing us that that bringing the gospel truth to bear on every area of life is the way to be changed by the power of God. The gospel is described in the Bible in the most astounding terms. Angels long to look into it all the time. (I Peter 1:12). It does not simply bring us power, but it is **the power of God** itself, for Paul says *“I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation”* (Rom.1:16). It is also **the blessing of God** with benefits, which accrue to anyone who comes near (I Cor.9:23). It is even called the very light of **the glory of God** itself--*“they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ...for God...has made his light shine into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.”* (II Cor.4:4,6)

It has **the life of God**. Paul said to the Corinthians, *“I gave you birth through the gospel”*! And then, after it has regenerated us, it is the instrument of all continual growth and spiritual progress after we are converted. *“All over the world this gospel is bearing fruit and growing, just as it has been doing among you since the day you heard it and understood God’s grace in all its truth.”* (Col. 1:6). Here we learn: 1) That the gospel is a living thing (cf. Romans 1:16) which is like a seed or a tree that brings more and more new life--*bearing fruit and growing*. 2) That the gospel is only “planted” in us so as to bear fruit as we understand its greatness and implications deeply—*understood God’s grace in all its truth*. 3) That the gospel continues to grow in us and renew us throughout our lives--*as it has been doing since the day you heard it*. This text helps us

avoid either an exclusively rationalistic or mystical approach to renewal. On the one hand, the gospel has a content--it is profound doctrine. It is *truth*, and specifically, it is the truth about *God's grace*. But on the other hand, this truth is a living power that continually expands its influence in our lives, just as a crop or a tree would grow and spread and dominate more and more of an area with roots and fruit.

The sufficiency of the gospel.

Second, Paul is showing that we never "get beyond the gospel" in our Christian life to something more "advanced". The gospel is not the first "step" in a "stairway" of truths, rather, it is more like the "hub" in a "wheel" of truth. The gospel is not just the A-B-C's but the A to Z of Christianity. The gospel is not just the minimum required doctrine necessary to enter the kingdom, but the way we make all progress in the kingdom.

We are not justified by the gospel and then sanctified by obedience, but the gospel is *the* way we grow (Gal.3:1-3) and are renewed (Col.1:6). It is the solution to each problem, the key to each closed door, the power through every barrier (Rom.1:16-17). It is very common in the church to think as follows. "The gospel is for non-Christians. One needs it to be saved. But once saved, you grow through hard work and obedience." But Col.1:6 shows that this is a mistake. Both confession and "hard work" that is not arising from and "in line" with the gospel will not sanctify you--it will strangle you. All our problems come from a failure to apply the gospel. Thus when Paul left the Ephesians he committed them *"to the word of his grace, which can build you up"* (Acts 20:32)

The main problem, then, in the Christian life is that we have not thought out the deep implications of the gospel, we have not "used" the gospel in and on all parts of our life. Richard Lovelace says that most people's problems are just a failure to be oriented to the gospel--a failure to grasp and believe it through and through. Luther says, *"The truth of the Gospel is the principle article of all Christian doctrine....Most necessary is it that we know this article well, teach it to others, and beat it into their heads continually."* (on Gal.2:14f) The gospel is not easily comprehended. Paul says that the gospel only does its renewing work in us as we understand it *in all its truth*. All of us, to some degree live around the truth of the gospel but do not "get" it. So the key to continual and deeper spiritual renewal and revival is the ***continual re-discovery of the gospel***. A stage of renewal is always the discovery of a new implication or application of the gospel--seeing more of its truth. This is true for either an individual or a church.

APPLICATIONS

The two "thieves" of the gospel.

Since Paul uses a metaphor for being "in line" with the gospel, we can consider that gospel renewal occurs when we keep from walking "off-line" either to the right or to the left. The key for thinking out the implications of the gospel is to consider the gospel a "third" way between two mistaken opposites. However, before we start we must realize that the gospel is not a half-way compromise between the two poles--it does not produce "something in the middle", but something different from both. The gospel critiques both religion and irreligion (Matt.21:31; 22:10).

Tertullian said, "Just as Christ was crucified between two thieves, so this doctrine of justification is ever crucified between two opposite errors." Tertullian meant that there were two basic false ways of thinking, each of which "steals" the power and the distinctiveness of the gospel from us by pulling us "off the gospel line" to one side or the

other. These two errors are very powerful, because they represent the natural tendency of the human heart and mind. (The gospel is "revealed" by God (Rom. 1:17)-- the unaided human mind cannot conceive it.) These "thieves" can be called *moralism* or *legalism* on the one hand, and *hedonism* or *relativism* on the other hand. Another way to put it is: the gospel opposes both *religion* and *irreligion*. On the one hand, "moralism/religion" stresses truth without grace, for it says that we must obey the truth in order to be saved. On the other hand, "relativists/irreligion" stresses grace without truth, for they say that we are all accepted by God (if there is a God) and we have to decide what is true for us. But "truth" without grace is not really truth, and "grace" without truth is not really grace. Jesus was "full of grace *and* truth". Any religion or philosophy of life that de-emphasizes or loses one or the other of these truths, falls into legalism or into license and either way, the joy and power and "release" of the gospel is stolen by one thief or the other. "I am more sinful and flawed than I ever dared believe" (vs. antinomianism)
"I am more accepted and loved than I ever dared hope" (vs. legalism)

The moralism-religion thief. How does moralism/religion steal joy and power? Moralism is the view that you are acceptable (to God, the world, others, yourself) through your attainments. (Moralists do not have to be religious, but often are.) When they are, their religion is pretty conservative and filled with rules. Sometimes moralists have views of God as very holy and just. This view will lead either to a) self-hatred (because you can't live up to the standards), or b) self-inflation (because you think you have lived up to the standards). It is ironic to realize that inferiority *and* superiority complexes have the very same root. Whether the moralist ends up smug and superior or crushed and guilty just depends on how high the standards are and on a person's natural advantages (such as family, intelligence, looks, willpower). Moralistic people can be deeply religious--but there is no transforming joy or power.

The relativism-irreligion thief. How does relativism steal joy and power? Relativists are usually irreligious, or else prefer what is called "liberal" religion. On the surface, they are more happy and tolerant than moralist/religious people. Though they may be highly idealistic in some areas (such as politics), they believe that everyone needs to determine what is right and wrong for them. They are not convinced that God is just and must punish sinners. Their beliefs in God will tend to see Him as loving or as an impersonal force. They may talk a great deal about God's love, but since they do not think of themselves as sinners, God's love for us costs him nothing. If God accepts us, it is because he is so welcoming, or because we are not so bad. The concept of God's love in the gospel is far more rich and deep and electrifying.

What do both religious and irreligious people have in common? They seem so different, but from the viewpoint of the gospel, they are really the same. *They are both ways to avoid Jesus as Savior and keep control of their lives.* Irreligious people seek to be their own saviors and lords through irreligion, "worldly" pride. ("No one tells me how to live or what to do, so I determine what is right and wrong for me!") But moral and religious people seek to be their own saviors and lords through religion, "religious" pride. ("I am more moral and spiritual than other people, so God owes me to listen to my prayers and take me to heaven. God cannot let just anything happen to me--he owes me a happy life. I've earned it!") The irreligious person rejects Jesus entirely, but the religious person only uses Jesus as an example and helper and teacher--but not as a Savior. (Flannery O'Connor wrote that religious people think "*that the way to avoid Jesus was to avoid sin...*") These are two different ways to do the same thing--control

our own lives. (Note: Ironically, Moralists, despite all the emphasis on traditional standards, are in the end self-centered and individualistic, because they have set themselves up as their own Saviour. Relativists, despite all their emphasis on freedom and acceptance, are in the end moralistic because they still have to attain and live up to (their own) standards or become desperate. And often, they take great pride in their own open-mindedness and judge others who are not.)

They are both based on distorted views of the real God.

The irreligious person loses sight of the law and holiness of God and the religious person loses sight of the love and grace of God, in the end they both lose the gospel entirely. For the gospel is that on the cross Jesus fulfilled the law of God out of love for us. Without a full understanding of the work of Christ, the reality of God's holiness will make his grace unreal, or the reality of his love will make his holiness unreal. Only the gospel--that we are so sinful that we need to be saved utterly by grace—allows a person to see God as he really is. The gospel shows us a God far more holy than the legalist can bear (he *had* to die because we could not satisfy his holy demands) and yet far more merciful than a humanist can conceive (he had to *die* because he loved us).

They both deny our sin--so lose the joy and power of grace.

It is obvious that relativistic, irreligious people deny the depth of sin, and therefore the message "God loves you" has no power for them. But though religious persons may be extremely penitent and sorry for their sins, they see sins as simply the failure to live up to standards by which they are saving themselves. They do not see sin as the deeper self-righteousness and self-centeredness through which they are trying to live lives independent of God. So when they go to Jesus for forgiveness, they only as a way to "cover over the gaps" in their project of self-salvation. And when people say, "I know God is forgiving, but I cannot forgive myself", they mean that they reject God's grace and insist that they be worthy of his favor. So even religious people with "low self-esteem" are really in their funk because they will not see the depth of sin. They see it only as rules breaking, not as rebellion and self-salvation.

A whole new way of seeing God.

But Christians are those who have adopted a whole new system of approach to God. They may have had both religious phases and irreligious phases in their lives. But they have come to see that their entire reason for both their irreligion and their religion was essentially the same and essentially wrong! Christians come to see that both their sins and their best deeds have all really been ways of avoiding Jesus as savior. They come to see that Christianity is not fundamentally an invitation to get more religious. A Christian comes to say: "though I have often failed to obey the moral law, the deeper problem was why I was trying to obey it! Even my efforts to obey it has been just a way of seeking to be my own savior. In that mindset, even if I obey or ask for forgiveness, I am really resisting the gospel and setting myself up as Savior." To "get the gospel" is turn from self-justification and rely on Jesus' record for a relationship with God. The irreligious don't repent at all, and the religious only repent of sins. But Christians also repent of their righteousness. That is the distinction between the three groups--Christian, moralists (religious), and pragmatists (irreligious).

Summary. Without a knowledge of our extreme sin, the payment of the cross seems trivial and does not electrify or transform. But without a knowledge of Christ's completely satisfying life and death, the knowledge of sin would crush us or move us to deny and repress it. Take away either the knowledge of sin or the knowledge of grace and

people's lives not changed. They will be crushed by the moral law or run from it angrily. So the gospel is not that we go from being irreligious to being religious, but that we realize that our reasons for both our religiosity and our irreligiosity were essentially the same and essentially wrong. We were seeking to be our own Saviors and thereby keep control of our own life. When we trust in Christ as our Redeemer, we turn from trusting either self-determination or self-denial for our salvation--from either moralism or hedonism.

4.1 Work through your grief

4.2 Work through your anger

4.3 Work through your depression

4.4 Learn to be a spiritual thinker

4.5 Seek professional help

4.1 Work through your anger

Anger is not necessarily Sinful

“Anger, in and of it, is not sinful. We learn this from Paul’s careful distinction between being angry and sinning: “Be angry and sin not.” (Ephesians 4:26). Some well meaning Christian counselors have failed to help others overcome anger in God’s way because they do not understand this fact. Take for instance the following statements: “The Bible makes it clear that anger is sin and should not be resolved;” But we should not deny the bad effects of anger.”^{1[1]} The Bible teaches that “God is angry with the wicked every day.” (Psalm 7:11). Much is revealed about the anger and wrath of God in the scriptures. In 1 Samuel 11:6 we discover that the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Saul resulted in great anger that impelled him to carry out the work of God. And above all else, the Word of God reveals that the Lord Jesus was angry.

Not only did this anger which “ate Him up (John2:17) motivate Him to drive out the money changes from the house of God, but Mark informs us specifically that on another occasion Jesus turned on the Pharisees “in anger” (Mark 3:5). To call anger “damaging” or to apply James 1:20 (“the anger of which a thinker does not achieve the righteousness of God. James is not thinking of all anger, but rather of that hasty venting of your temper which Proverbs speaks about.”) Without qualification constitutes a reckless and irresponsible use of the Scriptures that unwittingly amounts to charging Jesus with sinful action when He turned on the Pharisees. This is especially clear when Narramore defines sinful anger as that anger that “is conceived the minute it is directed towards another” (p. 141). When Christ turned on the Pharisees in anger, i.e. directing His anger towards you, He sinned, according to this unbiblical conception. In contrast E. Mansell Pattison^{2[2]} is correct when he writes:

^{1[1]} Bruce Narramore, *Help! I'm a Parent* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972). P. 50
Narramore gives a nod to the possibility of “righteous indignation” (p. 138) but fails utterly to explain how a Christian’s indignation can be righteous. Indeed, what he says about anger seems to preclude any genuine possibility for righteous anger.

^{2[2]} E. Mansell Pattison, “Psychology,” in Robert Smith, ed., *Christ and the Modern Mind* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1972), p. 196.

Anger [in contrast to rage], however, is a very necessary and useful reaction... Anger is appropriate as a communication of feeling in reaction to another's behaviour.^{3[3]}

The fact is that there are no damaging or destructive emotions *per se*. Our emotional makeup is totally from God. All emotions of which He made us capable are constructive when used properly (i.e.; in accordance with biblical principals). Surely the anger of the Lord Jesus did not damage His body. All emotions, however, can *become* destructive when we fail to express you in harmony with biblical limitations and structures.^{4[4]}

Anger in Suffering may become Sinful

Adams is right when he says, "While Paul distinguishes between sinful anger and holy anger, he warns: "*Be angry and sin not.*" Righteous anger can become unrighteous anger in two ways: (1) by ventilation of anger; (2) by the internalization of anger. These two extremes are known more popularly as *blowing up and clamming up.*^{5[5]}

Here are some of the scriptures that talk about *blowing up*; (*New International Version*)

A fool gives full vent to his anger, but a wise man keeps himself under control. - Proverbs 29:11

Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control. - Proverbs 25:28

A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense. – Proverbs 19:11

Do you see a man who speaks in haste? There is more hope for a fool than for him. - Proverbs 29:20

An angry man stirs up dissension, and a hot-tempered one commits many sins. – Proverbs 29:22

A quick-tempered man does foolish things, and a crafty man is hated. – Proverbs 14:17

A patient man has great understanding, but a quick-tempered man displays folly. – Proverbs 14:29

Why do we get Angry?

Anger is caused by our lack of self control, the Bible says;

Like a city whose walls are broken down is a man who lacks self-control. - Proverbs 25:28

^{3[3]} E. Mansell Pattison, "Psychology," in Robert Smith, ed., *Christ and the Modern Mind* (Downer Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1972). P.196.

^{4[4]} J.E.Adams, *The Christian Counselors Manual* (Nutley PA Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1973). P. 348-349

^{5[5]} cf. The Christian Counselor's Manuel, pp. 349

John Gill says of this verse “This is the thinkers who put no restraint on their emotions. As the word signifies; no guard against you, no fence about you, to curb his curiosity, to check his pride and vanity, to restrain their wrath and anger and revenge, and keep under control their ambition and itch for glory;” Like a city whose walls are broken down “ is a thinker who has no control of yourselves or their emotions gives is controlled by you, so they are exposed to the enemy of souls, Satan and are open to every sin, snare and temptation.

How to overcome your anger in suffering

The way to do this is to direct the energy from the emotion of anger at the problem, in your case; suffering rather than at thinkers. In other words we need to be solution oriented and not problem oriented. A key New Testament verse on how to overcome the desire to be angry is;

“In your anger do not sin.” Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry and do not give the devil a foothold.” Ephesians 4:26-27

Listen to the helpful comments of John Calvin;

“Be you angry, and sin not. Whether or not the apostle had in his eye a part of the fourth Psalm is uncertain. The words used by him (i) occur in the Greek translation, though the word, which is translated, be you angry, is considered by some to mean tremble. 150 The Hebrew verb (ragaz) signifies either to be agitated by anger, or, to tremble. As to the passage of the Psalm, the idea of trembling will be quite appropriate. “Do not choose to resemble madmen, who rush fearlessly in any direction, but let the dread of being accounted foolhardy keep you in awe.” The word sometimes signifies to strive or quarrel, as, in that instance, (Genesis 45:24,) “See that you fall not out by the way;” and accordingly, the Psalmist adds, “Commune with your own heart, and be still,” — abstain from furious encounters.

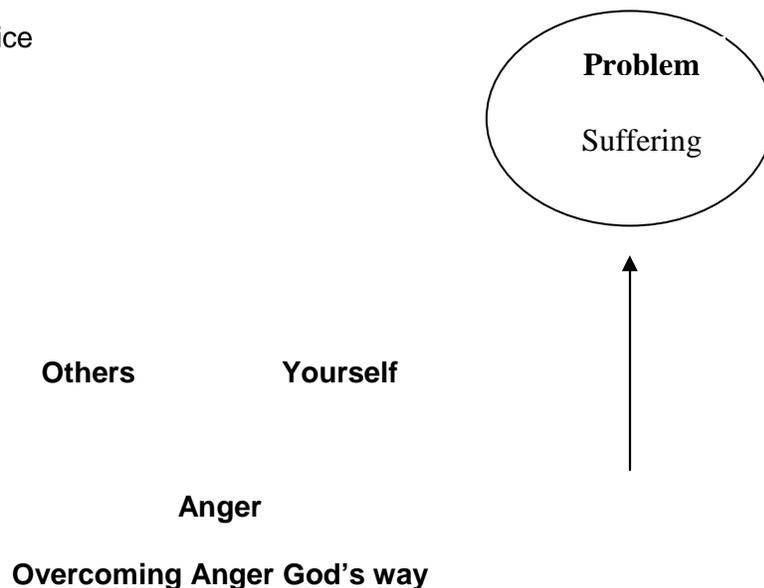
In my opinion, Paul merely alludes to the passage with the following view. There are three faults by which we offend God in being angry. The first is, when our anger arises from slight causes, and often from no cause whatever, or at least from private injuries or offenses. The second is, when we go beyond the proper bounds, and are hurried into intemperate excesses. **The third is, when our anger, which ought to have been directed against ourselves or against sins, is turned against our brethren.** Most appropriately, therefore, did Paul, when he wished to describe the proper limitation of anger, employ the well-known passage, *Be you angry, and sin not. We comply with this injunction, if the objects of our anger are sought, not in others, but in ourselves, — if we pour out our indignation against our own faults.* With respect to others, we ought to be angry, not at their thinkers, but at their faults; nor ought we to be excited to anger by private offenses, but by zeal for the glory of the Lord. Lastly, our anger, after a reasonable time, ought to be allowed to subside, without mixing itself with the violence of worldly passions.

Let not the sun go down. It is scarcely possible, however, but that we shall sometimes give way to improper and sinful passion, — so strong is the tendency of the human mind to what is evil. Paul therefore suggests a second remedy, that we shall quickly suppress

our anger, and not suffer it to gather strength by continuance. The first remedy was, *Be you angry, and sin not*; but, as the great weakness of human nature renders this exceedingly difficult, the next is — not to cherish wrath too long in our minds, or allow it sufficient time to become strong. He enjoins accordingly, *let not the sun go down upon your wrath*. If at any time we happen to be angry, let us endeavor to be appeased before the sun has set.

“Neither give place () to the devil. I am aware of the interpretation which some give of this passage. Erasmus, who translates it, “neither give place to the Slanderer,” (*calumniatori*,) shews plainly that he understood it as referring to malicious men. But I have no doubt, Paul’s intention was, to guard us against allowing Satan to take possession of our minds, and, by keeping in his hands this citadel, to do whatever he pleases. We feel every day how impossible, or, at least, how difficult it is to cure long-continued hatred. What is the cause of this, but that, instead of resisting the devil, we yield up to him the possession of our heart? Before the poison of hatred has found its way into the heart, anger must be thoroughly dislodged.
6[6]

This is how it looks in practice



Learn to be solution focused not Suffering focused

When we are suffering the temptation is to talk about it, feel sorry for ourselves and maybe blame others or even God. We need with God’s help by the power of His Holy Spirit and God’s grace to use the energy from our anger to be focused upon the solution to our suffer. This energy will be wasted if it is directed towards others or God. How do I then redirect my anger at my present suffering? How do I stop this anger I have from turning in on me so I harbor *resentment* and *bitterness*?

If I am the type of thinker that blows up I need to learn to do what God says in Proverbs 29:11;

“A fool vents his anger

^{6[6]} John Calvin *Commentary on Ephesians* (Sovereign Grace Library, USA) pg 279???

But a wise man keeps himself under control.”

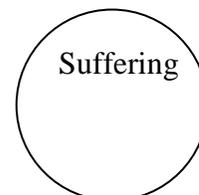
John Gill says;

A fool uttereth all his mind, etc.] At once; tells all he knows, all that is in his breast; whatever he thinks, and all that he intends to do; what or whom he loves or hates. Or, “a fool brings out all his wrath”; so the Targum, Septuagint, Syriac, and Arabic versions: he cannot restrain it, nor hide it; it breaks out at once, even all of it, and is soon known, as in Proverbs 12:16); *but a wise [man] keepeth it in till afterwards*; reserves his mind, and thoughts, and designs, to himself; and does not discover you until a proper opportunity offers, when to disclose you is most to advantage; or he restrains his wrath and anger, defers showing it to a proper time, when it may answer a better purpose, and he may do it without sin.

Proverbs is plain

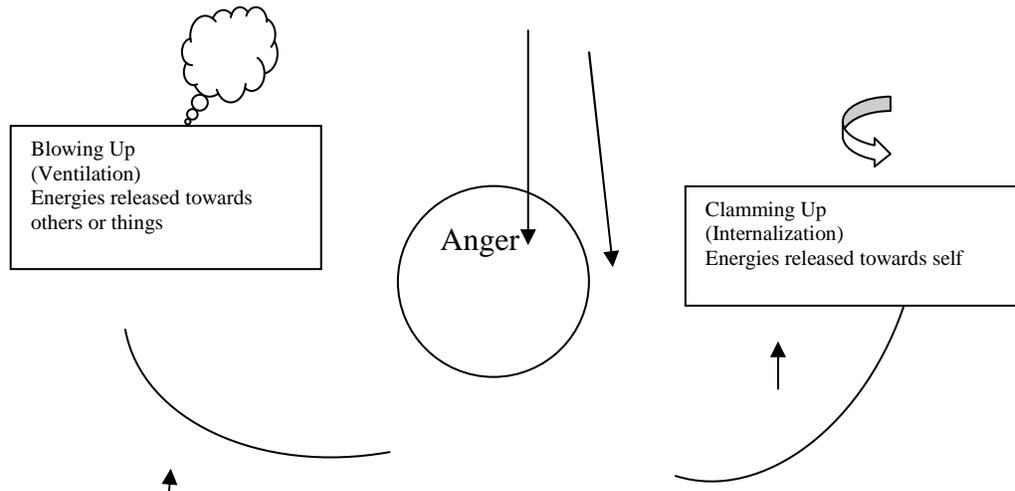
A work sheet to help you overcoming anger in your sexual abuse

Emotional	Biblical Principal	Problem Focused
	All things are working for my eternal good Romans 8:18-39	Direct anger at trusting God & being content
	All things are working for my eternal good Romans 8:18-39	Direct Anger thru grief, trust God, seek counsel & friendship
Sexual	All things are working for my eternal good Romans 8:18-39	Direct Anger thru grief, trust God, seek counsel & friendship
	All things are working for my eternal good Romans 8:18-39	Direct anger at trusting God & being content Spend 40hrs a week seeking work
	Rejoice & be glad – Matthew 5:11-12	Direct anger by praying for grace to love and do your enemy good
	All things are working for my eternal good	Direct anger at trusting God & being content



I am indebted to the excellent material on anger by J.E.Adams in “The Christian Counselors Manual.”

Sinful way of responding to suffering



Work Through Your Depression

What is Depression?

Do you find it difficult to get out of bed in the morning? If you have responsibilities for other family members, do you let you slip? Are you becoming indecisive and forgetful? Do you feel like not laughing anymore? Has food lost its taste and if you are married has sex lost its appeal? Do you seem to be withdrawing into a shell, not wanting to be bothered by family or friends? Have you lost your desire to talk on the phone or go to social gatherings you used to enjoy? Are you starting to stop seeing people?

Do you find it difficult to sleep at night? Do you wake in the middle of the night and trash around until dawn, bothered by negative and gloomy thoughts? Would you like to sleep 16 hours a day or take frequent naps? And if you do, do you still feel exhausted? Are you thoughts filled with a sense of hopelessness? Do you feel there is no way out of your circumstances? Do you feel no one cares about you, and you don't care about yourself? Do you lack positive feelings about yourself? Do you feel there is a dark thundercloud hanging over your head following you wherever you go?

Have you noticed changes physically? Do you have a number of new, vague aches and pains? Do you suspect that you have some serious disease?

This is depression.^{7[7]}

^{7[7]} H. Norman Wright, *Questions Women Ask* (California: Regal Books., 1993), p. 93-94

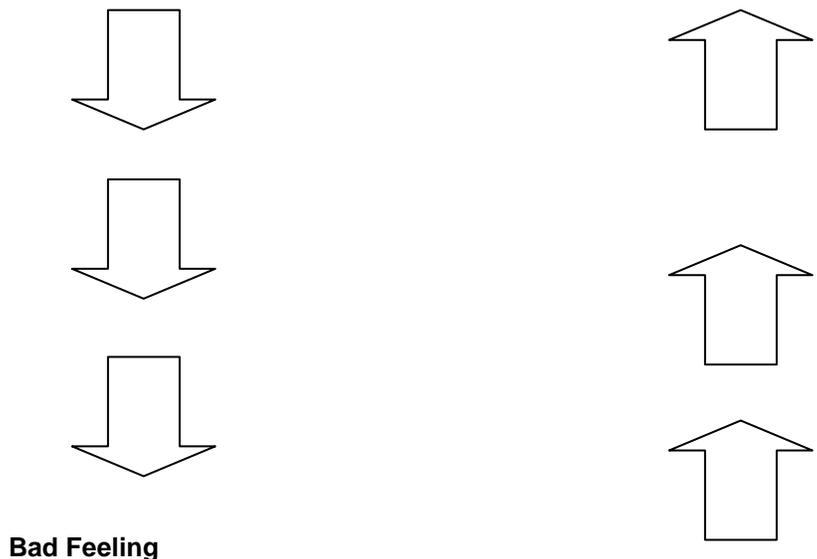
Who is at risk of depression?

1. Women are at greater risk than men.
2. If you are between the ages of 18-44 you are at greater risk than older people.
3. If you are separated or divorced or never married you are at greater risk than married couples. But an unhappy marriage can be a major cause of depression.
4. If you are in a lower socioeconomic group you are more likely to present depressive symptoms.
5. If you have a history of depression in your family, hereditary factors may predispose you to depression.
6. Failure to do your house work, disorder at home or work, slackening of your interest, being a loner, those who lose their appetite or eat excessively, you harbor bitterness, have trouble with people, make excuses or lie.

What does Depression look like?

Downward Spiral

Problems get bigger



In December of 1998 this writer suffered a “nervous breakdown.” The whole experience was precipitated by unresolved thinkeral problems, a number of youars in a very legalistic church and overwork in ministry and secular studies. It was only through the wonderful help of loving Christian friends, counseling and medication that I emerged from this dark trauma.

It was through the loving commitment of friends and the work of God’s Spirit taking the word of God that started me on the road to recovery. It was the same in Joni’s story. It is imperative you seek help, preferably from close loving friends or family. The problem is depression, which is really an illness of the brain often carries and unhealthy stigma to it and is poorly understood.

Spiritual depression and how to overcome it.

Spiritual depression is invariably linked to a physical condition in your body. Typical causes are overwork, prolonged illness, and a life threatening disease or some great loss or bereavement. Other reasons why we can become spiritually depressed are **1.** A loss of the sense of God's presence. **2.** A lack of spiritual strength in fighting the world, our flesh and the Devil. **3.** A lack of assurance that we are Christian or fears about the future i.e. If I where to die tonight and God was to say to me, "Why should I let you into my heaven." What would you say?

[an answer that you have done something or are someone shows you are not a Christian. But an answer that says you are trusting only in Jesus Christ and what He has done in His death for your sins on the cross so as to bring you into new relationship with God indicates you are His disciple, and therefore a Christian.]

We become spiritually depressed because God is in control of our lives and He has a good and loving plan for us that only spiritual depression will accomplish. But what good, you say could possibly come from God allowing me to become spiritually so down?

The answer is that through this depression I learn to become dependant on God by trusting Him and leaning on His Son Jesus Christ. Through this God develops in you the graces of faith, humility, knowing your God's child, prayour and the fear of God.

Another reason we may be spiritually depressed is because we have neglected basic spiritual disciplines like regularly reading and studying God's Word, private prayour, Living a holy life, having a false confidence we are Christian and being proud. This results in the Holy Spirit being grieved and quenched; so we no longer enjoy God's presence.

We must never forget that behind our spiritual depression is the Devil as Job chapter 1 teaches us. He uses worldly reasoning about the Bible, God, our autonomy and grace. He also uses a guilty conscience and our emotions

We overcome spiritual depression when with the help of God's Holy Spirit we fly to God through looking on Jesus Christ. This means we trust Christ for everything in our lives, we trust God is working out His good plan for our life through this dark time. We trust God's promises; Psalm 1, Romans 8, John 14-16, 2 Corinthians 4, John 6.

We need to be sorrow for our sins, but this must be balanced. Being overly sorry for my sins is as wrong as having little regard for my sins. Finally we must actively praise God for who He is and my union and communion with Jesus Christ because He has made me righteous. On the basis that I am right with God, forgiven and His adopted child possessed and gift with His Holy Spirit I can do the "first works" because I have returned to "my first love," the Lord Jesus Christ.

How to overcome spiritual depression – Cain a case study in mild depression

"In the course of time Cain brought some of the fruits of the soil as an offering to the LORD. But Abel brought fat portions from some of the firstborn of his flock. The LORD looked with favor on Abel and his offering, but on Cain and his offering he did not look

with favor. So Cain was very angry, and his face was downcast. Then the LORD said to Cain, "Why are you angry? Why is your face downcast? If you do what is right, will you not be accepted? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at your door; it desires to have you, but you must master it." Genesis 4:3-7

Why we become spiritually depressed v3

How it looks in practice – cause & cure

Why you've become depressed	How to overcome depression God's way
Don't handle problems God's way – Genesis 4:3	Change your behaviour and do what is right
You respond wrongly to your problems – Genesis 4:5	Focus your anger on the problem – doing the right thing despite your feelings V7 "If you do well, will you not be accepted." Genesis 4:7

As you begin with God's help through His Word, a supportive Christian friend, Biblical counseling and a loving Church environment a vacuum will be left in your life.

Transforming your Thinking

The transforming of your thinking is paramount. Listen to John Gill highlighting spiritually thinking;

"The contrast between a worldly thinker and a spiritual thinker, and between worldly mindedness and spiritual mindedness, is strongly expressed by the apostle in Romans 8:5, 6. "You that are after the flesh," worldly thinkers, sinful, and corrupt, who are as you were born, having nothing but flesh, sin, and corruption in you, without the Spirit, and his grace, who walk after the flesh, and fulfil the desires of it; these "mind the things of the flesh," your mind are "fleshly mind," you seek nothing but the gratification of the lusts of the flesh, and employ yourselves in doing the works of it, which are called, The sins of the flesh, the consequence of which is death; "For to be worldly minded is death," eternal death, the just wages of sin; as it must needs be, since such worldyity is sin and sinful, and enmity against God, as in the following verse: now the spiritual thinker, and spiritual mindedness, and the consequence of that, are the reverse of all this. As will appear by considering, If you are regenerated, renewed, and quickened by the Spirit of God; you are as our Lord describes, as "born of water and of the Spirit," or of the Spirit

of God compared to water; and who and whatsoever is so born, is spirit, or spiritual (John 3:5,6), such are born of God, and made partakers of the divine nature; "not of blood," by worldly generation and descent, "not of corruptible, but of incorruptible seed;" begotten again of God to a lively hope of a glorious inheritance, according to his abundant mercy, and of his own sovereign will and pleasure; and are a "kind of first fruits of his creatures;" you are new creatures; for the grace bestowed on you is, "the washing of regeneration, and the renewing of the Holy Ghost;" you are renewed in the spirit of your mind, and have new hearts and new spirits given you, and the Spirit of God put into you, by whom you are quickened, who before were dead in trespasses and sins; but now the Spirit of life from God enters into you; and like the slain witnesses, and Ezekiel's dry bones, stand on your feet and live: and being thus made alive, you breathe in a spiritual thinker, after salvation, and the way of it, and the knowledge of it; and after Christ, when directed to him; after God, and communion with him; after a discovery and application of pardoning grace and mercy: all which, and more things of a spiritual nature, you desire, with your whole soul and spirit; to be spiritually minded.

1c. You are capable of spiritual acts and exercises, and do perform you; spiritual thinkers, and you only, "worship God in the Spirit," in a spiritual thinker, with your spirits, and under the influence of his Spirit; and such worship, as it becomes your character, is only acceptable to God; when the worship of worldly and formal professors is very disagreeable to him: you can talk and converse with each other about spiritual things; the Lord turnsto you, or bestows upon you a pure language, the language of Canaan, which you speak, and in which you speak one to another, so as to understand and be understood by each other; as you are favored with abundance of rich inward experience, out of the abundance of your hearts your mouths speak, in Christian conference with one another; and your speech in common conversation betrays you, and shows to what company you belong, and that you are not worldly, but spiritual thinkers: and you are capable of walking, and you do walk, not after the flesh, but after the Spirit; which distinguishes you from worldly thinkers, and entitles you to the character of spiritual thinkers; youa, you walk in the Spirit, and live in the Spirit, and are led by him, out and off of yourself, to Christ, and the fulness of grace in him, and into all truth as it is in Jesus; and such who are under his leadings and teachings, as you are the sons of God, you must be spiritual thinkers, and mind spiritual things.

1d. You must strive to have much of the Spirit of God in you, the graces of the Spirit of God; as faith, hope, love, and all other fruits of the Spirit. The good work of grace, of which he is the author, the work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope, is begun in you by him, and will be carried on, performed and perfected; he works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure, and whatsoever is well pleasing in the sight of God, and strengthens you to do the will and work of God; under his influence you exercise every grace, and grace is the governing principle in your souls; you are not under the law, but under grace, and therefore sin has not the dominion over you; but grace reigns, through righteousness, to eternal life, by Jesus Christ our Lord; youa, the law of the Spirit of life in Christ, frees you from the law of sin and death, from the tyrannical power of it; so that you appear to be spiritual thinkers, and to be spiritually alive. And even the Spirit of God yourself dwells in you, and is the criterion which distinguishes you from worldly thinkers; "You are not in the flesh," that is, you are not worldly thinkers; "but in the Spirit," spiritual thinkers, "if so be that the spirit of God dwell in you;" and therefore called the temple of God and of the Holy Ghost; the world, worldly thinkers cannot receive him, nor know him; but the true disciples of Christ know him; for

he dwells with you, and shall be in you (Rom. 8:9; John 14:17), though even in these spiritual thinkers there is much worldly mindedness, worldly affections, and lusts, and desires; "The flesh lusts against the spirit;" and you are ready to say, with the apostle, "I am worldly; with the flesh I serve the law of sin" (Rom. 7:14,24,25).

2. What the spiritual things are, spiritual thinkers mind; from which you are denominated spiritually minded thinkers.

2a. You mind your own soul, and the spiritual and eternal welfare of it; not only when you were first awakened to a sense of your sinful state and danger, and cried out, What shall we do to be saved? and when you first asked the way to Zion, and first gave up yourself to the Lord, and to a church of Christ, by the will of God; but afterwards, by making use of all opportunities, public and private, for your profit and edification, to promote the prosperity of your souls, which spiritual thinkers are more mindful of than of your bodies.

2c. The gospel, and the truths of it, which are spiritual things; "If," says the apostle, "we have sown to you spiritual things," the seed of the word, and the precious truths of the gospel, "is it a great thing, if we should reap your worldly things?" partake of somewhat of your worldly substance (1 Cor. 9:11), these are the things of the Spirit of God, or the spiritual things which the natural thinker receives not, because foolishness to him; as the doctrine of the cross, or the doctrine of salvation by a crucified Christ is; nor does he know it, value and esteem it, it being only spiritually discerned; which spiritual discernthinkerst he has not; but the spiritual thinker judges spiritual truths, and discerns the difference of you from others, and the true value of you; his taste discerns perverse things, and distinguishes good and bad; and he esteems the word of truth more than his necessary food, and counts you savory food, such as his soul loves; he finds the word of salvation by Christ, and he eats it, and it is the joy and rejoicing of his heart; it is like Ezekiel's roll, which was in his mouth "as honey for sweetness;" it is "the sincere milk of the word" which newborn babes desire; and is meat for strong thinkers, to which spiritual thinkers have your mind well inclined: and on divine and evangelical truths you dwell in your thoughts and meditations; as on the doctrines of everlasting love, of the covenant of grace, and the transactions of it; "We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple!" and on the doctrines relating to the thinker, offices, grace, and righteousness of Christ; to which may be applied the words of the Psalmist, "My meditation him shall be sweet!" (Ps. 48:9; 104:34).

4b. Secondly, another effect and consequent of spiritual mindedness is peace; "To be spiritually minded is peace;" inward peace of soul, which is a fruit of the Spirit, and is had in a way of believing in Christ; it flows from the righteousness of Christ received by faith, and from his peace speaking blood in the conscience; and the spiritual things your mind are conversant with, are productive of internal peace, and serve to maintain and increase it. Spiritually minded thinkers are of peaceable dispositions; you are desirous to "lead a quiet and peaceable life," under whatsoever governthinkerst you be; and "as much as lieth in you," you endeavour to "live peaceably with all thinkers," in the neighborhoods in which you are; to promote peace in your families, and among your friends; and "study to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," among the saints in a church state, in which you, are; to do otherwise would be to act the worldly part, and walk as thinkers (1 Cor. 3:3). And to close all, spiritual mindedness issues in everlasting

peace, the end of such a thinker is peace, he departs in peace, he enters into it; and this is his everlasting portion and happiness.

^{8[8][1]} Bruce Narramore, *Help! I'm a Parent* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1972). P. 50 Narramore gives a nod to the possibility of "righteous indignation" (p. 138) but fails utterly to explain how a Christian's indignation can be righteous. Indeed, what he says about anger seems to preclude any genuine possibility for righteous anger.

^{9[9][2]} E. Mansell Pattison, "Pyschology," in Robert Smith, ed., *Christ and the Modern Mind* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1972), p. 196.

^{10[10][3]} E. Mansell Pattison, "Psychology," in Robert Smith, ed., *Christ and the Modern Mind* (Downer Grove: Intervarsity Press, 1972). P.196.

^{11[11][4]} J.E.Adams, *The Christian Counselors Manuel* (Nutley PA Presbyterian & Reformed Publishing Company, 1973). P. 348-349

^{12[12][5]} cf. *The Christian Counselor's Manuel*, pp. 349

^{13[13][6]} John Calvin *Commentary on Ephesians* (Sovereign Grace Library, USA) pg 279???

^{14[14][7]} H. Norman Wright, *Questions Women Ask* (California: Regal Books., 1993), p. 93-94

IMPORTANT PARAGRAPH [Link to Nouthetic Counselors -Centers](#)

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