

# NEW HOPE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

6240 VERNER AVE.  
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## AGONIA<sup>©</sup> STUDENT'S MANUAL

DOUGLAS AND SITA SHEARER • AUTHORS AND FOUNDERS

# RELATIONSHIPS COPING DEVICES PERVERSIONS

“RELATIONSHIPS • COPING DEVICES • PERVERSIONS” IS THE THIRD OF EIGHT SEPARATE MANUALS WHICH TOGETHER  
CONSTITUTE THE ENTIRE COURSE

**MAY 9, 2000 EDITION**

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*Special Note:* This manual is meant only for students enrolled in properly certified Agonias. The changes it presses cannot be effected by single individuals or by counselors attempting one-on-one therapy. A small group setting is essential - overseen by instructors who have been properly trained. This manual is meant to build the church of our Savior Jesus Christ and bring peace and joy into the homes of the saints for whom he died.

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# A NOTE TO THE STUDENTS

## BUILD YOURSELVES UP WITH ONE ANOTHER

1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, Ephesians 4, and many other passages of scripture liken individual Christians to *parts of a body* - an arm, a leg, a head, a hand, a foot, an eye, a nose, etc. For example:

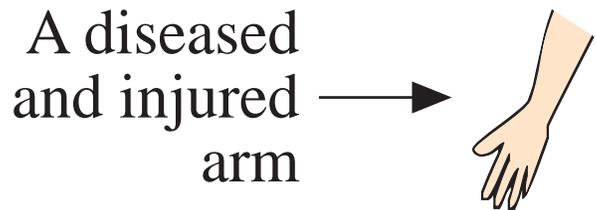
If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

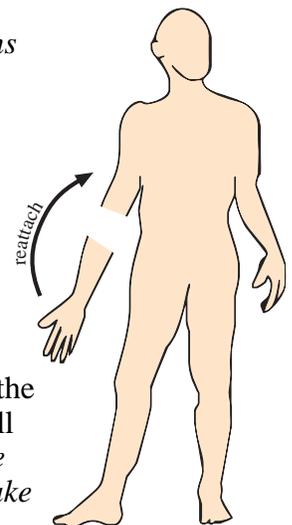
1 Cor. 12:15-17

And that tells us a lot about how healing and restoration should be handled within the Christian community - and it also explains why so little effective healing and restoration actually take place. Let me illustrate my point for you. Here we have a *severed* arm - which, not surprisingly, is terribly dysfunctional. It's both diseased and injured. It symbolizes a *carnal* (1 Cor. 3:1) Christian - a Christian who is not walking in victory - whose life does not reflect the fruit of the Spirit - whose marriage is beset with many troubling sins.



It's not that he hasn't *tried* to achieve victory; as a matter of fact, he has tried on numerous occasions: he has attended Bible studies, special seminars, and has sought out older Christians to disciple him. For several years, he attended church on a consistent basis - even serving on various committees. But nothing has helped - at least not significantly. His temper still lurks just below the surface - ready to explode at the least provocation; he still occasionally slips back into alcoholism and drug addiction. His children walk on eggshells around him; and his wife is a nervous wreck. He's slowly slipping into isolation and despair - and his erstwhile Christian friends are starting to give up on him.

What's the problem? It's that he's neglecting the obvious - *he'll never be healed and restored unless he becomes an organic part of the church - which, at this point, means that he's built up with his Agonia-mates - genuinely and authentically.* Can you imagine trying to heal a severed arm without reattaching it to its body? *But that's exactly the treatment protocol so many Evangelical Christians attempt. We've been blind-sided by the individualism that's so pervasive within American culture.* A severed arm is not going to be healed until a skilled surgeon reconnects the ligaments, blood vessels, nerves, and muscles *that make it part of a body.* That's his **first** priority. But quite often that's not our first priority. What's our treatment protocol? First, we identify the disease that's afflicting a specific "severed limb" - whatever that disease might be - addiction, depression, troubled marriages, etc.; next, we gather together all the "severed" arms, legs, feet, hands, eyes, etc. suffering from the same disease; and finally we apply various "scriptural antiseptics" - hoping that they'll all be healed. The obvious never seems to occur to us: *we first need to reattach those severed "limbs" to the body - only then can we reasonably expect Biblical truth to "take hold."*



We don't explain the importance of the church - that it's not simply a helpful expedient; that, instead, it's a basic sine qua non of healing and restoration. Its fundamental! *It's the framework within which the ministry of the Holy Spirit takes place.*

You must be built up with your Agonia-mates; you must become organically attached to them. In a very real sense, they must *own* you; and you must *own* them - clearly not to the point that your personal identity is lost in them - or theirs is lost in you; but *church* must be more than a simple gathering of discrete, atomized believers who merely "bump" into one another at a Sunday morning service - or on a deacon's committee - or in a children's ministry. You've got to become a part of one another's lives - an integral part - a vital part - an essential part!

And that doesn't occur easily in American culture. We're "islands unto ourselves;" we're taught to be rugged individuals; we guard our "privacy" with a jealous indignation. It's not surprising, then, that a lot of us gravitate to ministries that have been adapted to that kind of mind-set. Instead of teaching *dependency* and the *need for integration*, we're taught "*self-empowerment*." Instead of being told to tear down the walls that separate us from one another, we're told to become *self-sufficient*. And then we scratch our heads and search our hearts for why so little authentic change occurs in our lives.

Your first priority in the Agonia is to be built up with one another - to invade one another's lives. Continue to work hard at that! The Biblical truths you're being taught won't *take hold* unless you become an organic part of each other - genuinely and authentically.

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### **PLANNING THE CEREMONY**

# RELATIONSHIPS • COPING DEVICES • PERVERSIONS®

## CHAPTER 1

### RELATIONSHIPS - WHAT THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY ENTAIL

## WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

WEEK OF \_\_\_\_\_

	Prayer Items	When Answered How Answered
Day #1	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #2	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #3	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #4	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #5	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #6	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #7	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

# DAILY MONITORING FORM

<i>Week</i> _____	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5	Column #6	Column #7	Column #8	Column #9	Column #10
Instructions for scoring have been provided by your instructors. However, a brief description is given below.	<b>Two Chapters from the Gospels</b>	<b>15 Minutes of Prayer</b>	<b>Prayer Journal</b>	<b>Squabble Rule Violations</b>	<b>Response to Correction</b>	<b>Agonia Contacts</b>	<b>Fruit of the Spirit</b>	<b>Does Not Blame Spouse</b>	<b>Shares Joy with Spouse</b>	<b>Rebuffed Overtures</b>
Day #1				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #2				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #3				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #4				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #5				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #6				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #7				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
<b>Average for Week</b> Eliminate the high and low				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Yes or No</b>					<b>Total</b>				Total Attempted____ Total Positives____ Ratio_____

**INSTRUCTIONS:** (1) The "Three Disciplines," columns 1-3: one "no" for any day for any of the disciplines results in a "no" for the entire week. (2) "Squabble Rules," column 4: keep daily track of (a) how many times you violate the rules and (b) how many times your spouse violates the rules; at the end of the week, eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (3) "Response to Correction," column 5: keep daily track of how often you notice that either you or your spouse does not respond positively to correction and rebuke. The criteria consists of (a) non-defensiveness and (b) attentiveness. Grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (4) "Agonia Contacts," column 6: (a) phone call to an agonia-mate over ten minutes = 1 pt.; (b) personal, face-to-face contact over a half an hour = 3 pts.; (c) Having an agonia couple over for dinner = 5 pts; (d) participate in a meeting of the full Agonia other than the class itself = 5 pts. (5) "Spirituality Indices," columns 7-9: grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and the low for the week and average of the remaining scores. (6) "Overtures," column 10: keep daily track of how often you reach out to your spouse; and also keep track of how often, if at all, your overtures are rebuffed. At the end of the week, list the total overtures you undertook; and compute a ratio of positive responses to the total.

# RELATIONSHIPS - WHAT THEY ARE AND WHAT THEY ENTAIL

## HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT FROM LAST WEEK

Please begin this evening reading your definition of a close relationship - each of you, one at a time. Jot down below, for your own use, some of the most perceptive features embodied in those definitions.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_

Whatever your definition might have been - whatever you might have sketched out in your essay, you'll probably agree that it all boils down to "*intimacy*." But note carefully that the "*sine qua non*" of intimacy is risk - ***it's a willingness to make yourself vulnerable***. Meditate on this truth carefully and thoughtfully. It's one of the most important truths you'll be assimilating during the course of this entire year.

## ALIENATION AND COPING DEVICES

Now, for another important truth: ***to the extent that you want to be safe, to the extent that you adopt measures to protect yourself, precisely to that extent do you hinder the development of intimacy. Those measures we will term "coping devices."***

## CHRIST PUT HIMSELF AT RISK

Consider carefully that Christ conformed his own life to the principle we've delineated here: *the dynamic underlying every close relationship is risk*. Let's take a good look at Luke 2:7.

Luke 2:7                      And she brought forth her firstborn son; and she wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn.

*God, a new born babe, lying in a manger - helpless, dependent, at risk*. Christ laid aside his divine powers - and made himself vulnerable to mankind - all for the sake of restoring fellowship with us. Turn to Philippians 2:5-8. Here we have a doctrinal summation of Luke 2:7 - God at risk - *and we killed him*.

Philippians 2:5              Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:  
Philippians 2:6              Who, being *in the form of God*, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

- Philippians 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him *the form of a servant*, and was made in the likeness of men:
- Philippians 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

The word "form" in verses six and seven doesn't truly convey the meaning of the Greek word it translates, "morphé" (μορφή). That's because in English "*form*" and "*substance*" aren't necessarily linked conceptually. Form may correspond to substance; but, then again, it might not. *It's possible that an entity's form might not accurately depict or reflect its underlying essence.* The Greek word morphé, however, puts "*form*" and "*substance*" in a far less ambiguous relationship to each other: almost always the two **are** conceptually linked. "*Form*" reflects "*substance*" - its purpose is to afford evidence of a specific underlying essence. If an entity possesses a specific form, it's because that's what it *is*. A chair possesses the form of a chair because that's what it is - a chair. A temple possesses the form of a temple because that's what it is - a temple<sup>1</sup>. What verses six and seven tell us, therefore, is that (1) Christ is God - because he possesses the form (morphé) of God (εν μορφή θεου); and (2) Christ is man - because he possesses the form (morphé) of man (εν μορφή δουλου). Christ is both God and man - one person with two natures. And as man, Christ was subject to the same vicissitudes that plague all men - including sickness, pain, and death.<sup>2</sup>

Our salvation, therefore, begins with God putting himself in harm's way - making himself vulnerable to us - coming to us stripped<sup>3</sup> of his majesty and omnipotence. That's what *relationship* requires - and that's what salvation is all about: *relationship* - the restoration of a broken relationship between man and God. ***It's not about empowerment.*** It certainly includes empowerment; but that's not what it's *about* - that's not its purpose.

Christ did what we're going to be asking you to do during this next year: ***put yourself once again at risk. And risk is, no doubt, precisely what many of you want excised - cut out - eliminated - from all your relationships.*** You want your relationships to be *safe* and *secure* - with *ironclad, money-back guarantees* - and that's exactly the conundrum we'll be "*walking you through*" over the course of this entire year: *if you're unwilling to give up your "guarantees," you'll find that intimacy forever eludes your grasp.*

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## FOOTNOTES

- At the time the New Testament was written, the philosophical categories developed by Plato and Aristotle had been insinuated into the very structure of koiné Greek - made a part of its very fabric - especially the relationship both men drew between the *visible manifestation* of an object and its *underlying essence*. Both men insisted that *form* always corresponds to *essence* - whether an object is natural or fabricated. For Plato, in his well known "*Analogy of the Cave*," the "*shadow*" cast by an empirical object always provides evidence, however vaguely, of an unchanging cosmic "archetype" - which lends it meaning and directs its purpose. Aristotle's "telos" is comparable to Plato's "archetype" - except that it's imbedded in existential phenomena rather consigned to a transcendent realm. For Aristotle, the *form* of every object is governed by its underlying "*telos*."
- In 1 Corinthians 15:35-49, Paul makes this same point: *that form is meant to reflect the nature of its underlying substance, not disguise it.* Paul, of course, doesn't use the word "form" (morphé); instead, he uses the word "body" ("soma" - "σωμα"); but the idea is the same: *form corresponds to substance.* Paul is saying that in the resurrection the spirit of man undergoes a *qualitative* transformation; specifically, it is "*glorified*;" therefore, the body too must undergo the same change: it too must be glorified. *Form (in this case "body") is called to give evidence of its underlying essence (in this case "spirit").* The fact, therefore, that Philippians 2:5-8 describes Christ in two forms is of the utmost significance: it means that Christ is one person possessing two underlying natures: he is both God (εν μορφή θεου - verse 6) and man (εν μορφή δουλου - verse 7).
- Not, however, in the sense that he no longer possessed divinity, but only in the sense that he chose not to draw upon his divinity. Christ never ceased to be God; he never stepped out of his Godhood.

## REVIEWING THE DYNAMICS OF RELATIONSHIP

Let's review again the dynamics of a relationship:

1. An intimate relationship *always* entails openness - honesty - *transparency*.
2. But what does transparency *always* entail? *Risk! Because it requires a willingness on your part to make yourself vulnerable.*

## WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A RELATIONSHIP IS RUPTURED?

Ask yourself what happens when a close relationship ruptures? *You're hurt, aren't you? Sometimes desperately!*

## WHAT RELATIONSHIPS WHEN RUPTURED TEND TO PRODUCE THE MOST DEVASTATION

Now, ask yourself what relationships - when ruptured or soured - tend to be the most devastating; e.g., father-child; mother-child; brother-sister; husband-wife; friend-friend; etc.? Write down your answers in the space below - and be prepared to spend some time talking about your answers. Try to draw from your own personal experiences.

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____  |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____  |
| 7. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 9. _____ | 10. _____ |

Next, ask yourself what *defensive tactics* - coping devices - are brought into play when you've been devastated in a relationship?

1. ***You hold others at a distance*** - which, of course, leads to isolation. Isolation can assume either the form of introversion and withdrawal or a "charming" superficiality.
2. ***You deaden your feelings.*** Part of the *risk* involved in any genuinely close relationship turns upon the immense emotional investment that occurs. Should the relationship sour or rupture, the loss of that investment is terribly painful; consequently, you're less likely to invest your emotions in any future relationship. You're not as likely to "*let your heart go.*"
3. ***You avoid dependency.*** Dependency is avoided at all costs; and toward that end you're apt to pursue strategies which lessen your need to be dependent - strategies which promise "*self-empowerment.*" Self-empowerment has become an American zeitgeist<sup>1</sup>. Indeed, it has worked

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## FOOTNOTES

- 1 "Zeitgeist" is a very descriptive German word that's been carried over into the English language - because there's no native English equivalent. It means "*spirit of the age.*" All I'm saying here is that the press toward *self-empowerment* pervades American culture. It's "in the air." It's everywhere. It's the topic of seminars, lectures, home video courses, television, and radio. It's an American preoccupation - indeed, it's an American obsession.

itself into the warp and weft of the entire Western mind-set. Its impact is pervasive and far-reaching - to the point that it has become a cultural fixation. In fact, "salvation" itself is becoming more and more defined *not* in terms of restoring our relationship with God, but in terms of self-empowerment. It's a radical departure from orthodox Christian doctrine - and a very dangerous one.

## **WHAT COPING DEVICES INEVITABLY PRODUCE**

Let's examine now the kind of personality that coping devices tend to foster - the specific character traits that tend to arise when we make a habit of (1) holding others at a distance; (2) deadening our emotions; and (3) avoiding dependency:

1. *Titillating deadened emotions...*

Whenever anyone deadens his emotions in order to protect himself from being hurt, it almost inevitably leads to perversions. Why? Because perverse behavior often amounts to little more than a pathetic attempt to bring deadened emotions back to life - to kick-start them - to titillate them - to resuscitate them. Anyone who has deadened his emotions is beset with the sense of "*not being alive*" - of being unable to "*connect*" or "*engage*" - of "*walking through life without being able to get the feel of it*" - of just "*going through the motions of living.*" And that sense can prove to be terrifying for anyone who suffers from it. We'll discuss more about this in a later chapter.

2. *Exploitative attitudes and behavior...*

In addition, deadened emotions lead to exploitative and abusive attitudes and behavior. Why? Because you make yourself unable to "*empathize*" with others - your deadened emotions make that impossible. You're not able to "*put yourself in their shoes.*" You might *know* that your behavior is hurting them; but you're unable to *feel* the pain you're causing. You're by and large indifferent to it. We'll discuss more about this in a later chapter.

3. *The inevitable development of an "interpretational grid" that makes intimacy impossible...*

Anyone who has suffered profound "*betrayal*" tends to "*second guess*" and "*read between the lines.*" And it's because he's cultivated a suspicious mind-set. It's because the betrayal he's suffered has rendered him incapable of real trust. He doesn't "*take anyone at face value.*" He wants to "*stay one step ahead of everyone.*" Why? So that he's never again "*caught off guard.*" And "*reading between the lines*" seems to allow for that. He gauges everyone's behavior through an interpretational grid built out of his own fears; and that grid is like a stone wall standing between him and everyone else: it prevents the development of any kind of genuine "*connection.*"

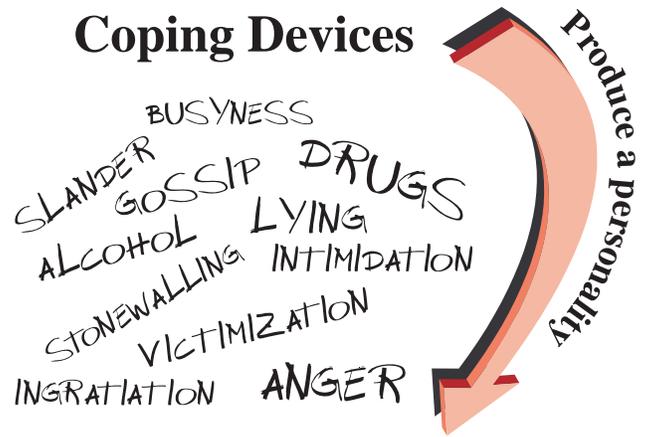


We build our coping devices over time - from our early youth well into our adulthood; we use them to protect ourselves from being hurt; and, in the short run, they *do* afford a measure of protection; but in the long run, they serve to...

1. Alienate us from others.
2. Desensitize us; cause us to deaden our emotions - to resist investing ourselves emotionally in others.
3. Prompt us to avoid dependency at all costs.



The devil uses the coping devices we build to produce a personality which is...



1. ...likely to cultivate and nourish well entrenched perversions - besetting sins that very frequently produce depression, anxiety, loss of self-esteem, and withdrawal.
2. ...callous, exploitative, and abusive - and, consequently, incapable of sustaining enduring friendships - especially with peers who are competent, confident, and assertive.
3. ...forever second guessing and reading between the lines; is unable to take anyone at face value; is susceptible to conspiratorial scenarios; and is often angry and paranoid.

Clearly, betrayal is what underlies the kind of personality we've sketched out here; *not just disappointment, but profound betrayal - the sort of betrayal that destroys relationships we should be able to count on - relationships we should be able to rely upon to protect and safeguard us* - especially the parent-child relationship and the other relationships clustered around it; e.g., older sibling-younger sibling, grandparent-grandchild, etc. And it's precisely this kind of betrayal that's fast becoming *endemic* here in America - most of it engendered by changed ethical standards that have undermined the sanctity of marriage - turning it from an "*unconditional commitment*" into a "*highly conditioned contract*" subject, by and large, to dissolution at the whim of either of the parties.

It's important now to notice how the character traits we've sketched out here so closely correspond to Paul's description in 2 Timothy 3:1-4.

2 Tim. 3:1	But know this, that in the last days grievous times shall come.
2 Tim. 3:2	For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty, railers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,
2 Tim. 3:3	without natural affection, implacable, slanderers, without self-control, fierce, no lovers of good,
2 Tim. 3:4	traitors, headstrong, puffed up, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God...

The underlying dynamic that produces the character traits sketched out by Paul in 2 Timothy 3:1-4 is a *contemporary* fact of life - and is becoming ever more pervasive: *divorce, abandonment, child abuse, etc.* We should expect, therefore, to encounter more and more of the kinds of individuals that correspond to Paul's description. And we'd better be prepared to adequately minister to them.

## **A COURSE OBJECTIVE**

One of the most important objectives of this next year is to get you to abandon all your coping devices. There's a better way of handling disappointments and offenses - specifically, the *forgiveness rules* that you've already been taught and that you're now learning to put into practice. Applying the forgiveness rules provides you with a scripturally based and powerfully effective means of handling disappointments and offenses - *without producing the alienation and deadened emotions spawned by coping devices*. You'll find that putting away your coping devices - discarding them -

1. *will go a long way toward enabling you to "feel" again. It will help you to recover the sense of "being alive" - without being plagued by terrifying fears and without recourse to perverse and dangerous behavior - which is what almost all coping devices eventually produce. (More about coping devices and perversions in future lessons.)*
2. *In addition, it will enable you to dismantle the "interpretational grid" that has prevented the formation of genuine intimacy.*

## **FOOLS' GOLD - THREE FALSE PREMISES**

We've all been taught that (1) trust, (2) acceptance, and (3) communication are the *starting points* of a friendship - and, most especially, a happy and fulfilling marriage. But that's simply not true. *Risk is the starting point.*

### **1. Trust**

If trust is made a *sine qua non* of building or rebuilding a relationship - of actually initiating it - then the whole process of developing it is jeopardized at the outset; *because for hurt and injured individuals, sufficient trust can never be amassed to overcome their fear of putting themselves at*

*risk*. You need to grapple very strenuously with the truth that risk, not trust, is the starting point of building a relationship. *Trust is not the starting point; it's a by-product*. Remember: Christ did not make trust the starting point of his relationship with us; he made risk his starting point.

2. *Acceptance*

Acceptance is another principle that's often made a *sine qua non* of relationship. But it too is a by-product of building a relationship, not a biblically based starting point. If acceptance means that approval is granted with no regard given to behavior, then it's a recipe for disaster. All relationships involve change; and to the extent that "acceptance" implies that little or no change will be required ("Love me, love my dog" attitude of the 1960s and 70s) then an intimate relationship becomes impossible. Two persons in relationship with one another are always making changes for the sake of mutual accommodation. No one who wants to build an intimate relationship can simply excuse his insensitivities and sinful behavior with the remark: "*Well, that's just the way I am and you've just got to learn to accept me.*"

3. *Communication*

All too often "communication" is made the scapegoat of a soured relationship. But that's seldom the case either. It's not improved communication skills that most troubled marriages need. The problem is far deeper than that - *and to suggest otherwise almost trivializes the impasse that they've reached*. Usually, the two parties have no trouble at all communicating - *they know all too well the nature of their impasse* - and no "honed" communication skills are going to resolve it.



## "Sally Smith's" Personal Testimony

"Sally Smith" (not her real name), was sexually abused while she was a child - and the abuse continued over several years - including even a family priest and a brother. Midway through the Agonia, she handed my wife a sheaf of papers from her diary. I read them myself and was deeply touched; I asked for Sally's permission to print a few excerpts. She encouraged me to do so. The excerpts illustrate the impact that betrayal generates in the heart and mind of its victims. The excerpts are not arranged in any kind of specific order.

### "Sally's" Personal Testimony

***First Excerpt:***

I thought I could take a break from healing, but I found out that I can't. Dealing with the pain and memories has become better than denial and numbing. I feel so out of control. I want to eat, drink, and watch TV - so I don't have to feel. Yet I don't feel good. I want joy and peace. I want the TRUTH (full caps are hers).

***Second Excerpt:***

I remember feeling like an alien in school. I was watching the kids on the playground and trying to

figure out what everyone was doing. It was a painful realization that the little child on the playground had already turned off her feelings and was learning to be the best actress who ever lived. She did a mighty fine job indeed. It hurts to think I acted, not lived, throughout my life.

***Third Excerpt:***

Anger has been a constant companion lately. I feel like I am not a good person when I am angry and you know how important it is to ACT like a good person. I am trying to allow myself to be angry and understand why I am so angry. Why should I feel so angry? I have never been listened to, unconditionally loved, understood, validated, not to mention I have been raped, sodomized and molested by trusted neighbors, teacher, brother, and family priest.

***Fourth Excerpt:***

I am having some sad and scary feelings come over me. Yesterday was my 39th birthday. I had a fun day. My co-workers were very thoughtful and I received much attention and several gifts. I really feel liked by my fellow co-workers. I had fleeting thoughts that I was an imposter. I really had everyone fooled. I'm not really the fun, caring, free spirit they think I am.

***Fifth Excerpt:***

I feel abandoned. I haven't felt this way for many months. I thought I was healed from this horrible pit. I feel consumed with sadness. I don't think I'll ever feel safe again. Why can't I feel mature and powerful. How do I get back there? What is the key that unlocks the door?

***Sixth Excerpt:***

I am an "abandonment person." Some days I think I have it all figured out. I will never hurt again. And the, crash - I am right back where I began. I feel like a child, alone and terrified. I went to the book store today. I wanted to find a book that had answers for me. A book that would give me a list of things to do so I could become a normal person. I can follow directions, but no one will direct me. It is so hard to be alone. I get disappointed when I want Frank (not her husband's real name) to be available for me. I get mad at myself for counting on him to be there for me. Why can't I get it through my head that he is available for fun only. Even when he says he wants to hear my grief and pain, he really doesn't. I know this, yet I still fall for it from time to time. And when I am vulnerable with him, it hurts so much. I do so much want to trust someone with my true feelings and not bear them alone. Maybe that will never happen for me.



## *Comments*

Note carefully some of Sally's comments - because they illustrate several of the coping devices we're going to be examining in this manual.

1. Denial and *numbing*... (Numbing - turning off your emotions so that you can't get hurt.)
2. The fear of losing control... (Control becomes an overriding concern of anyone who has been betrayed. They fear the merest suggestion of ever again being "put at risk.")

3. "I want to eat, drink, and watch TV - *so I don't have to feel.*" (Here again, we have numbing - "turning off your emotions so that you can't feel the pain of being hurt.)
4. "I remember *feeling like an alien* in school." (Any time someone "turns off" his emotions for the sake of "protecting himself," he becomes overwhelmed with the sense that he's not living, he's only acting.)
5. "...the little child on the playground had already *turned off her feelings* and was *learning to be the best actress* who ever lived." (Here again is the sense of "acting" - which arises from the refusal to emotionally invest.)
6. "It hurts to think *I acted, not lived*, throughout my life."
7. "...you know how important it is to *ACT like a good person.*"
8. "*Anger has been a constant companion* lately." (Free floating anger is always the result of "turning off your emotions.)
9. "I am having some *sad and scary feelings* come over me." (Anger is almost invariably accompanied by feelings of sadness and fear.)
10. "I had fleeting thoughts that *I was an imposter. I really had everyone fooled.*" Here again, we have the sense of "playacting.")
11. "I feel abandoned." (Anytime we "turn off" our emotions - anytime we refuse to invest ourselves emotionally - we become cut off from others; we become isolated. That's what gives rise to the on-going sense of abandonment that plagues so many persons who have been severely traumatized.)
12. "I feel consumed with sadness." (Here again the sense of sadness is being highlighted.)
12. "I wanted to find a book that had answers for me. A book that would give me a list of things to do so I could become a normal person. I can follow directions, but no one will direct me."

## ***HOMEWORK***

1. If you didn't read ahead of time the section assigned last week for this week's lesson, you're required to do so this week. Remember: *reading it this evening is not sufficient.* You need to read it on your own - with plenty of time set aside for quiet reflection.
2. Please read the section of the *Agonia Manual* entitled "*Relationships • Coping Devices • Perversion: Chapter Two - Coping Devices.*" Included in this chapter are several forms designed to help you identify your coping devices. Ignore them until next week.

There's a lot of homework for next week. Make sure that you don't fall behind. No excuses! You have been warned to reorder your priorities - and to make room for the Agonia. We will be holding you to your word. Both of these two chapters - the one assigned last week and the one assigned this week - are extremely important for the "life changes" that we're trusting God to bring about in your life. You must not only set aside sufficient time to read the material you've been assigned, but to reflect on it as well.



**RELATIONSHIPS • COPING DEVICES • PERVERSIONS®**  
**CHAPTER 2**  
**COPING DEVICES**

**WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL**

*WEEK OF* \_\_\_\_\_

	Prayer Items	When Answered How Answered
Day #1	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #2	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #3	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #4	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #5	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #6	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #7	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

# DAILY MONITORING FORM

<i>Week</i> _____	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5	Column #6	Column #7	Column #8	Column #9	Column #10
Instructions for scoring have been provided by your instructors. However, a brief description is given below.	<b>Two Chapters from the Gospels</b>	<b>15 Minutes of Prayer</b>	<b>Prayer Journal</b>	<b>Squabble Rule Violations</b>	<b>Response to Correction</b>	<b>Agonia Contacts</b>	<b>Fruit of the Spirit</b>	<b>Does Not Blame Spouse</b>	<b>Shares Joy with Spouse</b>	<b>Rebuffed Overtures</b>
Day #1				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #2				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #3				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #4				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #5				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #6				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #7				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
<b>Average for Week</b> Eliminate the high and low				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Yes or No</b>					<b>Total</b>				Total Attempted _____ Total Positives _____ Ratio _____

**INSTRUCTIONS:** (1) The "Three Disciplines," columns 1-3: one "no" for any day for any of the disciplines results in a "no" for the entire week. (2) "Squabble Rules," column 4: keep daily track of (a) how many times you violate the rules and (b) how many times your spouse violates the rules; at the end of the week, eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (3) "Response to Correction," column 5: keep daily track of how often you notice that either you or your spouse does not respond positively to correction and rebuke. The criteria consists of (a) non-defensiveness and (b) attentiveness. Grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (4) "Agonia Contacts," column 6: (a) phone call to an agonia-mate over ten minutes = 1 pt.; (b) personal, face-to-face contact over a half an hour = 3 pts.; (c) Having an agonia couple over for dinner = 5 pts; (d) participate in a meeting of the full Agonia other than the class itself = 5 pts. (5) "Spirituality Indices," columns 7-9; grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and the low for the week and average of the remaining scores. (6) "Overtures," column 10: keep daily track of how often you reach out to your spouse; and also keep track of how often, if at all, your overtures are rebuffed. At the end of the week, list the total overtures you undertook; and compute a ratio of positive responses to the total.

# COPING DEVICES

## ***REVIEW OF A PAST LESSON: PROCESSING DISAGREEMENTS***

Let's begin this evening's class with a review of how you should be processing disagreements.

1. Learn to *distinguish* between disagreements and offenses.
2. Most disagreements *do not need to be resolved*.
3. Learn to discuss your disagreements with *no thought of resolving them*.
4. Learn that you don't need your spouse to agree with you - that your own emotional and spiritual equanimity is *not dependent upon it*.
5. Learn to acknowledge that your spouse is *entitled* to his/her own opinions - that those opinions - and indeed the very process of formulating them - are vital to his/her own sense of self-identity.
6. Learn to *enjoy - actually enjoy - discussing* your disagreements.
7. Learn to use your disagreements *to validate each other*.

## ***LET'S REVIEW AGAIN THE DYNAMICS OF A GENUINELY CLOSE RELATIONSHIP - WHAT IT IS AND WHAT IT ENTAILS***

1. A close, personal relationship is based upon intimacy;
2. but intimacy *necessarily* entails making yourself vulnerable - which, of course, produces a state of risk.

It's perhaps helpful to describe it in mathematical terms:

$$\begin{aligned} \text{RELATIONSHIP} &= f(\text{INTIMACY}) \\ \text{INTIMACY} &= f(\text{MAKING YOURSELF VULNERABLE}) \\ \text{MAKING YOURSELF VULNERABLE} &\sim \text{"STATE OF RISK"} \end{aligned}$$

Again, what distinguishes a close relationship - in fact, its defining feature - is the *intimacy* which establishes it. A close relationship, then, is a *function* of intimacy - *meaning the more intimacy the parties are willing to extend one another, the closer the relationship becomes*.

*But I can grant intimacy only to the extent that I make myself vulnerable.* That's because intimacy requires *openness*; it requires transparent honesty - and leads inevitably to personal scrutiny. The doors and windows of a person's life are thrown open. Every room is made accessible - both the neat and tidy on the one hand and the jumbled and chaotic on the other. Every secret chamber is unlocked. *And, clearly, that's a very risky venture.* One party, for purposes of self-aggrandizement, can always exploit the secrets he's been made privy to - the hopes, the ambitions, the fears, the anxieties, the struggles. *Betrayal is always a possibility.*

Again, Jesus' life and conduct set an example for us. He opened himself up to his disciples; he brought them into close, personal contact with himself - and threw open his life to their unrelenting scrutiny. Consequently, he *lived* with the possibility of betrayal. And, as we know, it happened: one of the twelve betrayed him.

Matthew 10:2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

Matthew 10:3 Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

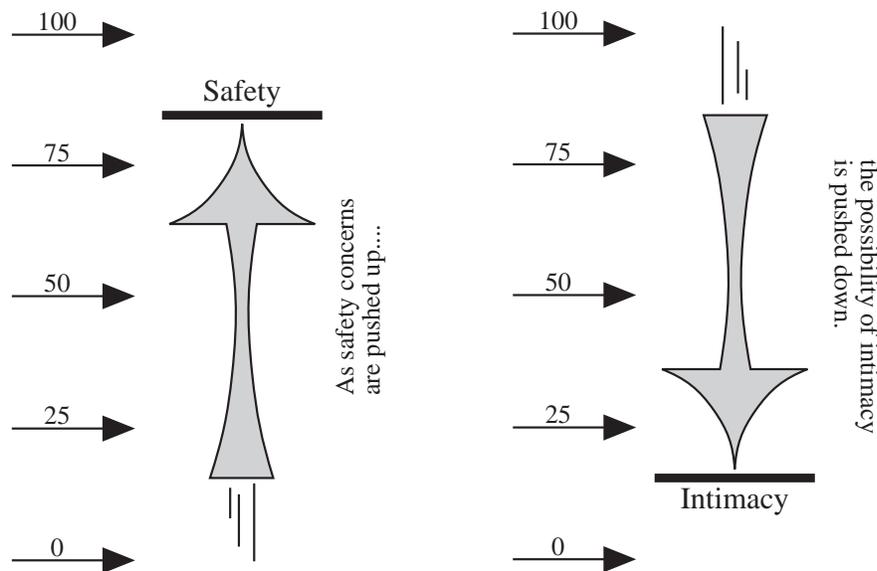
Matthew 10:4 Simon the Cananaean, *and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.*

*Anyone unwilling to open himself up to that possibility makes a close relationship impossible.*

Moreover, the emotional investment that occurs leads inevitably to a profound *dependency*. Lives become intertwined; boundaries become blurred. What's mine is yours; and what's yours becomes mine. Two lives *grow into* one another - and become organically linked. Any kind of a break, therefore, entails not just a simple parting of the ways, but a severe rending. It's filled with pain and anguish - and, in the end, can produce a deep-seated despair.

*A close relationship, then, exists within a state of risk.* Risk is the *unavoidable, inescapable* medium of every close relationship. And the more we seek to protect ourselves from that risk, the more the very possibility of developing an intimate relationship eludes us. It's a real dilemma.

## THE DILEMMA!!



The correlation is so clear-cut that it can be put in mathematical terms:

If "X" = "intimacy"  
 "Δ" (delta) symbolizes "change;" and  
 "Y" = "willingness to put oneself at risk;"  
 then  
 $\Delta X = f(\Delta Y)$

*But risk is precisely what many persons can't tolerate - psychologically; because they've learned' that putting themselves in a state of risk - making themselves dependent - can lead to terrible personal injury. And for many severely traumatized individuals, it's not simply that putting themselves at risk with others can lead to personal injury; it's that putting themselves at risk does lead to personal injury. It's as simple as that! There are no subtle nuances or carefully contrived addenda. It's very straight forward; it's a universal dictum. It's not an empirically based judgment, of course; nevertheless, it's believed fervently; it's encrusted with profound emotional conviction. Consequently, what develops is a genuine dysfunction: it's not that an authentic, palpable threat is needed to prompt fear: instead, fear becomes a pervasive "feeling" - a "mind-set" that never lets go of its grip. Fear becomes the backdrop against which life itself is carried on.*

1. For the *normal* individual, a *specific, well defined, palpable, tangible threat prompts fear.*
2. For the *traumatized* individual, however, *no specific threat is needed - the simple sense of not being in control is sufficient to generate profound fear.*

**Moreover, it should be carefully noted that when severely traumatized individuals sense that they're losing control, they often become angry and violent.**

### ***COPING DEVICES: A WAY OF LIFE***

Coping devices are a way of life for traumatized individuals. Why? Because however dysfunctional those devices may prove to be in the long run they afford a sense of protection in the short run. The long-run dysfunction, however, is obvious: (1) deadened emotions which often lead to perversions and (2) a profound isolation which almost invariably gives rise to a distorted perspective and dangerous fantasizing; e.g., conspiracy scenarios, etc.

### ***COPING DEVICES***

Remember what a coping device is: it's a *defensive measure* you adopt to protect yourself from being hurt. There are three kinds of coping devices:

1. measures you adopt to *distance* yourself;
2. measures you adopt to *deadened* yourself; and
3. measures you adopt to *avoid dependency.*

Please compile a list of coping devices - examples drawn from your own personal past - especially ones that were used within your own family circle while growing up. Spend some time discussing your list of coping devices among yourselves.

- |          |           |
|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____  |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____  |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____  |
| 7. _____ | 8. _____  |
| 9. _____ | 10. _____ |

---

### **FOOTNOTE**

1. Clearly, not learned in any rational, didactic sense of the word, but experientially - to the point that it generates a conditioned response based upon fear.

## A COMMON CHARACTERISTIC

What's the first characteristic you notice about this list? What common feature does each device share? *Notice carefully that each of the coping devices you've listed is a sin - in and of itself.* In other words, coping devices are, by and large, sinful - which shouldn't be surprising. We've already pointed out that coping devices (1) beget and perpetuate alienation, (2) deaden our emotions - spawning perversions and producing insensitivity, and (3) lure us into shunning almost any form of dependency. Likewise, sin always (1) separates human beings from one another, (2) destroys empathy, and (3) is self-centered. Flip a coping device over - and on the other side what you'll find is a sin. The two are one and the same. There's virtually no difference - regardless of how benign and apparently innocuous the coping device seems at first glance.

Turn with me to Galatians 5:19-21 and then to Colossians 3:5-8<sup>1</sup>:

Gal. 5:19	Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality (πορνια), impurity (ακαθαρσια), sensuality (ασαλγεια),
Gal. 5:20	idolatry (ειδωλολατρια), sorcery (φαρμακεια), enmities (εχθραι), strife (ερις), jealousy (ζηλος), outbursts of anger (θυμοι), disputes (εριθειαι), dissensions (διχοστασιαι), factions (αιρεσιες),
Gal. 5:21	envying (φθονοι), drunkenness (μεθαι), carousing (κωμοι), and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.
Col. 3:5	Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality (πορνειαν), impurity (ακαθαρσιαν), passion (παθος), evil desire (επιθυμιαν), and greed (πλεονεξιαν), which amounts to idolatry (ειδωλολατρια).
Col. 3:6	For it is on account of these things that the wrath of God will come,
Col. 3:7	and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them.
Col. 3:8	But now you also, put them all aside: anger (οργην), wrath (θυμον), malice (κακιαν), slander (βλασφημιαν), and abusive speech (αισχρολογιαν) from your mouth.

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## FOOTNOTE

1. I've put in parentheses the Greek for each of the vices listed in these two passages so that there's no doubt what particular vice is being highlighted.

Lets take a good look now at each of the vices we've pulled from Galatians and Colossians. (And you'll find other such lists throughout the New Testament as well.) They can be lumped into two general groups: (1) an actual coping device; and (2) an inordinate craving. What we have, then, are seventeen coping devices and four inordinate cravings.

### Coping Devices

1. idolatry (ειδωλολατρία)
2. sorcery (φαρμακεία)
3. enmities (εχθραί)
4. strife (ερίζ)
5. Jealousy (ζήλος)
6. outbursts of anger (θυμοί)
7. disputes (εριθειαι)
8. dissensions (διχοστασιαι)
9. factions (αιρεσιεις)
10. envying (φθονοί)
11. drunkenness (μεθαι)
12. passion (παθος)
13. greed (πλεονεξιαν)
14. anger (οργην)
15. malice (κακιαν)
16. slander (βλασφημιαν)
17. abusive speech (αισχρολογιαν)

### Inordinate Craving

1. immorality (πορνια)
2. impurity (ακαθαρσια)
3. sensuality (ασαλγεια)
4. carousing (κωμοί)

We'll discuss inordinate cravings next week. This week, we'll stay focused on coping devices.

Galatians 5:19-21 and Colossians 3:5-8 are both cast in the form of an asyndeton. An asyndeton is a figure of speech meant to unify various items into a comprehensive whole<sup>1</sup>. No one item on the list is meant to stand alone. Paul is telling us that anger is linked to strife; malice is linked to factions; envy is linked to idolatry; etc. If one is obvious and flagrant, the others, if not fully manifest, are lurking just below the surface. Why? Because the "flesh" is the "flesh" - and what it spawns is always the same.

Romans 7:18      For I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth  
no good thing...

It's clear from merely a cursory examination that the seventeen coping devices listed in Galatians 5:19-21 and Colossians 3:5-8 can be further subdivided into two additional categories: one category includes vices that are cast more in the form of *attitudes* and *predispositions*; while the other is cast more in the form of

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## FOOTNOTE

1. The purpose of an asyndeton is not limited to unifying various items into a comprehensive whole. It's also meant to point to a climatic conclusion which sums up what the list is intended to reveal. In the case of Galatians 5:19-21, the concluding phrase is "*those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.*" In the case of Colossians 3:5-8, the concluding phrase is found in verses 9 and 10: "*lay aside the old self with its evil practices, and put on the new self which is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.*"

*specific acts* or *behavioral ploys*. The first category, *attitudes*, includes (1) idolatry, (2) enmity, (3) jealousy, (4) envy, (5) passion, (6) greed, (7) anger, and (8) malice. The second category, *specific acts*, includes (1) sorcery, (2) strife, (3) outbursts of anger, (4) disputes, (5) dissension, (6) factions, (7) drunkenness, (8) slander, and (9) abusive speech.

Lets now examine each of the vices we've listed one by one - remembering, however, that both passages are asyndetons - and that, therefore, no one vice can be experientially isolated from the others. We will use the NASB.

## ***PREDISPOSITIONS AND ATTITUDES - MAKING UP A MIND-SET***

### 1. ***Idolatry***

ειδωλολατρία

Idololatria

Idolatry reflects a mind-set that holds nothing sacred. The transcendent nature of God is lost almost completely. There's little sense of the holy. For example, none of the Greek gods is fundamentally concerned with righteousness and personal integrity. The entire pantheon is devoid of a single illustration of unbending moral purity. And the same holds true for any other pantheon - whether Egyptian, Hittite, Canaanite, Amorite, or whatever. The gods are petulant, self-centered, proud, petty, greedy, and often morally reprehensible - so much so that Plato and Aristotle grieved bitterly against them and complained that they weren't worthy of genuine reverence.

Idolatry does not necessarily lead to spurning the worship of Jehovah; it often leads to nothing more than adding other gods alongside Jehovah - of inserting Jehovah into a pantheon. But that profanes Gods dignity; it reduces God to their level. God demands *exclusive* worship; likewise, he demands that his name and majesty be lifted to a transcendent plane. He forbids being even compared to other gods; because any act of comparison presumes at least a modicum of similarity.

Is. 46:5                      To whom would you liken Me, And make Me equal  
and compare Me, That we should be alike?

Idolatry suggests not only false worship, but it's often linked to greed.

Col. 3:5                      Therefore consider the members of your earthly  
body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil  
desire, and *greed, which amounts to idolatry.*

In addition, it's often associated with the commission of any unlawful deed associated with idolatry; e.g., temple prostitution.

Idolatry, then, is a *mind-set*; not simply a specific act. It reflects a mind that refuses to acknowledge transcendent holiness - a mind that will not be held accountable to any code of moral conduct. Morality is situational at best and nonexistent at worst. Power alone is revered; nothing else. Worship is reduced to little more than appeasing the capricious wrath of an ill tempered god.

### 2. ***Enmities***

εχθραι

Ekthrai

It denotes a hostile - even hateful - attitude - which prompts a person to injure others. It's often equated with vengeance. It's the opposite of love (αγαπη) - and often set in contrast to it.

Luke 23:12	Now Herod and Pilate became friends with one another that very day; for before they had been at <b>enmity</b> with each other.
Rom. 8:7	...because the mind set on the flesh is <b>hostile</b> toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so...
Eph. 2:16	...and might reconcile them both in one body to God through the cross, by it having put to death the <b>enmity</b> .
James 4:4	You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an <b>enemy</b> of God.

Like idolatry, enmity is an *attitude* - and reflects an *emotional and intellectual predisposition*.

### 3. **Jealousy**

ζηλος  
Zelos

In the New Testament, it's used sometimes to denote passionate commitment; but more frequently, it's used to indicate envy and anger - which is its meaning whenever it's included in a list of vices. It's a desire to possess what belongs to others; and it entails resentment - often a bitter resentment - when possession isn't forthcoming. It's often linked to strife (ερις) - jealousy gives rise to strife.

Acts 5:17	But the high priest rose up, along with all his associates (that is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with <b>jealousy</b> ...
Acts 13:45	But when the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with <b>jealousy</b> , and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul, and were blaspheming.
James 3:14	But if you have bitter <b>jealousy</b> and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.
James 3:16	For where <b>jealousy</b> and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.

Jealousy is an *attitude*, not a technique. It too reflects a mind-set - *an emotional and intellectual predisposition*.

### 4. **Envy**

φθονοι  
Fthonoi

Envy arises from an evil impulse - and is aroused whenever anyone else is blessed with prosperity or advantage. It should not be confused with jealousy (ζηλος). Envy seeks to *deprive* someone else of an advantage. Jealousy seeks only emulation, not deprivation.

Matt. 27:18      For he knew that because of *envy* they had delivered Him up.

It denotes an *attitude* - a *predisposition*.

5. **Passion**

παθος

Pathos

The English word *passion* misses almost totally the meaning of the Greek pathos (παθος).

"Pathos" (παθος) denotes a condition, not simply a single specific impulse. It points to the vile, diseased state out of which various lusts spring. In Romans 1:26, it's cast in the form of a punishment - a state of abject misery to which God consigns anyone who stubbornly rebels against him. It's a state of dishonor and shame.

Rom. 1:26      For this reason God gave them over to degrading **passions**; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural...

It's not a technique; it's a *state of mind and heart*. And it's actually a little more profound and more deeply entrenched than a mere predisposition or attitude.

6. **Greed**

πλεονεξια

Pleonexia

It means covetousness. Among the Greeks, greed is one of the most corrupting of all vices. Plato writes that it "*pokes holes*" in the soul of the afflicted person - spilling out all his vital forces.

Greed is insatiable - it prompts its victims to lust for more - and generates within them a profound emptiness that possessing more only exacerbates.

Eph. 4:17      This I say therefore, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind,  
Eph. 4:18      being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart;  
Eph. 4:19      and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of **impurity with greediness**.

The phrase *impurity with greediness* links "impurity" (ακαθαρσια) with covetousness - and suggests *compulsive behavior*. But the term "compulsive behavior" must be carefully modified for our use. It's not compulsive in the sense that a person is bereft of resources - and can't help himself - especially a Christian. A Christian is never helpless. He's not mere flotsam on the stream of life - carried about hither and yon - without a motor and without a rudder. Nor is he in need of prolonged psychotherapy. The Bible gives only one answer to compulsive behavior - whatever perverse form it assumes; and it's found in Ephesians 4:22 - just three verses down.

Eph. 4:22      ...that, in reference to your former manner of life, you *lay aside* the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit...

Just *lay it aside*. No long-term trauma therapy is suggested or even hinted at; just *lay it aside*. Whenever we cast a believer in the role of victim, we deprive him of the expectation he needs to

find real victory: that, specifically, God has supplied him with the power of the Holy Spirit and the comfort and strength of the church.

Greed, like passion, is less of a specific attitude than a more deeply entrenched *state of mind*.

## 7. **Anger**

οργη  
Orgé

It denotes more of a settled disposition than a specific act - which is the meaning "thumos" (θυμος) is ordinarily given. The ordinary distinction between "orge" (οργη) and "thumos" (θυμος) turns on the matter of duration. "Thumos" (θυμος) is a sudden outbreak of violence;" orgé" (οργη), on the other hand, though it may be vented suddenly, builds slowly. Jesus points out that it's a precursor to murder.

- Matt. 5:21            You have heard that the ancients were told, You shall not commit murder and Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.
- Matt. 5:22            But I say to you that everyone who is **angry** (οργη) with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever shall say, You fool, shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.

If it leads to vengeance, it infringes on God's divine prerogatives; and is, therefore, sinful.

- Rom. 12:19           Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather give place unto wrath: for it is written, Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the Lord.

Anger does not advance the cause of righteousness.

- James 1:19           This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger...

Anger here is more of a *predisposition* or a *temperament* than a specific act or technique. Some individuals seem to be more or less *permanently* angry. It's not that a specific offense spawns an angry outburst; the anger is already there - lurking just below the surface - and the offense merely triggers it - provides an opportunity to vent it. Angry (οργη, not θυμος ) persons are very dangerous. An angry person can so devalue and depersonalize others that he's led into murder.

## 8. **Malice**

κακια  
Kakia

- James 1:21           Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of **wickedness**, in humility receive the word implanted, which is able to save your souls.

It denotes a malevolent disposition. It's regarded as a precursor to sin; a seedbed for sin. It is, therefore, not a specific act or technique, but an attitude - perhaps even a state of mind.

## ***SPECIFIC ACTS OR TECHNIQUES***

### 1. ***Sorcery***

φαρμακεια  
Pharmakeia

It implies the use of magic potions, drugs, charms, and spells. It's used primarily for the purpose of controlling others - including spiritual beings.

Rev. 18:23      ...and the light of a lamp will not shine in you any longer; and the voice of the bridegroom and bride will not be heard in you any longer; for your merchants were the great men of the earth, because all the nations were *deceived by your sorcery*.

Plato distinguishes between two kinds of "pharmakeia" (φαρμακεια) - (1) poison that's meant to directly injure a person's body; and (2) poison that's nonmaterial in nature - cast in the form of spells and charms designed to enlist the help of demons or demonic powers. For the one, all that's required is the poison itself. For the other, a sorcerer is necessary - a witch - a magician - someone who knows how to conjure a spell or chant an incantation.

Sorcery is a *technique* geared toward self-empowerment.

### 2. ***Strife***

ερις  
Eris

It denotes discord, contention, quarrels. It suggests debate, but with no thought of eliciting the truth. It implies one person *beating down* another.

In the New Testament, it often stems from profound personal loyalty to a leader or a cause. It's nourished by false teachers - and puts the unity and harmony of the church in jeopardy.

1 Cor. 1:11      For I have been informed concerning you, my brethren, by Chloe's people, that there are ***quarrels*** among you.

1 Cor. 3:3      ...for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and ***strife*** among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

Phil. 1:15      Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and ***strife***, but some also from good will...

Titus 3:9      But shun foolish controversies and genealogies and ***strife*** and disputes about the Law; for they are unprofitable and worthless.

Strife is a *technique* that's used to put others off - hold them at a distance. It's also used to manipulate others: strife spawns factions - and then pits one faction against another.

### 3. **Outbursts of anger**

θυμοι  
Thumoi

Outbreak of violence. It's derived from a verb meaning "to boil up," or "to smoke." The meaning in the New Testament is always "wrath." It's often used interchangeably with *orgé* (οργη); however, *orgé* ordinarily suggests an attitude - a profound, rather permanently settled disposition, not just a specific outbreak of anger. "Thumoi" (θυμοι) is more in the nature of a specific act - although both words can denote an act, not just "thumoi" (θυμοι).

Luke 4:28	And all in the synagogue were filled with <b>rage</b> as they heard these things...
Acts 19:28	And when they heard this and were filled with <b>rage</b> , they began crying out, saying, Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!

It's more in the nature of a *technique* - used to keep others at a distance - to intimidate them. Obviously, it's also manipulative in nature - because it's meant to cause others to give ground - to capitulate. It presses them to appease and placate. It's a *bullying* technique - whether used by men or women.

### 4. **Disputes**

εριθειαι  
Eritheiai

From "erithos" (εριθος) - a hired servant. Labor for hire. It's applied to those who hire out their services for gain - and, to achieve their ends, promote dissension intended to spawn factions. The motive is always self-interest. Notice how different the two virtues of "love" and "goodness" are: for both, the underlying concern is the best interest of others.

Phil. 1:17	...the former proclaim Christ out of selfish <b>ambition</b> , rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.
James 3:14	But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish <b>ambition</b> in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth.

It's a *technique* used to promote factions - all for the purpose of securing a self-centered advantage.

### 5. **Dissensions**

διχοστασιαι  
Dikostasiai

It denotes a disturbance - a disruption that undermines the integrity of an otherwise unified body. A dissension is not as well defined as a faction; it's more fluid and less stable. But dissensions, if not resolved, eventually crystallize into factions. Romans 16:17 warns the church to be on guard against anyone whose behavior leads to dissension or whose teaching leads to disruptions which pit one person against another or one group against another.

Rom. 16:17 Now I urge you, brethren, keep your eye on those who cause *dissensions* and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.

It's a manipulative *technique* - designed to promote the breakdown of unity for the purpose of undermining authority and securing a self-centered advantage.

6. **Factions**

αἵρεσις  
Airesies

Factions - sects into which dissensions (διχοστασῆαι) have crystallized. Factions promote the interests of those who spawn them. A faction is more "institutionalized" than a dissension. It's a very potent weapon in the arsenal of troubled individuals - because it leverages their influence enormously. Once a troubled person manages to develop a faction from out of a dissension he's stirred up, he becomes a formidable threat to established authority.

1 Cor. 11:19 For there must also be *factions* among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you.

2 Pet. 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive *heresies*, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

A faction is a *technique* - a tool - that's used to promote the interests of self-centered individuals. Factions are spawned by persons who employ strife and dissension. Strife leads to disputes; disputes lead to dissensions; and dissensions eventually produce factions.

Strife ⇒ Disputes ⇒ Dissensions ⇒ Factions

And since jealousy gives rise to strife, our schema can be expanded to include jealousy.

Jealousy ⇒ Strife ⇒ Disputes ⇒ Dissensions ⇒ Factions

1 Cor. 3:3 ...for ye are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you jealousy and strife, are ye not carnal, and do ye not walk after the manner of men?

Notice how 2 Corinthians links jealousy to strife, factions, and other similar vices.

2 Cor. 12:20 For I fear, lest by any means, when I come, I should find you not such as I would, and should myself be found of you such as ye would not; lest by any means there should be strife, jealousy, wraths, factions...

Likewise, James links jealousy and factions.

Jas. 3:14                      But if ye have bitter jealousy and faction in your heart, glory not and lie not against the truth.

7. ***Drunkenness***

μεθαι  
Methai  
Intoxication.

Luke 21:34                      Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and ***drunkenness*** and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap...

It's a *technique* employed to deaden ones emotions - especially the pangs of conscience.

8. ***Slander***

βλασφημια  
Blasphemia

It implies railing, calumny, reviling. It's intended to tear down a person's reputation. It stems from pride and arrogance. It is directed toward impugning someone else's dignity.

Jude 1:9                      But Michael the archangel, when he disputed with the devil and argued about the body of Moses, did not dare pronounce against him a ***railing*** judgment, but said, The Lord rebuke you.

It's a technique designed to bully others - intimidate them - gain an advantage over them.

9. ***Abusive Speech***

αισχρολογιαν  
Aisxrolagian

It denotes obscenities; foul language.

It's a technique designed to bully others - intimidate them - gain an advantage over them - hold them at a distance.

Discuss each of the coping devices we've described. Put them in your own words. Try to "clothe" them in contemporary garb. Try your best to grasp just how frequently we resort to them - and how pervasive each one is. Take careful note that most of the vices enumerated in the New Testament - and the Old Testament for that matter - are little more than *coping devices*; and those that aren't fall under the rubric of an inordinate craving which, in next week's lesson, we'll learn are largely produced by the deadening impact of coping devices.

## ***HOMEWORK***

1. Begin pressing yourselves to wrap up all your "dung pile" offenses. You've had at least seven weeks to resolve them; give yourselves no more than two additional weeks. We will cease monitoring "dung pile" offenses when we reach Chapter Four of this section. Chapter Four will mark the last time we track them.

2. Last week you read the section of the *Agonia Manual* entitled "*Relationships • Coping Devices • Perversion: Chapter Two - Coping Devices.*" Included in that chapter are several forms designed to help you identify your coping devices. You were told to ignore them until tonight's lesson. ***Please now fill out those forms - and bring them to class next week.***

You should now know what a coping device is and how it works. Remember, coping devices (1) serve to beget and perpetuate alienation; (2) deaden our emotions; and (3) cause us to shun any kind of dependency. It's not necessary for you to use the exact terms we've examined in tonight's lesson; e.g., idolatry, sorcery, enmities, malice, etc. Use your own wording; e.g., stonewalling, temper tantrums, intimidation, withdrawal, etc. Try to look past the exact biblical terms to the principles they embody. Try to distinguish between (1) predispositions and attitudes on the one hand, and (2) specific acts or techniques on the other. ***It's very important that you not share with your spouse the list that you're compiling. There should be no collaboration whatsoever between you and your spouse.***

3. Please read the section of the *Agonia Manual* entitled "*Relationships • Coping Devices • Perversion: Chapter Three - Perversions.*" You need to read this teaching over carefully - and reflect on its meaning. A few of you are, no doubt, caught in bondage to a specific perversion - and you need to understand the dynamic underlying perversions. Take time to thoroughly understand what you're reading - and to relate it back to this evening's lesson on coping devices.

# MY COPING DEVICES

Please fill out the following form for next week. And be prepared to discuss it in class. Be as honest as possible. It will do no good whatsoever to fudge here.

You should know now what a coping device is and how it works. Remember, coping devices (1) serve to beget and perpetuate alienation; (2) deaden our emotions; and (3) cause us to shun any kind of dependency. There's no need for you to use the exact terms we've examined in this lesson; e.g., idolatry, sorcery, enmities, malice, etc. Use contemporary terms; e.g., stonewalling, temper tantrums, intimidation, withdrawal, etc. Try to look past the exact words used in the scriptures to the principles they embody. Please try to distinguish between (1) predispositions and attitudes on the one hand, and (2) specific acts or techniques on the other. Do not collaborate with your spouse in making up your list. Don't share it with your spouse before next week's class. *It's very important that wives not share with their husbands nor husbands with their wives the lists that they're compiling. There should be no collaboration whatsoever.*

<b>Describe the Coping Device</b> (Include in your description whether it's a predisposition or an actual technique or specific act)	<b>How It Has Affected Your Marriage</b>
1	
2	
3	
4	

<b>Describe the Coping Device</b> (Include in your description whether it's a predisposition or an actual technique or specific act)	<b>How It Has Affected Your Marriage</b>
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	

# MY SPOUSE'S COPING DEVICES

Please identify and describe the coping devices your spouse uses to protect himself/herself - and how they have damaged your relationship. Please don't fudge here; it will do no good whatsoever - and will serve in the long run only to further frustrate healing and restoration. Don't share what you've listed here with your spouse. You'll have an opportunity to do that after next week's lesson. Once again, there's no need for you to use the exact terms we've examined in this lesson; e.g., idolatry, sorcery, enmities, malice, etc. Use contemporary terms; e.g., stonewalling, temper tantrums, intimidation, withdrawal, etc. Try to look past the exact words used in the scriptures to the principles they embody. Again, please try to distinguish between (1) predispositions and attitudes on the one hand, and (2) specific acts or techniques on the other. Do not collaborate with your spouse in making up your list. Don't share it with your spouse before next week's class. *It's very important that wives not share with their husbands nor husbands with their wives the lists that they're compiling. There should be no collaboration whatsoever.*

<b>Describe the Coping Device</b> (Include in your description whether it's a predisposition or an actual technique or specific act)	<b>How It Has Affected Your Marriage</b>
1	
2	
3	
4	

<p align="center"><b>Describe the Coping Device</b></p> <p align="center">(Include in your description whether it's a predisposition or an actual technique or specific act)</p>	<p align="center"><b>How It Has Affected Your Marriage</b></p>
<p>5</p>	
<p>6</p>	
<p>7</p>	
<p>8</p>	
<p>9</p>	

# A Portrait of Coping Devices

## Husband's Portrait of Himself

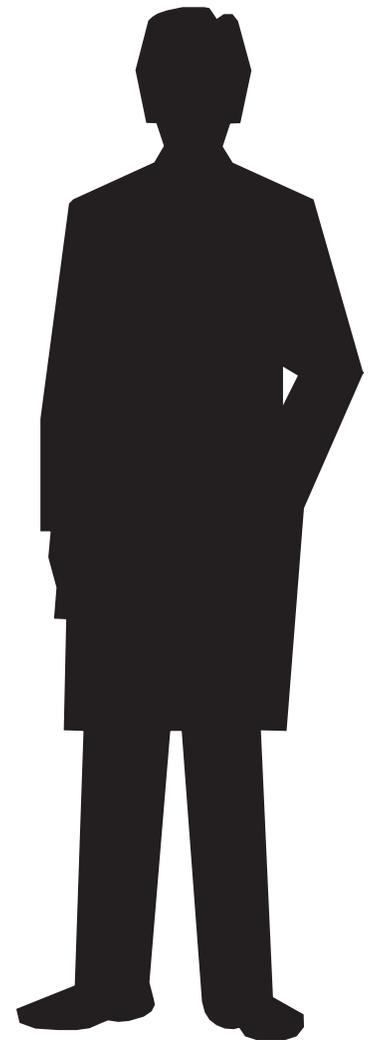
This is who I am

(Write Your name below)

---

You have already identified your own coping devices - and have described them in some detail. In addition, you have sketched out their impact on your marriage. Now, reduce your description of each coping device to a few brief, pithy words - and write them out on the lines below. It should provide an apt portrait of your personality in terms of its negative features. And that's exactly what you need to see. You need desperately to see yourself described in these terms - terms you yourself acknowledge - so that you can begin to take stock of what you've become - and make the changes that will lead to a joy-filled relationship with your wife.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_



# A Portrait of Coping Devices

## Wife's Portrait of Her Husband

This is my husband.  
(Write his name below)

Name of Wife \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

You have already identified your husband's coping devices - and have described them in some detail. In addition, you have sketched out their impact on your marriage. Now, reduce your description of each coping device to a few brief, pithy words - and write them out on the lines below. It should provide an apt portrait of your husband's personality in terms of its negative features. And that's exactly what he needs to see. He needs desperately to see himself described in these terms so that he can begin to take stock of what he's become - and make the changes that will lead to a joy-filled relationship with you.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_



# A Portrait of Coping Devices

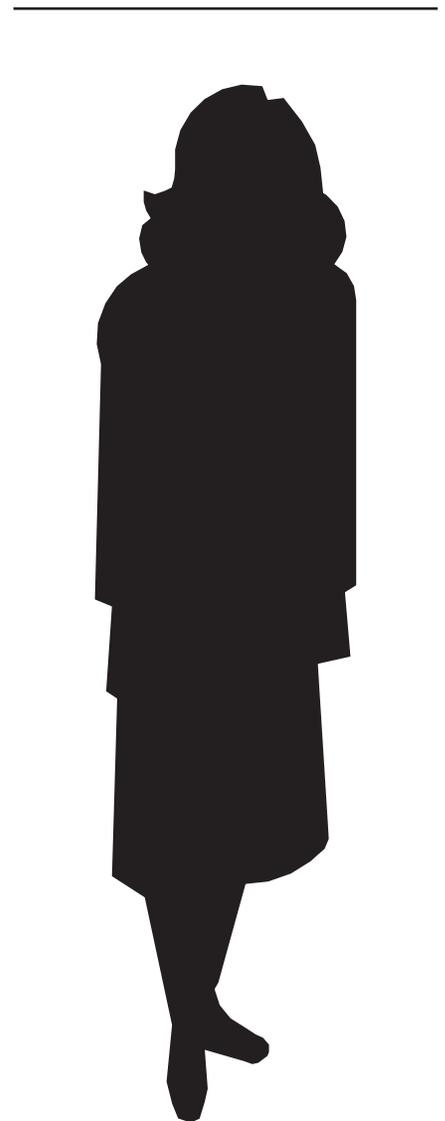
## Wife's Portrait of Herself

This is who I am

(Write Your name below)

You have already identified your own coping devices - and have described them in some detail. In addition, you have sketched out their impact on your marriage. Now, reduce your description of each coping device to a few brief, pithy words - and write them out on the lines below. It should provide an apt portrait of your personality in terms of its negative features. And that's exactly what you need to see. You need desperately to see yourself described in these terms - terms you yourself acknowledge - so that you can begin to take stock of what you've become - and make the changes that will lead to a joy-filled relationship with your husband.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_



# A Portrait of Coping Devices

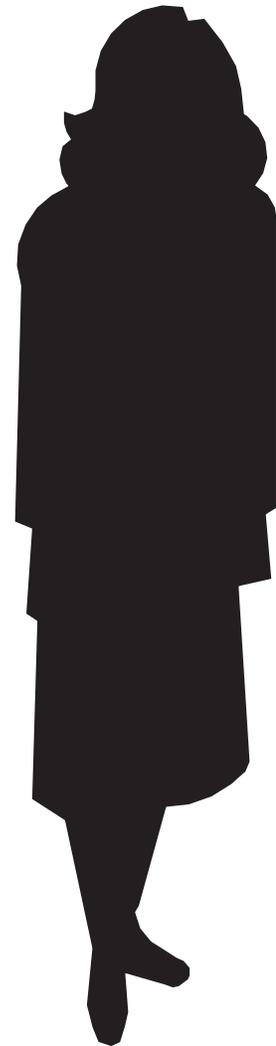
## Husband's Portrait of His Wife

This is my wife  
(Write her name below)

Name of Husband \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

You have already identified your wife's coping devices - and have described them in some detail. In addition, you have sketched out their impact on your marriage. Now, reduce your description of each coping device to a few brief, pithy words - and write them out on the lines below. It should provide an apt portrait of your wife's personality in terms of its negative features. And that's exactly what she needs to see. She needs desperately to see herself described in these terms so that she can begin to take stock of what she's become - and make the changes that will lead to a joy-filled relationship with you.



1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

4. \_\_\_\_\_

5. \_\_\_\_\_

6. \_\_\_\_\_

7. \_\_\_\_\_

8. \_\_\_\_\_

9. \_\_\_\_\_

10. \_\_\_\_\_



**RELATIONSHIPS • COPING DEVICES • PERVERSIONS®**  
**CHAPTER 3**  
**PERVERSIONS**

**WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL**

WEEK OF \_\_\_\_\_

	Prayer Items	When Answered How Answered
Day #1	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #2	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #3	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #4	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #5	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #6	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #7	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

# DAILY MONITORING FORM

<i>Week</i> _____	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5	Column #6	Column #7	Column #8	Column #9	Column #10
Instructions for scoring have been provided by your instructors. However, a brief description is given below.	<b>Two Chapters from the Gospels</b>	<b>15 Minutes of Prayer</b>	<b>Prayer Journal</b>	<b>Squabble Rule Violations</b>	<b>Response to Correction</b>	<b>Agonia Contacts</b>	<b>Fruit of the Spirit</b>	<b>Does Not Blame Spouse</b>	<b>Shares Joy with Spouse</b>	<b>Rebuffed Overtures</b>
Day #1				Your's /	Your's /		Your's /	Your's /	Your's /	Overtures Attempted /
				Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /		Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Positive Responses
Day #2				Your's /	Your's /		Your's /	Your's /	Your's /	Overtures Attempted /
				Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /		Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Positive Responses
Day #3				Your's /	Your's /		Your's /	Your's /	Your's /	Overtures Attempted /
				Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /		Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Positive Responses
Day #4				Your's /	Your's /		Your's /	Your's /	Your's /	Overtures Attempted /
				Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /		Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Positive Responses
Day #5				Your's /	Your's /		Your's /	Your's /	Your's /	Overtures Attempted /
				Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /		Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Positive Responses
Day #6				Your's /	Your's /		Your's /	Your's /	Your's /	Overtures Attempted /
				Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /		Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Positive Responses
Day #7				Your's /	Your's /		Your's /	Your's /	Your's /	Overtures Attempted /
				Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /		Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Positive Responses
<b>Average for Week</b> Eliminate the high and low				Your's /	Your's /		Your's /	Your's /	Your's /	Positive Responses
				Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /		Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	Your Spouse /	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Yes or No</b>					<b>Total</b>				Total Attempted _____ Total Positives _____ Ratio _____

**INSTRUCTIONS:** (1) The "Three Disciplines," columns 1-3: one "no" for any day for any of the disciplines results in a "no" for the entire week. (2) "Squabble Rules," column 4: keep daily track of (a) how many times you violate the rules and (b) how many times your spouse violates the rules; at the end of the week, eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (3) "Response to Correction," column 5: keep daily track of how often you notice that either you or your spouse does not respond positively to correction and rebuke. The criteria consists of (a) non-defensiveness and (b) attentiveness. Grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (4) "Agonia Contacts," column 6: (a) phone call to an agonia-mate over ten minutes = 1 pt.; (b) personal, face-to-face contact over a half an hour = 3 pts.; (c) Having an agonia couple over for dinner = 5 pts; (d) participate in a meeting of the full Agonia other than the class itself = 5 pts. (5) "Spirituality Indices," columns 7-9: grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and the low for the week and average of the remaining scores. (6) "Overtures," column 10: keep daily track of how often you reach out to your spouse; and also keep track of how often, if at all, your overtures are rebuffed. At the end of the week, list the total overtures you undertook; and compute a ratio of positive responses to the total.

# PERVERSIONS

## **REVIEW**

Let's review - just as we did last week - how disagreements should be processed. You need to memorize all seven rules.

1. Learn to *distinguish* between disagreements and offenses.
2. Most disagreements *do not need to be resolved*.
3. Learn to discuss your disagreements with *no thought of resolving them*.
4. Learn that you don't need your spouse to agree with you - that your own emotional and spiritual equanimity is *not dependent upon it*.
5. Learn to acknowledge that your spouse is *entitled* to his/her own opinions - that those opinions - and indeed the very process of formulating them - are vital to his/her own sense of self-identity.
6. Learn to *enjoy - actually enjoy - discussing* your disagreements.
7. Learn to use your disagreements *to validate each other*.

Once again, it's vitally important for you to process disagreements appropriately. You must learn how to discuss disagreements with no animosity - without even a trace of it. And that can't be achieved without lots of practice. Practice! Practice! Practice!

## **HOMEWORK FROM LAST WEEK**

Your instructors will now review with you your homework from last week

## **TONIGHT'S LESSON**

Let's return now to the whole issue of "coping devices." Remember what a coping device is: it's a *defensive measure* you adopt to protect yourself from being hurt. There are three kinds of coping devices:

1. measures you adopt to *distance* yourself;
2. measures you adopt to *deadend* yourself; and
3. measures you adopt to *avoid dependency*.

Remember that last week we separated the vices listed in Galatians 5:19-21 and Colossians 3:5-8 into two general categories.

### **Coping Devices**

1. idolatry (ειδωλολατρία)
2. sorcery (φαρμακεία)
3. enmities (εχθραί)
4. strife (ερίς)
5. Jealousy (ζήλος)
6. outbursts of anger (θυμοί)
7. disputes (εριθειαι)
8. dissensions (διχοστασιαι)
9. factions (αιρεσιεις)
10. envying (φθονοί)
11. drunkenness (μεθαι)
12. passion (παθος)
13. greed (πλεονεξια)
14. anger (οργη)
15. malice (κακια)
16. slander (βλασφημια)
17. abusive speech (αισχρολογια)

### **Inordinate Craving**

1. immorality (πορνια)
2. impurity (ακαθαρσια)
3. sensuality (ασαλγεια)
4. carousing (κωμοί)

There were a total twenty one vices. Seventeen fit the definition of a coping device. Whether cast in the form of a specific technique or a more general disposition, they (1) serve to beget and perpetuate alienation, (2) deaden our emotions - spawning perversions and producing insensitivity, and (3) lure us into shunning almost any form of dependency. However, at least four of the vices enumerated there did not actually correspond to our definition of a coping device. Those are listed in column two: immorality; impurity, sensuality, and carousing. They're not coping devices; they're more in the nature of “*inordinate cravings.*” What, then, is the relationship here? How are “coping devices” and “inordinate cravings” related to each other? Why are both listed together in these two passages of scripture?

The relationship between the two is causal - the one, coping devices, generates the other, inordinate cravings. And, in previous lessons, we have touched briefly on the reason why: *a coping device, by its very nature, anesthetizes the emotions.* Anyone who has developed well established and deeply entrenched coping devices has, inadvertently, desensitized himself. *And it's because he refuses to invest himself emotionally in others.*

He doesn't “*feel alive.*” It's a terrifying sense - and serves only to exacerbate his feeling of isolation - his sense of being “*cut off.*” Always the “*odd man out!*” “*There, but not there!*” He forever feels that he's play acting.

He's likely to be overwhelmed with a sense of hypocrisy - and it's because he's acutely aware that he “*can't get involved emotionally*” - that he's just “*going through the motions,*” unable to “*feel his part in the script.*”

He's likely to blame others; but the cause is inward. It's rooted in his own personal psyche - and is, no doubt, due to a severe emotional trauma - a trauma which has generated the coping devices he now so tenaciously clings to. Not always, but usually - indeed, quite frequently - the actual cause is his “betrayal” or perceived “betrayal” by an important authority figure - a parent - and, most often, a father or surrogate father.

It's his sense of "not being alive" that turns him toward perverse behavior. Why? It's an attempt to resuscitate his deadened emotions - to titillate them. ***He's unwilling to put himself at risk in a relationship, but he becomes all too willing to engage in dangerous and bizarre behavior designed to titillate his emotions.***

## ***ACTUAL BIBLICAL PERVERSIONS***

### **1. *Immorality***

πορνια

Pornia

The New Testament most often uses pornia to denote any illicit sexual intercourse - whether on the part of married persons (adultery) or unmarried persons (fornication). It clearly implies faithlessness and lack of self-control. And quite often it's used metaphorically to mean idolatry.

Matt. 19:9            And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for ***immorality***, and marries another woman commits adultery.

1 Cor. 7:2            But because of ***immoralities***, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.

1 Thess. 4:3           For this is the will of God, your sanctification; that is, that you abstain from sexual ***immorality***...

Rev. 17:2            ...with whom the kings of the earth committed acts of immorality, and those who dwell on the earth were made drunk with the wine of her ***immorality***.

Normal sexual intercourse between a husband and wife isn't sufficient to awaken deadened emotions - to titillate them - to stir them to life. It's too "normal;" it's too "routine;" it's not sufficiently fraught with danger - with a sense of the bizarre.

What's especially ironic is the need for risk. ***The very risk that's not extended for the sake of intimacy is sought recklessly for the sake of resuscitating deadened emotions.***

### **2. *Impurity***

ακαθαρσια

Akatharsia

In Matthew 23:27, it's used to denote the corruption that arises from death.

Matt. 23:27           Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all ***uncleanness***.

Elsewhere it indicates sensual impurity. Sordidness is often part of its definition. In Ephesians 4:19, Paul links impurity (ακαθαρσια) to greed (πλεονεξια).

Eph. 4:19 ...and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity (ακαθαρσία) with greediness.

Again, in Ephesians 5:3, impurity (ακαθαρσία) is closely associated with greed.

Eph. 5:3 But do not let immorality or any impurity (ακαθαρσία) or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints...

There's no doubt that we have here is *compulsive behavior*. That's because in both Ephesians 4:19 and Ephesians 5:3 akatharsia (ακαθαρσία) is linked to "greed;" and in Greek, "greed" denotes a terrifying state of emptiness - a condition that drives its victims relentlessly; and the more that's gained, the greater the sense of emptiness and the sharper the pangs. There's never any rest - never any sense of satisfaction - only a momentary reprieve followed invariably by another cycle of frenzy - more gripping than before.

Akatharsia implies filth - moral filth. It depicts gross degradation - a loss of honor - both in one's own estimation - and the estimation of others as well. It covers its victims in shame - and robs them of their dignity.

Akatharsia defiles its victims - and renders them useless in God's service and repulsive in his sight. It entails a sense of estrangement and profound isolation.

The dynamic that drives the compulsion is deadened emotions - all caused by coping devices that make genuine intimacy impossible. ***Don't forget that anytime someone, for the sake of protecting himself from betrayal, holds back from investing his emotions, he kills them. And that, then, is the starting point of "akatharsia" - that's its seedbed.***

### 3. *Sensuality*

ασαλγεια

Asalgeia

It denotes violence combined with spite and arrogance. It often indicates lawless insolence and wanton caprice. It implies duplicity. It conveys the sense of debauchery. Whenever it's linked to "Koite" (κοιτη) it means "sexual perversion." What we have, then, is sexual perversion combined with violence, spite, arrogance, and duplicity.

Rom. 13:13 Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity (κοιτη - a euphemism for sexual intercourse - when used with ασαλγεια, it means sexual excesses) and *sensuality* (ασαλγεια), not in strife and jealousy.

2 Pet. 2:1 But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

2 Pet. 2:2           And many will follow their *sensuality* (ασαλγεια),  
and because of them the way of the truth will be  
maligned;  
2 Pet. 2:3           and in their greed they will exploit you with false  
words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and  
their destruction is not asleep.

Sensuality - like both immorality and impurity - is pursued for the sake of "kick-starting" the emotions - of awakening them to life. But here *violence* is introduced. Violence is made part of the "mix." Sexual violence. Rape is a good example of "asalgeia."

#### 4. *Carousing*

κωμοι

Komoi

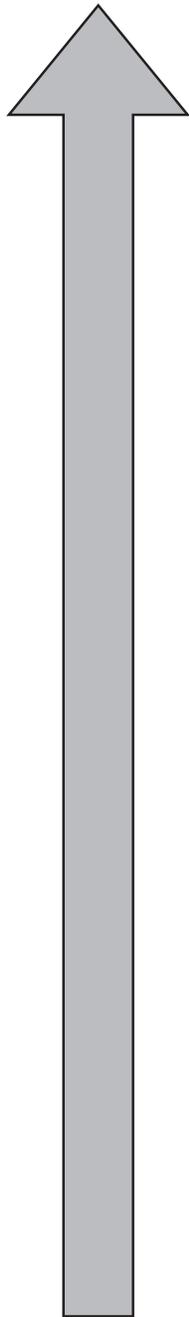
Party time! Wild! Frenzied! Reckless!

Rom. 13:13           Let us behave properly as in the day, not in  
carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual  
promiscuity and sensuality...

Once again, what we have here is a pitiful, heart-wrenching attempt to "kick-start" the emotions - arouse them from their stupor. "Carousing" should, of course, never be confused with "fellowship" (κοινωνια). The two are as different as night and day. Fellowship implies a gathering of intimate friends - and it features transparent honesty. And whatever is said and done carries over to the next day. Carousing, on the other hand, implies just the opposite. There are no real friends; only acquaintances. And there's no genuine honesty; no heart-to-heart transparency. "Liquor talk" sometimes conveys the sense of openness; but in the morning, its real meaning is exposed: Nothing there! Empty! Useless! Futile! Merely a momentary loss of inhibitions - not engendered by the truth, but by drugs and alcohol.

### ***STUDY THE GRAPHICS ON THE NEXT TWO PAGES***

Make sure that you examine the graphics on the next two pages. Go over the graphics very, very carefully. It's important that you thoroughly understand the correlation between coping devices on the one hand and perverse behavior on the other. Knowing it will help empower you to break free from its grip.



## Perversions

Immorality • Impurity •  
Sensuality • Carousing

Coping devices deaden the emotions. That's because a coping device keeps a person from investing his emotions in others - thereby "killing" them. The inevitable result is an overwhelming sense of *"not being alive."* Perversions are an attempt to *resuscitate deadened emotions* - to titillate them - to arouse them. And when a perversion is joined to greed (see discussion of "greed"), it becomes a compulsion. There's never a sense of satisfaction - only a terrifying cycle that repeats itself again and again - and tightens its grip relentlessly.

## Coping Devices

**in the form of specific acts  
or mechanisms**

Sorcery • Strife • Outburst of Anger •  
Disputes • Dissensions • Factions •  
Drunkenness • Slander •  
Abusive Speech

The coping devices listed here are specific acts - concrete, tangible techniques that give expression to underlying predispositions and attitudes. They serve to (1) beget and perpetuate alienation; (2) deaden our emotions; and (3) cause us to shun any kind of dependency.

## Coping Devices

**in the form of a predisposition or mind-set**

Idolatry • Enmities • Jealousy • Envy • Passion • Greed •  
Anger • Malice

The coping devices listed here are the predispositions fostered by a sense of betrayal. They prompt an individual to hold others at bay - and cast a cloud of suspicion over them. They're not techniques or specific acts. They're attitudes.

## Sin Nature

Both Galatians 5:19-21 and Colossians 3:6-8 constitute a list of vices that Colossians 3:9 links to our unregenerate human nature: "...seeing that ye have put off the **old man** with his **deeds**..." In other words, our *sin nature* is the ultimate source of all the coping devices and perversions that are delineated in both passages of scripture. Therefore, none of us is able to claim immunity. Obviously, then, each generation possesses the same *potential* for evil. But scripture indicates that some generations are worse than others; most notably, we're clearly warned in 2 Timothy 3:1-5 that just before the Second Coming an especially pernicious generation will arise - a generation *awash* in sin - a generation which will sow, cultivate, and harvest a level of sin hitherto unknown. All generations are plagued by individuals who are especially repulsive and degenerate; but this generation stands out from all the others. It's not that specific individuals are affected: it's the entire generation that's tainted. The underlying dynamic driving it is a profound sense of *betrayal* - betrayal especially at the hands of parents and spouses - but others as well - most particularly, "authority figures." Betrayal breeds insecurity, anger, and bitterness. It produces an unwillingness to trust - to ever again be cast into a state of dependency. It prompts a mind-set that repudiates transcendent holiness - that rebels against moral absolutes - and that harbors enmity, jealousy, envy, passion, greed, anger, and malice.

# Perversions

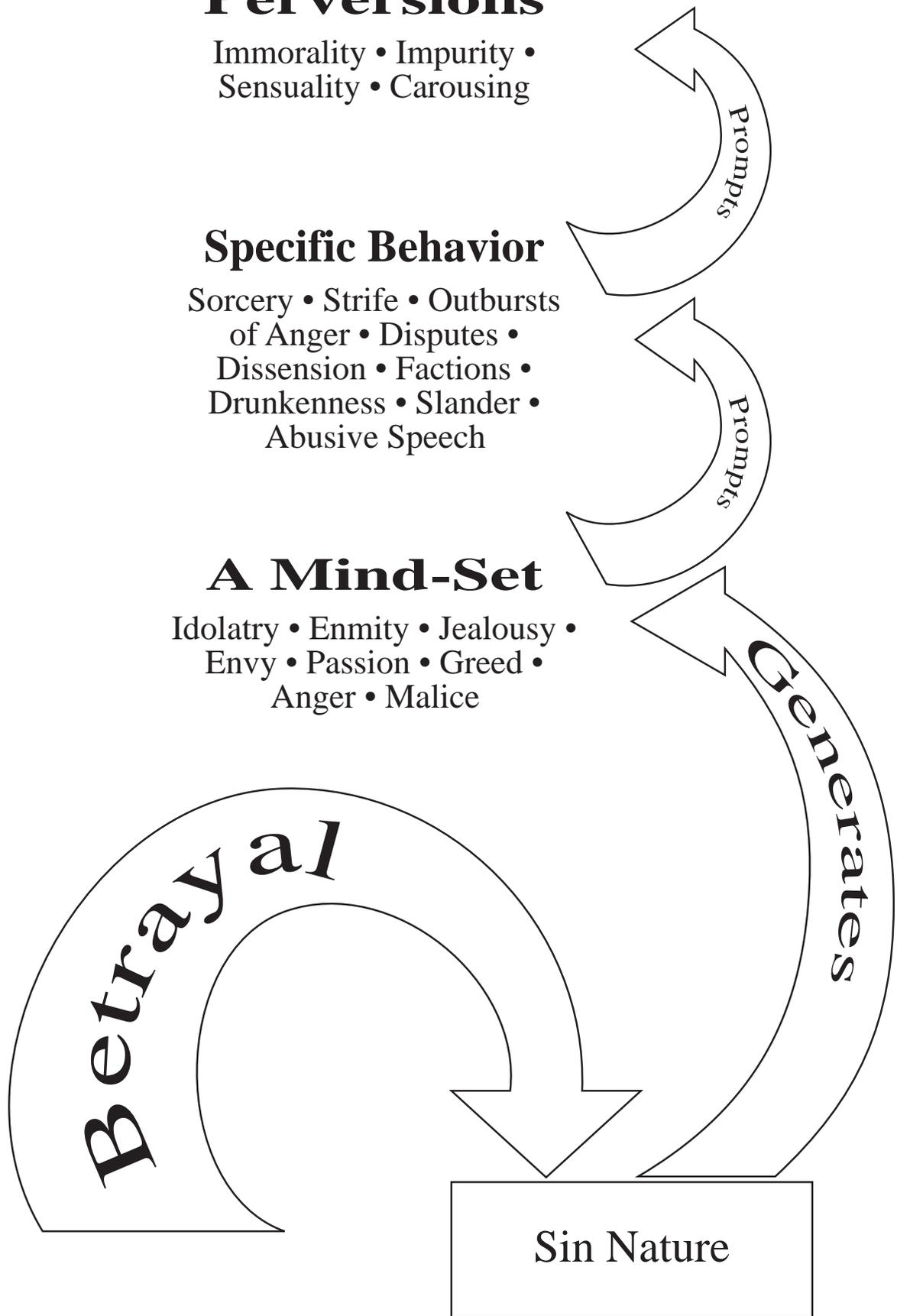
Immorality • Impurity •  
Sensuality • Carousing

# Specific Behavior

Sorcery • Strife • Outbursts  
of Anger • Disputes •  
Dissension • Factions •  
Drunkenness • Slander •  
Abusive Speech

# A Mind-Set

Idolatry • Enmity • Jealousy •  
Envy • Passion • Greed •  
Anger • Malice



## **IMPLICATIONS**

It's very important for you to clearly understand the link between coping devices and perversions - that the one, coping devices, causes the other, perversions. Study and reread the graphics sketched out on the two preceding pages. Remember: *anytime we refuse, because of anger or the fear of betrayal, to invest our emotions, we "kill" them - which leads to a terrifying sense of "not being alive" - of being unable to "engage."* Perverse behavior is little more than a heartbreaking and largely futile attempt to "kick-start" deadened emotions - to resuscitate them.

Some of you, without doubt, are caught in the grip of a specific perversion. Perhaps a few of you have been "exposed" - largely because a spouse has insisted on it: *the perverse behavior has become so dangerous and disruptive - e.g., drug abuse, adultery, pornography, homosexuality, etc. - that the Agonia has been made privy to it and its help has been elicited.* But whether revealed or unrevealed, confessed or unconfessed, there's hope. If you can get yourself to lay aside your coping devices, it's likely that you'll find it much easier to break free from whatever perversion is gripping you. Why? Because your deadened emotions will start returning to life - *causing the perversion to lose its compelling grip.* Call this truth to mind again and again. *The key is to dismantle and discard all coping devices.* We'll be working on that over the course of the next several months.

## **THE FORGIVENESS RULES ARE THE KEY TO DISMANTLING COPING DEVICES**

Remember, the key to getting yourself to dismantle and discard your coping devices is to rigorously make use of the forgiveness rules you've learned. The more conscientiously you apply the forgiveness rules, the less tempted you'll be to revert to coping devices - until finally they're all laid aside. ***If the key to breaking free of perverse behavior is to discard coping devices, the key to discarding coping devices is to make rigorous use of the forgiveness rules.***

## **HOMEWORK**

Next week, at the very beginning of next week's class, we'll be asking you to read aloud once again your list of coping devices - ***adjusted*** to reflect the modifications occasioned by your spouse's input. The forms for this assignment are provided on the next two pages.

There will be periodic reviews to determine just how well you're doing dismantling and discarding your coping devices. ***If your coping devices remains pretty much intact - with little or no compulsive dynamic drained from them, that's a pretty good indication that the forgiveness rules are not being applied conscientiously.***

You will be tested on all the material we've covered since the last "Review and Testing."

# Adjusted Portrait of Coping Devices Husband's Adjusted Portrait

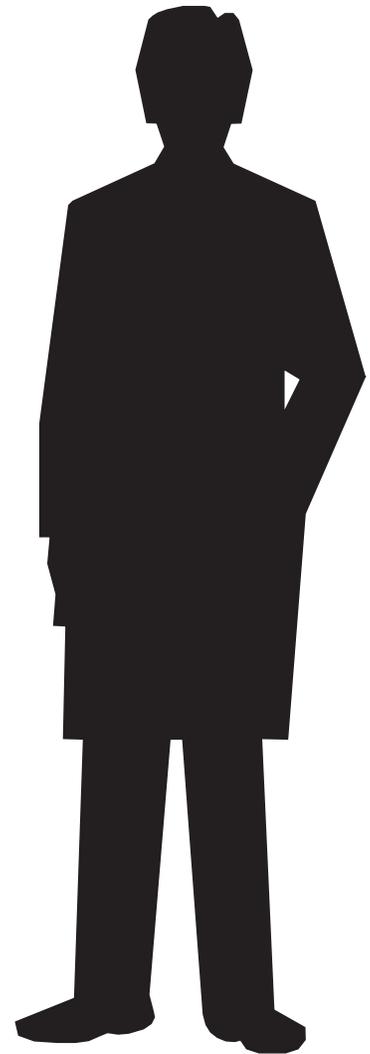
Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please draft an adjusted list of your coping devices in light of your wife's input. If there are any disagreements between you and your wife, your wife's opinion must prevail.

This is who I am  
(Write Your name below)

\_\_\_\_\_

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
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16. \_\_\_\_\_
17. \_\_\_\_\_



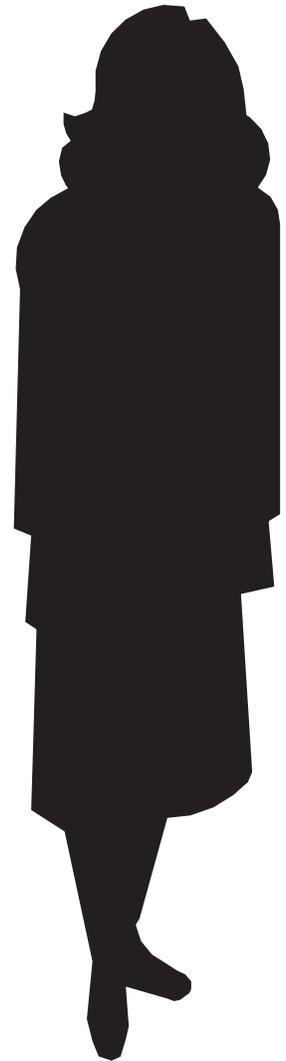
# Adjusted Portrait of Coping Devices Wife's Adjusted Portrait

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Please draft an adjusted list of your coping devices in light of your husband's input. If there are any disagreements between you and your husband, your husband's opinion must prevail.

This is who I am  
(Write Your name below)

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_
5. \_\_\_\_\_
6. \_\_\_\_\_
7. \_\_\_\_\_
8. \_\_\_\_\_
9. \_\_\_\_\_
10. \_\_\_\_\_
11. \_\_\_\_\_
12. \_\_\_\_\_
13. \_\_\_\_\_
14. \_\_\_\_\_
15. \_\_\_\_\_
16. \_\_\_\_\_
17. \_\_\_\_\_





**RELATIONSHIPS • COPING DEVICES • PERVERSIONS®**

**CHAPTER 4**

**REVIEW AND TESTING**

**WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL**

*WEEK OF* \_\_\_\_\_

	Prayer Items	When Answered How Answered
Day #1	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #2	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #3	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #4	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #5	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #6	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #7	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

# DAILY MONITORING FORM

<i>Week</i> _____	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5	Column #6	Column #7	Column #8	Column #9	Column #10
<p>Instructions for scoring have been provided by your instructors. However, a brief description is given below.</p>	<b>Two Chapters from the Gospels</b>	<b>15 Minutes of Prayer</b>	<b>Prayer Journal</b>	<b>Squabble Rule Violations</b>	<b>Response to Correction</b>	<b>Agonia Contacts</b>	<b>Fruit of the Spirit</b>	<b>Does Not Blame Spouse</b>	<b>Shares Joy with Spouse</b>	<b>Rebuffed Overtures</b>
Day #1				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #2				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #3				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #4				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #5				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #6				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #7				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
<b>Average for Week</b> Eliminate the high and low				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Yes or No</b>					<b>Total</b>				Total Attempted _____ Total Positives _____ Ratio _____

**INSTRUCTIONS:** (1) The "Three Disciplines," columns 1-3: one "no" for any day for any of the disciplines results in a "no" for the entire week. (2) "Squabble Rules," column 4: keep daily track of (a) how many times you violate the rules and (b) how many times your spouse violates the rules; at the end of the week, eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (3) "Response to Correction," column 5: keep daily track of how often you notice that either you or your spouse does not respond positively to correction and rebuke. The criteria consists of (a) non-defensiveness and (b) attentiveness. Grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (4) "Agonia Contacts," column 6: (a) phone call to an agonia-mate over ten minutes = 1 pt.; (b) personal, face-to-face contact over a half an hour = 3 pts.; (c) Having an agonia couple over for dinner = 5 pts; (d) participate in a meeting of the full Agonia other than the class itself = 5 pts. (5) "Spirituality Indices," columns 7-9: grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and the low for the week and average of the remaining scores. (6) "Overtures," column 10: keep daily track of how often you reach out to your spouse; and also keep track of how often, if at all, your overtures are rebuffed. At the end of the week, list the total overtures you undertook; and compute a ratio of positive responses to the total.

# REVIEW AND TESTING

## ***HOMework FROM LAST WEEK***

Each one of you should read aloud your list of coping devices - *adjusted* to reflect your spouse's input. Remember, it's your spouse who is most frequently the victim of your coping devices; his/her input, therefore, should be carefully considered.

## ***MORE REVIEW***

Once again, let's review two important procedures: (1) how to discuss an obnoxious character trait and (2) how to process a disagreement. There are four rules governing the discussion of a character trait and seven rules governing disagreements. It's vital that you understand and rigorously apply these rules. You will be richly blessed.

### **The Four Rules Governing the Discussion of Character Traits**

1. If there are any unresolved offenses between the two of you, you cannot discuss the character traits that have occasioned those offenses. You must first resolve the offenses; and only then can you discuss the underlying character traits.
2. You must ask your spouse's permission to discuss a specific character trait.
3. You cannot pursue it as an offense - simply a point of discussion.
4. Your spouse *always* reserves the right to break off the discussion at any point without giving any reason whatsoever. And you must *graciously* back off.

### **The Seven Rules Governing Disagreements**

1. Learn to *distinguish* between disagreements and offenses.
2. Most disagreements *do not need to be resolved*.
3. Learn to discuss your disagreements with *no thought of resolving them*.
4. Learn that you don't need your spouse to agree with you - that your own emotional and spiritual equanimity is *not dependent upon it*.
5. Learn to acknowledge that your spouse is *entitled* to his/her own opinions - that those opinions - and indeed the very process of formulating them - are vital to his/her own sense of self-identity.
6. Learn to *enjoy - actually enjoy - discussing* your disagreements.
7. Learn to use your disagreements *to validate each other*.

## ***MORE REVIEW***

Let's review the principles we've been examining over the past several weeks:

1. Anytime we refuse, because of anger or the fear of betrayal, to ***invest*** our emotions, we "kill" them - which leads to a terrifying sense of "*just going through the motions*" - of being unable to "*engage*" or "*connect*." Perverse behavior is often little more than a heartbreaking and largely futile attempt to "*kick-start*" deadened emotions - to resuscitate them.
2. The key to breaking free of perverse behavior is to discard coping devices - because coping devices keep us from investing our emotions; and, in turn, the key to discarding coping devices is to make rigorous use of the forgiveness rules. In a sense, the forgiveness rules "*substitute*" for coping devices: they provide us a means of processing offenses without deadening our emotions.
3. If after several months of applying the forgiveness rules, your coping devices remains pretty much intact - with little or no compulsive dynamic drained from them - that's a pretty good indication that the forgiveness rules are not being applied conscientiously.

3.



Restores spiritual and emotional health

## Perversions



Use the right key to unlock the door.

2.

*Discarding Coping Devices* is the key that unlocks the bondage of a perversion.

## Coping Devices



Use the right key to unlock the door.

1.

*Applying the Forgiveness Principles* is the key that unlocks the bondage of a coping device.

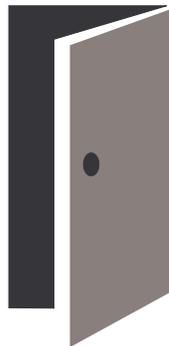
*"Locksmith"*



***Victory!***

Eventually, you will emerge totally victorious - free of besetting sins - joyful - your emotions fully invested in others - most especially your spouse.

Walk through both doors!!



***Begin to Discard Your Coping Devices***

You don't need to use them anymore. The *Forgiveness Principles* are more effective - and, in addition, keep you from deadening your emotions. As you begin to discard them, your emotions will "*come back to life*" - and as they do, any perversions that hold you in bondage will be drained of their compulsive dynamic.



***Using the Forgiveness Principles***

Begin to conscientiously and steadfastly apply the forgiveness principles. The *Forgiveness Principles* are meant to substitute for the coping devices you've developed over the years to "protect" yourself from being hurt.

*"Door - Open Revised"*

## ***CLOSE YOUR MANUALS. YOU'RE GOING TO BE TESTED***

Be sure this next week to read over the answers to the questions you're being posed this evening.

### **QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS**

1. What purpose do troubled individuals force all their relationships to serve?

***Answer:***

Troubled individuals often suffer from pervasive insecurity - an insecurity so acute that only a steady flow of approbation can keep it alleviated. Consequently, almost every relationship is forced to serve that purpose. Relationships are formed not so much for the sake of fellowship, but for self-validation.

2. What happens when such individuals are subjected to criticism on the part of their "friends"?

***Answer:***

They are likely to perceive all criticism in terms of betrayal. The very existence of the relationship is called into question.

3. What's the nature of a relationship - any relationship?

***Answer:***

Relationship =  $f$  (Intimacy)  
Intimacy =  $f$  (Making Yourself Vulnerable)  
Making Yourself Vulnerable ~ "State of Risk"

A close relationship, then, puts a person at risk. Put somewhat more accurately and more graphically: a close, personal relationship is built **by** putting oneself at risk.

4. Why is a genuine relationship so terribly difficult for some individuals?

***Answer:***

Because, for whatever reason, an almost indelible imprint has been pressed into their psyches: *putting oneself at risk leads to personal injury*. It's not simply that putting oneself at risk *might* lead to personal injury; it's that putting oneself at risk *leads* to personal injury. It's an emotionally driven paradigm - and is rooted in a severe, deep-seated trauma - a betrayal of some sort. It's the fear of another betrayal that makes it impossible to cultivate any kind of genuinely close relationship.

5. Give me a verse proving that Jesus himself acknowledged the dynamic we've been discussing - *that only to the extent that you put yourself at risk can "closeness" be achieved*.

***Answer:***

Philippians 2:5	Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:
Philippians 2:6	Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

Philippians 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Philippians 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

God began the process of saving us - by putting himself in a state of risk - because that's the unavoidable *medium* in which every intimate relationship exists - a state of risk.

6. What must you do to *begin* the process of restoring your marriage?

**Answer:**

You must put yourself in a state of risk vis a vis your spouse. You must tear down the barriers - coping devices - that have made you safe from him/her, but, at the same time, have held the two of you at arms length.

7. How should salvation itself be defined?

**Answer:**

The bottom line of salvation is "*the restoration of **relationship** with God.*" Salvation is a *relational issue*.

8. How is salvation being *redefined*?

**Answer:**

It's being redefined in terms of "empowerment" - and not just "empowerment," but "self-empowerment"?

9. What's a coping device?

**Answer:**

*it's a **defensive measure** you adopt to protect yourself from being hurt.*

10. What's the inevitable consequence of using a coping device - and why?

**Answer:**

The termination of intimate, deeply personal relationships - because an intimate, deeply personal relationship can exist only within a state of risk; that's its medium; and a coping device is designed to diminish risk - and, thereby, afford protection.

11. What three forms does a coping device assume:

- a. *measures you adopt to **distance** yourself;*
- b. *measures you adopt to **deaden** yourself; and*
- c. *measures you adopt to **avoid dependency**.*

12. Why would anyone want to shut himself down emotionally?

**Answer:**

It's a coping device. It protects him from being hurt once a relationship turns sour or ruptures. It's based upon a *presumption* that the relationship *will* turn bad - and that, therefore, when it occurs -

as it inevitably will - he won't be so entangled emotionally in the relationship that he's completely devastated.

13. What happens to a person who attempts to protect himself by "closing down emotionally" - by "refusing to invest his emotions in anyone else"? What kind of pervasive mood clings to him?

**Answer:**

Because he refuses to invest his emotions, he "kills" them. Consequently, he reaches the point that he can no longer "feel." He finds himself wrestling with the horrifying sense of "being dead" - of walking through life without being emotionally engaged. *"I feel dead. I don't feel alive."*

14. What do all coping devices share in common?

**Answer:**

*They're all sin.*

15. The vices listed in Galatians and Colossians can be divided into two categories: (1) coping devices; and (2) inordinate cravings. Explain the second category, inordinate cravings - and how it's related to the first category, coping devices.

**Answer:**

The use of coping devices robs a person of the sense of "being alive;" consequently, he finds himself drawn almost inexorably to behavior that titillates him - resuscitates his emotions - thereby alleviating the terrifying sense of "being dead." That's the purpose a perversion - an ordinate craving - serves.

16. What is so terribly ironic about perversions?

**Answer:**

Perverse behavior is fraught with terrible risk. Why? Because it exposes a person to awful danger. And that's what's so ironic. The very risk that's not extended for the sake of building an intimate relationship is engaged in recklessly for the sake of resuscitating deadened emotions.

17. What is the Greek word translated "impurity"? What does it mean actually? And what additional meaning is implied when it's linked to "greed."

**Answer:**

The Greek word is "akatharsia." It's often translated "impurity" or "unclean." In Matthew 23:27, it's used to denote the corruption that arises from death.

Matt. 23:27      Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside they are full of dead men's bones and all *uncleanness*.

Elsewhere it indicates sensual impurity. In Ephesians 4:19, Paul links impurity to greed.

Eph. 4:19      ...and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity (ακαθαρσια) with greediness.

Again, in Ephesians 5:3, impurity is closely associated with greed.

Eph. 5:3                      But do not let immorality or any impurity  
(ακαθαρσια) or greed even be named among you, as  
is proper among saints...

Whenever "impurity" is linked to "greed" in the Scriptures, it conveys the sense of "*compulsive behavior*." That's because for the Greeks, "greed" denoted a terrifying state of emptiness - a condition that drives its victims relentlessly; and the more that's gained, the greater the sense of emptiness - the sharper the pangs. There's never any rest - never any sense of satisfaction - only a momentary reprieve followed invariably by another cycle of frenzy - more gripping than before.

The dynamic that drives the compulsion is deadened emotions - all caused by coping devices that make genuine intimacy impossible. ***Don't forget that anytime someone, for the sake of protecting himself from betrayal, holds back from investing his emotions, he kills them.*** The key, then, to gaining victory over a compulsion is to renounce the use of coping devices.

18. Carousing can look and feel like fellowship? What's the difference?

***Answer:***

"Carousing" translates the Greek word "komoi." It conveys the sense of "wild partying" - pushed along by an "anything goes" attitude - reckless abandon - loss of all inhibitions. Once again, what we have here is a pitiful, heart-wrenching attempt to "kick-start" the emotions - arouse them from their stupor. "Carousing" should, of course, never be confused with "fellowship" (κοινωνια). The two are as different as night and day. Fellowship implies a gathering of intimate friends - and it features transparent honesty. And whatever is said and done carries over to the next day. Carousing, on the other hand, implies just the opposite. There are no real friends; only acquaintances. And there's no genuine honesty; no heart-to-heart transparency. "Liquor talk" sometimes conveys the sense of openness; but in the morning, its real meaning is exposed. Nothing there. Empty. Useless. Futile. Merely a momentary loss of inhibitions - not engendered by the truth, but by drugs and alcohol.

# RESUME READING

## ***THE FORGIVENESS RULES ARE THE KEY TO DISMANTLING COPING DEVICES***

*Remember, the single most important key to getting your students to set aside their coping devices is to encourage them to rigorously use the forgiveness rules they've learned. The more conscientiously each student applies the forgiveness rules, the less tempted he'll be to revert to his coping mechanisms - until finally they're all laid aside.*

### **HOMEWORK**

1. Please read the section of the *Agonia Manual* entitled "*Relationships • Coping Devices • Perversion: Chapter Four - Review and Testing.*" It gives the answers to all the questions you were asked this evening.
2. For next week, please fill out the Progress Form on the next page. I want you and your spouse to jointly decide the level you've reached on the "Strategy Sheet." If you differ on your assessment, the lower level should be recorded, not the higher level. Be prepared to share your findings with the whole Agonia next week.

# Personal Evaluation

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Agonia #: \_\_\_\_\_

*Instructions:* You and your spouse should indicate which level you've attained. If there's a conflict, the lower level should be recorded, not the higher.

Level we've attained: \_\_\_\_\_

Please write in the space provided below a brief essay explaining your assessment. Indicate which principles, if any, you find difficult to implement.

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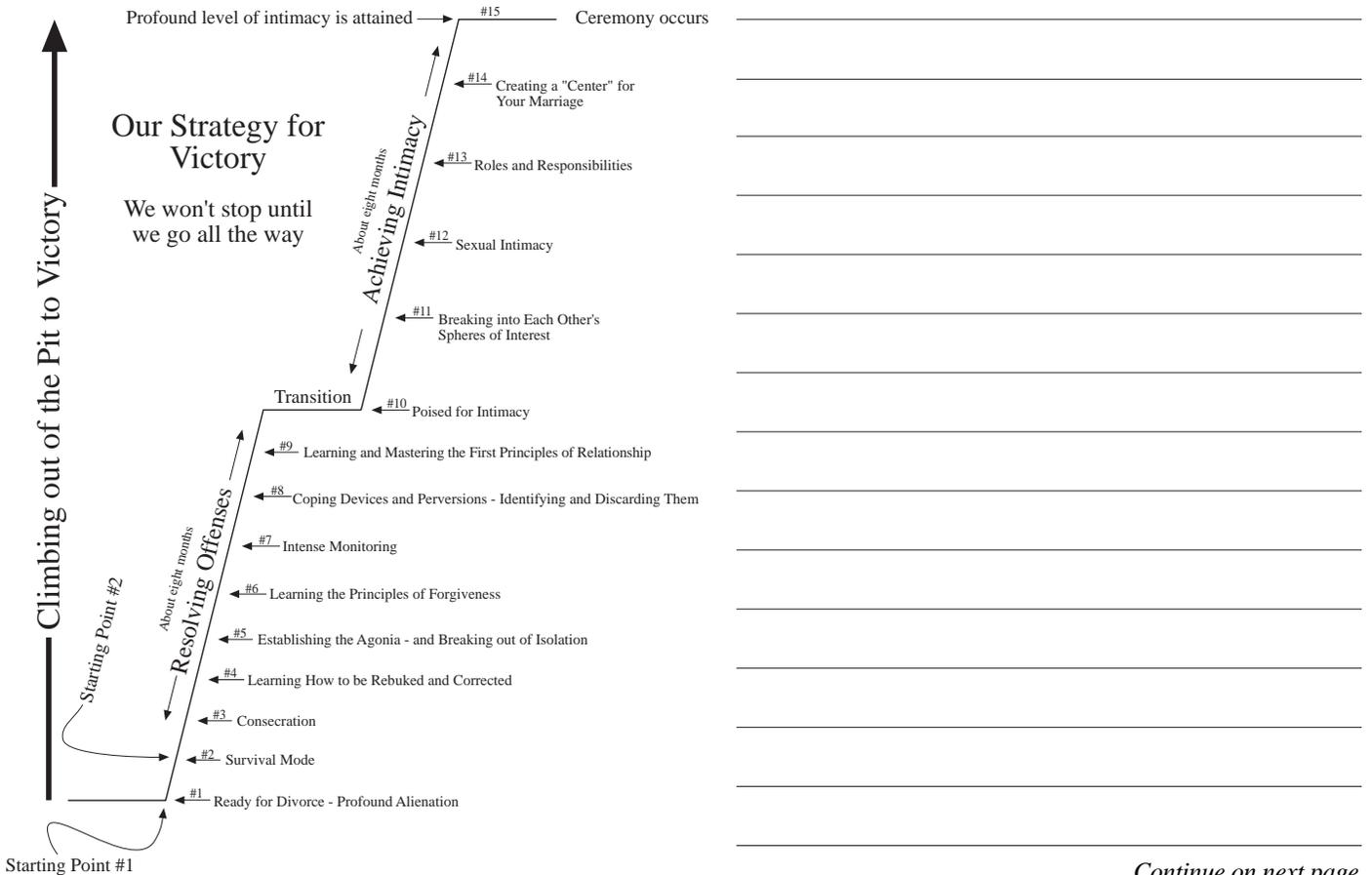
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**RELATIONSHIPS • COPING DEVICES • PERVERSIONS®**

**CHAPTER 5**

**ENDING ALIENATION - CONSCIOUSLY DISMANTLING COPING DEVICES**

**WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL**

WEEK OF \_\_\_\_\_

	Prayer Items	When Answered How Answered
Day #1	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #2	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #3	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #4	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #5	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #6	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #7	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

# DAILY MONITORING FORM

<i>Week</i> _____	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5	Column #6	Column #7	Column #8	Column #9	Column #10
Instructions for scoring have been provided by your instructors. However, a brief description is given below.	<b>Two Chapters from the Gospels</b>	<b>15 Minutes of Prayer</b>	<b>Prayer Journal</b>	<b>Squabble Rule Violations</b>	<b>Response to Correction</b>	<b>Agonia Contacts</b>	<b>Fruit of the Spirit</b>	<b>Does Not Blame Spouse</b>	<b>Shares Joy with Spouse</b>	<b>Rebuffed Overtures</b>
Day #1				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #2				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #3				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #4				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #5				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #6				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #7				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
<b>Average for Week</b> Eliminate the high and low				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Yes or No</b>					<b>Total</b>				Total Attempted _____ Total Positives _____ Ratio _____

**INSTRUCTIONS:** (1) The "Three Disciplines," columns 1-3: one "no" for any day for any of the disciplines results in a "no" for the entire week. (2) "Squabble Rules," column 4: keep daily track of (a) how many times you violate the rules and (b) how many times your spouse violates the rules; at the end of the week, eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (3) "Response to Correction," column 5: keep daily track of how often you notice that either you or your spouse does not respond positively to correction and rebuke. The criteria consists of (a) non-defensiveness and (b) attentiveness. Grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (4) "Agonia Contacts," column 6: (a) phone call to an agonia-mate over ten minutes = 1 pt.; (b) personal, face-to-face contact over a half an hour = 3 pts.; (c) Having an agonia couple over for dinner = 5 pts; (d) participate in a meeting of the full Agonia other than the class itself = 5 pts. (5) "Spirituality Indices," columns 7-9; grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and the low for the week and average of the remaining scores. (6) "Overtures," column 10: keep daily track of how often you reach out to your spouse; and also keep track of how often, if at all, your overtures are rebuffed. At the end of the week, list the total overtures you undertook; and compute a ratio of positive responses to the total.

# ENDING ALIENATION

## CONSCIOUSLY DISMANTLING COPING DEVICES

### *HOMWORK FROM LAST WEEK*

Read aloud your joint assessment of the progress you've made. A special form was provided for this assignment. Be sure also to identify which level you've attained - and the reason for your assessment. ***Take the whole evening to complete this important assignment.*** Don't rush through it.

### *HOMEOWRK*

1. Please read the section of the *Agonia Manual* entitled "*Relationships • Coping Devices • Perversion: Chapter Six - Relearning How to Respond to Your Spouse's Overtures - Putting Yourself at Risk Once Again.*"
2. Please also read the section of the *Agonia Manual* entitled "*Relationships • Coping Devices • Perversion: Chapter Seven - The Cultural Dynamic Underlying Personal Alienation.*" You need to begin your reading this next week - even though we won't be getting to it until the following week. This is not an easy lesson - *and it may seem difficult to grasp initially; consequently, you should read it over a couple of times - at least.*

Bear in mind that our purpose in this course is not simply to save you and your spouse from a miserable marriage so that you can "*get on with life;*" so that your life together become more joy-filled and romantic. Our ultimate objective is to build the church - and to enhance her effectiveness in the "Last Days." I want you to understand exactly what it is that we face on a cultural level. I want you to catch sight of the larger picture - that our challenge consists of sanctifying a generation that comes closer than any other to Paul's description in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. I want you to understand how the mind-set of that generation has evolved; what its underlying dynamic consists of; and *how it impacts our understanding of salvation itself.*

Make sure that you can tie the truths you'll be studying in this lesson into your personal life. I want you to know how you've been affected by the historical-cultural currents of the last five centuries - right at the gut-level - in your everyday life. I want you to understand for yourself the danger of shortcut sanctification strategies - how so often those shortcuts only exacerbate alienation. Why? Because they're so often based upon self-empowerment techniques.

These are truths that must be grasped by as many of us as possible. They can not be left in the hands of a "leadership elite." We've all got to take a hand in extricating ourselves and our respective church communities from this "devil's morass." These are ***not*** difficult truths - in the sense that only a genius can grasp them. It's not that they're difficult; it's that we don't spend much time reflecting on them - and that makes us vulnerable. This is not "esoterica." It's the "stuff of life" - put on a level that may be unfamiliar, but is not - or, more accurately, should not be - the exclusive purview of "intellectuals." The more of us who grasp them accurately and reflect on their meaning and implications, the more possible it will be to build a truly loving church community - able to minister to the needs of a horribly alienated generation.

May God bless you in your study.



# RELATIONSHIPS • COPING DEVICES • PERVERSIONS<sup>©</sup>

## CHAPTER 6

- RELEARNING HOW TO RESPOND TO YOUR SPOUSE'S OVERTURES •
- PUTTING YOURSELF AT RISK ONCE AGAIN •

### WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

WEEK OF \_\_\_\_\_

	Prayer Items	When Answered How Answered
Day #1		
Day #2		
Day #3		
Day #4		
Day #5		
Day #6		
Day #7		

# DAILY MONITORING FORM

<i>Week</i> _____	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5	Column #6	Column #7	Column #8	Column #9	Column #10
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Day #1				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #2				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #3				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #4				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #5				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #6				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #7				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
<b>Average for Week</b> Eliminate the high and low				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Yes or No</b>					<b>Total</b>				Total Attempted _____ Total Positives _____ Ratio _____

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# RELEARNING HOW TO RESPOND TO YOUR SPOUSE'S OVERTURES

## • PUTTING YOURSELF AT RISK ONCE AGAIN •

### REVIEW

Let's begin this evening with a quick review of why it's so terribly important to "*confess your sins*" - not just to God, but to one another. Please close your manuals.

1. Whenever a Christian resists exposure, what does that indicate?

#### *Answer*

It's a pretty good indication that he's blinded himself to grace - *that the principle of grace no longer governs his life.*

2. What is the purpose of the Law?

#### *Answer*

The Law was not given to help me establish my righteousness, but to establish my **un**righteousness - to show me conclusively just how guilty I am and how utterly hopeless it is for me to try justifying myself. ***And, in establishing my unrighteousness, and the hopelessness of any attempt on my part to justify myself, the Law was meant to force me to look for another option - to point me toward grace - to enable me to see grace - and to appropriate that grace through faith.***

3. What happens whenever we recoil at what the Law establishes - our unrighteousness?

#### *Answer*

Whenever any of us recoils at what the Law establishes - our sinfulness - we're kept from perceiving grace and, hence, appropriating it in our everyday lives.

4. What does the concrete act of confession afford me?

#### *Answer*

It opens my eyes to grace; and the more concrete I make my confession, the more I'm enabled to perceive and appropriate grace. And, correspondingly, the more I attenuate my confession - the more I abridge it - the more I hold back - the less I'm able to see grace and the less adequately I'm able to appropriate it.

# RESUME YOUR READING

First, you need to catch sight of just how much trust has been built up between you and your spouse. Remember, trust is a by-product of *conscientiously applying the forgiveness rules*. Consequently, though you may be yet unaware of it, you're probably already beginning to trust one another. It's already started. You need to now *consciously* acknowledge it - *and then build on it*.

I want the instructors to query each couple: "*On a scale of 1 - 10, try to assess the increase in trust between you?*" You need to be completely honest. Please don't fudge. You can keep track of each couples' answer in the space below.

Couple#1 : Name: \_\_\_\_\_ increase \_\_\_\_\_  
Couple #2: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ increase \_\_\_\_\_  
Couple #3: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ increase \_\_\_\_\_  
Couple #4: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ increase \_\_\_\_\_  
Couple #5: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ increase \_\_\_\_\_

However much trust has been rebuilt between you and your spouse, you need to acknowledge the implications of that increase: *that you must begin to put yourselves at risk with one another*. Any failure to respond positively to an overture on the part of your spouse is itself a sin. Why? Because there's no justification for it. All the dung pile offenses have been resolved! Current offenses are being promptly dealt with! Why, then, the failure to press toward intimacy? It's important to bear in mind that we're not settling for just *ending conflict*. That was made clear at the very outset. *We want intimacy*.

Once again, you must begin to *practice* responding positively to your spouse's overtures - and she, in turn, to yours - whatever form the overture might assume. You must stop "*second guessing*" each other and "*reading between the lines*;" instead, you must start giving one another the benefit of the doubt: "*He's not out to 'set me up.'*" "*She's not trying to 'trap me.'*" "*She's not trying to gain an advantage over me.*" "*He's not making a promise he won't keep.*"

*"I want intimacy; I want to be close; I'm willing to put myself at risk."*

## WILLARD WALLER'S INSIGHTS

Willard Waller taught sociology at the University of Nebraska from 1929 to 1931. In 1931, he left the Midwest to teach at Penn State. He taught there for six years. Finally, in 1937, he was appointed to the faculty of Barnard College - which is now a part of Columbia University.

Waller was an iconoclast - in the tradition of Thorstein Veblen - and delighted himself in analyzing the pretenses, norms, and customs of everyday university life - especially the ritual of "campus dating" - its origins in the changing economic milieu of the American family and its impact on the marriage relationship. Waller's reputation rests on three publications: *The Family: A Dynamic Interpretation*; *The Sociology of Teaching*; and an article entitled "*The Rating and Dating Complex*."

Waller's insights are penetrating and brilliant - and help to reveal the crux of the relationship between most men and women - especially husbands and wives. Waller made no attempt to conceal his belief that contemporary marriages, for most individuals, are "living hells" - traps which most husbands and wives can't seem to fathom and from which they can't seem to extricate themselves.

Waller's insights arose from his own study of "coping devices" - though he never used that specific term. Many of his conclusions are no different from what the scriptures sketch out: a coping device, by its very nature, (1) begets and perpetuates alienation; (2) deadens our emotions; and (3) and causes us to shun any kind of dependency - **making "CONTROL" an overriding concern**. A coping device keeps us from being hurt; but it produces profound estrangement.

However, it's not his study of coping devices that's so unique. It's his observation that coping devices are not simply developed *after* a marriage has been established and somewhat settled, but at the *very inception of the relationship* - from the very first date through the entire courtship phase. In short, coping devices are what the relationship is "*manufactured out of*." Alienation, therefore, is **built into** the marriage relationship from the very start - it's part of its "DNA" - part of its very fabric. It can't be easily swept out of the relationship - because it's imbedded so deeply within it - it's part of its basic structure. It's part of what it is.

Waller borrowed an insight from E. A. Ross: "*The Principle of Least Interest*." It's an interpersonal strategy designed to guarantee dominance in both dating and marriage. The strategy is simple and straightforward: *in any relationship, the person who is able to most successfully feign emotional detachment can dictate the conditions of the relationship*. The key, then, is to fake indifference - to "*be cool*."

Let's imagine a dialogue between a husband and his wife:

Husband: Shall we go to the movies tonight?  
Wife: Oh, I don't know. What's playing?  
Husband: The Titanic!  
Wife: It doesn't sound too interesting. Doesn't everyone die?  
Husband: All right. The heck with it!  
Wife: Well, don't be so hurt! If you're going to be so touchy, let's go.  
Husband: No. I don't want to go now.  
Wife: Oh, come on. You said you wanted to go. Let's go!  
Husband: No. I didn't really want to go for my sake. I thought you'd like it.  
Wife: Well, I would like it! Please, let's go.

The whole conversation here *turns on the issue of control*. Who's in **control**? Husband or wife? Look at what's happening:

The husband makes the first move. He wants to go to the movies. And he wants to take his wife with him. It seems simple enough. But it's not. Why? Because their whole relationship with one another is hinged on a single overriding issue: **control**. The husband knows that in making the first move - in asking his wife to go to the movies with him - he's putting himself at risk. What risk? The risk of being spurned. The risk of being rejected. But he's stuck. He really wants to go; so there's no getting around the need for him to make the first move.

Perhaps his wife will make it easy for him - and simply say, "*Yes, let's go. It sounds like fun*." But no - that's not what she does. That's not an option for her. Why? Because she's so much attuned to the issue of **control**. She knows that he has put himself at risk in making the first move; that, consequently, at least for the moment, she's got the upper hand. She also knows that if she acts too eager, she'll lose the **control** his overture has ceded to her. Why? Because, she'll be casting him in the role of a benefactor - someone who's doing her a favor; and if that occurs, he'll regain **control**. She can't, therefore, let it appear that he's doing her a favor; so, she *feigns indifference* - and asks, "*What's playing?*"

That's it: the *"game of least interest."*

The husband knows now that *"the game is on."* But he can't let her know that he knows - though, of course, he knows that she knows. He carries on stoically - and answers, *"The Titanic."* And she, in turn, continues to feign indifference, *"It doesn't sound too interesting."*

The next move, of course, is his to make. But going to the movies is no longer what's uppermost in his mind. Regaining **control** is now what counts. And he knows just what to do. He's sure that she wants desperately to see *"The Titanic"* - that her indifference is just a ruse. So, he withdraws his offer: *"All right. The heck with it!"* Now, she's in a real bind. He's called her bluff - and she knows it. She could, of course, abandon her charade. But she's not willing to do that - at least not yet. She's not quite prepared to lose the **control** his overture has ceded to her. Perhaps, after all, he's bluffing as well. So she carefully crafts an answer that still leaves her in the driver's seat - that still makes it appear that she's doing him a favor, not the other way around: *"Well, don't be so hurt! If you're going to be so touchy, let's go."*

But it doesn't work. He sticks to his guns. It wasn't a bluff! Going to the movies is no longer what matters to him now. Recovering the **control** he's ceded to her - that's what's driving him. He's determined to regain the upper hand. If she wants to see *"The Titanic,"* she'll have to acknowledge that *he's doing her a favor* - and that, consequently, *she's obligated to him.* He's got her checkmated - and at last she breaks.

It's a living hell! Nevertheless, if we're honest, this ghastly dialogue strikes a resonating chord in all of us. And here's the "kicker": Waller points out that *"playing the game of least interest"* eventually reaches the point that it's no longer a game. The indifference is no longer a ruse; it becomes an entrenched disposition. *We hold back and hold back and hold back* - until finally when we want to let ourselves go, *we can't.* We're stuck in *indifference.* We can't turn our emotions on any more.

The bottom line of *"staying cool"* - of *"holding back"* - is **control** - plain and simple; and the **control** it affords is purchased at a dreadful price - *emotional detachment.*

Get yourselves to see the importance of giving up *"the control game;"* encourage one another *"to let go"* - to stop trying so hard to *"be cool."*

Finally, notice carefully all the *"second guessing"* and *"reading between the lines"* that occurs. Notice too that *deceit* is its linchpin. The kind of **control** that's at issue here is *always* based on deceit. Intimacy, on the other hand, requires transparent honesty.

Now, let's imagine another dialogue - only this time the issue is *love-making*, not a movie.

Husband: Honey, let's spend a quiet evening alone with one another. Just the two of us.

Wife: Oh, I don't know. The kids wanted me to help them with their homework tonight.

Husband: Alright! Some other time.

Wife: Honey, you look hurt. If it's that important to you, I'll put the kids down early - and help them with their homework tomorrow night.

Husband: No. The kids' homework comes first.

Wife: Oh, come on. You said you wanted to spend some time alone together.

Husband: No. No. We need to put the kids first; it's just that I thought you'd like to spend some time alone together. It's not really that important to me.

The husband begins the conversation - but he does so very cautiously; he's unwilling to be direct. Instead of being explicit - *"Let's make love tonight!"* - he uses a well-worn euphemism - *"Let's spend a quiet evening alone with one another."* It allows him to *"save a little face"* should his wife spurn his overture. He desperately wants to afford himself some measure of protection.

*Now, you take it from here.* Remember what's being played out here: *"the game of least interest."*

## **CHECKING UP**

By this time, a good many of you should have resolved most if not all of the "dung pile" offenses that have alienated you and your spouse. That means, of course, that ***intimacy is required***. It's not an option. There's no excuse for any continuing estrangement. Let's check to see if that's true - if, as a matter of fact, you're actually coming to grips with what the resolution of "dung pile" offenses should lead to - *genuine intimacy*.

## **JOT DOWN**

1. Which of you couples have resolved all your "dung pile" offenses. List yourselves below:

Couple#1 : Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Couple #2: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Couple #3: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Couple #4: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Couple #5: Name: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Now, for every couple listed above, let's ask the *wife* if she's thoroughly persuaded that her husband has released her from all alienation - that he's not attempting to protect himself from her - that he's actually putting himself *"at risk"* with her. If she feels that's not the case, ask her to tell her husband - and the whole Agonia - the *concrete form* the on-going alienation is continuing to assume; e.g., inordinate time spent at work, absence of conversation, lack of affection, infrequent sex, etc. It's important that everyone is completely honest. They've given their word to be transparently honest - remind them of that!

Wife #1 : Name: \_\_\_\_\_ yes/no \_\_\_\_

If yes, list the concrete forms his on-going alienation assumes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Wife #2 : Name: \_\_\_\_\_ yes/no \_\_\_\_

If yes, list the concrete forms his on-going alienation assumes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Wife #3 : Name: \_\_\_\_\_ yes/no \_\_\_\_

If yes, list the concrete forms his on-going alienation assumes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Wife #4 : Name: \_\_\_\_\_ yes/no \_\_\_\_

If yes, list the concrete forms his on-going alienation assumes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Wife #5 : Name: \_\_\_\_\_ yes/no \_\_\_\_

If yes, list the concrete forms his on-going alienation assumes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

3. Now, let's ask each *husband* if he's thoroughly persuaded that his wife has released him from all alienation - that she's not attempting to protect herself from him - that she's actually putting herself "*at risk*" with him. If he feels that's not the case, ask him to tell his wife - and the whole Agonia - the *concrete form* the on-going alienation is continuing to assume; e.g., inordinate time spent at work, absence of conversation, lack of affection, infrequent sex, etc. It's important that everyone is completely honest. They've given their word to be transparently honest - remind them of that!

Husband #1 : Name: \_\_\_\_\_ yes/no \_\_\_\_

If yes, list the concrete forms her on-going alienation assumes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Husband #2: Name: \_\_\_\_\_ yes/no \_\_\_\_

If yes, list the concrete forms her on-going alienation assumes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Husband #3 : Name: \_\_\_\_\_ yes/no \_\_\_\_

If yes, list the concrete forms her on-going alienation assumes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Husband #4 : Name: \_\_\_\_\_ yes/no \_\_\_\_

If yes, list the concrete forms her on-going alienation assumes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

Husband #5 : Name: \_\_\_\_\_ yes/no \_\_\_\_

If yes, list the concrete forms her on-going alienation assumes:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

## ***ASSIGNMENT***

Each husband who's guilty of perpetrating unjustified alienation must write an essay for next week which attempts to explain why he hasn't "*put himself at risk*" - why he continues to "*protect himself*" - why he won't let his wife into his life and make room for her. The essay should address itself to the *specific concrete forms of alienation* his wife has identified. He must be prepared to read his essay out loud at the beginning of next week's class.

Likewise, wives who are guilty of perpetuating unjustified alienation must do the same.

## ***HOMEWORK***

1. Anyone guilty of perpetuating unjustified alienation must complete the essay already assigned for next week - and be prepared to read it aloud at the beginning of next week's class.
2. Please complete the reading assignment you were given last week: "*The Cultural Dynamic Underlying Personal Alienation.*"

Once again, the issues discussed in "*Cultural Dynamics*" are *not* actually that difficult to grasp. It's that we don't spend much time reflecting on them - and so they seem strange and foreign to us. And that makes us vulnerable. This is not "esoterica." It's the "stuff of life" - put on a level that may be unfamiliar, but is not - or, more accurately, should not be - the exclusive purview of "intellectuals." The more of us who grasp these issues accurately and reflect on their meaning and implications, the more possible it will be to build a truly loving church community - able to minister to the needs of a horribly alienated generation.

Once again, read this entire lesson over carefully. Make sure that can tie its truths into your own personal life. I want you to understand how you've been affected by the historical-cultural currents of the last five centuries - right at the gut-level - in your everyday life.



**RELATIONSHIPS • COPING DEVICES • PERVERSIONS®  
CHAPTER 7**

**THE CULTURAL DYNAMIC UNDERLYING PERSONAL ALIENATION**

**WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL**

WEEK OF \_\_\_\_\_

	Prayer Items	When Answered How Answered
Day #1	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #2	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #3	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #4	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #5	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #6	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #7	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

# DAILY MONITORING FORM

<i>Week</i> _____	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5	Column #6	Column #7	Column #8	Column #9	Column #10
<p>Instructions for scoring have been provided by your instructors. However, a brief description is given below.</p>	<b>Two Chapters from the Gospels</b>	<b>15 Minutes of Prayer</b>	<b>Prayer Journal</b>	<b>Squabble Rule Violations</b>	<b>Response to Correction</b>	<b>Agonia Contacts</b>	<b>Fruit of the Spirit</b>	<b>Does Not Blame Spouse</b>	<b>Shares Joy with Spouse</b>	<b>Rebuffed Overtures</b>
Day #1				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #2				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #3				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #4				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #5				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #6				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #7				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
<b>Average for Week</b> Eliminate the high and low				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Yes or No</b>					<b>Total</b>				Total Attempted _____ Total Positives _____ Ratio _____

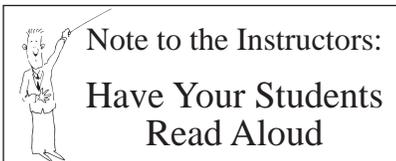
**INSTRUCTIONS:** (1) The "Three Disciplines," columns 1-3: one "no" for any day for any of the disciplines results in a "no" for the entire week. (2) "Squabble Rules," column 4: keep daily track of (a) how many times you violate the rules and (b) how many times your spouse violates the rules; at the end of the week, eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (3) "Response to Correction," column 5: keep daily track of how often you notice that either you or your spouse does not respond positively to correction and rebuke. The criteria consists of (a) non-defensiveness and (b) attentiveness. Grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (4) "Agonia Contacts," column 6: (a) phone call to an agonia-mate over ten minutes = 1 pt.; (b) personal, face-to-face contact over a half an hour = 3 pts.; (c) Having an agonia couple over for dinner = 5 pts; (d) participate in a meeting of the full Agonia other than the class itself = 5 pts. (5) "Spirituality Indices," columns 7-9: grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and the low for the week and average of the remaining scores. (6) "Overtures," column 10: keep daily track of how often you reach out to your spouse; and also keep track of how often, if at all, your overtures are rebuffed. At the end of the week, list the total overtures you undertook; and compute a ratio of positive responses to the total.

# THE CULTURAL DYNAMIC UNDERLYING PERSONAL ALIENATION

## *THE IMPORTANCE OF THIS LESSON*

I want this lesson to be thoroughly understood by all of you. I don't mean to suggest that all its details must be assimilated; only that the general outline is clearly grasped. Remember, our goal here is to not only save and restore marriages, *but to turn sheep into shepherds* - and, more specifically, shepherds who are prepared to lead God's people *in the Last Days*. We're not going to be able to protect the Lord's flock unless we know what the devil's "*up to*." This lesson provides an overview of what he's doing - and what we face - *as shepherds*. It's designed to show you...

1. why it has become so terribly difficult to stay focused on "*relationship*" and "*community*;"
2. how the very way *we think* makes it difficult to grasp what's gone wrong and how to biblically resolve it; and, finally,
3. how so many of the solutions we concoct only worsen the problem and actually render us ever more vulnerable to the devil's vicious assaults.



Feel free to punctuate their reading with your own personal comments. Make the whole assignment come alive for them through recounting your own personal experiences.

Have your students begin reading tonight's lesson on the next page. The quiz that you've just reviewed, as instructors, is exactly the quiz you'll be giving them next week. I trust that having looked it over before the lesson is read this evening will enable you to effectively guide them through the reading.

# THE CULTURAL DYNAMIC UNDERLYING PERSONAL ALIENATION®

BY PASTOR DOUGLAS SHEARER

This is a paper Pastor Doug Shearer presented to a leadership gathering at a meeting of the Conservative Baptist Convention held in Portland, Oregon June 29, 1993. The meeting was attended by Dr. Earl Radmacher, former President of Western Conservative Baptist Seminar; Dr. Gerry Breshears, President of the Evangelical Theological Society of America and Professor of Theology, Western Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary; Dr. James Sweeney, Provost, Western Conservative Baptist Seminary.

## ***The Church and Culture***

Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God.

*And such were some of you:* but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.

*1 Corinthians 6:9-11*

*“And such were some of you...”* A sobering reminder of our past - of what God has delivered us from!

It's not possible for any of us, touched by the grace of God, to ignore the bondages which once entangled us; but the chains have been broken, the prison doors have been wrenched open, and we've been set free. What joy! What thankfulness!

Still, what exactly have we been freed from? What's the meaning of the phrase *“but ye are sanctified...”*? At the very least, it means that we've been freed from the *penalty* of our sins. It means, furthermore, that our lives have been *set apart unto* God; that we've been *marked out* by His Spirit. And, finally, it means that we've been granted a new destiny.

But it certainly does not mean that we've been delivered fully from the *power* of sin - at least not in any experiential sense.<sup>1</sup> We're still subject to temptation; we still falter; and occasionally, if not frequently, we still sin. We still wrestle against many of the same fears and anxieties that plagued us before we committed our lives to Christ.

No, the church is not filled with men and women who have attained a state of “sinlessness.” Certainly, our lives have been infused with a new power - and we bask in the light of a new hope; but in many respects our struggles are no different from the unsaved. And in this sense, the church reflects the culture which envelopes it. It is not, of course, a mirror image of that culture; but it is a genuine reflection nonetheless. It's not rooted in that culture. It doesn't belong to that culture. And, of course, its future is far different. But it does display the broad outlines and many of the defining features of that culture.

Inevitably, then, the church is dramatically influenced, though hopefully not dominated, by the same historical forces which shape and form secular society. It's composed of men and women who are the products of that society - and who still bear the marks of that society - some more than others.

## ***The Danger of a Debased Culture***

It should not prove surprising, therefore, that an exceptionally debased culture poses a grave danger to the church - notwithstanding the spiritual maturity of its leaders. The debauchery which so characterizes that culture is bound to impinge upon the church. It's all but inevitable. And though the leadership may struggle strenuously and courageously against its impact, it cannot be avoided altogether.

The Apostle Paul himself was acutely aware of the influence of culture upon the church. His epistles to the Corinthian church reflect that awareness. He censures the Corinthian believers for condoning many of the peculiarly corrupt vices of Corinthian society.

But it's not only vices that Paul warns against. *Vices* are usually flagrant and obvious - and are ordinarily quite easily discerned. His epistle to the Galatian churches goes further: there he warns believers against adopting the *attitudes* of the indigenous culture; and attitudes are far more subtle than vices. Attitudes lurk beneath the surface - and are not easily spotted; but they constitute the intellectual and emotional framework of our behavior. They are the hidden progenitors of our conduct. Paul knew that the prevailing Jewish mind-set was inimical to faith - at least the mind-set that pervaded the synagogues of the First Century.<sup>2</sup> And it is that mind-set - and the specific attitudes which comprised it - that Paul excoriates in his epistle to the Galatians; not conspicuous vices per se, but underlying attitudes.<sup>3</sup>

Paul's most telling indictment against the often insidious influence of culture<sup>4</sup> is found in his second epistle to Timothy. There he warns against the threat of an especially perverted culture - a culture which will cast its pall over the “Last Days.”

This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.

## FOOTNOTES

- 1 Perhaps in some teleological sense, but surely not experientially.
- 2 I am not here suggesting that the message of the Old Testament is antithetical to faith - only that the rabbinical interpretation of the Old Testament message had become distorted. That's incontrovertible. Nor am I suggesting that all Jews embraced the distortions taught by the rabbis.
- 3 There are many other examples that could be cited; but one other that leaps to mind is found in the first several chapters of the Book of Romans - and once again its focus is the First Century Jewish mind-set - and the hindrance it poses to faith.
- 4 Not all cultural attitudes are harmful and insidious; indeed, though some Christians may find it surprising, occasionally a specific cultural mind-set can actually facilitate the dissemination of scriptural truth. A classic example is the very effective role Greek philosophical categories played in combating many of the heresies which characterized the first several centuries of the church's history. Greek philosophical categories were of inestimable value in elucidating the subtle but all important nuances of (1) the Trinity and (2) the two natures and one person of Christ..

For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,

Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,

Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

2 Timothy 3:1-5

### **Cultural Change and the American Evangelical Church**

What about the impact of culture upon the American church - most especially, the American *evangelical* church?

In point of fact, American Evangelicalism *is* undergoing profound changes - changes which are altering its fundamental nature. And, not surprisingly, each of those changes is rooted in a specific on-going transformation of American culture. Old, familiar terms are still used - "salvation," "sanctification," "worship," "prayer," "authority," "the gospel;" but the meaning attached to each of those terms is not at all what an older generation would admit to.

It's possible to boil all the changes down into one succinct formula: *salvation, in its broadest possible meaning, is no longer conceived in terms of developing a holy and loving relationship with God and, correlatively, fellow believers; instead, it's conceived in terms of personal empowerment - leading to a state of self-sufficiency - the very antithesis of what the term "relationship" is meant to convey.* A fundamental paradigm shift is occurring - and its implications for the church are staggering.

### **A New Personality Type**

David Riesman's seminal study, *The Lonely Crowd*,<sup>5</sup> published in 1950, warned of a new "personality type" then emerging - a personality not driven by internalized convictions, but, instead, by whims - and the irresolute opinions of largely ephemeral peer groups. He coined a graphic term to depict it: "other directed."

The "personality type" described by Riesman had been noticed by other scholars as well: Eric Fromm in his book *Man for Himself*; C. Wright Mills in his article "The Competitive Personality," published in the *Partisan Review* in 1946; Arnold Green in a ground breaking essay he wrote for the *American Sociological Review*, also published in 1946. Moreover, each of them, like Riesman, had coined graphic terms to depict it: Fromm - "the marketer;" Mills - "the fixer;" Green - "the middle class male child."

Riesman was not inclined to engage in sensationalism; and he carefully noted that "other directed" personalities were not yet predominant in American culture; that they were largely restricted to the upper middle class - and then only within certain major metropolitan areas, most notably New York and Los Angeles.

### **Deeper Roots**

The profile which Riesman delineated actually predates

even Fromm, Mills, and Green. It's antecedents extend back still further - most particularly to Alexis DeToqueville in his epoch study, *Democracy in America*, first published in 1840. Tocqueville's description of "the American personality" is startling: "he is shallower, freer with his money, friendlier, more uncertain of himself and his values, and, finally, more demanding of approval than most Europeans."<sup>6</sup>

American culture, therefore, has apparently always nourished a personality structure somewhat vulnerable to insecurity and not given much to internalizing a well defined ethic; it's highly susceptible to fads and craves the endorsement of others. And it's a personality type which has always constituted the raw material of the American church - but far more now than before the Second World War - and infinitely more now than during the 19th Century.

### **Additional Confirmation**

Forty three years have elapsed since *The Lonely Crowd* was first published; and the personality type Riesman sketched out has stood the test of time; it's not only endured, but has become much more sharply defined and ever more pervasive - to the extent now that contemporary scholars trumpet its ascendancy.

Christopher Lasch, an eminent historian now on the faculty of the University of Rochester, was among the first to underscore its ascendancy - and he did so in 1979 with his compelling study, *The Culture of Narcissism*.<sup>7</sup> Lasch confirmed Riesman's findings, but added to them as well. He not only stressed the personality traits Riesman had noted, but, in addition, he went on to point out that Americans (1) loathe binding commitments, (2) fear dependency, and (3) often ascribe little significance to loyalty and gratitude.

Clearly, Lasch's additional traits are not much more than extrapolations of the more basic traits Riesman had highlighted twenty nine years earlier - a point not lost on Lasch. Lasch concluded that the personality type Riesman had so ably portrayed back in 1950 was beginning to assume a pathological dimension; it was no longer benign and innocuous, but, instead, it was bordering on the neurotic.

Lasch's study prompted a chorus of "amens" from the American psychiatric profession.<sup>8</sup> And in 1988, James Masterson, an internationally renowned clinical psychiatrist, Director of the Masterson Institute, and adjunct professor at the Cornell University Medical Center, published his confirmation: *The Search for the Real Self: Unmasking the Personality Disorders of Our Age*.

Masterson ratified Lasch's insights - to wit, that more and more Americans (1) are suffering from an inability to form intimate relationships; (2) are fearful of losing control; and (3) beg the approval of others - often to the point of craving adulation.

Here we have the cultural dynamic underlying the paradigm shift in the evangelical mind-set: *a narcissistic personality, not just unable to establish binding commitments, but actually fearful of binding commitments, and, moreover, frightened of any kind of dependency, is surely geared toward redefining salvation in terms of personal empowerment.*

## **FOOTNOTES**

5 Riesman, David *The Lonely Crowd*. New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1963 (first published 1950)

6 This description is actually not taken from DeToqueville himself, but is a summary statement put together by Riesman.

7 Lasch, Christopher *The Culture of Narcissism*. New York and London: W. W. Norton and Company, first published in 1979; but republished in 1991 as a Norton paperback.

8 The "amens" were, however, somewhat belated. Initially, psychologists and psychiatrists tended to miss the point Lasch was trying to

*footnote continued on next page*

### ***The American Personality Structure and Mass Consumption***

The “American personality structure” did not just drop out of the sky. It’s largely the result of a culture addicted to mass consumption - and most especially to the manipulative advertising techniques developed to keep consumption levels at a fever pitch. Those techniques feed upon a “personality” that can be manipulated - a personality into which artificially contrived anxieties can be injected - and then exploited to induce enhanced levels of consumption.

“Pimples are ugly - and keep you from being liked. Buy Clearasil. Clear up your complexion - and people will like you.”

“Bad breath is a turnoff; buy Scope and get close up.”

“Clothes make the man - and a suit from Brooks Brothers will go a long way toward assuring you success.”

“Everybody is buying a Ford Taurus; don’t be left out; come on down to Big Valley Ford right away and get with it.”

“Show off! Drive a Lexus. Let people know how good you are. Make them envy you.”

“Fat women are unattractive; but Jenny Craig will slim you down; come on into one of our service centers and lose all the weight you want. A slim woman gets her man.”

There it is. In each case, an anxiety is aroused and a more or less guaranteed solution is extolled. And the result is a purchase. Consumption is kept rolling along - and the economy moves ahead. Investment, which serves to enlarge an economy’s productive base, chases consumption. Consumption is the key - and the more the better.

### ***The Shift to a Consumption Based Economy***

Until shortly after the First World War, the American economy was largely investment driven. Consumption was geared to essential needs. And investment could be sustained by simply serving those minimum, essential needs. Investment was primary, and consumption was largely a secondary concern.

However, from about 1920 until the Second World War, the economy underwent a fundamental change. Investment, the key to economic expansion, could no longer be propelled forward by consumption levels linked only to essential needs. Consequently, the American economy began to shift from an investment driven base to a consumption driven base.

Consumption began fueling the engine of the American economy. The Great Depression served only to underscore the importance of the new consumption factor.

A nascent advertising industry developed between the two world wars to pump up consumption levels. But the new industry remained largely primitive and unsophisticated until after World War II. The Second World War, though, lifted the productive capacity of the American economy to unheard of levels; and the end of the war threatened major economic dislocations: peace time consumption levels were hopelessly “out of sync” with the new production levels. Now, more than

ever, advertising was critical. Consumption had to be enormously expanded. The “action” shifted from Wall Street to Madison Avenue.

The advertising industry boomed - and its research arm began exploring new “Sell! Sell!” techniques; but always built around the principle of *arousing anxiety based upon peer group opinion*.

In a very real sense, the advertising industry began not only to probe the dark recesses of the American psyche for “anxiety triggers,” but to go further - to mold and shape an altogether new American personality<sup>9</sup> - one even more susceptible to the manipulative techniques of mass advertising. Here we have David Riesman’s “other directed” personality type. Riesman was merely taking note in 1950 of what Madison Avenue’s “busy little beavers” had been fabricating since at least 1945; and it’s what the American evangelical church has been contending with for the past forty eight years - though much more so during the last fifteen to twenty years.

### ***The Evangelical Church and the New American Personality***

Empowerment. That’s the touted panacea of Madison Avenue. Induce anxiety; then promise empowerment. “*Our product will empower you.*” “*Our service will empower you.*” “*Our seminar will empower you.*” It’s everywhere. On television; on billboards; in newspapers; in magazines. Everywhere. It’s become the American “zeitgeist.”<sup>10</sup>

And it’s not just empowerment per se; but *self-empowerment*. Madison Avenue advertising techniques always stress the “individual,” *never* the institutional framework which envelopes the individual. And why? Because anxiety is most effectively aroused within men and women who are alienated. Never promise to empower the family, the neighborhood, the club, the school, the town hall. *Only the individual*. Isolate him; alienate him; cut him off. *Then arouse anxiety*. And, finally, promise *self-empowerment*. And it works. That’s the whole point: it’s so marvelously effective.

And the evangelical church has fallen right into step. It’s not that pastors buy into the entire Madison Avenue formula. The best and most mature of them certainly spurn the temptation to actually induce anxiety,<sup>11</sup> but self-empowerment techniques are more and more preached from the pulpit and taught in Bible studies - that’s incontrovertible. And perhaps that’s to be expected. After all, the bedrock foundation of Evangelicalism is the Protestant Reformation. And it’s the Protestant Reformation that launched the intellectual revolution which ultimately produced Madison Avenue. Evangelicalism and Madison Avenue are “kissing cousins.”

What?

### ***The Reformation***

Most evangelical Christians are not accustomed to thinking of the Reformation as an intellectual revolution; for them, it’s strictly a spiritual revolution. Luther, Calvin, Zwingli: these are

## **FOOTNOTES**

make. Consequently, his study was at first dismissed as merely a commentary on the “Me Generation” of the late 1970s and early to mid 1980s. It took several years before his study was taken seriously and his insights appreciated.

9 The task of fabricating a new American personality was perhaps not as difficult as might first be surmised. After all, Tocqueville had already taken note, a century earlier, of a personality structure not at all dissimilar to Riesman’s observations in 1950. It’s possible, therefore, that Madison Avenue was merely pressing to the fore what was already there.

10 A wonderful German word - so marvelously descriptive. It means “spirit of the age.” Jacob Burckhardt, a towering intellect of the 19th Century, borrowed the term from Hegel’s *Lectures on the Philosophy of History* - and, subsequently, transformed it into a mode of historical research. He used it as the basis for his monumental study, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*.

11 Though, tragically, this isn’t always true - especially concerning “tithing.”

the fathers of a heroic faith - our faith; and their efforts culminated in the rebirth of scriptural truth - so long buried under the weight of a stifling Roman Catholic tradition. It's not easy for Evangelicals to catch sight of what else the Reformation actually ignited - that, in addition to "sola scriptura"<sup>12</sup> and the new hermeneutic it entailed, what it basically led to was the birth of "individualism."

"Sola scriptura" never extended much beyond the confines of the reformed churches; but "individualism" has crept into every crevice of Western culture - every nook and cranny. It's everywhere. It's the organizing principle of Western Civilization - and most especially American society.

Until the Reformation, the intellectual prisms of the West precluded any kind of meaningful focus upon the "individual." Men and women were part of a larger social and cultural framework; and in a sense they were never really perceived apart from that framework. The "individual" did not stand out on his own, but only as part of a larger social order - a highly complex network of interlocking institutions - including family, class, guild, manorial estate, government, and, most importantly, church. It was that larger social order - and his place in it - that lent substance to his being.<sup>13</sup>

There were no inalienable rights that pertained to individuals. Whatever rights and prerogatives men and women possessed were derivatives of the social institutions to which they belonged.

It's hard to grasp the medieval mind-set; to dust it off and actually put it on; to see through its intellectual and emotional prisms; to "feel" it. It's so alien to our Twentieth Century temperament. For us, social institutions - church, class, school, business, government - all are artificially contrived. They're not invested with a life of their own. They don't breathe; they aren't genuinely organic; they aren't really alive.

We don't think in terms of *belonging* to any social institution, of being *owned* by it - in the sense that we're organically a part of it - much as an arm or a leg is an organic part of the human body *and is meaningful only in terms of the body*. For us, it's not the whole that's imbued with meaning, it's the discrete parts which comprise the whole. But for the men and women of the 16th Century - at the tail end of the Medieval Era - it was the whole that was imbued with meaning, not the individual parts.<sup>14</sup>

Individualism, then, is less of an ideology than it is a "perspective." Which is primary? The whole or the parts? The proponents of individualism respond emphatically: "*The parts!*" And then they focus our gaze on the parts almost to the exclusion of the whole. It becomes more and more difficult to

even catch sight of the whole anymore. It fades so much into the background that it becomes almost invisible.

The only remaining social institution that retains a bit of the old medieval "feeling" is the nuclear family. A family is seldom thought of as an "artificial entity" - put together by its constituent parts - and meaningful only in terms of its "constituent parts." It's a living organism; and its members aren't attached to it, as a wristwatch is attached to an arm; but, instead, "grow out" of it, much as an arm "grows out" of a body.

We don't walk away from our families; we don't bind ourselves together on a contractual basis: "*If you do your part, then I'll do my part. But if you don't do your part, I'm under no obligation to do my part; and the contract is dissolved; and our family relationships are terminated.*" No, we're stuck with one another - for better or for worse. Families are based upon a commitment that begins with birth - and doesn't end until death. And it's in that sense that they're living and organic. Individual choice plays no part. It's all a matter of birth - which, of course, lies beyond personal choice.

It's hard for us to imagine that every social and cultural institution was at one time suffused with the same organic sense that today permeates only the "family." It may be hard to imagine, but it's true nonetheless - not just family, but class, guild, business, government, and, of course, the church. Men and women did not *join* institutions. That implies "personal choice." And choice was not the basis for belonging; only birth constituted a sufficient basis for belonging.

But in one fell swoop, Luther changed all that. What he did was very simple - and to us so obvious; but its implications were revolutionary in every sense of that hackneyed word. Luther insisted that salvation was the product of a wholly *personal* transaction between God and *individual* men and women.

Imagine! Salvation not the product of birth - not guaranteed by the church. Imagine! It's the product of individual choice - a conscious personal decision.

Here at last - *the individual* - out on his own - alone before God - with his very soul at stake. Church, class, guild, family - it all meant nothing. No one could stand in for him; no one could assume the burden of his choice. The decision was his - in stark solitude.

And if personal choice underlay the most important transaction of life, salvation, who could deny that ultimately it underlay all other transactions as well - including class and profession - even the nature and organization of government<sup>15</sup> - even the church<sup>16</sup> itself?

## FOOTNOTES

- 12 "Sola Scriptura" was the battle cry of the Protestant Reformation. It's a Latin phrase - and it means "*The Scriptures Only.*" The Reformers refused to honor the pronouncements of the Pope - and balked at ascribing to Roman Catholic tradition the same level of sanctity it reserved for the Bible.
- 13 C.f., Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*. C.f., also Dilthey, Burckhardt, Troeltsch, and Cassirer - especially Cassirer's *The Individual and the Cosmos in Renaissance Philosophy*. But perhaps the best study is J. Huizinga's *The Waning of the Middle Ages*.
- 14 Burckhardt puts it well: "Man was conscious of himself only as a member of a race, people, party, family, or corporation - *only through some general category.*" (Italics mine.) Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy*, Penguin Classics, published by Penguin Books, 1990, p. 98.
- 15 It's in this sense that the "Social Contract Theorists" must be read. Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, George Berkeley, David Hume, and, of course, that enigmatic and transitional figure, Jean Jacques Rousseau - all draw upon the perspective first brought to light by Martin Luther. For the first time in the history of mankind, a theory of government was being propounded which rested ultimately upon the primacy of the individual. And Luther's finger prints were everywhere. Imagine! Government is based upon individual men and women consenting to a social contract. Unthought of! Unheard of!
- 16 All Protestant churches rest upon forms of government and organizational principles which presuppose the primacy of personal choice. Church government is wholly inorganic, not at all the organic forms of the Roman Catholic tradition.

### ***Loss of the Sense of the Sacred***

The medieval mind-set did not collapse overnight; but the process had begun - and Luther had provided the intellectual rationale justifying that process. The bonds of tradition began to weaken. The links of medieval society began to snap.

The collapse was hurried along by another factor that historians largely overlooked - until Emile Durkheim, a brilliant French sociologist, brought it to light in 1912 with the publication of his masterful study, *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. The Reformation, he pointed out, kindled not only individualism, but, ironically, secularism as well. Martin Luther the father of modern secularism? It's true. Again, the key here is personal choice - and the shift in focus it effects from the whole to the parts. It's not the whole that's impregnated with meaning; it's the parts. The whole is artificially contrived. It didn't put itself together; nor did the "hand of God" fashion it - and then drop it down from out of heaven; men fashioned it - here on earth - with little or no help from God.

Class structure, for example, is not God ordained; it's man-made. And if men made it, it possesses only the sanction that men ascribe to it. There's no divine sanction underlying it at all. It can be undone, discarded, or modified - with little or no worry about divine retribution. And the same holds true for guilds, government, the manorial estate, and the church. Individualism, then, stripped away the holy reverence that had always been attached to social institutions. There it is: *secularism*.

What a mind-wrencher. Secularism did not spring from the womb of Voltaire, Helvetius, Condorcet, Holbach, or any of the other French *philosophes* of the 18th Century Enlightenment. It lies much closer to home: Martin Luther gave birth to secularism. He never intended it. But it happened nonetheless. In a very real sense, Luther is to blame for the corrosive spirit that's desecrated every social institution of the Twentieth Century - and is now eating away at the foundation of the nuclear family itself. Certainly, he would never have carried it to the extremes reflected in the Enlightenment. But in any case, the Enlightenment is not the "bête noire" that evangelical Christians have made it out to be. It was merely the broom that swept away the debris left behind by Luther's Reformation. It merely spun out, over two and a half centuries later, the corollaries implicit in Luther's fundamental axiom: *personal choice*.

### ***Luther's Two Children***

Like Abraham, Luther fathered two children: his Isaac is "justification by faith" and the evangelicalism<sup>17</sup> it led to almost four hundred years later; his Ishmael is the "profaning spirit of

secularism." And like Isaac and Ishmael, the two have never ceased to wage war against one another. Every evening, the major news networks broadcast the latest episode of the on-going struggle - from Operation Rescue to school prayer to gay rights. Isaac pitted against Ishmael - both the product of *individualism*.

### ***Secularism within Evangelicalism***

But has secularism somehow worked itself into the body of Evangelicalism itself? Is it possible that Evangelicalism itself is infected? The answer is, "Yes." But how? Where? The answer is so obvious that we're forever missing it: *It's found in our perception of the church*.

Evangelicals have never developed an overarching theology which provides for a biblically accurate ecclesiology. Our ecclesiology has always been deficient. Why? Because our reformation perspective has so effectively locked our focus onto the parts rather than the whole.

The church is not believed to be truly essential. It possesses no life of its own. Evangelicals "church hop" incessantly. There's little sense of family. Little sense of being bound organically to other believers; of being genuinely knit together with others to form a corporate whole. That's an almost alien notion.

Evangelicals believe that sanctification is largely a solitary quest for personal holiness. And the church merely helps out along the way. It facilitates. It's a convenience. It's an expedient. That's all. Nothing more. It's not an important end-in-itself.

The church is nothing more than simply the sum of its parts. Evangelicals attend a church; they don't *belong* to a church. How different is Roman Catholicism - drawing upon its medieval heritage; but how seldom Evangelicals take note of that difference.

But it doesn't stop there. There's no sense of the sacred either. And how can there be? If the church is merely an expedient, how can it be imbued with a sense of the sacred? There's no wellspring of respect and reverence that church officers can draw upon. The church's vaults are empty of that kind of almost mystical homage. The Reformers never made that kind of deposit - nor was it even possible to do so. No, the church officers are on their own. And if they command any respect at all, it's only the respect they can muster on the basis of their own personal charisma. It's fertile ground for leadership based upon manipulation. Again, how different is Roman Catholicism - drawing upon its medieval heritage; and, again, how seldom Evangelicals take note of that difference.

Luther's stress upon the individual is scripturally appropriate for conversion - for the deeply personal choice that

## **FOOTNOTES**

- 17 *Our Evangelicalism*, i.e., the Evangelicalism that arose following the liberal realignment of the Presbyterian Church and the tragic collapse of Princeton Seminary. Princeton Seminary had been the fountainhead of conservative Protestant theology here in America during the 19th Century. Charles Hodge (1797-1878) and Benjamin Warfield (1851-1921) were its preeminent representatives. In 1921, Warfield died, and the mantle of leadership fell upon John Gresham Machen (1881-1937). But eight years later, in 1929, Machen resigned - because the seminary's board of directors refused any longer to endorse the fundamental tenets of conservative theology. That same year, Machen helped to found Westminster Theological Seminary. Finally, in 1935, the rift was made irremediable: the Presbyterian Church USA found him guilty of insubordination and forbade him to engage in ministry. Princeton had been the last remaining bastion of an older network of theological seminaries - including Yale, Harvard, etc. Its collapse marked the end of an era. A whole new network of seminaries arose to take its place - dedicated to continuing and reaffirming conservative Protestant theology - with one important difference: the new network was composed of scholars who, for the most part, were premillennialists - and, unlike scholars of the older network, believed that eschatology was a vital topic of study. C.f. David Rausch.

leads to justification. But is it an appropriate paradigm for sanctification - for the continued walk of the believer following justification? Of course it isn't. Paul's description of the church is wholly organic.<sup>18</sup> The church is far more than the sum of its parts. It's far more than merely a useful expedient.

But Evangelicals can't see it. It's virtually invisible.<sup>19</sup> Roman Catholicism is far closer to the truth.

### ***The Evangelical Church and "Other Directed" Personalities***

The evangelical church, therefore, cannot very effectively minister to the alienation that afflicts "other directed" personalities. It furnishes no genuine counterweight. It's easy - far too easy - for evangelical pastors to buy into self-empowerment techniques - gimmicks which promise a cure, but which almost invariably serve only to accentuate the underlying anxiety. Look closely at Evangelicalism - and, all too often, what you'll catch sight of is Madison Avenue. "*Elmer Gantry*" is not that far off the mark. And neither is its more recent counterpart "*Leap of Faith*" starring Steve Martin. To be sure, both are caricatures; but there's a whole lot of truth behind those caricatures.

### ***The Final Assault of Alienation***

There's more here, though, than just Madison Avenue techniques and Luther's Reformation. There's another dynamic at work as well. It's a dynamic that touches men and women "up close" and in the "gut." It's the continuing disintegration of the family. And for the last thirty years or so it's been at this level that alienation has been most forcefully injected into the American psyche.

Almost 80 years ago, Robert Frost intoned, "*The family's where you go when no one else wants you.*" Family was a sanctuary; a haven; a refuge. All other social institutions were fast becoming impersonal bureaucracies staffed by experts - and pointed toward well defined, rationally calculated goals. Management technique was based upon "cost effectiveness." Organizational linkages were intentionally stripped of affection and reduced instead to a mere "cash nexus." Neither management nor labor stressed personal loyalty based upon a sense of mutual respect and organic attachment. The bottom line for both was the "almighty dollar." Employees were mere ciphers, moveable parts, *modular units* - to be shifted around or discarded at will. There was no thought of a predefined organic wholeness.

### ***Modular Units - A New Way of Thinking Produces a New Art Form***

Modular units, moved about at will - perhaps the best single concrete reflection of alienation. It has been carried over onto every level of human

consciousness - even onto the level of artistic consciousness. Picasso's art reflects it. His human figures are composed of "modular units" moved about at random - not bound by any thought of the whole. A nose is haphazardly attached here, an ear there, etc. The parts are all present, but not fit together according to any holistic principle. The integrating significance of the whole has been intentionally discarded.



Edvard Munch's "The Scream"

Picasso perfectly reflected the alienation that was tightening its grip on western culture at the beginning of the Twentieth Century. That was his genius. Picasso, though, never quite captured the horror of that alienation. That was left to Edvard Munch. His painting "*The Scream*" sends shudders through the soul of every man, woman, and child born since 1900. Each of us resonates to the dread it portrays. And what it so dramatically portrays is the insanity that alienation leads to - the horrifying solipsism it produces. Likewise, the absurdity produced by alienation is the subject of the surrealists - who transformed even space and time into "modular units." The whole flow of "modern" art is easily discerned when set against the backdrop of the individualism Luther unleashed.

## **FOOTNOTES**

18 For example:

For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.

For the body is not one member, but many.

If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body?

If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling?

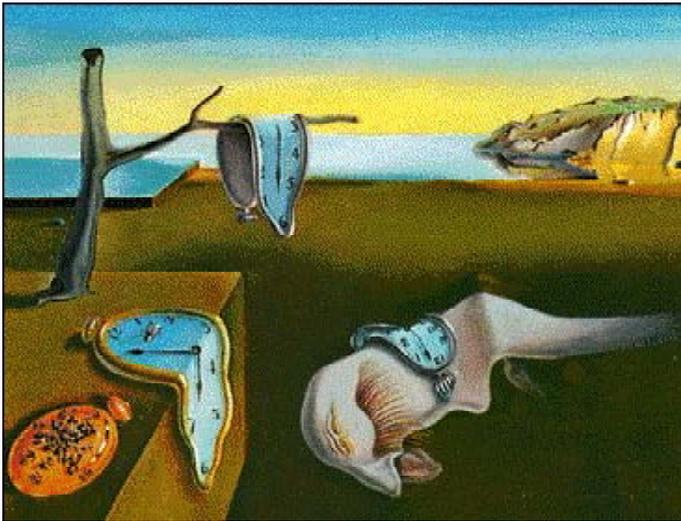
But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased him.

And if they were all one member, where were the body?

But now are they many members, yet but one body.

*1 Corinthians 12:12-20*

19 I'm aware of only two Evangelicals who have managed to put together a somewhat adequate ecclesiology: Michael Griffiths and Watchman Nee. In the case of Michael Griffiths, his book, *Cinderella with Amnesia*, has aroused some interest, but has provoked almost no change at all - either here in America or in England. And in the case of Watchman Nee, his many books and tracts have all been tainted by their association with Witness Lee's "Local Church Movement."



Salvatore Dali's  
"The Persistence of Memory"

### **The Last Bastion: The Family**

Luther's revolution had indeed taken hold. But family was different.<sup>20</sup> There you were not a "moveable part" or a "modular unit." You were a son or a daughter; a brother or a sister; a dad or a mom. There was kinship. There was affection. There was warmth. There was camaraderie.

There was no calculation of "cost effectiveness." You simply belonged. You owned and you were owned. You couldn't be "kicked out." Family was blood. The bank might measure personal worth in terms of a credit rating; but a brother?



The Extended Family - Gone Forever

*Never!* His was a different standard: *blood and birth.*

The family held alienation at bay. It held in check the forces (1) Luther had released, (2) the Enlightenment had amplified, and (3) industrialization had institutionalized. Family was a fortress; it was a bastion.

### **The Demise of the Extended Family**

The family's collapse began almost imperceptibly - not at the center, but way out along its margins. Until the end of the 19th Century, family consisted of far more than merely the *nuclear* family - with moms and dads, sons and daughters, brothers and sisters; it was the *extended* family - including grandparents, uncles, aunts, and, of course, cousins. Cousins were everywhere: first cousins, second cousins, some once removed, some twice removed - but often, too many to count.

The nuclear family, then, didn't truly stand on its own. The extended family guarded its periphery and watched its flanks. But it did more: it helped to ease the impact of alienation on other social institutions as well. Large, extended families penetrated neighborhoods, schools, clubs, businesses, churches, and governmental agencies. A brother might be chairman of the local chamber of commerce; an aunt on the school board; a cousin, the chief of police; an uncle, the bank president; another uncle, the church deacon. And that penetration prevented those institutions from becoming totally impersonal - wholly devoid of affection - impervious to the claims of loyalty. Businesses, neighborhoods, churches, schools, labor unions, clubs, governmental agencies - they were often little more than institutional conduits and appendages of the extended family. Nepotism was a way of life - and not altogether the unmitigated evil reformist politicians claimed.

But the extended family could not withstand the relentless march of urbanization.<sup>21</sup> Extended families thrive best in rural and semi-rural settings; but by 1920, 67% of American families had been wrenched from farms and small towns and resettled in larger metropolitan areas. And fifty years later, in 1970, only about 4.5% of American families survived within a rural setting. But it wasn't just urbanization that destroyed the extended family. Upward social mobility, engendered by better education and job training, dissolved family ties as well. By the end of World War II, only the last vestiges of the extended family remained. Norman Rockwell continued to celebrate its simple virtues, but, in truth, it was less of a celebration than it was a funeral dirge. The nuclear family was out on its own.

### **The Strain Is Too Much**

And right away the strain began to show. Abuse and neglect had been almost unheard of within the extended family.<sup>22</sup> It had been too easily spotted. Prying eyes! Everywhere, the prying eyes of grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. In addition, though, support had been readily available. Child rearing had been shared; financial hardships had been ameliorated; and emotional sustenance had been always close at hand.

But that was all gone. Mom and dad were alone - isolated; and they were stretched far too thin. Divorce rates began to

## FOOTNOTES

- 20 Sociologists have coined various terms to depict the difference between the type of human collectives represented by a family and the type represented by a bureaucracy: Henry Maine, "status" and "contract;" Ferdinand Tonnies, "gemeinschaft" and "gesellschaft;" Max Weber, "communal" and "associative;" and so on. But the essential distinction is always the same: kinship and affection mark out one type; and objective, quantifiable goals and a rational calculation of means mark out the other. The one is personal; the other is intentionally depersonalized.
- 21 Itself merely a necessary by-product of industrialization
- 22 Perry, John A. and Perry, Erna K., *Contemporary Society*. Cambridge, Philadelphia, San Francisco, etc.: Harper and Row, Publishers, Third Edition, p. 357.

climb precipitously. The upward spiral began during the 1950s.

The 1950s were never the “Golden Years” of the American Family. That’s a myth. The “Ozzie and Harriet” generation was jerked around cruelly; it was torn by stress. A war was underway in the suburbs - but no one would admit it. The charade continued until the mid 1960s; but then the pretense was scrapped. From 1967 through 1980, the divorce rate shot upwards. William Hodges, Professor of Clinical Psychology at the University of Colorado, reported in 1991 that almost 40% of American children are victims of divorce or abandonment - and the bitter by-product of its ravages.<sup>23</sup>

The family, then, is no longer an effective barrier against the ever encroaching floodtide of alienation. It’s far too atrophied to hold it in check anymore.

### **Family - A Vehicle of Alienation**

But that’s not the whole story: within the last twenty years, more and more family units have actually served to enhance alienation. Myriads of families have been transformed into actual vehicles of alienation. Why? Because children from broken or abusive homes find it difficult to *trust* - and trust lies at the heart of every enduring relationship. Without it, relationships are very “iffy” propositions.

Dad walks out on mom - and the child’s whole microcosm is torn asunder.<sup>24</sup> He can’t possibly be expected to understand the dynamics underlying the rupture. All he knows - and all that really matters to him - is that dad’s missing from the equation. The trauma that induces is unimaginable. And it’s a trauma that child psychologists are only now beginning to acknowledge. It’s been far too politicized to permit an objective study.

“Family” is a child’s first encounter with “relationship” - and it colors all his subsequent encounters. It teaches him what to expect and how to “play the game.” And if a child’s family is abusive, neglectful, or ruptured - and more are than ever before - that’s internalized. How can he trust any relationship if his primordial relationships were so terribly disappointing, so inexcusably damaging, so bereft of support? Intimacy becomes virtually impossible. But it’s not just that intimacy is impossible; it’s that it’s not even genuinely attempted; nor is it really comprehended; it’s simply avoided - almost at any cost. *Intimacy is feared.*

“Control” is the byword and hallmark of persons who have been abandoned, abused, or neglected in their childhood. They tend to resist ever again becoming dependent. Often it’s not just frightening, it’s psychologically intolerable. And if thrown into a relationship which entails dependency, they will try to extricate themselves quickly - or *manipulate* the relationship to lessen their sense of dependency - to mitigate their fear of having “lost control.” The key to every relationship is not

intimacy; it’s power. Intimacy and power become hopelessly confused.

Marriage is likely to be perceived in terms of contract, not commitment; and even if a prenuptial agreement is not actually drawn up, it’s presumed. Marriage is not the “end of the line.” All the “no exit” signs have been torn down and carted off. There’s always a “way out.” There’s no sense of “being stuck.” Marriage, like all other social institutions, is meant to empower *individuals* - or, put somewhat more euphemistically, to enrich them; and if it fails to do so, it loses its moral sanction - and can be justifiably abandoned.

### **The Perversion of Authority**

Authority is misperceived as well. After all, “authority” is merely a subcategory of “relationship.” It’s a species of relationship. And if “relationship” is misperceived, certainly authority is likewise misperceived. But even more so. Because authority - more than any other species of relationship - entails loss of control. All relationships - especially intimate relationships - impose some dependency and loss of control; but authority carries that loss to an extreme.

Authority is the bugbear of the late Twentieth Century. During the 1960s, bumper stickers read “*Question authority.*” During the 1990s, they’ve been modified to read “*Ignore authority.*” And it’s not just meant to be humorous or cute. It’s more of a “declaration of war.” It’s a challenge - tainted not just with cynicism, but outrage. “*You’re not going to get me to bend to your will. I will not cede control of my life or my body to anyone.*” There it is - the battle cry of the abused. It’s a slogan emblazoned across the placards of abortion rights activists, feminists, and gay rights advocates. It’s everywhere. But it’s not only the battle cry of feminists and abortionists; look more closely: all too often it’s the battle cry of Evangelicals as well. Again, “kissing cousins.”

Leadership, therefore, is no longer based upon authority. It can’t be. Authority engenders too much deep seated anxiety. It’s not equated with loving protection and guidance; instead, authority calls to mind exploitation, humiliation, and brutalization.<sup>25</sup>

### **Leadership and Manipulation**

What then is the foundation of leadership today? Increasingly, it’s based upon manipulation. There’s been no other option. An effective leader knows what “buttons” to push and what “levers” to pull; he never speaks in terms of a faith-based obedience - which authority necessarily calls for; but, rather, he stresses motivation. He’s a clever student of the human psyche - and unabashedly so. He’s a disciple of Napoleon Hill. Basically, he’s a good salesman. That’s all there is to it.

## **FOOTNOTES**

- 23 Hodges, William *Interventions for Children of Divorce*. New York, Chichester, Brisbane, Toronto, and Singapore: John Wiley and Sons, Inc., published in 1991.
- 24 Charles Odier, a disciple of Jean Piaget, comments, “Nothing is more capable of suddenly throwing children into a state of mystery, worry and insecurity than dissension between the parents, especially if the child believes himself to be the cause or the object of these quarrels. It is as if the child’s naive belief in an absolute love is broken once and forever.” Odier, Charles, M.D. *Anxiety and Magic Thinking*. New York: International Universities Press, Inc., 1956; p. 102.
- 25 Piaget insists that a child’s comprehension of authority - his basic response to it - is formed from out of a primitive sense of “respect.” And that respect is essentially a product of both fear and affection. Fear alone cannot engender the kind of respect that eventually leads to a sound and wholesome perception of authority. The kind of perception fear alone eventually generates is based upon a sense of cruel exploitation. Piaget, Jean. *Six Psychological Studies*, New York: Random House, 1967, p. 36 (Translated from the French by Anita Tenzer)

And, once again, the evangelical church has slipped right into line. Pastors are, first and foremost, motivators - not because motivation is a grace which embellishes their authority,<sup>26</sup> but because there's nothing more. There's no authority to embellish. Their leadership is based *exclusively* upon motivation. If their motivational techniques fail, their leadership fails - and they're driven from the pulpit.

A pastor is a salesman - and his leadership skills often amount to little more than the simple techniques taught to stock brokers and used car hucksters. He can pick them up at any cheap weekend seminar. And often he knows intuitively that it's wrong. But, frankly, he can't move the congregation - "lead" the congregation - using any other technique. The congregation has ditched authority - and refuses to respond to it.

There's hardly been a single book or article published during the last twenty five years that helps pastors to base their leadership upon authority. There's no dearth of books which press the issue of motivation; but there's virtually none that shamelessly speaks to the issue of obedience and submission.<sup>27</sup>

The congregation is massaged; every move is painstakingly calculated. The right words are selected; and the wrong words eschewed. Ambiance, style, form - those are the keys. "Packaging" is as important in the average pastoral staff meeting as it is in the boardroom of General Motors. Appearance is far more stressed than substance. If a choice must be made between the two, almost invariably it's made in favor of appearance.

The congregation is "cajoled;" it's "brought on board;" it's "convinced." The point here is not that "winning over" a congregation is wrong; what's wrong is that there's nothing more; that if a congregation is not "won over to the truth" that's as far as the truth goes. If the congregation must always be won over and convinced, then the sheep have become the shepherds and the shepherds the sheep. The distinction between the two is lost entirely. And there *is* a distinction - notwithstanding the possibility of harnessing that distinction for exploitative purposes. Reverential subjection is unheard of. Homage is derided - and not just as a worn out anachronism, but in far more sinister terms - shades of Jim Jones and David Koresh.

### ***Kill the Pastor***

Every pastor knows what it's like to be adulated one moment and despised the next. That's part and parcel of leadership in the 1990s. And it's because persons raised in abusive homes are forever looking for the father they were deprived of. On the one hand, "father" is maligned; but, on the

other hand, he's desperately sought. The pitiful, heartbreaking search for missing fathers - it never ceases - it's restlessly pursued.

*Where's the dad  
I never had?*

Pastors are obvious "substitute fathers." They seem so ready-made to fill the bill. But the standards imposed by persons marred by abuse or abandonment are simply too lofty. The least flaw is likely to trigger a hostile response: "*There it is again - betrayal. I'm being double crossed. I'm being set up. He's out to get me.*" The king is crowned one moment; and the very next he's led off to the gallows. "*Crown the King; kill the king.*" It's a scenario that's played out more and more in congregations throughout America.

What pastor is there who hasn't been dressed in the garb of a father who walked out on mom; or an uncle who sexually abused his niece; or a husband who beat up his wife? But it's all so unconsciously perpetrated - and always rationalized in the best of terms. There's a whole reservoir of smoldering anger ready to break loose on pastors today. And the least of infractions can trigger its release. Furthermore, there's just enough well publicized failures to lend credibility to what otherwise might be labeled mere paranoia.

### ***More David Koreshes***

And the same psychological dynamic that produces disquieting irreverence, on-going agitation, and smoldering rebellion can also, given the right setting, produce the very opposite - blind obedience to a Jim Jones or a David Koresh. It's the very same dynamic; however, it's embedded in a radically different setting - and that setting generates an extraordinary variation. What is that setting? It's acute anxiety - a pervasive, on-going sense of terrifying dread.

Victims of childhood abuse quite frequently suffer from an arrested emotional development which traps their perceptions at a very primitive level.<sup>28</sup> They find it all but impossible to emotionally and intellectually coalesce in a single individual both favorable and unfavorable impressions - especially authority figures.<sup>29</sup> Authority figures are either *all good* or *all bad*, not a mixture of the two. Under normal conditions, authority figures are held at arms length - clothed with sinister intentions and immersed in mistrust and hypocrisy. Persons who have been abused are primed to beat down authority figures and strip them of esteem and deference.

However, if anxiety reaches intolerable levels, the dynamic is reversed - and instead of stripping authority figures of

## **FOOTNOTES**

- 26 The point here is not that motivation is wrong. That's a very flawed conclusion. Motivation linked to authority - pressed into the service of authority - is not wrong at all. But leadership based exclusively upon motivation *is* wrong.
- 27 One exception is Watchman Nee's *Spiritual Authority*. But, again, it is tainted by Nee's association with Witness Lee. A second exception might be Gene Edward's *A Tale of Three Kings*. But Gene too has been closely associated with Witness Lee.
- 28 This dynamic has been spelled out by numerous child psychologists - beginning with Jean Piaget. The "genetic school of psychology," founded by Piaget, has proven clinically that adults raised in unhappy and insecure homes often find it extremely difficult to (1) distinguish between the "self" and the "nonself," (2) authentically adopt the perspective of others, and (3) ascribe even the possibility of legitimacy to that perspective if grasped at all. In short, their intellectual and emotional development has been cut short. They remain essentially children - unable to adapt themselves within almost any social setting. "Others" are merely means to an end - and are quite often invested with either totally good or totally evil intentions.
- 29 Odier is adamant: "(Adult neurotics suffer from a) tendency to divide reality summarily into the two categories of benevolent and malevolent elements. In the 'neurosis of abandonment,' this double investment focuses upon the *authority object*." (italics mine); *ibid.*, p. 195.

reverence and judging them by impossible standards, they're clothed in unassailable majesty. The congregation, instead of squeezing out all the good, *squeezes out all the bad*. The authority figure becomes himself the very definition of good and evil. If *he* does it, it's good - *axiomatically*.

"He took my wife; that's good - because *he* did it."

"He beat my child; that's good - because *he* did it."

"He took all my money; that's good - because *he* did it."

"My parents are evil - because *he* tells me they're evil."

"My education is worthless - because *he* tells me it's worthless."

"Society is corrupt - because *he* tells me it's corrupt."

No other justification is needed. The leader's behavior and attitudes are *self-justifying*.<sup>30</sup> The unconscious rationale is simple: "*If I can't empower myself, I'll empower a Protector - and at the same time deny the very possibility of being exploited by him.*"

### **Redefinition of Fundamental Christian Terms**

Alienation, which is merely the pathological end point of individualism, is the defining feature of the culture which envelopes the evangelical church here in America. It produces the raw material for the church - what every pastor, every Bible teacher, every counselor faces coming through his doors - the door to his sanctuary, the door to his Bible studies, the door to his office. Almost every marriage is touched by it; almost every relationship. The challenge is truly overwhelming - and

more and more pastors are succumbing to despair or giving in to sordid gimmickry. "*Keep 'em entertained. Don't raise any troubling issues. Keep 'em occupied and distracted.*"

What's particularly worth noting is the disturbing resemblance between the generation now flooding into the evangelical church and Paul's description in 2 Timothy 3:1-5. Paul's description looks a lot like Riesman's "lonely crowd" - and even more like Lasch's "narcissists."

*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.*

*For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*

*Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good,*

*Traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God...*

Not only that, but church leaders are themselves the products of that culture - and can lay no claim to immutability. They too have been touched by the alienation which has oozed its way into the corpus of American society. And what that alienation has produced is a redefinition of Christian paradigms - a reinterpretation of fundamental Biblical terms - and it's wreaking havoc within the church. We're losing much more than any of us realize or care to admit: salvation cast in terms of self-empowerment, not the restoration of an intimate relationship with God; the church cast in terms of an expedient, not an organic community of loving believers - an important end-in-itself; marriages cast in terms of contractual ventures, not commitment and responsibility. We're not being empowered; we're being impoverished - and what's worse, we're being set up for the devil's final assault against mankind.

## **FOOTNOTES**

30 Sigmund Freud, in his brilliant exposé of Twentieth Century culture, *Civilization and Its Discontents*, pointed out that all persons, when plagued by unrelenting anxiety and stress, are subject to the siren call of this dynamic, not just persons whose emotional and intellectual development has been arrested because of abandonment, abuse, or neglect.

## ***HOMEWORK***

Your instructors will be distributing the next Agonia Manual to you for next week's lesson. Please read the first chapter - entitled "*Faith: Chapter 1 - The Dynamic of All Change.*"

Read it over carefully. The principles we'll be covering in this section are at the heart of effecting enduring change. Take the time to not only read, but reflect and meditate on the material you're being assigned.

