

**December 20, 2010**

## **Afflicted By Self-absorption**

***"You will lift up your face without shame;  
you will stand firm and without fear" (Job 11:15)***

During our years of ministry we've observed that the majority of people we've encountered are emotionally scarred by past trauma of all sorts. They carry wounds that have not yet been healed by our Lord Jesus. If you *have* been healed by our Lord of past emotional hurt, you're able to discern the **self-absorption** of those still afflicted. That underlying pain, no matter how deeply they've tried to bury it, brings about a focused intent to pursue whatever makes them feel good about themselves. At the same time, however, they pay little or no attention to the emotional hurt they cause others, whether overtly or by oblivious disregard. They're so narrowly focused on their own small arena of self-satisfaction that they live as if looking through binoculars.

The most recognizable distinction of the self-absorbed is the *hurt* they inflict on other people; yet they're blinded to the emotional devastation they're causing. Think "bull-in-a-china shop." If you try to give them feedback on how they're wounding those close to them, they become defensive and rattle off excuses to justify or rationalize their responses. These people are the Hardened Fools the Bible speaks about: "*As a dog returns to its vomit, so a fool repeats his folly*" (Proverbs 26:11; see also 2Peter 2:22).

Most people who try to maintain a relationship with the self-absorbed give up providing any meaningful feedback or correction. Instead, they've resigned themselves to living in codependency, their minds and hearts dulled to the pain that individual causes. That puts others who've tried to give the self-absorbed any feedback into a state of near hopelessness that things can change. Ultimately their relationship with the self-absorbed person can become so desperate that others may withdraw and avoid him or her just to preserve their own sense of well-being.

*Do you know a self-absorbed person? Could it be you?* It is our heart's desire that all would turn to our Lord Jesus and be healed of any and all past emotional hurt. Your determination to *forgive from your heart* those who wounded you releases the healing power of the Spirit of Christ in you so that the "sting" of the memory is gone. That's the **ONLY** way to rid yourself of any self-absorption that may be keeping you from denying yourself, picking up your cross each day, and wholeheartedly following Jesus out of grateful love and trust. Then, in the pattern He set, you can fulfill this mandate for His followers: "*Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others*" (Philippians 2:4). That indeed calls for self-denial through the work of the Spirit in you! But remember this: Your past emotional hurt so desperately needs His healing as you humbly cry out to Him as a yielded and obedient child. The alternative?

You'll continue to hurt others and never fulfill Father's good and righteous purpose for you in their lives.

Recently we watched a Hallmark movie, *In From the Night*, which graphically portrays the disabling internal conflict even years later that was caused by earlier emotional wounds. (A caveat: We always use our Clearplay filter to screen out any inappropriate language, immorality and/or violence, and recommend this for your family as well for anything you view.) Each of the traumatized people reflected various forms of self-absorption; some compensated by near-normal behavior, others more antisocially. But the movie also reminded us of particular emotional scars we ourselves had received during our upbringing and subsequent years. Most importantly, we could *praise our Lord Jesus* for what He had accomplished in healing us. Those scars evidence His wondrous ability to take past pain and transform it into an opportunity to help others going through what we've experienced. That way they too can find hope and healing as they love and trust Him to forgive, and then press on to bless without a desire for vengeance or retribution.

Perhaps *you* are plagued by self-absorption and don't recognize it. We wouldn't have recognized it in ourselves if people who deeply cared for us hadn't pointed it out. Yet even if you want to follow Jesus, self-absorption is a prison that rivets your attention on insignificant matters that have nothing to do with either our Father's will or becoming more like Christ. Self-absorption reduces any Kingdom impact you might have as His ambassador on those you encounter. That's because the power of His love *through you* is blocked. Even more painful for you, because of your unhealed hurt you go through life never able draw closer to your Father. And keep this sad thought in mind: In your heart you may secretly *blame Him* for the hurt you've received in the past. You live neither trustingly dependent on Him nor available to do His will.

Grievously, religion with its predictable rituals and self-satisfying practices becomes an acceptable opiate for the wounded. The "Christian" religious system does nothing to heal the self-absorbed or to help them experience the fulness of the Covenant relationship our Father desires. Do you see, a religious system takes on a life of its own *without the Lordship of Jesus!* Years ago a close friend was speaking to a congregation in England. He asked them, "If Jesus were dead, how long would you go on meeting together?" The congregants talked among themselves and replied, "We would just keep going on as we do now, with or without Jesus." And, man-made liturgy and ritual, which erroneously enable people to feel like they're pleasing God no matter what the state of their hearts and lives, only perpetuate the self-absorption of westernized Christians today.

The prophet Jeremiah laments the trap of man-made religion as a *counterfeit replacement* for a vibrant, intimate trust relationship with the Living God: "*My people have committed two sins: They have forsaken Me, the spring of living water, and have dug their own cisterns, broken cisterns that cannot hold water*" (Jeremiah 2:13). He's not talking about "unchurched pagans" here; Jeremiah is mourning God's own people who have created their own version of religion apart from His Holy Word!

Jeremiah is not alone in his grief as God's spokesman. The prophet Isaiah bemoans the heart motive of those who rely on religious form and go through the motions but have neither awe nor love for Him: "*These people come near to Me with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me. Their worship of Me is made up only of rules taught by men*" (Isaiah 29:13). Jesus Himself apperceived this sad reality in His discourse about the "religious" of His day (see Mark 7:6). Don't cover up your self-absorption in some religious system that makes you feel better about yourself but does nothing to fill the void that only *repentance* and *life in His Spirit* can bring.

We'd like to offer you an excerpt that presents what we're saying from a different angle. Maybe this will bring clarity to you where there might be fuzziness. (You can access the entire *Going to the High Places* series as a free download at our website.)

### **From Going to the High Places: Chapter 7. On the Shores of Loneliness**

"Have you ever been laughed at or mocked about something that was out of your control? Mockery that assails your self-esteem can be a powerful motivator to alter your life journey. In the old novel, *Gone With the Wind*, Scarlett O'Hara has been thrust by the Civil War from a life of pampered wealth into a protracted season of utter poverty. All throughout the years of distress one thought drives her: "I will never be hungry again!" Scarlett is fictional, but you probably know people who have been so humiliated that they are consumed with silencing that echo of mockery, that emotional hurt.

A younger friend of ours had been often taunted by schoolmates because his clothes were out of style. He swore to himself that when he was able, he would buy only the best for himself. He has followed that course but discovered that his labels and luxury have not afforded peace to his heart. The little boy who had been shamed years earlier is still crying to be accepted for who he is rather than the image he projects.

That wounded "little boy" or "little girl" within *you* is a prime target for the enemy to pierce with pain if you haven't laid that pain on His altar for Jesus to heal and restore to wholeness. We discovered our own need to trust Jesus to heal old emotional pain while we were in Israel. We had to choose to cast off those soiled garments of shame and resentment in order to press on without having to compensate for old wounds.

- Is there an unhealed "little boy" or "little girl" in you who suffered shame or teasing at some point way back? Have you protected or hidden away that area as you've gotten older by compensating in some way?
- Are you willing to set this burden down at His feet so the sting of those memories can be healed, and your testimony of His healing can be a life-giving instrument to help others?"

Before 2010 ends, please earnestly seek Lord Jesus to heal you of emotional wounds you've been carrying from your past. Let January 1, 2011 be the day you can wholeheartedly affirm our Lord's definition of what love looks like:

***"Love is patient, love is kind.  
It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.  
It is not rude, it is not self-seeking,  
it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.  
Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.  
It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres"***

(1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Don't be held captive by your past any longer. Make the closing of this year a season when all record of past wrongs and the wounds they have caused you are buried under the healing blood of Jesus Christ. In this way you'll not only be affirmed in your heart as you follow Jesus; you'll also be compelled by love to be like Him in denying yourself and picking up your own cross daily for the joy set before you in Him.

### **Mike & Sue**

P.S. During this year we've heard from many who've been waiting for God to answer a particular prayer. I (Mike) was wrestling with this recently as I began my day in prayer. As I reached for my Bible, I also grabbed a David Wilkerson letter out of a pile of reading materials Sue had set aside. In Isaiah 64 my eyes immediately fell upon the 4th verse: *"Since ancient times no one has heard, no ear has perceived, no eye has seen any God besides you, **Who acts on behalf of those who wait for Him.**"* As soon as I read that verse I turned to see the title of Wilkerson's letter—***Waiting on God to Act.*** In it he referenced the very same verse I'd just read! Sue awoke to my joyful laughter at the way Father had ministered to my heart. This letter was so encouraging that we thought that if you've been waiting on God for some answer, you'd be blessed by it too. You can read the letter by going to: <<http://www.worldchallenge.org/node/9052>>.