

Week 4 - Areas of Vulnerability to Seduction

I know it's not easy hearing about the battles waged by the enemy, especially when it hits close to home. However, we are living in a time when we have got to get real about the battle waging around us. Satan wants to do everything he can to get the bride of Christ to defile her sexuality. If we don't get real about this he will continue having a field day during our lives. The next five days we are going to look at areas that leave us vulnerable to seduction. Being aware of these areas will help us safeguard against seduction. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in truth this week as we study His word together.

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Day 1 - Too Close for Comfort

Have you ever seen the movie “The Jungle Book”? One of the characters in the story is a snake and throughout the movie when he wants to attract someone to him he comes out from his hiding, looks them in the eyes and seduces them into a trance-like state. The characters would do what the snake wanted to as long as their eyes were focused on him. At times that is how we become seduced by sin and our deceitful natures. The snake represents Satan, and he comes along in our lives trying to seduce us into sin. Notice I said *trying*, not *making*. We ultimately make the choice to sin, but Satan plays a huge part in doing everything he can to seduce us into the act of sin. You don’t have to look that far outside your door to see how hard he is at work in our world drawing God’s people into all sorts of sin, particularly sexual sin.

We are living in a time that if we don’t watch where we plant ourselves and are unaware of seduction, we can become attracted to the sin at hand. Before we know it, we can fall into a full blown act of sin that we never fathomed we were capable of doing. There are all kinds of seductions going on in the world, but we are going to focus on sexual seduction for this study. Let’s begin with looking at how choosing unwise “habitats” can make us vulnerable. We are going to look at a story in Genesis and personalize it to our lives today. Put on your hiking boots, we are going to need them as we take a hike back in time to the land of Canaan. We are going to be a fly on Abram’s wall. Today’s study will require a bit more reading than usual but I promise the events that unfold are nothing short of boring. Are you ready? Let’s get moving!

Please read Genesis 13:12-13. *“Abram lived in the land of Canaan, while Lot lived among the cities of the plain and pitched his tents near Sodom. Now the men of Sodom were wicked and were sinning greatly against the Lord.”*

Do you think Lot’s decision to make camp near Sodom was dangerous based on what little knowledge we have from these two scriptures? Why or why not?

For background knowledge, Abram and Lot lived together on the same land. Scripture tells us that their possessions had gotten very large. Quarreling broke out between the two family’s herdsmen which caused them to separate. Abram sacrificed his own right to the best land and gave Lot the option to choose which part of the land he wanted first. Genesis 13:10 says that, *“Lot looked up and saw that the whole plain of the Jordan was well watered, like the garden of the LORD.”*

Why did Lot choose this part of the land? _____

Lot selfishly chose the better area to pitch his tents and herds based on the way the land appeared. As we see from our key scripture up top, Lot ended up pitching his tents near Sodom. If you know the history behind Sodom, you know that God destroyed it because of its detestable wickedness.

Please read all of Genesis 18-19 to get an idea of all that was taking place. What are some things mentioned?

We see that Lot pitched his tent *near* Sodom, not actually inside the city gates. There is something significant to see here. Sometimes we can “pitch” our tents or choose unwise habitats near things that look good on the outside; yet, once settled in things are not as they appeared. Have you ever known someone who seemed totally incapable of having an adulterous affair but somewhere along the way you heard she had fallen into one? Oftentimes, the person is not aware they are flirting with seduction until after the fact. When we are caught off guard and not walking in the spirit, Satan uses all he has and all we have to give him to bring us closer and closer to the sin. Remember, our flesh naturally craves sinful things. Our fleshly nature will enjoy seduction, particularly sexual seduction because it feels good. Think about this for a moment. Have you ever watched an R-rated movie with a heavy sexual scene in it? Can you remember how your body began to be sexually stimulated through what you were watching on the screen? If so, that is how seduction feels. You were being stimulated by watching two random people have sex. Seduction overcame you if you were stimulated. Seduction appeals to our flesh. You don’t hear many people say that sinning feels bad at first! That is part of Satan’s scheme. He wouldn’t tempt you with something that felt horrible. He tempts you with something that feels good so you will take the bait. Once you bite the bait, you are lured in and at some point the sin does not feel good anymore.

Describe a time that Satan lured you in to his scheme. Were you able to resist or did you fall into his plan?

We sometimes choose our “habitats” based on things that make us feel good. For instance, you may choose a group of friends based on their popularity and how they make you feel like you are a part of something good, yet you know they are involved in worldly things that God has called you away from. Or, you may become close friends with someone who is involved in an affair. Because you spend a lot time together, your “tent” is pitched near hers. At some point, the seduction she is under flows over into your life. Seduction begins when you find yourself wishing you could be in her shoes just once. Seduction is not something that we tend to notice right away.

Lot chose that area to settle down in based on the appearance of things. He was drawn towards it because it looked like it was a good choice, regardless that it was located right next to Sodom. We

have got to become aware of where we are pitching our tents. We need to be wise and not assume that we are resilient to everything that goes on around us.

Please read the following scripture and write your interpretation next to it. 2 Corinthians 11:14 says, *“And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light.”* What do you think that means?

I believe that if Satan masquerades as an angel of light then he probably doesn't come dressed in his red Halloween costume with his pitchfork. Think about it, if he did that, he would stick out like a sore thumb and you would see him a mile away. Scripture gives us this warning so we don't go by appearances alone. My point is that I don't believe Satan wants to stand out in a crowd. I don't think he or his hosts are going to appear to be scary or we would more than likely run the other way. As scripture tells us, he appears to be an “angel of light.” He masquerades through enticing us with things that appeal to our flesh.

There are some scriptures in Ezekiel that some scholars believe Ezekiel is describing Lucifer (who is now called Satan) as “perfect in beauty.” Believing that it's possible that the enemy was very striking in appearance we are wise to know that he is not going to come across to us as something unattractive or undesirable. In your life it might look like this: You are a married nurse who works at a hospital. You work closely with a doctor who is attractive. He is funny and he always seems to want to know what is going on in your life. He spends time asking personal questions and seems to really care about you as a person. It's been a long time since your husband or significant other actually seemed to care that much about you to ask you such things. You begin to compare your husband to this other man and before long you begin wondering what he really thinks of you. Things go through your mind such as, “I wonder if he finds me as attractive as I think he is.” “I wonder why he asks me such personal questions. That must mean he cares for me more than an acquaintance.” “I wonder if he thinks about me as much as I think about him.” “I wonder what it would be like to be married to him. His wife is so lucky.” You soon begin to form an emotional attachment to him. Before long, he begins confessing to you that he has an attraction for you. The seduction continues and the next thing you know you are sharing your feelings with him. Now that you have spoken your feelings into existence you have really opened the door even wider for Satan to tempt you into a sexual affair.

This is how Satan masquerades himself. It's not that the doctor was Satan, it's that he is allowing himself to be a vessel for the enemy's plan of destruction. Ladies, Satan is working so furiously in this area that he is convincing women that these types of scenarios are from God. They are being seduced by spirits that actually try to convince them that this is what God would want for them. They buy the lie that God would rather they be “happy” and leave their marriage for another man, than stay in an unhappy marriage. If you are being tempted with thoughts such as these, know they are coming from your enemy!

Look back at the time you were drawn to sin. Can you see any lies you might have believed at the time? Perhaps you fell into a particular sin because you believed lies from the evil one. Was there ever a period of time after that you “woke up” and saw the lies the enemy fed you to tempt you into that sin? If so, what did those lies look like?

Many women use the excuse that their marriage has been “dead” for years and they believe God would not want them to live in a relationship like that. Please understand that an unhappy marriage is not the same as an abusive one. If you are living in an abusive marriage I highly encourage you to seek help. If God calls you out of a relationship because of abuse, he is NOT going to use another man to entice you away! God is not the author of seduction, Satan is. Let’s end today’s lesson with a prayer.

Heavenly Father, we humbly come before you and ask you to show us any area that we are unaware of where we might be camping ourselves next to sin. Please open our eyes to any place in our lives where seduction is lurking about and show us how to go in the opposite direction. Begin to make us keenly aware of the enemy’s schemes in our lives when it comes to sexual seduction. Expose him and his traps set for us so that we will not stumble. In Jesus’ name we pray, Amen.

Day 2 - Settin' up Camp

I hope you are awakening to how seduction slips its way into your life so carefully. I know it doesn't always feel good to talk about this kind of material, but we are living in a time that we have to. Are you ready to pick up where we left off last time? Let's go!

We know that Lot chose the portion of land near Sodom because its looks enticed him. Lot did not realize he was planting himself in a danger zone. The type of sin that was going on in Sodom was so wicked and because the people never repented, God destroyed it. We are wise not to be in an intimate relationship with someone who is actively engaging in sin without repentance in their heart. Scripture warns us in Galatians 6:1 to be careful when restoring someone we know who has fallen into sin. It says, "*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.*" After reading that, why do we need to be careful when restoring someone caught in sin?

Why do you think God warns us that we also may be tempted into their sin? _____

God warns us to be careful because he knows how capable we are to giving way to temptations and then getting wrapped up in the very thing we were trying to pull our sisters out of in the first place!

Can you think of ways that we may pitch our tents next to sin? _____

I can think of several. Let me share one. If we begin hanging around someone who is involved in the "partying" scene, it may seem harmless at first. But, the more we surround ourselves with that person socially, the more we begin to grow numb to that kind of behavior. Over time we begin to crave this atmosphere and all that comes with it. What starts as one time ends up being every week. I can remember when I was single falling into that trap over and over. I would tell myself, "I'm going to quit going out to the bars and I am going to quit drinking." Yet I never changed my surroundings so when the temptations to go out with the same group of girls came again, I would fall into the same pattern over and over.

It's so important that we are aware of our surroundings. I have been guilty of pitching my tent next to the doorway of sin one too many times. I don't ever want to be naïve again. Perhaps you know someone who has gotten close to sexual sin and fallen head first into it. For instance, a young lady by the name of Sarah has been working out at the local gym. No harm there. However, Sarah's

marriage has been under a lot of stress lately. Her husband, Chris, has been working long hours and never seems to be home. He never seems to call home during the day and Sarah is feeling lonely and unloved. Sarah has been working out at the gym where she begins to notice a guy who always seems to make eye contact with her. At first, Sarah doesn't think too much about it because she has a low self esteem and figures no men as good looking as this one would be noticing her anyway. As time passes, Sarah finds herself looking forward to going to the gym just so she can see this guy and to see if he notices her. Sarah begins to flirt with seduction. She is placing herself in a position for attack. Before long, eye contact turns into a few smiles here and there, which later turns into small conversations. She begins to think that he is incredibly nice and she finds out through conversations with him that he goes to church. Chris, Sarah's husband, resents going to church every Sunday because he is tired from a long week at work and this begins to look attractive to Sarah. She begins to think about this guy all of the time. She begins fantasizing about what it would be like to be in a relationship with him. He appears to be so nice and charming and after all, he goes to church! Do you think Sarah is pitching her tent near danger? Why or why not?

Sarah is in a major danger zone! First of all, we know her marriage is weak right now and that makes Sarah vulnerable. Sarah becomes attracted to this man based on appearance and has little knowledge about him. She is being seduced by appearances. Just because he goes to church doesn't make him a godly man. Satan works desperately to destroy the body of Christ through the church. Sarah is headed toward a full blown affair if she does not remove herself from this danger zone. What would you do if you were Sarah at this point?

I can tell you now, Sarah needs to flee! She is headed for a downward spiral of sin if she doesn't cry out to God for help! Ladies, when we believe lies that we won't let it get out of hand and that we are not capable of such sin, we have walked right into the enemy's trap. God's word tells us that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (see Romans 3:23).

I know in my past I never thought I was capable of half the things I found myself doing. Speaking from experience, it is best to humble ourselves and get into agreement with God that we are all capable of anything. Besides, believing we are above certain sins is prideful. God's Word says in Proverbs 16:18, "*Pride goes before destruction.*" Let's not set ourselves up for destruction because of pride in our lives. Sarah began making decisions based on outward appearances and the lure of another man. She began to go to the gym at the same time each day just so she could "accidentally"

run into the guy at the gym. Seduction whispered lies to Sarah and talked her into fantasizing what life would be like with another man. Lot did something similar as well.

In our scriptures we saw that Lot was probably strong enough to resist temptations, but other members of his family proved not to be. Sometimes we choose locations for our families next to sin and although we may be resilient to it, those closest to us may not. Have you ever thought about how staying in a sinful environment could affect your loved ones? Perhaps a parent provided an environment for you that was conducive to sin. Being that you were surrounded by it, maybe you fell into it.

Have you ever found yourself in a “Sodom” and possibly not by choice? Describe what happened.

I know I have. Because of Lot’s decision, most of his entire family was susceptible to sin and total destruction. I would encourage you to read the entire chapters of Genesis 18-19. It’s better than any soap opera you could watch on television!

Here is the *Reader’s Digest* version: When God sent two angels to destroy Sodom, Lot was there at the city gates and urged them to come into his home so he could feed them. While they were there, a group of sexually hungry homosexuals surrounded the home demanding Lot to bring these two men (angels) out so they could have sex with them. In Lot’s desperate attempt to save these two men, Lot offers his two virgin daughters to the men outside for them to have sex with. Any father with a heart completely surrendered to God could not give his daughters over to a mob like this! So we can see how deeply the sin around Lot was absorbed into his own life. He became desensitized to the point of offering his own daughters to be victimized. I don’t know about you but after understanding the wickedness of Sodom and what the consequences are from just living near it, I don’t want to be caught dead close to that place. I don’t ever want to become desensitized to sin. It has happened one too many times in my life and caused too much destruction.

Is there any area of your life where you feel sin going on around you is being absorbed into your life? I have had a past full of many grievous sins and I can tell you that after all of the pain and destruction I caused myself and those nearest me, I don’t ever want to go back to any area that even borders a “Sodom”. I speak from experience. It is not worth it! When the Holy Spirit convicts you about a certain relationship and a red flag goes up you are wise to take notice of it. If you have been tempted into an ungodly relationship and the Holy Spirit is prompting you to flee from it, run like the wind! Don’t let the enemy have a foothold any longer. His plan is to expose you sooner than later. Let this serve as a warning and run as far from the relationship as possible.

Please read the rest of our text for today which is Genesis 19:14-36. Just to recap, the angels were urging Lot to get his family and get out of there before the Lord destroyed it.

Have you ever urged someone to leave a life of sin before total destruction fell on them? Perhaps someone has urged you to leave sin. If so, what was their reaction or what was your reaction towards them?

If you remember when Lot urged his future sons-in-law to get out because the Lord was going to destroy it, what was their reaction?

Sometimes, we may face rejection from our loved ones who have fallen into sin when we confront them, but it's better to be obedient and speak God's truth in love than to never confront our loved ones about their sin. On the flip side, don't reject those who encourage you to flee from sin. They are trying to help you!

In the rush to get out, Lot was only able to convince his wife and daughters to leave. The angels gave strict orders in verse 17. What were they?

Why did they tell them to flee to the mountains? _____

Hopefully your answer was "so they wouldn't be swept away". We are going to look at this more in detail in our next lesson. I hope you are enjoying this story as much as I am. I told you the things of God are not boring! There is so much to learn from His word. I can't wait to meet back with you tomorrow.

Day 3 - The Rearview Mirror

For today's lesson please reread Genesis 19:14-17. I find it interesting that as they were fleeing from the sinful city, just as we might flee from sin, they were told not to look back because they would be swept away. God sent his angels as messengers and he uses messengers in our lives for a reason. When we are told to flee a sinful situation, such as a premarital or adulterous relationship, we are to do so immediately without looking back or we will be swept away in disaster! God warns us to flee for our own protection. We can see from the scriptures that is clearly why the angels told them to flee without looking back.

Why do you think God gives us this warning? _____

If you are being tempted to be involved in an adulterous relationship at any level of sexuality, I urge you to flee before you reach total destruction and find yourself swept away. I know people who thought they were leaving their marriages for something better and once they got over there they were worse off than before. I've also seen the situation where an affair was exposed and both marriages stayed together but were completely devastated to a point they never fully recovered. For some reason many people who get themselves into situations such as these believe the aftermath won't be that bad. They don't realize how something like this can have lifelong devastating effects.

Today we are going to skip down a few verses in Genesis from verse 17 to verse 26. Genesis 19:26 says, *"But Lot's wife looked back, and she became a pillar of salt."*

Why do you think his wife looked back? _____

Why do you think she didn't obey the warning given to her? _____

There is no right or wrong answer. Maybe it was that she was hesitant on leaving that life behind because she had become comfortable in it. Perhaps she wanted one last look. Perhaps her flesh was torn between leaving the comfort of chaos that she had grown used to and the fear of unknown peace. For example, have you ever actively chosen to leave a relationship that you may have been emotionally or physically involved in premarital or extramarital that you know was not ordained by God, yet after you made the choice to break it off the temptation to look back was overwhelming? What part of it felt overwhelming?

Looking back at a sin you are “fleeing” from can have serious ramifications. When we cling to our pasts, we cannot possibly move forward. It’s like having one foot in the church while the other foot is knee-deep in sin. We can’t do both.

Have you ever had a time in your life when you had one foot in the door at church and the other foot knee-deep in sin? What was the result?

I know I have. If we don’t turn completely away from our sin, then we won’t come to full repentance and will be susceptible to falling back into it again and again. Have you ever known someone who made the decision to turn away from something sinful yet at some point along the way they began looking back and they became tempted again only to fall right back into the same pattern of sin? You see this seems to be the case in many adulterous relationships. The couple having the affair tries cutting it off before it comes to light, but because they have not cut all ties to each other they can’t seem to completely break it off. They have one foot staying put in the relationship while the other foot is trying to run in the opposite direction. That can’t work! You have to have both feet running in the same direction.

I know several stories of women who longed to break free from the addictions to alcohol or prescription drugs yet once they made the decision to turn from it, somewhere along the way “out” they looked back and began craving it again. Another thing that can happen is that Satan sees that as a weakness in you and tempts you with every trick in your old book to get you to fall back into the addiction again. Ladies, the battle was not meant for us to fight alone.

Read Philippians 4:13. *“I can do all things through Him that gives me strength.”* God tells us here that we can get through the battle with him that provides us the strength.

Not only does God give us the strength we need, he also provides a way out when we are under temptation. 1 Corinthians 10:13 says, *“No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.”* God promises us here that no temptation you face is too strong for you. He also promises to provide a way out of it. Hang on to that promise. Don’t believe the lie that any temptation is too strong for you to resist. If He that is in you is greater than he that is in the world then you have all you need to fight temptation.

Day 4 - Move Over Feelings!

Today we are going back to our story in Genesis. Please read Genesis 19:12-17.

The angels had a reason for Lot and his family to not look back. It was for their protection! Since this study is primarily about sexuality, when dealing with someone who is trying to “flee” sexual temptation, the pull towards the ungodly relationship is like a magnetic force. It feels like you have an unseen force pulling you back. Remember, feelings are just that. They are not always correct. We are wise to go on what we know rather than on what we feel. My feelings have proven to be wrong too many times for me to follow them anymore! I know I said once before that our feelings can be our worst enemy. When we choose to walk in our feelings, we are left extremely vulnerable to seduction. Women tend to act on what they feel. If we “feel” unloved at home and “feel” someone else can love us better, we are more than likely going to make choices based on those feelings. Feelings are not to be trusted. They are manipulating and the enemy knows that. He uses our feelings against us!

I can tell you that from my own life there was a time when I turned from a sinful relationship and the temptation to “look” back was so incredibly strong. I can remember trying to flee out of my own strength and failed each time. My feelings would get the best of me and I would return to what “felt” comfortable. I had to resist listening to my feelings and choose to follow God’s ways. The period after leaving this relationship was literally like coming off of a drug. The withdrawal symptoms were horrendous. I had never felt so unhealthy in all of my life. You see, we buy a lie from the enemy that flirting with sin will not hurt us. We believe the lie that we won’t fall into the sin. After all, we can handle our fleshly temptations and are not capable of falling, right? Wrong!

In what ways can you relate?

Many times women who have father wounds or women who have been sexually abused tend to fall for these lies more so than the woman who does not have those wounds. They are wounded and looking for something to soothe the pain. Assuming the wound was never healed, they go around, not even aware of it, trying to find someone or something to soothe the wound, perhaps to numb the pain. Satan is having a field day with these women. They believe a man other than their husband is going to love them like no one else ever has. They believe this man’s love is enough to fulfill them. Unfortunately, once they buy into the lie, Satan unveils his mask. Usually, the man never had any intentions of staying with her. He uses “love” to get sex and to meet his own selfish needs. In an extramarital relationship, once the light is shed, he usually acts cowardly and flees. She is left feeling even more emotionally alone and worse than before. Satan’s plan all along was to get her to fall for

his trap through a premarital or extramarital relationship and then to wreck havoc on her! Remember, the Bible says Satan comes to steal, kill and destroy.

We also buy into the lie that a man can fulfill that emptiness the little girl within us deeply craves. Don't fall for it! It's a lie. When I think back to the time when I was fleeing an ungodly relationship, I was so desperate to get through withdraw that I was tempted to numb the pain with anything I could get my hands on. The feelings were overwhelming. Luckily, God placed a wonderful counselor in my life who taught me that I could not walk in unity with my feelings anymore. She taught me that this may be my last chance to get things right before my family would be swept away from me. She encouraged me with tough love to grasp hold of God with everything I had and to keep my eyes on him rather than the voice of drugs or alcohol calling out to me, tempting me to numb my pain. She encouraged me to walk through the pain without taking my eyes off my one true Healer.

Have you ever been in a situation where some kind of sin had such a tight grip on you that when you tried to turn from it, the temptations to go back were overwhelming? What was that like for you?

I believe God truly desires to come to our aid when we recognize our sin and want to repent. Proverbs 3:6 says, *"In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight."*

How can you bring that scripture to life to someone who is in a pit of sin and wants to change her ways?

We can show them that it is a promise from God that He will make their path straight when they cry out to Him. God's word tells us that His Word never returns void. That means it's always "doing" something and will produce an end product.

I know for me, I began to cry out to Him in every area of my life. I asked Him to change my heart, my mind, my friendships, my every being! I grew sick and tired of being sick and tired which made me desperate to understand why I fell into the same old patterns of sin. When I cried out to Him, it was then that I heard His voice within whisper, "I came to help you clean up this mess, dear one. You don't have to do it alone. I know how devastated you feel. You were lost, but now you are found. Don't you know that I came to seek and save what was lost? Don't you know that I specialize in cleaning up my children's messes?"

Have you ever experienced your God as one who cleans up your mess? Describe a time in your life when He did.

What a precious father we have that while we were still sinners, he died for us. And not only did he die for us, he came to save us from our sins. Your Father will never leave you nor forsake you, no matter what kind of sin you should find yourself in. Don't ever let someone tell you that you have gone too far. There is not a "too far" with God. He will never desert you.

Have you ever been at a place in your life where you felt that you had separated yourself from God for good? Why did you feel that way?

Please read Romans 8:38 with me. *"For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Sisters, let that soak in. Nothing can separate you from his love. Absolutely nothing.

Let's use Lot's wife as an example to challenge us to stop looking back at old, enticing sin when we need to look forward.

Please read Philippians 3:13. *"Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining on toward what is ahead."* How does this verse speak to you today?

I think this verse is the exact prescription for helping someone who continues to fall back into the same vicious cycle of sin. Paul is admitting here that he has not necessarily accomplished the "not looking back" part, but he is striving to. I believe that if it is our desire to move forward, leaving what is behind us, sinfully speaking, that is all we need to get started. That desire gives God something to work with.

I can just hear the Father now saying, "My child, your desire to want to change and move forward gives me something to work with now. Before, I couldn't because you didn't desire to have my help. I would be honored to help you. That is what I am here for."

Now that we understand the significance in carefully choosing where we place ourselves, and we see the importance in not looking back, we will take a look at how holding on to past emotional wounds can leave us vulnerable.

Let's pray together.

Lord, we ask you to begin to make us aware when we are trekking towards anything that is not of you. Give us spiritual eyes to see what is of you and what is of darkness. Let no part of darkness come near us, Father. Begin to show us any area of our lives that are not protected against the evil one. Thank you for your word and may we be blessed by your truths.

In Jesus' name,

Amen.

Day 5 - Emotional Wounds

Many women walk into our churches today with emotional wounds from their pasts. They come to church under what I like to call the “witness protection program” hiding under a mask of pain, shame and regret. They put on their stylish clothes and pretty makeup, yet hiding beneath is a woman who is emotionally bleeding from pain. She covers her scars well, because after all, if she were to unveil the hurt at church she might be shamed. I know all about this woman because I have walked in her shoes. Although I no longer walk in them, I see plenty of women who do and it grieves my heart. If they only knew there is a road to freedom! My passion is for women who walk in shame to be set free. I believe we are coming to a place where it’s time for us to stop coming to church under the witness protection program. It’s time for those of us who have found healing, to rise up and show our scars so the church can act as a place of recovery for God’s wounded people; a hospital for sinners. Showing our healed scars gives proof we can be delivered from the vilest of addictions. How can the body reach out and heal when it can’t or won’t see any wounds that need healing? There are unhealed wounds in our lives that cause us to live in bondage instead of the freedom Jesus came to give.

Allow God to show you wounds that may need to be healed. Write a prayer asking God to reveal those wounds to you and allow the healing process to begin.

Whether these wounds were caused by others or self inflicted, God wants to set us free from them. I was recently reading about the woman in the bible who was bleeding for 12 years that got healed when she touched Jesus’ cloak (see Mark 5:25-34). I was thinking about that woman and the Lord revealed something to me that I want to share with you. As I pictured this scene, it was as if I heard the Lord say to my heart, “this is what is happening to my daughters in the church. They may not be physically bleeding, but they are emotionally. Some have been bleeding for twelve years just like this woman. They need to reach out and touch Jesus.” As I pondered those words, I pictured us, the women in the body of Christ, reaching out to touch His cloak for healing. This woman touched his cloak once, and she was immediately healed. I believe that is what some of us need to do.

If you are hurting today, perhaps bleeding from a wounded heart, would you consider reaching out far enough to touch His cloak? I know you can’t physically touch it, but symbolically you can reach out for it. If needed, would you consider stopping right here and journaling a prayer asking for His much needed touch on your wounds? Take a moment to do so and when you finish writing close your eyes and lift your hands to heaven and receive His healing touch.

We all suffer from different kinds of hurts in our lives. Maybe the wounds were caused from abuse suffered as a child. Maybe there was an emotionally or physically absent father or mother that wounded you. Perhaps you were mistreated or taken advantage of by an old boyfriend. On the other hand, maybe you have willfully lived a sin-filled life that brought about pain and bondage. Untreated wounds are like poison to our souls. In the area where our sexuality is concerned, these wounds need to be dealt with and healed so you are not vulnerable to sexual compromise. Those of you, who have a desperate need for male attention, have usually come from a situation where there was lack of a positive male role model at home. Perhaps when you were a little girl you did not get the attention and nurturing you needed from your father. Therefore, it became easy to compromise your sexuality as a teenager or as a young adult to find male acceptance and love. The Lord wants to fill that void in your life through a relationship with Christ.

I suffered deep-rooted wounds of rejection and abandonment throughout my young life. I never tended to those wounds with the love of Christ. Little did I know, these untreated wounds left me open and vulnerable to emotional and sexual temptations. I was so desperate for love and acceptance from a male that I would go to great lengths to get it. When I was in a relationship with a male and sensed rejection coming towards me, I would run. My natural response was to reject him before he could reject me. I would begin running from him and chase after the next temporary fix. My radar would go up looking for someone to show me the least amount of attention. Unfortunately, fleeing from one man into the arms of the next would only heap shame upon shame in my life. What my soul was really crying out for was the unfailing love of God.

Proverbs 19:22 says, “*What a man desires is unfailing love*”. How would you interpret that scripture?

What does unfailing love look like to you?

I believe this strong, intense desire for unfailing love was built into you by your Creator. He created you with that deep need for love within so we would seek and find that in Him. That desire becomes misdirected when we are not aware of truth. Anything we use to fill that God-given desire will only provide temporary relief. For me, I went seeking this unfailing love from the opposite sex, time and time again.

No matter how much you desire for a man in your life to offer unfailing love, it's not possible. It's sad to think how much pressure I have placed on my husband in the past to fill that need when it was not his job.

I believe that many of our wounds left over from childhood are crying out to be soothed. Sometimes we are so wrapped up in trying to soothe our pain we will use whatever we can to stop it, not thinking about the ramifications.

Have you ever tried to medicate your pain through an ungodly relationship? What were the ramifications?

I have found that many women use men to numb their pain or to fill a void. I believe so many young girls and women today use sex to receive love. They are so desperate for love they are willing to compromise not only their sexualities, but marriages to find fulfillment through another man.

Please read Isaiah 1:6. *"From the sole of your foot to the top of your head there is no soundness-only wounds and welts and open sores, not cleansed or bandaged or soothed with oil."*

Why are the people in this scripture not experiencing any soundness?

They are not experiencing soundness because they have open wounds that have not been cleansed and treated with God's love. This is true for some of us as well. We are not applying the correct medication to our wounds. Using another man to heal a deep wound is not the answer. Perhaps you use drugs or alcohol to soothe the pain.

Remember earlier that I said Satan is always trying to offer the counterfeit of what God has for you. If God offers His soothing ointment, Satan comes along trying to offer you something that looks like it will "fix" or soothe the wound. God is the Ultimate Physician. He desires to doctor our wounds. I have a dear friend who once experienced foot pain. She would wake up in the morning and take one step on the ground and feel pain. God laid this scripture on her heart and showed her that was a physical sign of an emotional wound that needed His healing touch.

Would you take a moment to journal to the Great Physician and ask him to tend to any wounds the Holy Spirit is bringing to mind?

For some of us that means we are going to need his guidance in cleansing the very things that may be poisoning us such as anger, bitterness, and unforgiveness towards someone who hurt us. It's going to mean giving these things to Him and allowing him to cleanse us from them and then fill the wound with His healing touch.

I have found that unforgiveness usually surrounds many of our past wounds. Whether it's unforgiveness towards ourselves others, it can poison our souls. The enemy can keep us bound to

the source of our pain through unforgiveness. Forgiveness is a choice. Some think that if they forgive an abuser for instance, that it is saying what they did was okay. Nothing could be further from the truth. Forgiveness is for you, not for the other person. I once heard that if you have unforgiveness towards someone, it's like taking a rope and tying ourselves to them. In that case, they go wherever you go! The only way to be free from them is by forgiving them. It cuts the rope that binds you to them.

I believe the process for this is:

- Acknowledge your wounds to God and confess any unforgiveness.
- Recognize that any wounds you are hanging onto are holding you back from the freedom He came to give you
- Choose to forgive yourself and others.
- Choose to walk in forgiveness (sometimes this will be daily!)
- Pray for those who have hurt you. Bless them as well. This will drive Satan nuts!
- Ask God to set you free from the pain of your past.

There is a way to fill the emptiness inside. There is a way to be set free from past emotional pain. It's through a personal relationship with Christ. If you have not asked Jesus to be your Lord and Savior I encourage you to seek counsel from your local church pastor.