

## OVERCOMING OUR DESTRUCTIVE HABITS! - (PART FOUR) EMOTIONS OF EMPOWERMENT - HOW THEY STRENGTHEN THE HOLD OF THE HABITS IN YOUR LIFE!

. . . Thirty years of addictions! Thirty years of alcohol abuse and immorality!

I felt so covered with sin that it seemed as if no amount of spiritual cleansing could ever wash me clean. Desperately I had pleaded for God to free me from the tentacles of these cancerous sins. Sins which now, after so long, seemed to have attached themselves to every cell within my body. And yes, there were times that for a moment, a season, I would feel, I would believe, I was free! But then the torment would begin again.

Slowly it would emerge from some dark recess within my soul. And seeming to sense I was alone, like some vicious and cunning predator, it would once again begin to stalk my soul as its prey. . . . Wounded and weakened, I was an easy kill.

It was if my sins were no longer outside aliens that I battled. They had somehow become a part of me! Parasites living within, who found nourishment from each piece of my soul that they devoured. And now, each day, their insatiable appetite and hunger severed me further from my only hope - God!

So consistent was this pattern that I had stopped dreaming of ever being free. Now broken by my own failure to truly repent, and so hopeless of ever being free from the sins "that so easily beset me," I had resigned myself to the truth. I would always be a prodigal. And never would I find my way back to God.

And yet, inside I wondered, like the father of the prodigal in Scripture, did God each day still watch the horizon, wondering if this might be the day when I would finally come back home? . . . Did He still care about me?

Yes, I do know what it feels like to give up. Because what you have just read were my thoughts years ago as I struggled to deal with my own destructive habits. But you need to know . . . **you and I have a Shepherd who will come out to save His lost sheep!**

If you have been following this series, do you remember in the first letter when I wrote that our destructive habits and addictions are *"never rooted in the surface habits that we spend all of our time struggling to overcome!"*?

. . . And that as a result of this fact, **"without an understanding of the root cause of our temptations, you and I will never find freedom over our additions and destructive habits!"**

Now *if* this is true, then how can you *find* that root cause? Think about this! Isn't it correct that . . .

**THE STRENGTH OF THE HOLD OF YOUR DESTRUCTIVE HABIT IS ROOTED IN YOUR NEED FOR RELIEF FROM THE PAIN CAUSED BY YOUR EMOTIONS.**  
**. . . EMOTIONS THAT YOU WERE ALREADY FEELING PRIOR TO THE FIRST MOMENT OF TEMPTATION?**

Reread that paragraph again, and really think about it!!!

And as a result of the pain, what did you do? You probably either drank, or did drugs, or went shopping, or emotionally escaped in a book or spent hours playing some video game, or binged on some snack food, or gambled, or got involved in some form of immorality, (and the list could go on and on and on) . . . ***all in order to find momentary relief from the emotional pain you were feeling at that moment? ISN'T THAT TRUE?***

Think about this! If it were **somehow possible** for you to recognize the *destructive "emotions of empowerment"* that are in your life, **and then eliminate them . . .**  
**WOULDN'T THAT MEAN YOU WOULD FINALLY LOSE YOUR NEED FOR THE DESTRUCTIVE HABITS THAT NOW RULE YOUR LIFE?**

***Now how do you do that?*** First honestly ask yourself, **"What emotions do I feel 15 to 30 minutes before I am tempted by the *escape* that my destructive habit provides?"**

Why 15 to 30 minutes prior to the first moment of temptation? Because by the time you are "***feeling tempted***", your emotions are already bouncing all over each other! Isn't that right? Think about it. Already you probably feel guilty, confused, and fearful. Maybe angry, and even a need to blame someone for the temptation. And . . . *if you are a typical Christian*, you most likely are also struggling with a resolve that somehow, this time, **YOU ARE NOT GOING TO GIVE IN!**

Now as a result of the emotional *overload*, you are feeling . . . it probably would be impossible for you to identify what I call your "*emotions of empowerment*". Or the emotions that cause you to need the relief your destructive habit can provide.

***Yet, if you look at what emotions were causing you pain 15 to 30 minutes before you first felt tempted . . . you will probably be immediately able to find the emotions that are *empowering* your temptation!***

. . . Now because sometimes it is difficult for people to identify these emotions, I have provided a short list that hopefully will be of some help to you.

**Ask yourself: BEFORE** you feel overwhelmingly tempted by the destructive habit, that seems to control your life, which emotions listed below, do you feel the most 15-30 MINUTES "PRIOR" TO THE FIRST MOMENT OF TEMPTATION? Mark each emotion somewhere on a scale between 0 - 10. "0" meaning that this emotion has absolutely no effect on you at that time. And "10" meaning that it is overwhelming!

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|---|--|
| ___ 1. Bored?   | ___ 8. Feelings of intense depression?   |
| ___ 2. Great amounts of tension or pressure?  | ___ 9. A need or demand for revenge?   |
| ___ 3. Overpowering fear?   | ___ 10. A compulsive need for emotional, mental, physical, spiritual, or financial security? |
| ___ 4. Intense anger?   | ___ 11. Deep feelings of guilt and shame?  |
| ___ 5. Hurt and bitterness?   | ___ 12. OTHER? (                                 ) )   |
| ___ 6. A deep demanding need or desire for love, approval, or acceptance?                       |  |
| ___ 7. A compulsive desire or need to control the situation, person, or outcome of a situation? |  |

Now for every emotion that you listed with a score of **seven or above**, I want you to go back and rank them in order of strength or importance to you. This will help you identify which *emotions of empowerment* are the **most powerful** in your life.

And finally, for any emotion that you scored "7" or above in strength, ask the question, "What circumstances in my life *do I believe* are causing these emotions?" Take the time and **write them down**. Then after doing that, I want you to think about this!

**The only people or circumstances in your life that CAN emotionally hurt you . . . ARE THE ONES THAT YOU ARE EXPECTING SOME SORT OF EMOTIONAL FULFILLMENT FROM!**

Isn't that true? If the opinion of someone isn't really all that important to you . . . then *doesn't that person in some way, lose his or her ability to emotionally hurt you?*

If right now I told you that a person named "Yungoo Sung" in China (that you have never met) doesn't really like you, *would that emotionally tear you up inside?* And as a result, would you find yourself struggling with depression for months? **Of course not!** Now, why would that be so? *Because you don't know "Yungoo Sung" well enough yet to have invested ANY of your emotionally needs or happiness in him.*

Now do you see, do you really see what I am talking about? *Only the people or things that you expect something emotionally from . . . have the power to emotionally hurt you.*

Understanding that let's now take another look at the "circumstances" that you believe are causing the emotional pain in your life. Remember - these are the painful situations *that you believe* are creating the "emotions of empowerment" inside of you.

And it is from the emotional pain created by these circumstances, pain that has become *so tormenting* . . . that you now need a **daily** diversion or escape to help relieve the suffering.

Now hear me! For any of us to ever be free from the destructive habits in our lives . . . **THE EMPTINESS AND PAIN WE FEEL INSIDE HAS TO STOP!** *You and I both know that!* But as long as the *sources in your life that you look to fill your emotional needs are undependable and unreliable, you will always continue to live in pain!* And if you continue to live in emotional pain . . . **you will also continue to be addicted to the destructive habits in your life.**

At the base of all of the "*crippling*" emotional pain in our lives, we will always find the truth that *somehow we have begun to look to another source as our primary reservoir to fill a void in our lives!* . . . **A void that ONLY GOD'S PRESENCE CAN EVER TOTALLY FILL!** **AND THAT WILL NEVER WORK!** - Even if the other person is caring and kind. Even if they love you!

But there is a problem. Remember you must find a way to end the pain! And quite honestly, let's admit the truth, for most of us God hasn't become touchable and tangible enough to fill that void! Because of that fact, we spent most of our lives searching for something to fill the emptiness. Always falsely hoping that "just around the corner" we will finally find the right person, the right job, the right house and car, the perfect children, or the right amount of money, *to provide the acceptance, peace and love that we so desperately crave.*

But then *because nothing can ever fill the "God void" inside of you or I (except God Himself), to deal with the pain, we run from one "God substitute" after another after another, searching for anything to give us even momentary relief.* And when we find that source, **we also find ourselves now addicted to a destructive habit!**

Can you see that for you to ever finally be free from your destructive habits, God must become "touchable and tangible"? Next month I will finish this series by explaining just how God can be this real to you! And I PROMISE, *when He is . . . the destructive habit will lose its hold in your life!*

Now take the time and reread your letters. **And prepare to find God in a way that maybe you never thought possible!** Prepare to find Him - touchable and tangible!