



SALVATION
A STUDY IN RECONCILIATION



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Romans 5:6-11

STUDY THEME

As Christians, the Father has reconciled us to Himself. Through our trust in Jesus, He has forgiven our unrighteousness and self-righteousness. Furthermore, He has empowered us for life and ministry through the Holy Spirit. This booklet will explore the progression of this reconciliation through looking at: Our Origin, Our Fall, Our Freedom, and Our Submission.

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SERIES PREFACE

You know those negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, or habits that are seemingly impossible to overcome? Or, how about those relationships and circumstances where you feel completely trapped, powerless, or out-of-control?

For me, this was a deep-rooted bitterness toward my dad, an inability to share my feelings, and a 20-year addiction to pornography. My wife, Lacey, struggled with fear that fed an explosive anger producing a need to control people and circumstances.

If our heart and mind are poisoned with feelings of being unloved or unsafe, we hurt.

We are all created in the image of God. This identity is intrinsic. However, it can be distorted and devalued. When we feel loved and safe in our relationships, our heart and mind feel at peace. If our heart and mind are poisoned with feelings of being unloved or unsafe, we hurt. This pain affects how we see ourselves and others. As a result, we hurt others while continuing to hurt ourselves. This devalued and distorted identity is what led Lacey and I into our negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. It wasn't until we were set free from our distorted and devalued identities that we were able to truly live a joy-filled life.

We are all created in the image of God. This identity is intrinsic.

We truly believe that every person has the potential to live a life of freedom and overflowing joy as Jesus promised. That is why our vision is to see Christians live free, joy-filled lives. The power of one person's story of freedom and victory is life-changing. It is the best evangelistic tool a Christian has. Our mission is to encourage and equip Christians to live free of those negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits and empower them to live joy-filled in every relationship and circumstance. Our hope is that Christians — through their life and story —

would be the best testimony the world has of God’s transforming love, grace, mercy, and truth. This is the prayer behind the *Christian Living Study Series*.

On behalf of my wife Lacey and me, it is an honor to be able to share these studies with you. They are the result of our combined heartache, healing, education, and transformation. To get the most out of this series, we recommend that you participate in each study in two ways:

First, choose a partner. Due to the nature of the questions, we recommend, if married, your partner be your spouse. If you’re not married, choose a partner of the same gender. You and your partner will independently begin each study with prayer. Then, work through the study — reading the main Scriptures (*indicated by* 📖) and text. Finally, together prayerfully discuss the *Response Questions* (*indicated by* 🗣️) and implement the *Next Steps*.

Second, journal. Personal journaling through the lessons will help solidify what the Holy Spirit is doing in your heart and mind. Write out your answers and discussions to the *Response Questions*; your experience with the *Next Steps*; and your own thoughts, objections, and struggles with the studies. This journal will be a record of God’s grace and transformation in your life, mind, and heart.

While each study booklet may stand-alone, the *Christian Living Study Series* is a process — a linear progression of theology and application. With this in mind, we recommend going through the booklets in order. A full list of studies is available in the back of this booklet.

Our prayer is that you would be vulnerable — challenging yourself to openly discuss and answer the questions with your partner. Also, that you would allow the Holy Spirit to convict, comfort, and encourage you — empowering you to accomplish Jesus’ mission for God’s glory, other’s good, and for your joy.



Your friend,

NATHANAEL P. STEEL

OUR ORIGIN



Genesis 1:26-31

God designed everything. He created everything. Everything was perfectly good. Through Adam and Eve and the garden rebellion, that design is now marred. However, although we suffer from the physical effects of the rebellion, it wasn't just a historical event in the past. Rather, it is a willful choice we make everyday. We are capable of either trusting or rejecting the Father today as Adam and Eve were in The Garden.



In what circumstance or with whom is it difficult for you to trust the Father's love, goodness, faithfulness, and provision?

OUR ORIGINAL DESIGN

The single most important distinction between the rest of creation and us is that we are created in God's image and likeness. No other animal in His creation was given the privilege of reflecting the image and character of Him.

“Humans were created in the image of God. True freedom, then, is not found in moving away from that image but only in living it out.”

~
St. Augustine

While we are not God — nor can we become gods — we were created to reflect the character and likeness of our Creator.¹ The following are examples of God's original design for us:

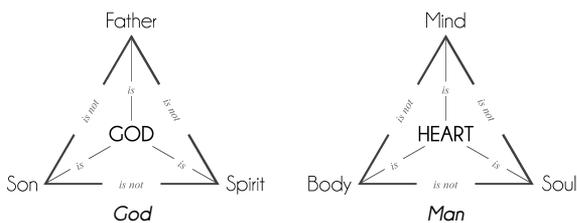
¹ Genesis 1:26-27

1. WE WERE CREATED TO REFLECT THE TRIUNE GOD



Mark 12:28-30

Although we are finite creations, we reflect the infinite Triune God. Our identity is based upon Him rather than ourselves (what we do or what is done to us). God exists as three distinct persons with differing yet perfectly unified wills. God created us in His image and likeness — with three distinct parts. These parts consist of our body, our soul, and our mind. The wills associated with each part, however, conflict with one another as a result of our cursed flesh.² God created us three-in-one as He is. This diagram illustrates how we are, limitedly, the best analogy of the Triune God. It is not meant to correlate the Father with our Mind, the Son with our Body, etc. It is simply a visual aid in seeing the three distinct parts with which God has created us.³



It should be noted that many theologians only separate man into two distinct parts: flesh (body) and spirit (soul). While there are several Scriptures that support this simplistic distinction, the majority of Scripture suggests the heart is the center or deepest part of a person. It is the deepest part of a person — the source of a person’s words and actions. The heart represents the entire person.⁴ It can be concluded that if the heart is the center and source of our thoughts, actions, words, and feelings then everything else (our soul, mind, and body) emanate out of it. The four parts can be understood as the following:

² Genesis 3:19; Romans 5:12; 8:6; Galatians 5:16-17. God cursed physical creation. The curse for man is that we physically die, — “return to dust”.

³ It should be noted that many theologians only separate man into two distinct parts: flesh (body) and spirit (soul). There are several passages of Scripture that support this distinction: 1 Corinthians 5:3; 7:34; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 2:3; Colossians 2:5; 1 Peter 2:11.

⁴ See Proverbs 27:19. See also, Jeremiah 17:9 in Lancelot C. Brenton, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha: Greek and English*. (Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1986)

The Heart – This is the origin of thoughts, motives, and actions; it is the summation and totality of a person and their decisions.⁵

The Soul – This is the immaterial, eternal spirit of a person; it is the spiritual and eternal representation of the heart.⁶

The Mind – This is the immaterial eternal thoughts of a person; it is the reason, intellect, beliefs, understanding, and ideas of the heart.⁷

The Strength – This is the temporal flesh and blood (the body) of a person; it is the actions and words of the heart.⁸

2. WE WERE CREATED WITH NATURAL DESIRES



James 1:14 & Luke 22:15

The word *desire* in both James 1:14 and Luke 22:15 are the same words. It means desire, passionate longing, or lust. It is translated as lust, desire, or impulse.⁹ Desire and passion are not sin. Rather, it is the means by which we fulfill these desires that can be sinful. Our God-given natural desires can be fulfilled through trusting God or trusting ourselves.¹⁰ Maturity is the process by which we learn to discern between trusting God and trusting ourselves. If physically healthy, we may grow physically and mentally older but we may not necessarily emotionally and spiritually mature. **Emotional and spiritual maturity** is growing from relying on ourselves and others to fulfill our desires to trusting God for our desires.¹¹ This is a normal and God-ordained process. Immaturity in childhood is to be expected; but immaturity in adulthood is disobedience (sin). It is living outside of God's designed — seeking value, comfort, and security either in others or ourselves. As we grow and learn, we develop habits. These habits either enhance a trusting relationship with God or foster disobedience against Him. This disobedience can take two forms. While we may

⁵ See Proverbs 4:23; 27:19; 1 Samuel 16:7; Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 33:35

⁶ See Ezekiel 18:1-32; Matthew 10:28

⁷ See Roman 8:6-8; 12:2; Colossians 3:2; Philippians 4:8; 1 Peter 1:13

⁸ See Matthew 12:33-37; 10:28; 26:41; Romans 1:24-32

⁹ Thomas, Robert L., *New American Standard Hebrew-Aramaic and Greek Dictionaries: Updated Edition*. (The Lockman Foundation., 1998), n. pag. Print.

¹⁰ See Genesis 2:15-17; Romans 1:18-32; 14:20-23; Ezekiel 18:1-32

¹¹ See 1 Corinthians 13:11; Luke 2:52; Isaiah 7:10-15; Hebrews 5:11-14

primarily drawn toward one or the other, we are not exclusively just one. We must examine our hearts to find and repent of both.

Rebellion – Rebellious disobedience is emotions, thoughts, beliefs, and habits in opposition to God and His design or plan. It can be defined as unrighteousness.

Religion – Religious disobedience is emotions, thoughts, beliefs, and habits devoid of God and His design or plan. It can be defined as self-righteousness or ungodliness.

3. WE WERE CREATED WITH PURPOSE & RESPONSIBILITIES



1 Corinthians 10:31

Our purpose is to glorify God. **Glorifying God** is acknowledging, trusting in, submitting to, and thanking Him in all circumstances and relationships.¹² Essentially, we were created to reflect His character to others and trust Him in all circumstances. Our responsibilities flow out of this purpose.¹³ Although God gave us responsibilities to fulfill our purpose, it is our trust in Him that leads to our reconciliation. Our standing before Him is not dependent upon accomplishing those responsibilities.



What, in God’s creation, do you specifically enjoy participating in (i.e., eating, drinking, sex, art, music, nature, etc.)? Explain. What specifically do you enjoy about how God created you? Was this question difficult for you to answer? Explain.

EFFECTS OF THE GARDEN REBELLION



Genesis 3:16-24

While we continue to reflect God’s image and likeness, some key changes happened because of God’s curse on physical creation.

¹² Romans 1:18-32

¹³ See Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15; John 15:1-11; Colossians 3:17, 23; 1 Corinthians 10:31; James 1:22-25; 2:18-26

1. INCREASED PAIN IN PREGNANCY¹⁴

Eve was the federal head, or representative, for all women in the garden. She was also the initiating person in The Garden rebellion. Therefore, God's punishment for her rebellion is increasing women's pain during childbirth. Eve's responsibility becomes risky, traumatic, and painful.

2. WORK BECOMES UNFULFILLING¹⁵

Adam was the federal head, or representative, of all men in The Garden. He was also a passive yet willing participant in The Garden rebellion. Therefore, God's punishment for him is making it difficult for men to provide for their families. Adam's responsibility becomes unfulfilling, idolatrous, and miserable.

3. ABDICATION & REJECTION OF ROLES¹⁶

Because of how Adam and Eve rebelled — Adam did not lead and Eve did not trust — God cursed them. Wives now struggle against the leadership of their husbands (i.e., not submitting to him with respect). Husbands struggle with either apathy or dominance toward their wives (i.e., not leading her with love).

4. PHYSICAL CREATION DIES¹⁷

Adam's apathy toward his responsibility over creation led to the curse of creation. Physical creation now has a bent toward death and decay. Since The Garden rebellion, physical creation has developed and inherited a "death DNA". This "death DNA" causes our bodies, for example, to develop and inherit diseases, succumb to gestational issues or chemical imbalances, and ultimately, die. Scripture calls this "death DNA" our "sin nature" or more accurately translated, "flesh".¹⁸ While we are not guilty of willful sin when we are born, we do inherit broken bodies and death (the curse). This physical death is a result of Adam and Eve's rebellion. We only die spiritually when we choose to reject, rebel, and sin against the Father. This physical death is an act of grace through which God allows us to remove

¹⁴ Genesis 3:16; see also 2 Timothy 2:13-15 (cf. Galatians 4:4)

¹⁵ Genesis 3:17-19; see also Genesis 5:29; Matthew 6:19-34

¹⁶ Genesis 3:16; see also Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Timothy 2:11-14

¹⁷ Genesis 3:18-19, 22-24; see also Ezekiel 18:1-32; Romans 5:12-14, 17; 8:19-23; 1 Corinthians 15:1-22, 50

¹⁸ The NIV and NLT use the term "sin nature" while the ESV, NASB, KJV, and the NKJV use "flesh" for the Greek word σάρξ or "sarx". See, for example, Romans 7:18; 8:3; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 5:5; Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 2:3

our cursed physical body to spend eternity in relationship with Him if we acknowledge, trust, submit to, and thank Him (see 1 Corinthians 15:50, John 3:3, 5).¹⁹ With the removal of the Tree of Life God graciously allows us to die. This takes away the possibility of us living forever separated from Him because our imperfect physical bodies.



How have you personally been impacted by the above effects of The Garden rebellion (i.e. death of relationships, emotions, or people, etc.)?

CONCLUSION

God has designed and created every human. By implication of Him designing us, we are all His children. We are created in His image and likeness — with the same power to think (intellect), feel (emotion), and self-determine (free-will).²⁰ We have taken our ability to be in relationship with our Heavenly Father and either rejected or rebelled against Him. We have become habitually drawn toward unrighteousness and self-righteousness.

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above  questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

Specifically, who around you is suffering from one of the above aspects of the curse? In what way can you serve them this week?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture: Romans

Gerald L. Bray

IVP Academics, ©2005

¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:50; John 3:3, 5

²⁰ Morrell, Jesse, *The Natural Ability of Man: A Study on Free Will & Human Nature*. (Open Air Outreach., 2012), pg.42

OUR FALL



Luke 15:1-32

Parables are relatable stories that communicate deep spiritual truths. They are analogies that reflect truths about the Kingdom of Heaven. In the parables of Luke 15, all the “lost” objects started in the presence of their owner — the sheep with the shepherd; the coin with the woman; and the sons with the Father. Each of these “lost” stories gives more detail about the Kingdom. The final story reveals that although we begin in relationship with our Heavenly Father, we can reject (become lost) Him through our unrighteousness and self-righteousness. When we reject who God is, what He’s done, and His purpose for our lives we make Him our enemy. We become slaves to sin and death. We become spiritually “lost” and worthy of spiritual “death” (eternal separation from God).¹



When was the last time you lost something? What was it? How did you feel? What were your thoughts? How did you respond?

GOD IS OUR FATHER



Genesis 2:7

As our Creator, God has always been our good and loving Father.² However, given the opportunity to trust His love, goodness, faithfulness, and provision or reject, rebel, and deny Him, we choose the latter. We shift our adoration and trust away from Him to our experiences, our knowledge, and our abilities. Therefore, we build habits that reinforce this rejection.

¹ James 4:4-10; Deuteronomy 30:1-20 (esp. 30:11-18); Ezekiel 18:1-32

² Luke 15:11; Psalm 139:13-18; Matthew 6:9; James 1:17-18

We become either unrighteous or self-righteous in our hearts and minds — making God our enemy.³ Unrighteousness and self-righteousness are not just issues of morality. They are issues of broken relationship. Despite our rejection, God is constantly drawing our hearts — extending forgiveness through Jesus and desiring reconciliation with His children.⁴



Do you view God as a good and loving Father who desires relationship with you OR a holy and sovereign King who judges righteously? Explain. How was your relationship with your earthly father (ex: loving or harsh, close or distant, etc)? Explain.

UNRIGHTEOUSNESS & SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS



Romans 1:18-25

The story in Luke 15:11-32 is all about unrighteousness and self-righteousness. We reject relationship with our Heavenly Father through our unrighteousness and self-righteousness.

Unrighteousness is rebellious living that is opposed to the power of the Holy Spirit — fulfilling our God-given desires through destructive means.⁵ The younger brother in Luke 15 rejected relationship with his father by joining himself to a foreign country⁶ (or kingdom) — a place he was never meant to live. He rejected his true citizenship. We develop a habitual inclination toward sin (or develop a “sin nature”) when we reject our citizenship in God’s kingdom, influence, and power. Unrighteousness leads us to rebel against how He created and designed us to live.⁷ This rebellion is thoughts, words, and actions opposed or in direct opposition to God’s character and design. Unrighteousness tolerates and promotes destructive emotions, thoughts, beliefs, or habits because it doesn’t trust the Heavenly Father’s plan and provision for peace and joy.

³ James 4:4-10; Isaiah 65:1-2; John 12:32; Romans 1:18-32; 3:23; Luke 12:29-34

⁴ Isaiah 65:1-2; John 12:32; 2 Corinthians 5:16-

⁵ Acts 17:31; Romans 6:13; 8:5; Philippians 3:9; 1 Timothy 6:11

⁶ See Luke 15:13, 15. See ESV footnote note for the Greek.

⁷ See 2 Chronicles 36:13; Job 9:4; Psalm 95:8; Proverbs 28:14; Ezekiel 18:24, 26; Isaiah 53:6; John 8:34; Romans 1:20-23; 6:16-19; Ephesians 4:17-19; Hebrews 3:8-15; 2 Peter 2:19 — pay special attention to the words “became”, “become”, “hardened”, and “turns”.



What negative or destructive emotions, thoughts, beliefs, or habits of others AND yourself do you find yourself excusing, justifying, or defending? Why?

Self-Righteousness — “**ungodliness**” or “**sin**” is simply our unwillingness to acknowledge, seek, trust, and thank God in every area of our lives.⁸ The older brother in Luke 15 rejected relationship with his father by judging who should be allowed into his father’s presence.⁹ We become ungodly when we develop rules and guidelines by which others (and ourselves) may achieve and earn God’s grace, mercy, love, and forgiveness. We ignore God’s redemptive plan, looking instead to our own abilities, knowledge, and strength. We trust ourselves (or others) rather than God. Self-righteousness leads to a religion of thoughts, words, and actions devoid or without consideration of God’s character and design. Self-righteousness ranks sin and judges people’s actions and motives because it believes relationship with the Heavenly Father is based upon effort and merit rather than faith and mercy.



Who’s sin or wrong doing do you consider worse than your own? Why?

The paradox about unrighteousness and self-righteousness is that we inevitably become both. While one may be more dominant (or habitual), we have both unrighteousness and self-righteousness pulling at our heart. Perhaps the most dangerous of these is self-righteousness. While unrighteousness is often external, active, overt, and public self-righteousness is internal, cognitive, subtle, and private.¹⁰ This is what makes self-righteousness so dangerous. It can easily grow into a habit unnoticed and unchecked. We become rebellious and religious when we do not acknowledge, trust, submit to, and thank God for our value, comfort, and security.



In what circumstances or decisions have you not sought God’s desire or plan? In what circumstances or decisions have you opposed what you knew to be God’s desire or plan?

⁸ Deuteronomy 8:11-20; Romans 14:23; Galatians 2:16; 1 John 3:23

⁹ See Luke 15:25, 29, 30.

¹⁰ See 1 Timothy 5:24

THE “FAR” COUNTRY



Deuteronomy 30:1-20¹¹

We live in one of two “countries” or kingdoms. While we are born into the kingdom of Heaven we choose to reject it for a “far” or foreign kingdom. We trust the temporal approval, comfort, and security of this foreign kingdom more than the eternal approval, comfort, and security of our Heavenly Father. As Adam and Eve chose the forbidden tree in the garden so too do we choose the forbidden kingdom. Although this foreign kingdom promises pleasure, power and peace it only steals, kills, and destroys our relationships, minds, emotions, bodies, and souls.¹² The Kingdom of Heaven — trusting the Heavenly Father — leads to joy, freedom, and life.¹³ The foreign kingdom — trusting ourselves and others — only leads to regret, addiction, and death.¹⁴



To what foreign kingdom do you physically or mentally go to escape the discomforts, troubles, and pain of this life? Why? In what relationship or circumstance is it easier or “natural” for you to go to this foreign kingdom?

STARVATION & DEATH



James 4:4-8¹⁵

Unrighteousness and self-righteousness only leads to relational, emotional, physical, and spiritual starvation and death. We believe the law of diminishing returns — “the more I have the more I will be satisfied”. Or, for the religious person, they believe, “the harder I try and the better I am the more I will be accepted”. They believe this for other people as well.

¹¹ See Luke 15:11, 13, 15 for unrighteousness and 15:28 for self-righteousness.

¹² See 1 John 2:15-17

¹³ See John 10:10; 15:10-11

¹⁴ See Jeremiah 17:5; John 8:34; Romans 6:16-20; Titus 3:3; 2 Peter 2:19

¹⁵ See Luke 15:14-16 for unrighteousness and 15:29 for self-righteousness. In James 4:4-8 the “world” here can simply mean trusting ourselves or others rather than God. This is why we’re called “adulterous” and why James tells us God apposes the proud.

Therefore, we continue building destructive relational, emotional, physical, and spiritual habits that reject God. The younger brother began to starve because he trusted creation (i.e., others and himself). The older brother began to relationally starve when he compared himself to his younger brother and refused to be apart of his father's forgiveness. We try to fulfill our genuine desire for approval, comfort, and security through imperfect people (e.g., spouse, children, friends, leaders, parents, etc.) rather than our perfect Heavenly Father. God brings these imperfect people into our lives as an opportunity for us to mature through trusting Him in those relationships. It is not a matter of if someone will hurt, wound, or offend us but rather when. If we choose to live in the "far country" — when offense comes — we react with unrighteousness or self-righteousness.



To what thoughts or actions are you a slave — seemingly unable to quit or escape? From who do you not feel approved of or accepted by?

CONVICTION & CONDEMNATION



Romans 8:1-8¹⁶

The Holy Spirit will always convict us of living a life not inline with our identity and nature. When He convicts us of sin it is always specific, hope-filled, life-giving, and Christ-focused. Denying the Holy Spirit access into every area of our heart, mind, soul, and life to reveal sin will lead to condemnation and death. Real sin leads to real guilt and real condemnation. When we live rejecting the Holy Spirit and what Jesus accomplished on our behalf on the cross then we live condemned of our sin. However, when we entrust our sin to Jesus' sacrifice we are no longer condemned.¹⁷ Condemnation is a hopeless, self-reliant, self-focused state that leads to death. The enemy will always try to turn the Holy Spirit's hope-filled guilt and conviction into hopeless shame and regret.¹⁸ He will always lead us to death.

¹⁶ See Luke 15:17-19; John 16:7-11; 2 Corinthians 5:11-21. It's interesting to note that Jesus reveals that the unrighteous son did repent while it's left unknown whether or not the self-righteous son repented. It's as if Jesus desires us to answer the question for our selves — knowing that being religious can be more difficult to repent of than rebellion.

¹⁷ See Romans 8:1-8

¹⁸ See Revelation 12:10-11



After sinning, do you focus on what you've done or what Jesus has done for you? How have you allowed Jesus to redeem your past? When talking about your past, do you share impersonal generalities or appropriate specifics?

CONCLUSION

The story of the rebellious and religious sons reveals the two ways we willfully reject relationship with the Heavenly Father; namely, unrighteousness and self-righteousness. However, when we trust Jesus — the redeeming son — and his victorious life, sacrificial death, and freeing resurrection our unrighteousness and self-righteousness is replaced with His righteousness. Through Jesus, our identity is restored. Jesus empowers us through the Holy Spirit to live free of our past and victorious in our future. We are made to live free, joy-filled lives. Therefore, reconciliation with the Father is both a moment and a lifestyle of celebration, peace, joy, and hope.

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above  questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

Who have you partnered with to help you overcome your unrighteousness and self-righteousness? What intentional ways have you two worked together to trust Jesus for your freedom and victory? If not, when, this week, will you develop a plan to help you see freedom in these areas of your heart, mind, and life?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The Prodigal God: Recovering the Heart of the Christian Faith

Timothy Keller

Penguin Books, ©2011

OUR FREEDOM



Ephesians 2:1-10

There are several benefits to trusting who Jesus is and what he's accomplished on our behalf. Primarily, we are reconciled to our good and loving Heavenly Father who designed and created us. He restores our identity. In addition, we are freed from the enemy's ownership, sin's power, and death's eternal hold. Trusting Jesus frees us both from something and to something. We are freed from our past (what we've done and what has been done to us) and free to live a joy-filled purposeful life.¹



From what specific physical or emotionally destructive lifestyles or circumstances has Jesus set you free? Over what specific false beliefs or negative thoughts about yourself, others, or God has the Holy Spirit made you victorious?

WHAT WE ARE FREED FROM



Ephesians 2:1-10

Trusting Jesus' sacrificial death on our behalf frees us from the penalty of sin — God's eternal wrath and eternal death (separation from Him). Trusting the Holy Spirit to empower us for life frees us from the power of sin. As we have habitually inclined our flesh and mind toward unrighteousness and self-righteousness, it becomes nearly impossible to free ourselves from these bondages. Our brains become bonded or enslaved to these unhealthy destructive habits or "addictions". When we trust Jesus for our past sin and trust the Holy Spirit for victory over future sin, we're freed from several factors:

¹ James 4:4-10; Deuteronomy 30:1-20 (esp. 30:11-18); Ezekiel 18:1-32

1. GOD'S WRATH & ETERNAL DEATH²

Paul in Ephesians 2:1 regards us as “dead”. This death is not a death of our free will. Rather, this death is a statement to our eternal standing before God. By nature (or the natural consequence) of our willful rebellion against God and His design is that we are subject to His wrath and eternal death. This death is an eternal separation from Him in hell. This consequence is a result of our own willful sinful choices. However, we can be reconciled with God by repenting from our habitually inclined lifestyles and receiving His forgiveness through Jesus. A continual trust and submission to the Holy Spirit will empower us to remain free from sin.

2. THE INFLUENCE OF SATAN & THE WORLD³

Ephesians 2:2 addresses how we are influenced by the “course of this world”. The immediate course of this world around us is the culture we grow up in and live in. Each culture empowers the enemy in its own unique way. By living in this world, we are naturally subject to its influence. However, the Holy Spirit also influences us. We have the choice to follow this world or follow the Holy Spirit. When we allow the Holy Spirit to empower us, we diminish the ability for Satan and this world to influence our lives.

3. UNNATURAL DESIRES⁴

By listening and giving into the enemy, we empower him to influence us. As a result, we develop attitudes, thoughts, belief, and habits contrary to the way God designed us. We incline ourselves toward sin and rebellion. The following process is how we incline our flesh away from trusting God:

- a. **Concealment** - Sin and rebellion gain power through isolation and secrecy. We become ashamed of our unrighteousness or we shame others and isolate ourselves through our self-righteousness.
- b. **Diminishing Return** - The more we give into sin and rebellion the more we are dissatisfied and need more to fulfill us. We either seek out more unrighteousness or we try harder to be righteous.

² Ephesians 2:1-3; Ezekiel 18:1-32; Jeremiah 31:29-30; Romans 8:1-2; James 4:4

³ Ephesians 2:2; 6:10-12; Galatians 5:16-26; James 4:4-7; 1 John 2:15-17; 5:1-5

⁴ Ephesians 2:3; Romans 1:24-25; 12:1-2; Colossians 3:9-10; 2 Peter 2:19; 2 Corinthians 4:16-18

- c. **Motivating Factor** - Because of our exponential dissatisfaction, sin and rebellion begin to influence our ambitions decreasing our inhibitions. Our mind is filled with seeking out unrighteousness or self-righteousness.
- d. **Grievously Tormented** - Sin and rebellion — with their lies — begin to plague our thoughts and beliefs. We become increasingly shameful in our unrighteousness or prideful in our self-righteousness.
- e. **Demonic Oppression** - As a result of giving into sin and rebellion, we have willfully — albeit possibly unknowingly — empowered the enemy with a position of authority in our minds. We've given the enemy the right to our heart through our unrighteousness and self-righteousness.
- f. **Habitual Inclination** - When the enemy — with their works and effects — have rooted themselves into our hearts, we exchange natural God-given fulfilling desires for unnatural destructive desires. We develop an unnatural craving for unrighteousness and self-righteousness (or we develop what some call a “sinful nature”, becoming totally depraved and incapable of saving ourselves). In recent years, there has been significant research in the areas of neuroscience and addiction. Studies have revealed (in agreement with what God has said in Scripture) that our brain actually becomes addicted (or bonded) to these destructive attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits.⁵

However, living out of unnatural desires does not have to be our end state. We do not have to live enslaved to negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and lifestyles. When we choose to repent (change direction in this process) and trust the Holy Spirit, the process of renewing our heart (and transforming our mind) begins.⁶

⁵ Davis, Jonathan. *“The Opposite of Addiction is Connection”*. Uplift. (www.upliftconnect.com/opposite-addiction-connection). July 17, 2015. See also www.leadershipcouncil.org/1/res/brain.html and www.fightthenewdrug.org.

⁶ Romans 13:12-14; Ephesians 4:17-24; 6:10-20; Colossians 3:9-17 Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18.

While freedom from the penalty of sin is instant, freedom from the power of sin is a process.⁷ We've taken time and effort to cultivate bad habits (and neural connections) so it will take a greater amount of effort and reliance upon the Holy Spirit to change our hearts, renew our minds, and create life-giving lifestyles. Our thoughts and actions will follow our hearts. We will develop new lifestyles — through the power of the Holy Spirit — in line with our redeemed (new) nature. Our old habitually inclined sinful nature will pass away as we build these new life-giving habits.



In what areas of your heart are you not free (often, these are things we've done or that have been done to you that you keep hidden or do not talk about)? What thoughts or decisions have you chosen that has led to your lack of freedom (continued enslavement or bondage)?

WHAT WE ARE FREED TO



John 10:10

We often think of salvation as only being freed *from* something. However, once we've inclined our hearts away from God's design, salvation restores us — freeing us *to* a full, joy-filled life.⁸ When we allow the Holy Spirit to empower us we are freed to:

1. LOVE GOD & OTHERS⁹

Reconciliation with others may be impossible because it takes two people agreeing with God — one for forgiveness and one for repentance. However, it is possible to sacrificially love, have freedom, and be at peace in all our relationships. To achieve this, our confidence must be in God rather than in those relationships.

⁷ While God may choose to perform a miracle (work outside of how He naturally operates) and free us instantly from negative habits and mindsets, God's preferred (or natural) method of renewing our mind is through time and process. This process is not referring to our salvation (reconciliation with God). When we repent and trust Jesus' death and resurrection for our unrighteousness and self-righteousness, we are instantly reconciled with God.

⁸ John 3:36; Romans 6:17-23; Ephesians 2:4-10; Colossians 1:9-14; Titus 2:11-14; Luke 6:32-36; Matthew 22:37-40

⁹ John 14:23-24; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Colossians 3:12-17; Romans 5:6-11; 8:12-17, 37-39; 12:18; Hebrews 12:14; 1 John 4:19-21

2. DO GOOD WORKS¹⁰

Good works are the byproduct of choosing to live empowered by the Holy Spirit. Good works are fruit, calling, gifts, and repentance and forgiveness. **Fruit** is the positive affect of the Holy Spirit in our life on others. This includes our story of God's power setting us free from negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits. Along with this story, it is our willful choice to sacrificially love and humbly serve others. Sacrificial love and humble service toward imperfect and undeserving people reveals our love and trust in God. This is especially revealed in how we love and serve those who have hurt, wound, and offend us. Good works will also include working in our calling. Our purpose is to glorify God. However, our **calling** is how He invites us to fulfill this purpose through a unique mission based on our experience, abilities, and gifts. These **gifts** are both natural and supernatural abilities we're given by God to fulfill our purpose and calling. Finally, good works include forgiving others of their sin and repenting for our own sin. God desires to use this forgiveness and repentance to produce fruit in our life.

3. LIVE AN ABUNDANT LIFE¹¹

Although our physical bodies are not yet restored, our sinful and rebellious desires are redeemed. Through our destructive habits, we've inclined our flesh toward unnatural, unrighteous, and rebellious desires. However, when we allow the Holy Spirit to renew our mind and develop new habits in us, He replaces our destructive desires with one's that are life-giving.

By trusting Jesus and allowing the Holy Spirit to empower us, the Father replaces our desires, renews our minds, and redeems our souls. The last part of our humanity to be redeemed is our flesh, which will be renewed at the resurrection.



When tempted to doubt, sin, or rebel against God, how do you trust the Holy Spirit to empower you to overcome? When you've sinned or been sinned against, how do you entrust that sin to Jesus?

¹⁰ Ephesians 2:10; 4:25-32; Colossians 1:9-14; Titus 2:11-14; John 15:1-11; 16:7-11; Galatians 5:22-25; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10

¹¹ John 3:36; 10:10; Romans 6:5-7, 17-23; 1 Corinthians 15:50-57; Ephesians 2:4-7; Colossians 3:5-10; 2 Corinthians 5:17

CONCLUSION

Trusting Jesus and living empowered by the Holy Spirit will foster lifestyles of freedom.¹² Trusting who Jesus is and what He has accomplished on our behalf is the only requirement for salvation.¹³ Trusting the Holy Spirit is simply a byproduct of trusting Jesus. It is the only method of walking in freedom and victory.¹⁴ We trust the Holy Spirit by allowing Him to: convict us of sin and rebellion; empower us to repent; equip us to forgive, love, and pursue reconciliation with those who have wounded, hurt, or offended us; and build new life-giving habits within us that are inline with our redeemed nature.

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above 🗣️ questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

To whom and for what sin do you have yet to confess and repent? To whom and for what sin do you have yet to forgive? When will you repent/forgive this week?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Truly Free: Breaking The Snares That So Easily Entangle

Robert Morris

Thomas Nelson, ©2015

The Bondage Breaker: Overcoming Negative Thoughts, Irrational Fears, and Habitual Sins

Neil T. Anderson

Harvest House Publishing, ©1990

¹² Ephesians 4:17-32; Galatians 5:1; Romans 8:5-11; 12:1-2; 13:11-14; 2 Corinthians 7:10-11

¹³ John 14:6-7; 15:5-6; Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 John 1:9; Hebrews 5:7-10

¹⁴ Ephesians 3:14-21; Galatians 5:16-24

OUR SUBMISSION



Galatians 5:16-25

To remain free and victorious over the enemy, his servants, and their works and affects in our lives it is our responsibility to continually trust the Holy Spirit for our conviction, comfort, and confidence. Salvation is not simply a momentary decision; it is also the culminating trajectory of one's life. We are saved from the penalty of sin through Jesus and being saved from the power of sin through the Holy Spirit.



In what specific relationships, circumstances, and temptations is it difficult for you to trust the Holy Spirit? Why is it difficult to trust the Holy Spirit in these areas?

THE BY-PRODUCT OF SUBMISSION



Luke 14:25-35

Submission to the Holy Spirit demands we trust Him above our relationships, circumstances, and temptations. Through our life, we have habitually inclined ourselves to trust creation (ourselves, our experience, etc.) above the Creator. We believe the lie that created things (jobs, hobbies, human relationships, etc.) will bring us the most satisfaction. Submitting to the Holy Spirit doesn't just glorify God and isn't just good for others. Submitting to God brings us true joy and fulfillment. Our life, void of acknowledging, trusting, submitting to, and thanking God is meaningless, fruitless, and unfulfilling. As Christ denied himself and died on the cross for the benefit of others, we too must deny ourselves, pick up our own cross (sacrificing ourselves for the benefit of others), and follow Him. This is a conscious choice, not an emotional decision. When we submit to God, there are several by-product of this submission.

God's Glory – Our submission to the Holy Spirit does not negate our physical needs. Rather, God is glorified and we are satisfied when we trust Him. Our needs can only be fulfilled when we use the means and the methods He designed.¹

Other's Good – Our submission to the Holy Spirit will affect others. Because God is good He desires good for everyone. While we cannot define what “good” looks like in someone's life we know that the Holy Spirit desires good for that person. He always works toward their freedom and victory. The Holy Spirit will empower us to respond or pursue relationship with others in ways that are both easy and difficult. We must simply trust Him for the fruit.²

Our Joy – Because God designed us He ultimately knows what will bring us the greatest amount of joy. Trusting God brings about peace that is not dependent upon circumstance or relationship. Trusting God brings about redemption, purpose, and fulfillment.³



In normal everyday life, how do you actively trust the Holy Spirit? While trusting the Holy Spirit, how have you pursued relationship with or responded to others for their good? When do you remember experiencing the Holy Spirit's peace and joy in spite of negative relationships and circumstances or temptations?

A LIFE-TRAJECTORY OF SUBMISSION



John 15:5-6

Salvation is both a moment and lifestyle. It is trusting Jesus to take our punishment for us, forgiving past choices of unrighteousness and self-righteousness. It also trusts the Holy Spirit to empower us for the future.⁴ We are empowered to repent for our own sin and rebellion. We are empowered to be victorious over our own sin and rebellion.

¹ 1 Corinthians 10:31-33;

² John 15:1-8; Luke 24:47-49; 2 Corinthians 5:16-20

³ John 8:31-36; 10:10; 15:11; 16:24; Philippians 2:5-11; 4:4-9

⁴ John 14:6-7; Ephesians 1:3-14; Galatians 5

Trusting Jesus – Our salvation trusts who Jesus is — He is both fully God and fully man — and what He has accomplished. He is God forgiving us for our sin and rebellion. He is also a man redeeming us from the affects of The Garden rebellion by submitting to the Father.

Trusting the Holy Spirit – Our salvation trusts the Holy Spirit to empower us to love God, love others, and love life. He equips us to forgive other's sin — releasing them from any expectation or requirement. He also equips us to repent of our own willful unrighteousness and self-righteousness — the breaking of relationship with God and others.⁵



Specifically how do you demonstrate your trust in Jesus when you break relationship with God and others? How have you resisted the Holy Spirit's empowerment for sacrificially loving and forgiving others? How have you resisted the Holy Spirit's empowerment to repent to God and others for your own sin?

THE COST OF SUBMISSION



Romans 12:1-2⁶

There are several costs to trusting the Holy Spirit and building new habits of submission to Him.

1. THE DEATH OF OUR FLESH

Over the course of our life, we've habitually inclined our flesh — our mind and body — toward unnatural desires and cravings. The Holy Spirit redeems our unnatural desires by realigning them to our original design. This renewal process — with the exception of a miracle — is not instantaneous. As it has taken time to distort our minds, it will also take time to renew our minds. This process consists of making our selves living sacrifices. That is, people who die to our negative and destructive attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits for the benefit of others.

⁵ Matthew 4:17; 12:29-37; 18:21-35; Mark 1:14-15; 11:25; Luke 13:1-5; 2 Corinthians 7:8-11

⁶ Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:1-17

2. **THE WILLFUL AND PURPOSEFUL SACRIFICE OF OUR RIGHTS**
As Christians, our life is not solely for our own benefit. We purposefully and perpetually lay down our rights, privileges, and pleasures for the benefit of others. Holy Spirit led sacrifice is not a hindrance to joy. Spirit led sacrifice is a catalyst for overflowing joy and fulfillment. The amount of peace and joy we experience in this life is directly affected by the extent to which we sacrificially serve others.⁷

3. **WE CARRY OTHER'S BURDENS**
As representatives of Jesus, we will be negatively affected by other's sin and suffering. Not because their sin is against us — although it may be — but because we desire them to be free and victorious. The Holy Spirit will empower us to sacrifice our schedule, abilities, finances, and thoughts for the sake of their freedom and victory. As Jesus carried our burdens through the leading of the Holy Spirit, He will empower us to bare the weight of other's sin and suffering. Carrying other's burdens is not the same as enabling them. Rather, it is a purposeful process toward their freedom and victory.⁸ When they no longer desire our sacrifice for their freedom and victory, we no longer need to unnecessarily sacrifice. However, in all circumstances and relationships the Spirit must lead us.



What rights are you unwilling to give up for the sake of someone else's freedom? When is it difficult for you to sacrifice your schedule, abilities, finances, and thoughts for someone else's freedom and victory?

SALVATION & SUBMISSION



Luke 8:4-15⁹

Salvation is not simply a single moment or decision to submit. Salvation is the totality of your life lived in submission to God. A momentary profession of faith in God followed by a refusal to

⁷ Romans 14:13-23; 1 Corinthians 6:12-19; Hebrews 12:1-11

⁸ Romans 12:9-21; Luke 14:25-33

⁹ John 15:1-11; 16:1-4; Hebrews 3:12-19; 6:1-12; Matthew 24:4-14; Mark 4:17; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; Jude 20-21; Romans 8:37-39; 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Galatians 5:2-12; James 2:19-20

live submitted to Him does not lead to eternal life. The parable of the farmer describes four types of people who all receive the Gospel of the Kingdom. Their responses, however, determine the outcome of the Gospel's affect on them.

1. THE SEEDS ON THE HARDENED PATH

The seeds that fell on the hardened path are those who receive the Gospel yet because of hurt, wounds, or losses caused by others (being walked on) they reject the Kingdom. As a result of not resolving these issues (forgiving and releasing), their hearts continued to be hardened.¹⁰ This hardness of heart allowed the enemy to come in and take away the Gospel's impact in their lives.¹¹

2. THE SEEDS IN THE ROCKY SOIL

The seeds that fell on the rocky soil are those who have received the Gospel yet because of the lack of depth (trust in God) refuse to walk through suffering. They refuse to grow. As a result of their response to this suffering, they refuse to walk out the Gospel and abide in Jesus.¹²

3. THE SEEDS IN THE THORNY SOIL

The seeds that fell on the thorny soil are those who have received the Gospel yet because they find acceptance, comfort, and security in people and stuff they fall away. They refuse to get rid (repent) of the weeds in their life. As a result of this, they become unfruitful and are cut off.¹³

4. THE SEEDS IN THE GOOD SOIL

The seeds that fell on the good soil are those who have fully received the Gospel. They are soft hearted. They have removed the rocks and thorns in their lives. As a result of this, they become fruitful and are pruned.¹⁴



In what areas of your life (i.e., relationships, circumstances, or decisions) is it difficult for you to go to the Holy Spirit and trust Him? What passages of Scripture do you find difficult to believe or question their truths? Why?

¹⁰ Ephesians 4:26-27

¹¹ Matthew 13:12-15; 18-19

¹² Matthew 13:20-21

¹³ Matthew 13:22; John 15:1-11

¹⁴ Matthew 13:22; John 15:1-11

CONCLUSION

Our salvation from the penalty of sin is accomplished by our faith in Jesus alone. However, walking out that salvation we must be willing to submit to the Holy Spirit and grow in our walk with Him. This is the only way we become free of the power of sin and kill our habitually inclined destructive flesh. When we refuse to submit to the Holy Spirit, we allow the enemy access to our heart. It is through this access and listening to his lies that we reject the Gospel. Our salvation is not something that can be lost or taken away. However, we can absolutely reject, deny, and forfeit our salvation when we stop submitting to the Holy Spirit through forgiveness, repentance, and trusting.

STUDY RESPONSE

DISCUSSION

Pray through and discuss the above  questions with your partner. Journal your response and answers to this study. Include any questions or differing opinions and thoughts that were shared in your discussions.

NEXT STEP

What lifestyles do you need to purposefully change that inhibit your ability to trust God? Specifically what are those changes and how will you implement them into your life? Who, this week, will you ask to help you implement those changes?

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Tale of Three Kings: A Study in Brokenness

Gene Edwards

Tyndale House Publishing, ©1992

Discipline: The Glad Surrender

Gene Edwards

Tyndale House Publishing, ©1992

Follow Me: A Call to Die. A Call to Live.

David Platt

Tyndale House Publishing, ©2013

FINAL JOURNAL THOUGHTS

1. In **Salvation** (*Our Origin, Our Fall, Our Freedom, Our Submission*), what passage of Scripture has been the most convicting or challenging for you? Explain. What passage of Scripture has been the most encouraging or empowering for you? Explain.
2. What content or discussions regarding **Salvation** (*Our Origin, Our Fall, Our Freedom, Our Submission*) have you disagreed with? Or, have difficulty accepting or understanding? Or, find most difficult to apply? Explain.
3. What content or discussions regarding **Salvation** (*Our Origin, Our Fall, Our Freedom, Our Submission*) have you agreed with? Or, find easy to accept and understand? Or, find easy to apply? Explain.
4. Explain what ONE aspect of Salvation you find to be the most difficult to accept AND apply?
 - a. That Jesus' death frees you from the penalty of sin.
 - b. That the Holy Spirit's empowerment frees you from the power of sin.
5. Since beginning the study on **Salvation**, what area in your life (*actions & words*), mind (*thoughts & beliefs*), and heart (*motivations & passions*) have you noticed the most significant change — positive or negative? Explain. Or, in light of this study, what do you desire to change? Explain.
6. What was your favorite discussion with your partner? Why? What was your least favorite or most difficult discussion with your partner? Why? Who could you encourage with what you've learned from this unit? How will you do this?

CHRISTIAN LIVING STUDY SERIES

The power of one person's story of freedom and victory is life-changing. It is the best evangelistic tool a Christian has. Our mission is to encourage and equip Christians to live free of those negative attitudes, thoughts, beliefs, and habits and empower them to live joy-filled in every relationship and circumstance. Our hope is that Christians — through their life and story — would be the best testimony the world has of God's transforming love, grace, mercy, and truth. This is the goal behind the *Christian Living Study Series*.

1. FAITH // *A Study in Reliance*
2. SALVATION // *A Study in Reconciliation*
3. IDENTITY // *A Study in Restoration*
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6. CONFLICT // *A Study in Resolution*
7. RELATIONSHIPS // *A Study in Reflecting God*
8. STEWARDSHIP // *A Study in Managing Resources*
9. SPIRITUAL WARFARE // *A Study in Being Relentless*
10. PRAYER // *A Study in Divine Relationship*
11. EXPERIENCE // *A Study in Rejoicing*
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INFORMATION

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Contributions The *Christian Living Study Series* are provided free of charge. If you would like to contribute to the development and distribution of them or to NLS Ministries in general, please visit their website at www.NathanLaceySteel.com.

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NATHAN & LACEY STEEL were married in 2004. They met at Alaska Bible Institute, located in Homer, Alaska. Nathan graduated from ABI's Biblical Study Program in 2004 and Christian Ministry Program in 2006. Nathan was born with a genetic disease called Cystic Fibrosis. This disease led the Steels to adopting their

two girls, Lydia and Arianna. Through God's grace and provision, the Steels have shared Jesus' love, grace, mercy, and truth all over the world. Nathan and Lacey's vision is to *See Christians Live Free, Joy-Filled Lives*. They designed the *Christian Living Study Series* as a catalyst for one-on-one discipleship, a curriculum for church small groups, and a course for discipleship schools. They developed and teach the *Christian Living Course* at Alaska Bible Institute (ABI). ABI exists to *Train and Equip Christians for Life & Ministry*. You can find out more at www.AlaskaBible.org. For more information about the Steels, visit their website at www.NathanLaceySteel.com. They currently reside with their two girls in Homer, Alaska.

