

## Principles for a Transformed Life (PTL)

### Principle #4: Self-examination

**Self-examination** is the process of taking an honest look at our own motives. The purpose is to change our thinking and walk free of self-centeredness. It means being brutally honest in determining the source of our negative attitudes and sinful thinking.

- ◆ The natural, human tendency is to blame others for our misfortunes and our shortcomings. If we want to be free of the things that hinder us, it is absolutely essential that we begin to take responsibility for our own behavior **and** feelings.
  - Blaming began in the Garden. Genesis 3:12 – 13. Adam's response implies that God was actually at fault. If He had not given Eve, then Adam would not have fallen. One of man's consistent tendencies is to blame God for his problems. This is a fallacy.
    1. Blaming is a common, human practice. Exodus 32:21-25 / 1 Samuel 15:15 / Job 34:5-15.
    2. We live in a world that is already lost. Without the intervention of God in our lives we are under the curse set in motion by Adam's fall. 1 John 5:19 / John 3:18 / 2 Corinthians 4:4.
    3. Galatians 6:7 Much of our difficulty comes as a result of the seed we have sown.
  - Following Christ requires taking responsibility for our own sin. Even when others are wrong, it is our job to forgive them and judge ourselves. Matthew 7:1-5 / 1 Corinthians 11:31

#### Topics for Discussion

Who or what is responsible for your problem? Who is responsible for helping you get well?

What are you doing today to help yourself live free?

- ◆ The purpose of self-examination is not to cause us to dwell on our past. As believers in Jesus Christ, we have been forgiven. Those things we did before our conversion are forever forgotten by God. We are new creations in Christ Jesus. We want to examine the thinking patterns, emotional habits, and selfish motivations that hinder our progress in our walk with God. Many of these are “hangover” from our old life. Note each of the following scriptures and write out what they mean to you.
  - John 3:3-6 / 2 Corinthians 5:17 / Psalm 51:10 / Ezekiel 36:26-27 / Isaiah 43:25
  - Our hearts are changed, but our heads are still full of many old ideas and attitudes. These must be identified and changed to reflect God's thinking. 2 Corinthians 10:5/ Isaiah 55:7-8 / Romans 12:2

#### Topics for Discussion

What does it mean to you to be “born again?” To be a new creation?

What OLD attitudes and emotions are still causing problems in your daily life? How so?

◆ **Painful and distressing emotions are danger signals.** Like warning lights on the dashboard of our car, they let us know that something is wrong under the hood, that our internal attitudes are in need of adjustment. The formula is simple: **"If I am disturbed, there is something wrong with me."** When the emotional red lights of resentment, fear, self-pity, or despair begin to flash, we need to look under the hood. Somewhere there is a faulty way of thinking or believing which needs a tune-up. The important thing is to look at ourselves, not others.

- **Danger signal #1: Fear.** God never leads us with fear. He is a God of peace. When we are experiencing fear, our trust in God is weak. Fear is almost always self-centered. We are worried about what will happen to us, or we are afraid we will lose what we think is ours, or fail to receive what we think we deserve. Our self-esteem, our finances, or our personal relationships are being threatened, and we are afraid.

1. God doesn't want us to be afraid. Notice the following passages. Take time to think about each one and how it might apply to you.
  - (a). Psalm 23:4 / Psalm 27:1 / Psalm 27:3 / Psalm 118:6 / Hebrews 13:5-6 / Proverbs 3:25 / Isaiah 41:10 / Luke 12:7 / Luke 12:32 / Romans 8:15 / 2 Timothy 1:7 / Hebrews 2:14-15 / 1 John 4:18
  - (b). Hopefully, you are now convinced that God doesn't want you to fear. Still, there may be fears that you feel often.

#### Topics for Discussion

Think back over the last week. What things have caused you to be afraid? Was it an event, a comment, or a thought?

Identify the root of your fear: What area of your life is threatened? Is it your self-esteem (pride)? Your financial security? Your personal (or sexual) relationships?

What is your number one fear? Are you ready to deal with it? If not, why not?

2. In order to be free from fear, you must learn to substitute faith. It is important to name your fear specifically, then deal with it according to the Scriptures. Here is the recommended process followed by an example. Take the fears you identified above and apply the process.
3. This is the beginning of a new lifestyle: I am no longer the passive victim of my emotions. I have the tools to identify causes and conditions and apply the sword of the Spirit to them. Love, peace and joy are my heritage and I will learn to enjoy them! Hebrews 4:12 / Galatians 5:22-24

### The Process:

1. Name your fear: I am afraid of .....
2. What area of your life is threatened (Pride, security, relationships,...)
3. What event or thought triggered your fear?
4. What exactly are you afraid is going to happen?
5. Ask God for grace to face your fear and walk forward.
6. Get out your Bible and find what God says about your fear
7. Ask God to forgive you for being self-centered and unbelieving.
8. Speak the promise of God you found in your Bible out loud. Thank the Lord that His Word is true for you.
9. Take steps to face the fear head on. Recruit help to go with you if need be, but stop running away. List Action Steps:

### The Process: An Example

1. Name your fear: I am afraid of going broke and living on the street.
2. What event or thought triggered your fear? I got a bill from the hospital that was way more than I expected
3. What area of your life is threatened (Pride, security, relationships,...) My security because I don't have the money, My pride because I don't like having to ask for help.
4. What exactly are you afraid is going to happen? They will sue me and I will lose my house.
5. Ask God for grace to face your fear and walk forward. Lord, I am afraid. Please fill me with Your strength and wisdom.
6. Get out your Bible and find what God says about your fear: Philippians 4:19 NLT And this same God who takes care of me will supply all your needs from His glorious riches, which have been given to us in Christ Jesus. Psalms 56:3-4 NLT But when I am afraid, I will put my trust in You. (4) I praise God for what He has promised. I trust in God, so why should I be afraid? What can mere mortals do to me?
7. Ask God to forgive you for being self-centered and unbelieving. "Lord, forgive me for my self-centered fear. I know You provide my needs. Forgive me for not trusting You."
8. Speak the promise of God you found in your Bible out loud. Thank the Lord that His Word is true for you. "Thank You. Lord, for what You have promised. You do supply all my needs by Your glorious riches that have already been given in Christ. My needs are met!!!
9. Take steps to face the fear head on. Recruit help to go with you if need be, but stop running away. Action steps:
  - a. Balance check book.
  - b. Call hospital and make an appt to see someone in the business office.
  - c. Continue believing God.

- **Danger Signal #2: Resentment.** Continued bad feelings, hatred, or bitterness that I feel towards others is a sign that I need to forgive and forget. Any event that continues to evoke anger after the passage of time is an area where forgiveness is needed. A resentment is an area of anger which keeps coming back. Evidence of this condition is feeling bitter emotions when I tell the story again. Sometimes it is revealed when we are easily angered by people or situations that remind us of past hurts and bitterness. A short temper today is often the result of a fuse already ignited by yesterday's anger.
  1. Resentments cause great destruction in the lives of believers and non-believers alike.
    - (a). Mark 11:2 Forgiveness is commanded as a requirement for answered prayer. (Note also Matthew 6:12)
    - (b). Hebrews 12:15 Bitterness causes damage to many. Resentment poisons all our relationships.
    - (c). Ephesians 4:30-32 Bitterness grieves the Holy Spirit.
  2. The Bible commands forgiveness for all those who hurt us, no matter what they have done. This can be very difficult. Remember, all we can do is ask God to forgive us for our own sin, then change the way we act toward others.
  3. Matthew 18:21-35 We must make an on-purpose decision to forgive. We are motivated to forgive, not by emotion, but by obedience. We obey the Lord in this because He is the one who has paid the ultimate price to forgive us when we did not deserve it. He now asks us to forgive others in the same manner. This requires a decision, not a feeling. Ephesians 4:30-32 / 1 John 4:7-11
  4. Matthew 5:43-45. Praying for those toward whom you feel bitterness loosens the chains on you. Ask the Lord to bless them with every physical and spiritual blessing.
  5. Your bitterness is sin for you. Ask the Lord to forgive you for your bitterness of heart. 1 John 1:9
  6. Think of ways to be a blessing to those who have harmed you. If you have harmed them by returning cursing for cursing, you might ask them to forgive you. Romans 12:17-21

### Topics for Discussion

Think back over the last week. Can you remember things that have really caused you to be angry? List a few.

What was the threat at the root of the anger? What event prompted it? Did it threaten self-esteem, or financial security, or personal relationships?

Can you name people in your life toward whom you still have hard feelings? Make a list. Are there any you are not willing to forgive? Why not?

### The Process:

1. Name your resentment: I am angry at .....
2. What event or thought triggered your anger?
3. What area of your life is threatened (Pride, security, relationships,...)
4. What is your part in the conflict?
5. Review what the bible says about forgiveness.
6. Ask God to forgive you for being self-centered and bitter, and for your part in the problem, no matter how small.
7. Pray for the person toward whom you feel bitterness. Ask the Lord to bless them with every physical and spiritual blessing.
8. Think of ways to be a blessing to those who have harmed you. If you have harmed them by returning cursing for cursing, you must ask them to forgive you. List Actions Steps:

- **Danger Signal #3: Self-pity**      Feeling sorry for ourselves is the basis of most depression. When we begin to cry about our condition and believe that our life is worse than that of others we are in dangerous territory. This frequently leads us into the area of blaming God for our distress and then falling away from Him.
1.      1 Corinthians 10:13 tells us there is no trial in life that is unique. You are never alone. When we begin to feel we are unfairly mistreated we are in the grip of self-pity. We are expressing doubt about the justice of God. We are complaining that He is not being fair to us. *Find scripture that tells you God is faithful and just.*
    - (a).      Self-pity prevents us from finding the way of escape that we are promised.
    - (b).      Self-pity is always self-centered. There is no way to feel sorry for yourself without thinking of yourself.
    - (c).      Self-pity complains.    Philippians 2:14-16 / Psalm 106:24-25
    - (d).      Self-pity keeps us from taking responsibility for our own actions and outcomes. Until we acknowledge our own failures they can never be removed by the blood of Jesus. Luke 9:23 / 1 John 1:9

### Topics for Discussion

Name some areas where you feel you have been deprived in life, where you got the short end of the stick, or are just inadequate.

List all the things you have complained about in the last 24 hours. Is it long? Ask someone else to be your mirror – “What have you heard me griping about?”

One symptom of self-pity is envy of the blessing of others. Can you name some times when you have felt bad because someone else seems to be more blessed than you?

OK. Now get grateful. What can you be grateful for today, just like you are and just where you are? Write them down or say them out loud.

2.      The cure for self-pity: Gratitude
  - (a).      1 Thessalonians 5:18      Gratitude is an antidote for self-pity. Our commandment is to maintain an attitude of gratitude even in the midst of trials. Ephesians 5:18-21 /    Philippians 4:6-7.
  - (b).      **Make a list of all the things you have to be grateful for. Thank God for each item on the list.**

- (c). John 13:1-17 Jesus gives us a glorious example of the cure for self-pity. Though He is facing death the next day He takes this opportunity to bless His disciples, including the one who He knows will betray Him. Self-pity keeps us from loving others. The best way to get free from self is to do something selfless. What can you do today to bless someone else?

**The Process:**

1. Name your self-pity: I deserve better ..... I never get..... I hate it when.... How dare they treat me like...
2. What event or attitude about yourself started this thinking?
3. In what area of your life do you feel threatened or deprived (Self-esteem, security, relationships,)
4. Review what the Bible says about who you are in Christ.
5. Ask God to forgive you for being self-centered and ungrateful. If you have been envious of others, ask Him to forgive you for this sin.
6. Pray for those of whom you are envious and thank God for blessing them even more.
7. Write a list of things you have to be thankful for. Now thank God out loud for each one.
8. Make a list of things you can do to bless someone else who is in worse shape than you. List Actions Steps:

- **Danger Signal #4: Discouragement** To be discouraged is to be disheartened and dismayed. It implies a lack of hope. Discouragement literally means the removal of courage from the heart. Satan tries to convince the Christian that he does not have the necessary strength, determination, or talent to fulfill the will of God. He does this through difficult circumstances and negative words. The Bible is full of golden texts on the subject. Let's look at 2.

1. Deuteronomy 1:21 Moses is recounting the story of Israel at Jordan. His reference is back to Numbers Chapters 13 & 14 when they sent 12 spies into Canaan to assess the land. The instruction they had from God was very clear: The land is yours. Take it! He even gave them a warning: "Don't be discouraged!" Notice verse 28. They became discouraged by the report of ten men. It was an evil report that kept them out of the Promised Land. They believed a lie.
  - (a). Go back and read Numbers 13 & 14. Especially notice the speeches and actions of Joshua and Caleb. These are the two who eventually got into the Promised Land. What was different about them?
  - (b). Notice Numbers 13:31-33. The ten negative spies discouraged all of Israel because they allowed themselves to be overwhelmed by the circumstances.
  - (c). *"They are stronger than we."* They began comparing the problem to their own resources. We must remember that our problems are to be measured against God's ability, not ours. The question is not, "How big is the problem compared to my ability?" The question is, "What has God said about our situation?"
  - (d). *"The land is a land which devours its inhabitants."* Discouragement usually includes making the problem sound bigger than it is. There were a few giants in the land. They had to exaggerate the problem. Ask yourself "What is the problem really? What would it really take to solve it?"
  - (e). *"We were like grasshoppers in our own eyes."* Discouragement usually means we are looking at ourselves as weak and small. It reflects a decrease in self-esteem. How are you viewing yourself? Where did you get your information about yourself?
  - (f). *"and so were we in theirs."* Discouraged people make easy prey for the devil. When he sees us slumped over in despair, deprived of hope and without the spirit to resist, he has a field day.

#### Topics for Discussion

Describe a time when negative thinking, either from people around you or from your own thinking, held you back from accomplishing something you wanted to do?

Describe the problem in an objective way. Was it as big as it seemed or was it exaggerated?

How do you get information about yourself? Whose judgments are you believing?



2. Numbers 21:4-9 Israel has been forced to go the long way around to get to their destination. The way has been quite difficult. Because of this they have become discouraged. It is longer and harder than they expected. Discouragement often results when the task at hand is longer and more difficult than we expect. Unfortunately, the world in which we live is almost always such that the way is long and hard.

(a). Notice the symptoms of discouragement that afflicted Israel.

- (1). They began to speak against God. Blaming God for your mess is always a bad idea.
- (2). They began to speak against their spiritual leaders. Blaming someone else never cures anything, even if they may have been less than perfect.
- (3). They began to look with longing on the land from which they had escaped. Our memory of the old life is usually inaccurate. If it was so good, then why did we want out?
- (4). They complained about the quality of God's amazing provision. (The manna is symbolic of the Word of God – our daily bread.) the Word is our answer, don't gripe, read!

#### **Topics for Discussion**

Think of problems in your life you have been blaming on God. Where have you had a part in causing them?

Have there been spiritual leaders who you think have caused you problems? Did they also help you in some area? Name the areas where they helped you and forgive them for any place they may seem to have been wrong. Now apply what you learned and get on with it!

Have you ever thought about going back to your old life? What was so wonderful there that you want to go back? Is that a realistic picture of how it was, or is it a fantasy world? Revisit Principle #1 to remind yourself of the way it really felt when you were in your bondage.

The Word of God is our daily bread. What have you been chewing on from the Word today? If you can't think of anything, you need to go get yourself a snack!

2. Here is a little Manna for a quick encouragement snack. Read the following for clues to overcoming discouragement. (The word “dismayed” is often used instead of “discouraged” in the Old Testament.)
- (a). Colossians 3:21 What did you learn about yourself from your parents that causes you to be discouraged about your abilities? What does God say about you in this area?
  - (b). Deuteronomy 31:7, Joshua 1:9. What have you learned from spiritual leaders that causes you to be discouraged? What did Moses tell Joshua?
  - (c). 1 Samuel 17:11 What have other people told you that causes you to doubt your ability to overcome? What did David do when he faced the giant? (See verse 32-47)
  - (d). 1 Chronicles 28:20 God is with you. Don’t’ ever forget it! Heb 13:5-6
  - (e). 2 Chronicles 20:15-22. Praising God will allow Him to fight the battle for you.
  - (f). 1 Samuel 30:6 Even in the face of difficult odds, David encouraged himself in the Lord. When everyone else is against you, let the words of your mouth be words of encouragement to yourself.

#### **Topics for Discussion**

Where did you get the unbiblical idea that you cannot overcome or succeed in this particular situation?

Who are you going to believe?

#### **The Process:**

1. Have you seen any symptoms of discouragement in your life lately? (Griping, blaming, lack of Word time, longing for the “good old days,” lack of energy in your discipleship...)
2. What are you discouraged about?
3. What event or attitude about yourself started this thinking? Where did your hopeless thinking come from (parents, peers, co-workers, church...)?
4. In what area of your life do you feel threatened or hopeless (Self-esteem, security, relationships,)
5. If you have been blaming God or others, ask God to forgive you right now.
6. What does the bible say about you and your circumstance? Eat some manna on the subject. Who are you going to believe?
7. What are three things you can do right now to encourage yourself in the Lord? List Actions Steps:

◆ **Remember the great principles of self-examination.**

- We are called upon to examine ourselves, not others:
  1. 1 Corinthians 11:27-32
  2. 2 Corinthians 13:5-6
  3. Matthew 7:1-5 Our calling is to examine ourselves to remove every crumb of judgment before we attempt to help another. We always help from a position of empathy, not condescension.
- **Here is the rule of life:** When I experience disquiet in my heart I must examine my own motivations. My job is to take responsibility for my own wrongdoing or wrong attitudes while extending grace and forgiveness to others.
- **The process:**
  1. Identify my distress: I am afraid, angry, discouraged, etc.
  2. Identify the cause: What was said or done or thought to prompt this response.
  3. Identify the aspect in me which is threatened or offended. Is it my security, my pride (self-esteem), my relationships, or something else.
  4. Identify what the Scripture says about the situation.
  5. Adjust my thinking and actions to obey the Word.
  6. Pray for grace to overcome, pray for the offending party, and do whatever the Bible instructs. Claim the promise and go on with life.

◆ **Self-examination and personal responsibility are a lifestyle for the one who will live free in Christ. Prolonged discomfort will eventually drive us back to our familiar sources of comfort.**