

**NEIL T. ANDERSON
& RICH MILLER**

MANAGING YOUR ANGER



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ANGER AND PHYSICAL HEALTH



Anger: an acid that can do more harm to the vessel in which it is stored than to anything on which it is poured.

Attributed to Lucius Annaeus Seneca

Jim was trying to wrap up another busy day at the office. His son was having a Little League game at 5:30 and he promised him he would be there. Demands at work prevented him from being at the last three games. Jim was a highly motivated insurance salesman who had won the salesperson of the year award for three straight years. His desire to climb the corporate ladder was often in conflict with his Christian convictions to be a good husband and father, but it wasn't hard to rationalize his work ethic. Achievement awards, higher salaries, and greater commissions afforded him and his family a higher standard of living and better vacations.

Last minute calls irritated him as he rushed to get out the door. *Why do people always call at the last minute?* Jim wondered. He glanced at his watch as he merged into the late afternoon traffic. Just enough time to make it to the game on time if the freeways cooperate. As he tried to work his way into the fast lane, he was suddenly cut off by another car. *Stupid jerk! Where are the cops when you need them?* The traffic slowed to a crawl and Jim found himself stuck behind a large truck that blocked his view and slowed his lane

even more. His hands gripped the steering wheel, and he angrily shouted, “Trucks shouldn’t be allowed to drive anywhere other than the right lane!”

Ruminating thoughts in Jim’s left cerebral cortex already sent a signal deeper in the brain to hypothalamic nerve cells. The activated hypothalamic emergency system stimulated sympathetic nerves to constrict the arteries carrying blood to Jim’s skin, kidneys, and intestines. At the same time, the brain sent a signal to the adrenal glands, and they pumped large doses of adrenaline and cortisol into his bloodstream. As he sat behind the truck, his muscles tightened, his heart beat faster, and his blood pressure rose. In such a state his blood would clot more rapidly in case of injury. Muscles at the outlet of his stomach were squeezing down so tightly that nothing could leave his digestive tract causing it to become spastic, resulting in abdominal pain. The blood was directed away from the skin, making it feel cool and clammy, and toward the muscles to facilitate a “fight or flight” response.

As the angry thoughts continued, Jim’s increased heart rate had pumped far more blood than was needed to just sit in the car. His body was prepared to spring into action, but there was nowhere to go. He was tempted to let off some steam by rolling down the window and telling somebody what he thought of them or honk the horn, but he knew that wouldn’t do any good. The adrenaline stimulated Jim’s fat cells to empty their content into the blood stream. This would provide additional energy that would be necessary if the situation required immediate action. But Jim just sat there, fuming at the traffic while his liver converted the fat into cholesterol. He has no one to fight and nowhere to take flight.

Over time the cholesterol formed from the unused fat in the bloodstream will accumulate. It morphs into a plaque in the arteries that begins to block the flow of blood. Jim’s struggle with anger continues until one day the flow of blood is cut off entirely and Jim

becomes one of the 500,000 Americans each year who suffer from a heart attack.

Tragically, some do take action when their anger gets the best of them. Their cars become weapons, or they find weapons to use against those who they think have caused them to get angry. More than 1000 people in the U.S. die each year in road rage incidents. U.S. academic James Strickland reported that if provoked, motorists would respond as follows:

- 40 percent driving more aggressively
- 22 percent make angry expressions
- 15 percent mutter under breath
- 14 percent hit something in the car
- 5 percent make obscene gestures
- 3 percent bump the car causing the anger
- Only 1 in 140 said they'd do nothing¹

Oh no you're not! I'll speed up just a little and not let him in.

Are you kidding me? I have waited through two traffic lights to get through the intersection and a stupid cement truck is ahead of the pack. He could have gone through the yellow light. That slug will keep five cars from making it through when the light changes.

Why is that bimbo tailgating me? Doesn't she know it's against the law? I think I will just keep going slower and slower until she gets the message.

Why is this person in the fast lane?

Get off your stupid cell phone you idiot. The light changed two seconds ago.

Why are you shaking your fist at me? I'm trying to set a good example by driving under the speed limit.

I would love to give you a piece of my mind, but an icy stare will have to do as I drive by.

Listen to yourself! For the next week take special note of what you are thinking when you drive in traffic. To give another a piece of your mind is to rob your mind of peace, because anyone who shovels dirt at another is losing ground.

Too many people are at the boiling point, and the slightest provocation can set them off. “The famous psychologist, John Hunter, knew what anger could do to his heart: ‘The first scoundrel that gets me angry will kill me.’ Sometime later, at a medical meeting, a speaker made assertions that incensed Hunter. As he stood up and bitterly attacked the speaker, his anger caused such a contraction of blood vessels in his heart that he fell dead.”²

Frederick Buechner wrote:

Of the seven deadly sins, anger is possibly the most fun. To lick your wounds, to smack your lips over grievances long past, to roll over your tongue the prospect of bitter confrontations still to come, to savor to the last toothsome morsel both the pain you are given and the pain you are giving back; in many ways it is a feast fit for a king. The chief drawback is that what you are wolfing down is yourself. The skeleton at the feast is you.³

In my first pastorate, I (Neil) was given a book by an ambitious engineer in our church. He said, “You should read this book, because I think you may benefit from it.” The book was *Type A Behavior and Your Heart* by Meyer Friedman and Ray Rosenman.⁴ This highly motivated IBM engineer went on to explain that he had a Type A personality and he suspected that I did too. After reading the book, I did see some aspects of my personality that were Type A. I also gave a message a few weeks later entitled, “Jesus was Type B.”

Friedman and Rosenman were cardiologists who began to notice

that certain personality types were more prone to have heart problems. Those who burnt the candle at both ends, climbed the stairs two steps at a time, took little time off, and were driven to accomplish their goals were classified Type A. They are the task oriented, high achievers of this world, and they are driven to accomplish their goals. Type B individuals are more laid back, less driven, and generally more relational.

Their observations have had a profound effect on society. Not only are their classifications of Type A and B personalities well-known stereotypes, but they stimulated a flood of research into psychosomatic illnesses. Before the publication of their work, stress was not considered to be a major contributor to heart disease, cancer, and other major illnesses, but it is today. The medical field is now telling us that the majority of people are sick for psychosomatic reasons.

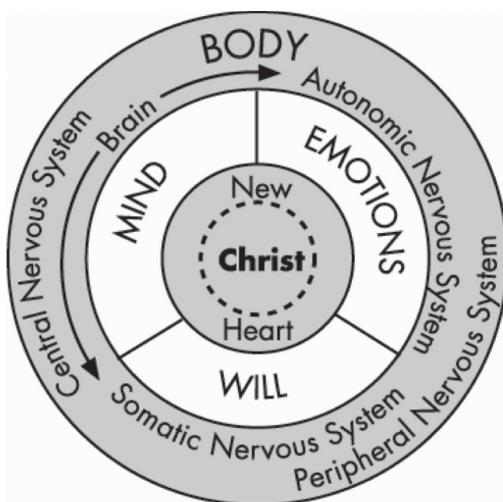
Redford and Virginia Williams, in their book *Anger Kills*,⁵ adapted the work of Friedman and Rosenman to the problem of anger. In their research, they show how those with a hostile personality are more prone to coronary heart disease. For many years, researchers, therapists, and schools of higher education have used the MMPI (Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory) to assess clients and students. Since many of these test results have been kept, they could be compared many years later with the physical health of those who took the test. The Williamses, along with other colleagues, isolated certain questions from the MMPI that reflected a cynical distrust of others, the frequent experience of angry feelings, and the overt expression of their cynicism in aggressive behavior. They summarize their findings as follows:

1. Hostile people—those with high levels of cynicism, anger and aggression—are at higher risk of developing

life-threatening illnesses than are their less hostile counterparts.

2. By driving others away, or by not perceiving the support they could be deriving from their social contacts, hostile people may be depriving themselves of the health-enhancing, stress buffering benefits of social support.
3. A quicker activation of their flight-or-fight response, in combination with their relatively weak parasympathetic calming response, is a biologic mechanism that probably contributes to the health problems that afflict hostile people.
4. Hostile people also are more prone to engage in a number of risky behaviors—eating more, drinking more alcohol, smoking—that could damage their health.⁶

The fact that many people are sick for psychosomatic reasons indicates that more is going on than just a biological response to the environment. To understand how the body and soul interact, consider the following diagram:



God formed Adam and Eve from the dust of the earth and breathed into them the breath of life (see Genesis 2:7). This union of divine breath and earthly dust is what constituted the physical and spiritual life that Adam and Eve both possessed. To be physically alive means that our soul is in union with our body. To be spiritually alive means that our soul (depicted as mind, emotion, and will in the diagram) is in union with God. When Adam and Eve sinned they were separated from God. They died spiritually. Physical death would also be a consequence of the fall, but that would happen years later.

Every human being possesses an inner person and an outer person. In other words we all have a material self and an immaterial self (see 2 Corinthians 4:16). Our outer person, or material part, is what makes up our physical body. We relate to the world around us through our five senses. The inner person or immaterial self describes the spirit and soul of a human being.⁷ Being created in the image of God is why we have the capacity to think, feel, and choose, as opposed to animals that operate out of divine instinct.

Being fearfully and wonderfully made, it would only make sense that God would create the outer person to correlate with the inner person. The brain and mind correlation is obvious, but the two are fundamentally different. Our brains are like organic computers that will return to dust when we physically die. At that time, if we are born-again believers, we will be present with the Lord, but we will not be there mindlessly. The mind is part of the soul, the inner person.

The brain is the capstone of the central nervous system, which also includes the spinal cord. Using the computer analogy, if the brain is the hardware, then the mind is the software. As we shall explain later, the brain cannot function in any way other than how it has been programmed. Neither the software nor the hardware is any good without the other.

Branching off from the central nervous system is a peripheral nervous system that has two distinct channels. One channel is the somatic nervous system. That system regulates all our muscular and skeletal movements. It is that which we have volitional control over. Provided we have adequate physical health, we can mentally choose to move our limbs, smile, and speak. Obviously, the somatic nervous system correlates with our will. We don't do anything without first thinking it. The thought-action response may be so rapid that one is hardly aware of the sequence, but it is always there. Involuntary muscular movements do occur when the system breaks down, as is the case with Parkinson's disease.

The autonomic nervous system is that which regulates all our glands and correlates with our emotions. We don't have direct volitional control over the functioning of our glands. In the same way we don't have direct volitional control of our emotions including the feelings of anger. We cannot will ourselves to like someone who is disgusting. We can choose to do the loving thing on their behalf even though we don't like them. We cannot simply tell ourselves to stop being angry because we cannot directly manage our emotions that way. When we acknowledge that we are angry, we do have control over how we are going to express it. We can manage our behavior within limits, because that is something we have volitional control over. We do have control of what we will think and believe, and that is what controls what we do and how we feel.

Telling angry people that they shouldn't be angry will only produce guilt, defensiveness (rationalization), or retaliation. You will have as much success telling them to stop being angry as they will have trying to keep their autonomic nervous system from functioning. We can, however, be a calming influence so they can manage their behavior. "A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (Proverbs 15:1). We could say, "I know you are

angry right now, and you may have good reason to be. Are you open to sharing with me what that reason is so I can understand?" Anger in others is a symptom that must be acknowledged, or you will be adding insult to injury.

It is important to realize that what is causing the autonomic nervous system to respond is not the brain, and neither is the brain causing us to feel angry. It is the mind and the way it has been programmed. Neither do the circumstances of life or other people make us angry. It is our perception of those people and events and how we interpret them and that is a function of our minds and how they have been programmed.

Let's apply that reasoning to the problem of stress. When the pressures of life begin to mount, our bodies try to adapt. Our adrenal glands will excrete hormones into our bloodstream enabling us to rise to the challenge. If the pressure persists too long, then stress becomes distress, our system breaks down, and we become sick. Why then do some people respond positively to stress while others get sick? Is it because one has superior adrenal glands? Some are physically able to handle more than others, but that is not the primary difference. The primary difference is found in the mind not the body.

Suppose two partners in a business are confronted with what one believes is a financial crisis. They just lost a contract they thought would bring them to a new level of prosperity. One partner is not a Christian and has chosen to believe that this new contract would make him successful. Many of his personal goals would be realized, but now his dreams are dashed. He responds in anger to all who try to console him and calls his lawyer to see if he can sue the company who broke the contract.

The other partner is a Christian who believes that success is becoming the person God created him to be. He believes that God

will supply all his needs. Therefore, this loss has less of an impact on him. Though he will likely be disappointed, he doesn't get angry, because he sees this temporary setback at work as a learning experience and continues to believe that all things work together for good to those who trust God (Romans 8:28). One of these two partners is stressed out and angry while the other partner isn't. The primary difference between the two men is their belief system, not their external circumstances, which are the same. "For as he thinks within himself, so he is" (Proverbs 23:7).

This brings up another important concept. If what we believe does not conform to truth, then what we feel does not conform to reality. Suppose a man has been employed by the same company for 30 years. His plan is to work another five or ten years with the same company and then retire. The recent recession has resulted in some layoffs, but he believes his job is safe. Then on a Monday morning he receives an email from his boss requesting that he come to his office Friday morning at 10:00. Can you imagine what would go through his mind that week? *Why does he want to see me at the end of the week? They are going to lay me off!* If that is what he thinks he will likely get angry. *How can they lay me off after thirty years of service? I'm not going to give them the satisfaction. I'm going to resign!*

His wife talks him out of it, but on Tuesday and Wednesday he is struggling with doubts. *Well, maybe they aren't going to lay me off. Yeah they are. No they're not. Yeah they are!* Now he is feeling anxious, because he is double-minded. By Thursday he has convinced himself that he is probably going to get laid off. *How am I going to get a job at my age? How will I pay the bills?* Now he is depressed, because he feels helpless and hopeless. By Friday morning he is an emotional wreck. Reluctantly he enters the office of his boss who says, *Congratulations. We are promoting you to vice president.* In those five days he

has felt anger, anxiety, and depression all as a result of what he has chosen to think. None of it was based in reality.

Current or external events do not trigger our physiological responses, nor is the secretion of adrenaline initiated by our adrenal glands. External events are picked up by our five senses and sent as a signal to our brains. The mind then interprets the data, choices are made, and that is what determines the signal that is sent from the central nervous system to the peripheral nervous system. The brain cannot function any other way than how it has been programmed.

If the data we receive is false or incomplete then wrong decisions are made and the emotional response is inappropriate. Many civil protests have turned into angry riots, destroying property and taking human lives. Often it is fueled by false or incomplete information supplied by agitators with their own agenda. Few people listen to reason when anger takes over. Some don't want to wait for justice to be served, because they don't trust the justice system.

Our emotions and actions reveal what we believe. People don't always live according to what they profess, but they do live according to what they believe. James wrote, "I will show you my faith by my works" (James 2:18).

Let's take another look at Jim, our angry driver. He held certain beliefs about himself, life, and what he valued. Chances are his identity and sense of worth were tied into his career. He believed he would be a successful person if he did well on the job and a failure if he didn't. He also had a belief about himself. He was a salesman and a good one. But he was also a father and he held certain Christian values about being a good parent. That afternoon he didn't want to go back on his word and miss his son's game, but he didn't want to miss a couple of late-afternoon calls either that could affect his sales. Was he a salesman first or a father first?

Jim made choices that afternoon that had a profound effect on how he felt. He could have entered into his phone the time of his son's game and made it just as important as any business schedule. Then he could have left earlier and avoided all the traffic. His secretary could simply tell his callers that he had an important commitment that he could not miss, but he will do his best to get back to them tomorrow. The stalled traffic didn't make him angry, that was his own emotional response to the choices he made that day.

When I attended my first doctoral class years ago, I was the only professing Christian enrolled. The instructor was an ex-nun who liked to show off her liberation from the church with a lot of profanity. I think she was especially delighted to have a "reverend" in her class whom she would often put on the spot. I saw it as a challenge to my faith, which I was delighted to accept. Near the end of the semester, we were asked to share with the class what our term paper would be. I said I was doing a paper on managing our anger. Another doctoral student protested, "You can't do a paper on managing your anger." I asked her, "Why not?" "Because you don't get angry." She thought it was incredulous that I would choose to do a paper on anger and she reminded me of it several times. I assured her that I do at times get angry.

Apparently, she would have responded in anger to some of the targeting that I was getting in the class. Our differences became clearer as the semester came to an end. She and her brother, who also attended the class, were members of a cult. Our divergent belief systems became more and more evident as they were tested under fire. What we believe does affect how we respond to the circumstances of life. If our identity and security are centered in our eternal relationship with God, then the temporal things of life have less of an impact on us.

No person can consistently behave in a way that isn't consistent with what they believe about themselves. What you do doesn't determine who you are. Who you are determines what you do. So who are you? "See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are" (1 John 3:1 ESV).

Beloved, this is who you are:

You Are Accepted

John 1:12	You are God's child.
John 15:15	You are Jesus's chosen friend.
Romans 5:1	You have been justified (forgiven) and have peace with God.
1 Corinthians 6:17	You are united with the Lord and one with Him in spirit.
1 Corinthians 6:20	You have been bought with a price—you belong to God.
1 Corinthians 12:27	You are a member of Christ's body, part of His family.
Ephesians 1:1	You are a saint.
Ephesians 1:5	You have been adopted as God's child.
Ephesians 2:18	You have direct access to God through the Holy Spirit.
Colossians 1:14	You have been bought back (redeemed) and forgiven of all your sins.
Colossians 2:10	You are complete in Christ.

You Are Secure

Romans 8:1-2	You are free from condemnation.
Romans 8:28	You are assured that all things work together for good.

Romans 8:31	You are free from any condemning charges against you.
Romans 8:35	You cannot be separated from the love of God.
2 Corinthians 1:21-22	You have been established, anointed, and sealed by God.
Colossians 3:3	You are hidden with Christ in God.
Philippians 1:6	You are assured that the good work that God has begun in you will be finished.
Philippians 3:20	You are a citizen of heaven.
2 Timothy 1:7	You have not been given a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and a sound mind.
Hebrews 4:16	You can find grace and mercy in time of need.
1 John 5:18	You are born of God and the evil one cannot touch you.

You Are Significant

Matthew 5:13-14	You are the salt and light of the world.
John 15:1,5	You are a part of the true vine, joined to Christ and able to produce much fruit.
John 15:16	You have been chosen by Jesus to bear fruit.
Acts 1:8	You are a personal witness of Christ's.
1 Corinthians 3:16	You are God's temple where the Holy Spirit dwells.
2 Corinthians 5:17-18	You are at peace with God and He has given you the work of making peace between Himself and other people. You are a minister of reconciliation.
2 Corinthians 6:1	You are God's co-worker.
Ephesians 2:6	You are seated with Christ in the heavenlies.

Ephesians 2:10	You are God's workmanship.
Ephesians 3:12	You may approach God with freedom and confidence.
Philippians 4:13	You can do all things through Christ who strengthens you.

Discussion Questions

1. Why do so many people get angry while driving?
2. What can drivers control and what can't they control?
3. What is the difference between the outer person and the inner person?
4. What is the difference between physical life and spiritual life?
5. How would you cure a psychosomatic illness?
6. Why shouldn't we try telling people not to feel a certain way?
7. What should we do or tell people when we feel their emotions don't reflect reality?
8. How does belief affect how we act and feel?
9. What are common stimuli that turn protests into angry riots?
10. Why is it so important to know who you are?

Introduction to the *Steps to Freedom in Christ*

God created Adam and Eve in His image and in His likeness. They were physically and spiritually alive, and the latter means that their souls were in union with God. Living in a dependent

relationship with their Heavenly Father, they were to rule over the birds of the sky, the beasts of the field, and the fish of the sea. Adam and Eve were accepted, secure, and significant. Acting independently of God, they chose to disobey Him, and their choice to sin separated them from God (see Genesis 2:15–3:13). They immediately felt fearful, anxious, depressed, and insecure. Because Eve was deceived by Satan and because Adam sinned, all their descendants are born physically alive but spiritually dead (Ephesians 2:1).

Since all have sinned (Romans 3:23), those who remain separated from God will struggle with personal and spiritual conflicts. Satan became the rebel holder of authority and the god of this world. Jesus referred to him as the ruler of this world, and the apostle John wrote that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19).

Jesus came to undo the works of Satan (1 John 3:8) and take upon Himself the sins of the world. By dying for our sins, Jesus removed the barrier that existed between God and those He created in His image. The resurrection of Christ brought new life to those who put their trust in Him.

Every born-again believer's soul is again in union with God and that is most often communicated in the New Testament by saying "in Christ," or "in Him." The apostle Paul explained that anyone who is in Christ is a new creation (2 Corinthians 5:17). The apostle John wrote, "But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name" (John 1:12), and he also wrote, "See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are" (1 John 3:1).

No amount of effort on your part can save you, and neither can any religious activity, no matter how well intentioned. We are saved by faith, by what we choose to believe. All that remains for us to do is to put our trust in the finished work of Christ. "For by grace you

have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is a gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast” (Ephesians 2:8-9). If you have never received Christ, you can do so right now. God knows the thoughts and intentions of your heart, so all you have to do is put your trust in God alone.

You can express your decision in prayer as follows:

Dear Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Jesus to die on the cross for my sins. I acknowledge that I have sinned and that I cannot save myself. I believe that Jesus came to give me life, and by faith I now choose to receive You into my life as my Lord and Savior. May the power of Your indwelling presence enable me to be the person You created me to be. I pray that You would grant me repentance, leading to a knowledge of the truth so that I can experience my freedom in Christ and be transformed by the renewing of my mind. In Jesus's precious name I pray. Amen.

Assurance of Salvation

Paul wrote, “If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved” (Romans 10:9). Do you believe that God the Father raised Jesus from the dead? Did you invite Jesus to be your Lord and Savior? Then you are a child of God and nothing can separate you from the love of Christ (Romans 8:35). “And this is the testimony, that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (1 John 5:11-13). Your Heavenly Father has sent His Holy Spirit to bear witness with your spirit that you are a child of God (Romans 8:16). “You were sealed *in Him* with the Holy Spirit of promise” (Ephesians 1:13, emphasis added). The Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth (John 16:13).

Resolving Personal and Spiritual Conflict

Since we are all born dead (spiritually) in our trespasses and sin (Ephesians 2:1), we had neither the presence of God in our lives nor the knowledge of His ways. Consequently, we all learned to live independently of God. When we became new creations in Christ, our minds were not instantly renewed. That is why Paul wrote, “Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is—His good, pleasing and perfect will” (Romans 12:2 NIV). That is why new Christians struggle with many of the same old thoughts and habits. Their minds have been previously programmed to live independently of God, and that is the chief characteristic of our flesh. As new creations in Christ we have the mind of Christ, and the Holy Spirit will lead us into all truth.

To experience our freedom in Christ and grow in the grace of God requires repentance, which literally means a change of mind. God will enable that process as we submit to Him and resist the devil (James 4:7). The *Steps to Freedom in Christ* (Steps) are designed to help you do that. Submitting to God is the critical issue. He is the Wonderful Counselor and the One who grants repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth (2 Timothy 2:24-26). The Steps cover seven critical issues that affect our relationship with God. We will not experience our freedom in Christ if we seek false guidance, believe lies, fail to forgive others as we have been forgiven, live in rebellion, respond in pride, fail to acknowledge our sin, and continue in the sins of our ancestors. “He who conceals transgressions will not prosper, but he who confesses and forsakes [renounces] them will find compassion” (Proverbs 28:13). “Therefore since we have this ministry, as we received mercy, we do not lose heart, but we have renounced things hidden because of shame, not walking

in craftiness or adulterating the word of God, but by the manifestation of truth” (2 Corinthians 4:1-2).

Even though Satan is defeated, he still rules this world through a hierarchy of demons who tempt, accuse, and deceive those who fail to put on the armor of God, stand firm in their faith, and take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. Our sanctuary is our identity and position in Christ, and we have all the protection we need to live a victorious life, but if we fail to assume our responsibility and give ground to Satan, we will suffer the consequences of our sinful attitudes and actions. The good news is, we can repent and reclaim all that we have in Christ, and that is what the Steps will enable you to do.

Processing the Steps

The best way to go through the Steps is to process them with a trained encourager. The book *Discipleship Counseling* explains the theology and process. However, you can also go through the Steps on your own. Every Step is explained so you will have no trouble doing that. If you are in a group study, the leader will introduce each Step after the discussion questions and ask you to pray the beginning prayer out loud. The rest you will process on your own. If you experience some mental interference, just ignore it and continue on. Thoughts such as, *This isn't going to work*, or *I don't believe this*, or blasphemous, condemning, and accusing thoughts have no power over you unless you believe them. They are just thoughts and it doesn't make any difference if they originate from yourself, an external source, or from Satan and his demons.

Such thoughts have no power over you unless you believe them. They will be resolved when you have fully repented. The mind is the control center, and you will not lose control if you can maintain control of your mind. The best way to do that, if you are being

mentally harassed, is to just share it. Exposing the lies to the light breaks their power.

The apostle Paul wrote that “Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Corinthians 11:14). It is not uncommon for some to have thoughts or hear voices that claim to be friendly, offer companionship, or claim to be from God. They may even say that Jesus is Lord, but they cannot say that Jesus is their Lord. If there is any doubt about their origin, verbally ask God to show you the true nature of such spirit guides. You don’t want any spirit guide other than the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Remember, you are a child of God and seated with Christ in the heavenlies (spiritual realm). That means you have the authority and power to do His will. The Steps don’t set you free. Jesus sets you free, and you will progressively experience that freedom as you respond to Him in faith and repentance. Don’t worry about any demonic interference, most do not experience any. It doesn’t make any difference if Satan has a little role or a bigger role, the critical issue is your relationship with God, and that is what you are resolving. This is a ministry of reconciliation. Once those issues are resolved, Satan has no right to remain. Successfully completing this repentance process is not an end, it is a beginning of growth. Unless these issues are resolved, however, the growth process will be stalled and your Christian life will be stagnant.

Breaking Mental Strongholds

On a separate piece of paper write down any false beliefs and lies that surface during the Steps, especially those that are not true about yourself and God. When you are finished, verbally say for each exposed falsehood: “I renounce the lie that” (what you have believed), and “I announce the truth that” (what you are now choosing to believe is true based on God’s Word). It may be best to have

the encourager keep this list for you if you are being led by another through the Steps. We strongly recommend that you repeat the process of renouncing lies and choosing truth for forty days since we are transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:2), and it is very easy to defer back to old flesh patterns when tempted.

Preparation

Processing these Steps will play a major role in your journey of becoming more and more like Jesus so that you can be a fruitful disciple. The purpose is to become firmly rooted in Christ. It doesn't take long to establish your identity and freedom in Christ, but there is no such thing as instant maturity. Renewing your mind and conforming to the image of God is a lifelong process. May God grace you with His presence as you seek to do His will. Once you have experienced your freedom in Christ you can help others experience the joy of their salvation. You are now ready to begin the Steps by saying the prayer and declaration below.

Prayer

Dear Heavenly Father, You are present in this room and in my life. You alone are all-knowing, all-powerful, and present everywhere, and I worship You alone. I declare my dependency upon You, for apart from You I can do nothing. I choose to believe Your Word, which teaches that all authority in heaven and on earth belongs to the resurrected Christ, and being alive in Christ I have the authority to resist the devil as I submit to You. I ask that You fill me with Your Holy Spirit and guide me into all truth. I ask for Your complete protection and guidance as I seek to know You and do Your will. In the wonderful name of Jesus I pray. Amen.

Declaration

In the name and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ, I command Satan and all evil spirits to release their hold on me in order that I can be free to know and choose to do the will of God. As a child of God who is seated with Christ in the heavenly places, I declare that every enemy of the Lord Jesus Christ in my presence be bound. God has not given me a spirit of fear, therefore I reject any and all condemning, accusing, blasphemous, and deceiving spirits of fear. Satan and all his demons cannot inflict any pain or in any way prevent God's will from being done in my life today, because I belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.