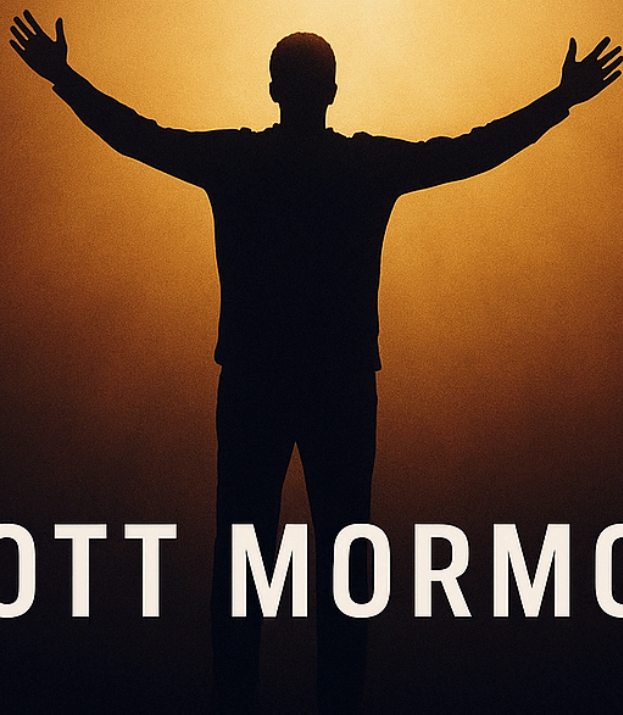


# BREAKING FREE FROM IDENTITY CRISIS

*Finding Your True Self in Christ*



SCOTT MORMON

# Table of Contents

♦ **About the Author: Page- 3**

♦ **Preface: Page- 4**

♦ **Introduction: Page- 5**

---

✦✦ **Section 1: The real Issue why we keep Searching Page- 8**

---

✦✦ **Section 2: When Doing is Never Enough the Performance Trap Page- 11**

---

✦✦ **Section 3: Made Right in God Page- 15**

---

✦✦ **Section 4: Breaking Free from People Pleasing Page- 19**

---

✦✦ **Section 5: Living in God's approval Page- 22**

---

✦✦ **Section 6: Letting Go of the Need of Others Approval Page- 25**

---

✦✦ **Section 7: Letting Go of Self Approval Page- 28**

---

✦✦ **Section 8: Shame Vs. God's Truth Page- 31**

---

✦✦ **Section 9: The Solution to Shame Page- 34**

---

✦✦ **Section 10: Receiving Healthy Approval from Others Page- 38**

---

✦✦ **Section 11: Handling Criticism, Judgements, or Resentments from Others Page- 41**

---

✦✦ **Section 12: Walking in the Truth Page- 46**

---

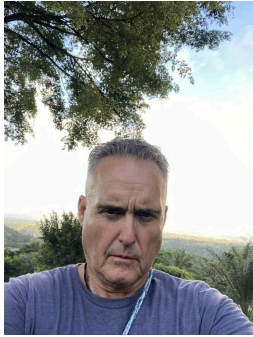
✦✦ **Section 13: A Lifetime in the Word Page- 50**

---

✦✦ **Conclusion Page- 54**



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Once trapped in addiction, prison, and deep hopelessness, everything changed when Scott encountered the living Jesus in 1988. That divine encounter didn't just save his life—it sparked a radical transformation and a lifelong mission to bring the hope of Christ to the most broken and overlooked.

Even before coming to Christ, Scott carried undeniable leadership gifts—gifts the enemy once used to influence others into darkness. But what was twisted for destruction has now been fully redeemed by God.

Today, those same gifts are used to equip servant-hearted leaders, rescue the lost, and build the Kingdom of God in some of the hardest places on earth.

Just two years after his conversion, Scott began mentoring others through the painful, beautiful journey of addiction recovery, spiritual growth, character formation, and Christ-centered leadership. Over the past 38 years, he has lived on mission—preaching the Gospel across prisons, streets, recovery centers, housing projects, and pulpits. His style of radical evangelism has remained constant: bold, Spirit-led, relational, and unbound by walls.

In 2006, Scott launched the Servant Leadership Training (SLT) School at the Georgia campus, deepening his call to develop leaders grounded not in title or ego—but in humility, sacrifice, and service. Through years of frontline ministry, he also earned a Doctorate, further sharpening his ability to teach, train, and multiply faithful workers for the harvest.

From his personal transformation, *Breaking Free Inc.* was born—a ministry that reaches the addicted, the incarcerated, the chronically homeless, and the spiritually forgotten. Through *Breaking Free*, Scott has led residential programs, planted churches, raised up missionaries, served in refugee camps and orphanages, and developed ministry leaders internationally.

Now, as he continues pouring into others, Scott is writing *Church Without Walls: 24-7 Radical Harvesting Manual*—a field-tested equipping tool drawn from nearly four decades of hands-on evangelism and discipleship. This manual is for those called to reach the streets, the margins, and the mission field just outside their front door. It's for harvesters—not spectators.

Yet Scott will be the first to say: none of it is about him. The miracle is not the ministry. The miracle is Jesus.

A grateful father to four biological children, six adopted daughters, and one adopted son from Costa Rica—and now a proud grandfather of thirteen—Scott's deepest joy is watching God's faithfulness across generations. His passion remains the same: to love people back to life, lift high the name of Jesus, and keep showing up wherever hope is most needed.

“May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ...” — Galatians 6:14

“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...” — Matthew 28:19–20

## Preface

In every generation, men and women have wrestled with the same deep questions of the soul: *Am I valuable? Am I truly loved? Does my life matter?* These questions lie at the core of human existence, shaping the way we think, the choices we make, and the relationships we pursue. And yet, the world offers countless answers that often leave us emptier than before. We are told that our worth comes from how much we achieve, how well we perform, how attractive we appear, or how much approval we gain from others. But these foundations are fragile—one failure, one rejection, or one criticism can send us spiraling into self-doubt and despair.

The truth is, many of us carry silent chains we never talk about. We wear smiles in public while quietly battling guilt, shame, rejection, fear, or feelings of worthlessness. These burdens distort the way we see ourselves, color the way we view others, and even hinder the way we relate to God. Instead of living with joy, security, and confidence, we often settle for lives marked by striving, comparison, and emptiness.

This manual, ***Breaking Free from Identity Crisis***, was created for those who are weary of carrying these chains and ready to step into something greater. It is more than a study—it is an invitation. An invitation to lay down the false beliefs that have shaped your story, to encounter God’s unchanging truth, and to begin walking in the freedom that comes from knowing who you truly are in Christ.

Within these pages you will find a journey—one that blends honest reflection, heartfelt prayer, biblical teaching, journaling, and practical application. It is not designed merely to fill your mind with new information, but to transform the way you live and the way you see yourself. It can be used personally, with your family, or in a small group setting, where honest conversations and accountability can help the truths take root more deeply.

The goal is simple, yet profound: to exchange lies for truth, bondage for freedom, and insecurity for unshakable significance in Christ. You will learn to confront the inner voices of condemnation and replace them with God’s voice of love and acceptance. You will discover that your value does not depend on your past mistakes, your present circumstances, or your future achievements—but on the finished work of Christ on your behalf.

My prayer is that as you walk through these lessons, you will encounter God’s heart for you in a new and deeper way. May you not only understand His truth intellectually, but also experience it personally—until it reshapes how you think, feel, and live. May you find the courage to release what has held you back and embrace the freedom that Christ offers. **This is the journey of breaking free. And it begins here.**

## Introduction

We live in a culture obsessed with achievement, appearance, and approval. From the time we are children, we are bombarded with messages that our worth depends on how well we perform, how others respond to us, or how closely we match the world's standards. We are taught that if we succeed, we matter; if we fail, we are worthless. If people like us, we are valuable; if they reject us, we are nothing. If we look the part, we belong; if we fall short, we are left out.

This constant striving creates an endless cycle of pressure, fear, and emptiness. No matter how much we accomplish, it never feels like enough. No matter how many compliments we receive, the approval fades too quickly. And no matter how hard we try, the voice inside often whispers that we will never truly measure up. Beneath the surface of our lives lies a quiet ache—a longing to know we are enough, a desire to feel secure, a hunger for unconditional love and acceptance.

The message of the Gospel is radically different from the message of the world. God never intended for us to define ourselves by performance, popularity, or possessions. Our Creator formed us in His image, giving us worth and dignity that cannot be erased by failure, rejection, or shame. Through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, He has redeemed us and restored us to Himself. And by His Spirit, He calls us into a new identity—beloved sons and daughters who are loved, forgiven, accepted, and secure in Him.

This is the heart of **Breaking Free from Identity Crisis**. This manual is not about giving you more rules to follow, or more ways to earn the approval of others. It is not about teaching you how to build a stronger mask or hide your brokenness behind spiritual-sounding words. Instead, it is about uncovering the lies that have shaped your view of yourself, bringing those lies into the light of God's truth, and replacing them with the unshakable reality of who you are in Christ.

Each section of this journey will address specific struggles that weigh us down: guilt that whispers we are beyond forgiveness, shame that chains us to our past, rejection that convinces us we will never belong, fear that paralyzes our faith, and self-doubt that blinds us to God's calling. These are not abstract concepts; they are the real battles that every person faces in one way or another. But through Scripture, reflection, journaling, and prayer, you will learn to face these struggles honestly and overcome them with the truth of God's Word.

Breaking free is not always easy. This journey may uncover old wounds, bring hidden lies to the surface, and challenge deeply rooted patterns of thinking. There may be moments when you feel exposed, uncomfortable, or uncertain. But do not lose

heart—God never reveals a wound without providing the healing. The Lord is both gentle and powerful; He knows your pain, and He longs to replace it with freedom, wholeness, and peace.

This process will show you that your value does not come from what you do, what others think of you, or even what you have experienced in the past. Your value is rooted in something far deeper and unshakable: the eternal love of Christ. In Him, you are not defined by your mistakes, your struggles, or your scars. You are defined by His sacrifice, His forgiveness, and His promise that you belong to Him forever.

So this is your invitation: to lay down the heavy burdens of performance and approval, and to step into the freedom of a new identity. To stop striving to prove your worth and start resting in the truth of God's unchanging love. To exchange fear for peace, rejection for belonging, shame for grace, and insecurity for confidence in Christ.

This is your moment to begin **Breaking Free**. Not by trying harder, not by earning more approval, and not by becoming someone you are not. True freedom comes by receiving the truth that has the power to set you free: in Christ, you are fully loved, completely forgiven, and eternally secure. Your journey begins now.

## Closing Note to the Introduction

It is important to recognize that this manual does not stand alone. *Breaking Free from Identity Crisis* was designed to build upon the truths already laid in *Christ in Us, the Hope of Glory: Living in His Presence Manual*. That work provides the essential foundation—teaching us how to dwell in Christ’s presence, to rely on His Spirit, and to cultivate an intimate relationship with Him.

Without that foundation, the journey of identity can easily drift back into self-effort or performance. But when we begin from the place of God’s presence, we are reminded that freedom and transformation are never achieved by striving, but by abiding.

If you have not already engaged with *Christ in Us*, I strongly encourage you to do so. The principles in that manual will help anchor your heart as you walk through the deeper layers of healing, identity, and significance in this book. Together, these two works form a pathway—first to intimacy with Christ, and then to freedom in Christ. One gives you the foundation of His presence; the other helps you break free from the lies that keep you from living fully in that presence.

As you step into this journey, remember: your identity is not something you earn or create—it is something you receive. And it is only in Christ’s presence that you will truly discover who you are and the freedom He designed you to walk in.

You can find “*Christ in Us, the Hope of Glory: Living in His Presence Manual*” in our free Breaking Free Library at: <https://www.bfservices.org/library>

---

## Chapter 1 – The Real Issue: Why We Keep Searching

**Scripture Focus:** *“You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* (John 8:32)

## Teaching / Truth

Every human heart longs for significance. Every person wants to know, “Do I matter? Am I loved? Do I have a secure place in this world?” From our earliest memories, we begin searching for answers to these questions. This search is universal, yet the paths we take are often misguided and painful.

Some of us chase **validation in relationships**, hoping that someone else’s love will define our value. We might look to a spouse, friend, or even our children to fill an invisible emptiness. Others seek **success and achievement**, climbing ladders of prestige or recognition, believing that accomplishments will finally give us worth. Many attempt to **mask the ache with possessions, experiences, or substances**, filling the void with temporary distractions. Social media, status, and approval often become modern idols—tools we use in the futile hope of feeling seen, accepted, and valuable.

Yet no matter how much we achieve, accumulate, or chase, the emptiness always returns. Why? Because our souls were never meant to find ultimate identity in anything created. The true source of significance is God Himself.

Beneath every struggle—addiction, fear, shame, perfectionism, or people-pleasing—there lies a **core question of identity**: *“Who am I, and am I truly loved?”* This question drives every decision, every pursuit, and often every cycle of disappointment and brokenness in our lives.

The **Breaking Free** journey begins by recognizing this truth: the world cannot provide the lasting value we seek. Only Jesus can satisfy the deep longing of our hearts. In Him, we discover **forgiveness for the past, security for the present, and hope for the future**. When we stop seeking approval, identity, and peace in shifting things—jobs, relationships, recognition, or substances—and start seeking Christ, the truth sets us free.

Breaking free from false sources of worth is not about self-improvement alone—it’s about **realignment with God’s view of who we are**. Scripture repeatedly reminds us that we are **God’s treasured children** (Psalm 139:14), uniquely made in His image, loved unconditionally, and called to live in freedom and purpose. True freedom is not



striving to be “enough” in the eyes of others—it is resting in God’s love and embracing the identity He has already given you.

**The Heart of the Matter:** The deepest struggle is not what we do—it is what we **believe about ourselves**. Breaking Free begins with a willingness to confront the lies we’ve believed and replace them with God’s truth.

**Key Principle:** Lasting significance cannot come from approval, possessions, or performance—it comes only from Christ.

### Reflection Questions

1. Where have you been searching for significance—success, relationships, money, appearance, approval, or other pursuits?
2. Have these things ever fully satisfied you, or do they leave you still longing for more?
3. When you consider that **Jesus is the only true source of significance**, what fears or doubts arise in your heart?
4. What would it look like for your life to be **fully aligned with the truth that God already considers you valuable**?

### Journaling Prompt

Take 20–30 minutes to write honestly about what you have been chasing to find worth. Ask yourself:

- Which pursuits have left me empty, exhausted, or restless?
- How has chasing human approval affected my decisions, relationships, or peace?

Then, write a short prayer inviting Jesus to begin revealing your true identity in Him. Example:

“Lord, I confess that I have sought worth in places that cannot satisfy. Forgive me for building my identity on shifting sand. Show me the truth of who I am in You, and help me

to break free from the lies I've believed. Teach me to rest in Your love and live in Your freedom. Amen."

**Journaling Insight:** Be brutally honest with yourself. The act of writing and praying is a step toward **breaking free** from the cycle of searching outside of God.

### Family / Group Discussion

1. Share together the different places people tend to look for meaning and worth in life. Consider: work, social media, relationships, achievements, or substances.
2. How does the pressure to "measure up" affect relationships within your family or group?
3. Imagine a home or community where **worth is not based on performance but on unconditional love and grace**. What would that look like? How could you begin creating that environment today?
4. Discuss practical ways to encourage each other to seek **identity in Christ** rather than in temporary, earthly measures.

**Togetherness:** Healing and freedom are not only personal but also **relational**. Families and groups can become safe spaces where everyone learns to embrace God's truth over human approval.

### Closing Prayer

Lord, I confess that I have searched for worth in people, things, and achievements that cannot satisfy. Forgive me for trying to define my identity on shifting sand. Thank You for loving me unconditionally and calling me Your own. Help me to see the truth of who I am in You. Teach me to rest in Your love, embrace my true value, and begin **breaking free** from the patterns that have kept me searching in the wrong places. May my life reflect Your truth, grace, and freedom. In Jesus' name, amen.

**Breaking Free:** The journey to significance begins with a single truth: **you are already loved, forgiven, accepted, and valuable in Christ**. Step into that truth, and let God set you free.

---

## Chapter 2 – When Doing Is Never Enough: The Performance Trap

**Scripture Focus:** *“Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.”* (Matthew 11:28)

### Teaching / Truth

There is a hidden message most of us have absorbed from our culture, our families, or even from ourselves: “If you do enough, prove enough, achieve enough, then you will finally be enough.” This is the lie of the **performance trap**, and it runs deep in the human heart.

For some, this begins early in childhood. A parent’s approval may have only come when you brought home good grades or acted perfectly. Perhaps affection was withheld when you failed, leading you to believe that love must be **earned**. For others, performance became a shield against insecurity or rejection. “If I stay busy enough, successful enough, or pleasing enough, maybe no one will see the flaws I fear inside.”

This way of living can look respectable on the outside. A person caught in the performance trap might appear driven, dependable, and highly accomplished. But beneath the surface there is exhaustion, anxiety, and often a deep fear of failure. Success brings only temporary relief, because soon the bar is raised higher. Yesterday’s victory is today’s starting line, and the cycle begins again.

At its core, the performance trap is slavery to **conditional worth**. We tell ourselves:

- *“If I work harder, I’ll finally feel secure.”*
- *“If my family looks good to others, I’ll finally have peace.”*
- *“If I achieve more, then people will respect me.”*
- *“If I keep serving, maybe God will be pleased with me.”*

But performance never satisfies the deep hunger for significance. Even religious activities can fall into this trap when we confuse service for God with intimacy with God.

The Pharisees in Jesus' time did everything "right" outwardly, but their hearts were still far from Him (Matthew 23:27–28).

Jesus calls us to something radically different. He says, *"Come to Me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest."* (Matthew 11:28). Notice His invitation: **rest, not more performance**. God's love is not something you must work for—it is something you receive. Christ's finished work on the cross proves once and for all that your worth is not based on what you do but on what He has already done.

The **Breaking Free journey** is about exchanging the heavy yoke of performance for the light and freeing yoke of Christ (Matthew 11:29–30). It is about learning to live and serve out of love rather than fear. This doesn't mean we stop working hard or striving for excellence. It means we stop confusing **what we do** with **who we are**. We serve not to earn love but because we are already loved.

**The Heart of the Matter:** The performance trap whispers, *"I am only as valuable as my last success."* God's truth declares, *"You are valuable because you are Mine, no matter what you do."*

**Key Principle:** Freedom is not found in doing more—it is found in resting in Christ's finished work.

### Reflection Questions

1. Where in your life have you felt pressure to "prove yourself"—in career, family, church, friendships, or appearance?
2. What emotions rise up when you fail or fall short—shame, fear, anger, or discouragement?
3. Can you recall a time when achieving something still left you empty inside? What does that reveal about the limits of performance?
4. How would your life look different if you truly believed you are already loved and accepted by God, apart from anything you do?
5. What would it feel like to rest in Christ rather than constantly striving to measure up?

## Journaling Prompt

Take 20–30 minutes and write about the “**scorecard**” you’ve been carrying in your heart.

- What invisible standards are you constantly trying to meet?
- Who are you trying to impress, prove yourself to, or earn approval from?
- What happens inside you when you fall short—do you become harsh toward yourself, hide from others, or try harder to overcompensate?
- How has this pressure affected your joy, peace, and closeness with God?

Now turn these confessions into a prayer. Example:

“Lord, I see that I’ve been trapped in the belief that my worth depends on how well I perform. I confess that I have carried a heavy burden of striving and proving. I’ve often mistaken Your love as something I must earn. Please forgive me and teach me to rest in Your grace. Show me that my value is secure in Christ. Help me to break free from the cycle of performance and to live out of the truth of who You say I am. Amen.”

## Journaling Insight

When you put words to the hidden lies about your worth, you expose them to the light of God’s truth. This is a critical step in **breaking free**.

## Family / Group Discussion

1. Share with each other how performance pressures show up in everyday life (school grades, financial success, church involvement, appearance, social media).
2. How does the pressure to achieve or appear successful affect the way family members treat one another? Does it create tension, distance, or unrealistic expectations?

3. Imagine your home or group becoming a place where **love is given freely, not earned**. What changes would you need to make?
4. What practical steps can you take together to remind one another that worth is not based on performance but on God's unconditional love?
5. How can you celebrate identity in Christ in daily life—through words of encouragement, family traditions, or reminders of God's promises?

## **Togetherness**

Families flourish when grace replaces performance. In a home where love is secure and not conditional, members can take risks, fail, learn, and grow without fear of rejection. This is how families and groups begin **breaking free** together.

## **Closing Prayer**

Father, I admit that I have worn myself out trying to prove my worth through performance. I've believed the lie that I am only valuable if I succeed, achieve, or appear strong. But today, I lay that burden at Your feet. Thank You that in Christ, I am fully accepted and deeply loved—not because of what I do but because of who You are. Teach me to rest in Your grace and live out of Your truth. Help me to serve and work with joy, not striving. Set me free from the performance trap so that my life reflects Your love instead of my fear. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **Breaking Free**

True freedom is found not in endless striving but in resting in Christ's finished work. You are not what you do. You are who God says you are—loved, forgiven, and valuable. Let go of the burden of proving yourself, and step into the rest and freedom He offers.



---

## Chapter 3 – Made Right with God

**Scripture Focus:** *“Since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.”* (Romans 5:1)

### Teaching / Truth

Deep inside, many of us live with a gnawing sense that something is wrong with us. It may show up as guilt from the past, shame we try to hide, or a quiet fear that God could never truly accept us. Even if we know the “right” answers in our heads, our hearts often whisper: *“I’m not good enough. God must be disappointed with me.”*

Because of these feelings, many people try to fix the problem by being “better.” We promise to pray more, serve more, give more, and sin less. We put on masks of strength, pretending we have it together. But no matter how much we strive, there’s still a haunting sense that we don’t measure up.

This is where the gospel brings life-changing news. The Bible has a word for God’s solution to our guilt and shame: **justification**. To be *justified* means to be declared righteous—completely in right standing before God. And here’s the breathtaking truth: justification is not something we earn by cleaning ourselves up. It is a gift given the very moment we place our faith in Jesus Christ.

Think of it like a courtroom. You stand before the Judge of all the earth. A record of every sin, failure, and selfish act you’ve ever committed is laid out in detail—evidence you cannot deny. By all accounts, you deserve punishment. But then Jesus steps forward. He takes your record upon Himself, bearing the penalty in full on the cross. In exchange, He gives you His perfect record of obedience. The Judge doesn’t simply let you off the hook—He slams the gavel and declares: *“Innocent. Righteous. Free.”*

This is not a temporary pardon; it is a permanent declaration. Because of Jesus, you no longer stand condemned (Romans 8:1). You don’t have to live in fear that God will reject you when you fall. You don’t have to wonder if you’ve prayed enough, done enough, or been good enough. The righteousness of Christ has been credited to your account.

That’s what justification means. It’s more than being forgiven—it’s being **clothed in the righteousness of Christ**. When God looks at you, He doesn’t see a failure limping through life—He sees His beloved child covered in the perfection of Jesus.

And what does this bring? *Peace*. Not just a fleeting feeling of calm, but real, unshakable peace with God. The war is over. The striving is done. The performance trap has been silenced. The shame of the past is no longer your identity. You are at peace with the One who created you, redeemed you, and calls you His own.

The **Breaking Free** journey means stepping out of guilt, shame, and fear, and stepping into the security of justification. This truth changes everything. Instead of hiding from God when we fail, we can run to Him, confident in His acceptance. Instead of judging ourselves or others harshly, we can live in grace. Instead of fearing God's rejection, we can rest in His unfailing love.

**The Heart of the Matter:** Our deepest fear is that we will never be enough for God. Justification reminds us that Christ has already been enough in our place.

**Key Principle:** Justification is not about earning God's approval—it's about receiving His declaration: *"You are forgiven, you are mine, you are righteous in Christ."*

### Reflection Questions

1. When you picture yourself standing before God, do you see Him as angry, disappointed, or loving? Why do you think that is?
2. How have you tried in the past to make yourself "good enough" for God? Did it bring peace—or did it leave you exhausted and guilty?
3. What emotions rise in you when you think about Christ giving you His righteousness as a free gift?
4. How might your daily life change if you truly believed you were already justified and fully accepted by God?

### Journaling Prompt

Spend 20–30 minutes reflecting on this truth: *"In Christ, I am justified. I am declared righteous. I am at peace with God."*

- What are the specific lies you've believed about God's acceptance? ("I have to try harder," "God is always disappointed in me," "I'm beyond forgiveness.")
- Write them out, then cross them out. Next to each lie, write down a Scripture truth (Romans 5:1, Romans 8:1, 2 Corinthians 5:21).
- Finally, write a **letter to God** thanking Him for justification. Be honest about the ways you have doubted His acceptance. Declare in your own words what it means to be forgiven and made right with Him—even when you fall short.

Example: "Father, thank You that through Jesus I no longer stand condemned. I confess that I've often doubted Your love and tried to earn Your approval. But Your Word says I am justified by faith. I choose to believe that truth. Thank You for covering me in Christ's righteousness. Teach me to live each day in the freedom and peace that come from being fully accepted by You. Amen."

### Journaling Insight

Naming the lies and replacing them with God's truth is a powerful way to begin **breaking free** from guilt and shame.

### Family / Group Discussion

1. How does guilt or fear show up in family life? (harsh criticism, hiding mistakes, perfectionism, silence after conflict)
2. How might believing that we are justified change the way we treat one another at home?
3. Imagine a family where everyone truly believed they were accepted and loved by God—what would that look like?
4. Share one way you can remind each other this week: *"You are already made right with God through Christ."*
5. How could extending grace instead of criticism reshape the atmosphere of your home?

## **Togetherness**

When families live in the truth of justification, the cycle of shame and fear can be broken. Homes become places of safety where love is not earned, but freely given. This is how families begin **breaking free** together.

## **Closing Prayer**

Father, thank You that through Jesus I am justified—declared righteous in Your sight. Forgive me for the times I have tried to earn Your love or doubted Your acceptance. Help me to live in the peace that comes from knowing I am fully forgiven, fully loved, and fully secure in You. Teach me to extend this same grace to my family and others around me. May my life reflect the freedom and confidence that come from being made right with You. In Jesus' name, amen.

## **Breaking Free**

The greatest freedom comes not from proving yourself to God but from receiving what Christ has already done for you. You are forgiven. You are righteous in Christ. You are at peace with God. Step into this truth, and begin **breaking free** from guilt, shame, and fear.

---

## Chapter 4 – Breaking Free from People-Pleasing

**Scripture Focus:** *“Am I now trying to win the approval of human beings, or of God? Or am I trying to please people? If I were still trying to please people, I would not be a servant of Christ.”* (Galatians 1:10)

### Teaching / Truth

Few things are as exhausting as the endless chase for approval. Deep down, many of us believe the lie that if others accept us, then we are valuable—but if they reject us, then we are worthless. This belief fuels the cycle of people-pleasing.

We say *yes* when we should say *no*. We smile even when our hearts ache. We work ourselves to exhaustion because we fear letting someone down. We bend, compromise, and hide parts of ourselves—all to keep others happy. But instead of peace, people-pleasing leaves us drained, resentful, and hollow.

The problem isn't love or service itself—God calls us to love others sacrificially. The danger comes when our identity and worth depend on other people's opinions. Praise becomes our fuel, and criticism becomes our prison. We're trapped in a life of masks—showing others what we think they want to see, while burying who we really are.

But the gospel tells a better story. God never called us to be enslaved to human approval. Our value does not rise and fall with the applause of others. In Christ, we are already fully accepted, fully loved, and fully secure. Paul's words in Galatians 1:10 remind us that we cannot serve two masters: we will either live for people's approval or God's. Only one of these masters brings freedom.

Breaking free from people-pleasing is not easy. It often feels risky to disappoint someone or set a boundary. Fear rises: *“What if they get angry? What if they leave? What if I'm rejected?”* But each time we choose obedience to God over fear of man, we step into freedom.

Living to please God doesn't mean we become harsh, uncaring, or selfish. Instead, it means we love people more authentically. Because we are no longer enslaved to their approval, we can offer grace, honesty, and truth without hidden motives. We can say *no* without guilt and *yes* with sincerity. We can serve not to be noticed, but because we are already loved by God.

This is the heart of *Breaking Free* is moving others from a life chained to people's opinions into a life rooted in God's unshakable acceptance.

**The Heart of the Matter:** People-pleasing looks like love, but it is actually fear in disguise. True love flows from security in God, not from the need to be approved.

**Key Principle:** Freedom comes when we stop living for applause and start living from God's assurance.

### Reflection Questions

1. What are the signs in your life that you may be caught in people-pleasing? (anxiety, resentment, overcommitment, dishonesty)
2. Whose approval do you most often seek? How has their opinion shaped your decisions?
3. When have you sacrificed peace, health, or integrity just to avoid disappointing someone?
4. What might it look like this week to live from God's approval instead of chasing human approval?

### Journaling Prompt

Write about a time you felt pressured to please someone—even though it cost you peace or went against your values. How did it affect you emotionally, spiritually, or relationally?

Then imagine how the situation might have been different if you were resting in God's approval instead. What freedom, honesty, or courage might you have shown?

Finally, write a short prayer: *"Lord, I no longer want to live for the approval of \_\_\_\_\_. Teach me to rest in Yours."*



## **Family / Group Discussion**

1. In what ways can families fall into the trap of people-pleasing? (Trying to appear “perfect,” hiding struggles, overcommitting schedules)
2. How does the need to “look good” for others affect the atmosphere inside the home?
3. What would it look like for your family to live openly and honestly before God instead of trying to impress others?
4. Share one “healthy no” your family can practice this week—something you can decline with peace, choosing God’s approval over fear of others’ opinions.

## **Togetherness**

When a family chooses honesty over image and grace over performance, the home becomes a place of rest instead of pressure.

## **Closing Prayer**

Lord, forgive me for the ways I have sought the approval of others more than Yours. Set me free from the chains of performance, fear, and pretense. Teach me to rest in Your perfect love and acceptance. Give me courage to walk in truth, even when it means disappointing others. Help me to love people sincerely, not out of fear, but out of the deep security I have in You. In Jesus’ name, amen.

## **Breaking Free**

True freedom is found when we stop living for the applause of people and start living for the approval of God.

---

## Chapter 5 – Living in God’s Approval

**Scripture Focus:** “For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” (Romans 8:15)

### Teaching / Truth

From the time we are young, we learn to crave approval. As children, we look for it in a parent’s smile, a teacher’s praise, or a coach’s affirmation. As adults, the stage changes, but the longing remains: the job well done, the compliments from friends, the likes on social media, the affirmation from a spouse, or the respect of our peers.

Approval is powerful—it shapes us, motivates us, and at times controls us. But here’s the problem: human approval is inconsistent. It shifts with moods, circumstances, and changing opinions. What earned you applause yesterday might be ignored or criticized today. Living for human approval is like running on a treadmill—you exhaust yourself, but you never arrive.

The apostle Paul reminds us that in Christ, we no longer live as slaves to fear—not fear of failure, rejection, or criticism. Instead, we live as children of God, secure in His love and covered in His approval. God’s approval is not conditional. It is not withdrawn when you stumble. It is not based on how many boxes you check, how much you accomplish, or how well you perform.

Think of a child who falls while learning to walk. A good father doesn’t withdraw his love or disown the child for stumbling. Instead, he picks the child up, encourages them, and delights in every step forward. In the same way, God looks at us with delight and calls us His children. His approval is rooted in our identity, not our performance.

Living in God’s approval brings freedom:

- **Freedom from fear**—we no longer live afraid of rejection.
- **Freedom from comparison**—we don’t measure our worth against others.
- **Freedom to obey God**—even when His will contradicts popular opinion.

- **Freedom to love authentically**—because we’re no longer motivated by insecurity or fear of rejection.

When you rest in God’s approval, you stop striving to be “enough” in the eyes of others. You begin living with a quiet confidence, anchored in the truth that your Father has already called you beloved, accepted, and chosen. This doesn’t make you careless—it makes you courageous. It doesn’t make you arrogant—it makes you secure.

---

### **Reflection Questions**

1. In what areas of life do you find yourself most tempted to chase the approval of others?
2. How has the need for human approval caused stress, compromise, or fear in your life?
3. How does knowing that God calls you His child change the way you see yourself?
4. What would it look like this week to live from God’s approval instead of chasing human applause?

### **Journaling Prompt**

Write about a situation in your life where you felt desperate for someone’s approval. How did that shape your choices and emotions? Now, rewrite that situation as if you were secure in God’s approval. How would your words, decisions, or feelings be different?

Example: “I felt insecure at work because I wanted my boss to notice me. But if I had rested in God’s approval, I could have worked faithfully and confidently, knowing that my worth is not tied to recognition.”

### **Family / Group Discussion**

- Where do we as a family or group tend to seek approval—image, success, achievements, or appearances?
- How does approval-seeking show up in family life? (ex. keeping secrets to look “perfect,” over-scheduling to impress, hiding struggles)
- What would change in our home if everyone lived secure in God’s approval rather than chasing people’s acceptance?
- How can we remind each other daily that God’s opinion is the one that matters most?

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, thank You that I am fully approved by You, not because of what I do, but because of what Jesus has done. Forgive me for the times I have lived as a slave to fear, chasing the shifting approval of others. Help me to rest in Your love, secure as Your child. Teach me to live from Your approval, not for it. May this truth bring freedom to my heart, my home, and my relationships. In Jesus’ name, amen.

---

## Chapter 6 – Letting Go of the Need for Others' Approval

**Scripture Focus:** “Do not fear what others fear, and do not be frightened. The LORD Almighty is the one you are to regard as holy, he is the one you should fear.” (Isaiah 8:13)

### Teaching / Truth

For many of us, the desire for approval goes deeper than occasional insecurity—it becomes a way of life. From childhood, we may have learned that love and acceptance were conditional: “I’m proud of you when you succeed,” “You’re valuable when you behave,” “You’re accepted as long as you fit in.” Over time, this conditional love trains us to believe a dangerous lie: *my worth depends on keeping others happy*.

Living for others’ approval can feel like wearing invisible chains. We say “yes” when we want to say “no.” We hide our true opinions for fear of rejection. We put on masks, trying to become who others want us to be. Slowly, we lose touch with who God made us to be.

The cost is high:

- We burn out from overcommitment.
- We feel resentful when our efforts go unnoticed.
- We compromise values to avoid conflict.
- We live with anxiety, always wondering, *What will they think of me?*

But Scripture is clear: the fear of people is a trap (Proverbs 29:25). God never intended for us to be enslaved by others’ opinions. When Isaiah tells us not to fear what others fear, he is reminding us that there is only one opinion that truly matters: God’s. When we regard Him as holy—set apart, supreme, and sovereign—we find freedom from the tyranny of human approval.

Letting go of approval-seeking does not mean becoming harsh, rebellious, or dismissive. It means we no longer let fear dictate our choices. It means we live with integrity—doing what is right even if it costs us popularity. It means we love honestly, without manipulation, because we are secure in God’s acceptance.

This is not an overnight change—it’s a daily surrender. Each time we feel fear rise when someone disapproves, we can pause and ask: Am I living for God’s approval or man’s applause? Each time we’re tempted to hide the truth, we can remind ourselves: God already knows me and loves me completely.

Freedom begins when we stop bowing to the opinions of others and start standing in the truth of who God says we are: His children, chosen, loved, and approved.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. Whose opinion tends to carry the most weight in your life? Why?
2. How has the need for others’ approval shaped your decisions or held you back from obeying God?
3. What fears surface when you think about disappointing people?
4. What would freedom look like in your life if you no longer lived under the weight of others’ expectations?

### **Journaling Prompt**

Write about a specific situation where you said “yes” to please someone, even though you knew it wasn’t best. Then, imagine how the situation would have unfolded if you had prioritized God’s approval instead. What difference would that choice have made in your peace, your relationships, or your obedience to God?

### **Family / Group Discussion**



- In what ways do approval-seeking show up in our family life? (ex. trying to look “perfect” for others, hiding weaknesses, fearing what people think)
- Share an example of a time when someone in your family chose to honor God’s truth rather than seek approval. How did it affect others?
- How can we support each other in setting healthy boundaries and living with integrity, even when it means saying “no”?
- What practical steps can we take this week to remind each other that God’s opinion is the only one that ultimately matters?

### **Closing Prayer**

Lord, I confess that I have allowed the opinions of others to shape my choices and control my peace. Forgive me for fearing people more than I fear You. Teach me to live secure in Your love, confident in Your approval, and courageous in my obedience. Help me to let go of the need to please others, and instead live for Your glory. Let my life reflect Your truth and freedom. In Jesus’ name, amen.

---

## Chapter 7 – Letting Go of Self-Approval

**Scripture Focus:** “For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.” (Romans 12:3)

### Teaching / Truth

For some of us, the greatest battle for approval is not in the opinions of others—it is in the secret court of our own minds. We carry an inner critic that never seems satisfied. We replay conversations and decisions, nitpicking what we should have done better. We measure ourselves against impossible standards and call ourselves failures when we fall short.

At first glance, self-approval seems noble. It motivates growth, discipline, and hard work. But when our worth is built on our ability to meet our own standards, life becomes exhausting. We live under the pressure of a perfectionistic taskmaster—ourselves. If we succeed, we feel temporarily worthy. If we fail, we spiral into shame, self-condemnation, or despair.

This cycle is bondage because it ties our identity to performance. Self-approval is fragile; it crumbles the moment we stumble. Scripture calls us to something better: **freedom in Christ’s approval**. Paul warns us not to think of ourselves “more highly than we ought,” which means we must avoid both pride and self-condemnation. Instead, we are to see ourselves with “**sober judgment**”—**through God’s perspective**.

God’s truth cuts through both arrogance and self-hatred:

- We are not perfect, but we are deeply loved.
- We are not flawless, but we are fully forgiven.
- We are not self-sufficient, but we are empowered by grace.

When we release the need for self-approval, we step off the treadmill of proving ourselves. We realize that our worth is not up for debate—not by others, and not by ourselves. Our identity is secure in Christ.

### **Practically, letting go of self-approval involves three key steps:**

1. **Awareness:** Pay attention to the voices in your head. Do you berate yourself when you fail? Do you link your worth to achievements, appearance, or discipline? Awareness brings hidden lies to the surface.
2. **Surrender:** Bring those lies into the light of prayer. “Lord, I’m tired of being my own harsh judge. Replace my standards with Your truth. Teach me to see myself through Your eyes.”
3. **Affirmation:** Replace negative self-talk with God’s Word. Speak truth over yourself daily: “I am chosen, not forsaken” (Ephesians 1:4), “There is no condemnation for me in Christ” (Romans 8:1), “His power is made perfect in my weakness” (2 Corinthians 12:9).

This shift doesn’t erase growth or discipline; rather, it frees us to pursue growth from a place of love, not fear. When our worth no longer rises and falls with our self-approval, we live in peace. We become free to fail, free to learn, and free to grow in Christ without the crushing weight of perfectionism.

### **Reflection Questions**

1. In what areas of life do you place the highest demands on yourself?
2. How does self-criticism affect your emotions, relationships, or spiritual life?
3. What lies do you often believe about your worth? What truths from Scripture directly confront those lies?
4. How might your daily life change if you rested in God’s approval instead of demanding your own?

## Journaling Prompt

Identify one area where you find it hard to approve of yourself (parenting, career, faith, appearance, etc.). Write down the accusations you silently speak over yourself. Then, next to each accusation, write God's truth.

Example:

- Lie: "I'm failing as a parent."
- Truth: "God says His grace is sufficient in my weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). My children ultimately belong to Him."

End by writing a prayer of release: *"Father, I give You my self-judgment in this area. Teach me to rest in Your truth."*

## Family / Group Discussion

- How does striving for self-approval create pressure within a home or group?
- Share a moment when letting go of self-criticism allowed you to act with honesty, humility, or love.
- How can we encourage one another with God's truth when someone is struggling with perfectionism or shame?
- As a family or group, what practical habits could help us speak grace and truth over ourselves and each other?

## Closing Prayer

Father, I confess that I often hold myself to impossible standards. I seek my own approval, and when I fail, I condemn myself. Forgive me for believing lies about my worth. Teach me to see myself through Your eyes: loved, forgiven, and accepted in Christ. Guard my heart from perfectionism and self-condemnation, and let me live in the peace of Your truth. May my relationships and home reflect the freedom that comes from resting in You. In Jesus' name, amen.

---

## Chapter 8 – Shame vs. God’s Grace

**Scripture Focus:** *“Those who look to Him are radiant; their faces are never covered with shame.”* (Psalm 34:5)

### Teaching / Truth

Shame is one of the enemy’s most destructive weapons. Unlike guilt, which points to something we’ve *done*, shame attacks who we *are*. It whispers lies: *“You are dirty. You are worthless. You are broken beyond repair.”* Shame doesn’t just say, *“You made a mistake.”* It says, *“You are a mistake.”*

Shame isolates us. It convinces us that if people really knew the truth about us, they would turn away. It drives us to hide—from God, from others, even from ourselves. Addiction, abuse, family wounds, and personal failures often leave a trail of shame that chains us to our past.

But the gospel declares something radically different. Grace doesn’t deny our sin—it faces it head-on. Yet it also proclaims that Jesus carried not only our sin, but our shame, to the cross. The punishment we feared has already been paid. The identity we lost has been restored.

Where shame says, “You are unworthy,” grace says, “You are beloved.” Where shame says, “You are broken,” grace says, “I am making all things new.” Where shame says, “Hide yourself,” grace says, “Come into the light; you are safe with Me.”

Psalm 34:5 reminds us: *“Those who look to Him are radiant.”* Grace doesn’t just remove our guilt—it replaces shame with dignity, beauty, and joy. As God clothes us in Christ’s righteousness, our faces can shine with confidence instead of hiding in fear.

Breaking free from shame is a daily battle. Old lies often resurface, especially when we fail or when others remind us of our past. In those moments, we must answer shame with truth: *“I am not defined by my failure. I am defined by Christ. I am not what I once was—I am who God says I am.”*

This is the power of grace: it not only forgives—it restores, renews, and transforms our identity.

**The Heart of the Matter:** Shame says, *“You are not enough.”* Grace declares, *“In Christ, you are chosen, beloved, and made new.”*

**Key Principle:** Grace calls us out of hiding and clothes us with dignity.

### Reflection Questions

1. How has shame shaped the way you see yourself?
2. What lies has shame spoken over your life? (Examples: “I’m dirty,” “I can’t change,” “I don’t deserve love.”)
3. What truths about God’s grace can you cling to when shame rises again?
4. How might your relationships change if you lived fully in grace instead of under shame?

### Journaling Prompt

Write down one lie shame has spoken over you. Then, beside it, write the truth of God’s Word.

Example:

- Shame says: *“I will always be broken.”*
- God says: *“If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come”* (2 Corinthians 5:17).

Do this with as many lies as come to mind. Then, write a prayer thanking God for His grace that replaces every lie with truth.

### Family / Group Discussion



1. In what ways does shame affect families, not just individuals? (silence, secrecy, harsh criticism, lack of vulnerability)
2. What would a family atmosphere of *grace* look like, compared to one ruled by shame?
3. Share a personal example of how you have experienced God's grace instead of shame.
4. How can we encourage one another this week to step into God's grace when shame whispers lies?

### **Togetherness**

When families walk in grace, they create safe spaces where mistakes are not final verdicts, but opportunities for forgiveness and growth.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, thank You that Jesus bore my shame so I no longer have to live under it. Break the chains of false identity in my life. Replace every lie of unworthiness with the truth of Your grace. Teach me to walk as Your beloved child—free, forgiven, and secure in You. Let my home and relationships reflect an atmosphere of grace, not condemnation. In Jesus' name, amen.

---

## Chapter 9 – The Solution for Shame: A New Creation in Christ

**Scripture Focus:** “Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!” (2 Corinthians 5:17)

### Teaching / Truth

Shame tells us that we are defined by our past, by our failures, and by the negative labels we or others have placed upon us. It whispers lies like: *“You are unworthy. You are broken. You are beyond repair.”* Shame attacks our identity at its core and convinces us that our true selves are unacceptable, unlovable, and unchangeable.

But God offers a radically different perspective: **in Christ, we are made new.** This transformation is not merely behavioral—it is spiritual, emotional, and relational. The “old” self—the one burdened by shame, guilt, and fear—no longer has authority over our identity. Through Christ, we are reborn with a fresh start, fully forgiven, fully accepted, and fully loved.

2 Corinthians 5:17 declares that the new creation is not a suggestion—it is a reality. Yet, the enemy often tries to make us live as if it is optional. We may hear the lies of shame creeping in: “You’ll never change,” “You’ll always fail,” “People will reject you if they truly knew you.” When we listen to these lies, we remain trapped in guilt, hiding from God, others, and even ourselves.

The solution is not self-effort. Trying to erase shame through self-discipline, perfectionism, or masking our pain only strengthens shame’s hold. Instead, the solution is **believing and living in the truth of our identity in Christ.** God does not ask us to earn this new identity—He gives it freely.

### Practical Examples:

- If shame tells you, “I am a failure because of my past addiction,” the truth is, “In Christ, I am forgiven, restored, and empowered to walk in freedom.”
- If shame says, “I am unworthy of love,” God’s truth declares, “I am loved with an everlasting love; I am chosen and precious to Him” (Jeremiah 31:3).

- If shame insists, “I am defined by my mistakes,” Scripture reminds us, “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing!” (Isaiah 43:18–19).

## Renewing Your Mind

Living as a new creation requires intentionally renewing your mind daily. Every time shame resurfaces, we must actively replace the lie with truth:

1. Recognize the lie. Name it. “This is shame whispering, not God speaking.”
2. Replace it with God’s Word. Speak Scripture aloud or write it down.
3. Walk in the new identity. Take action aligned with God’s truth, not shame’s accusation.

This process is not a one-time event. It is a **daily commitment** to live from your identity in Christ, to embrace grace, and to reject shame.

## The Heart of the Matter

Shame has a way of chaining us to our past, constantly reminding us of failures, regrets, and wounds that no longer have power in Christ. It whispers that our worth is determined by what we’ve done or by what has been done to us. But grace tells a different story—one that speaks of forgiveness, renewal, and a brand-new identity. Grace redefines us, not by our mistakes, but by the love and righteousness of Jesus. In Him, we are not who we were—we are who He says we are: redeemed, restored, and made new.

## Key Principle

The solution for shame is not trying harder—it’s embracing the new creation God has made you to be, and allowing His truth to transform your thoughts, emotions, and actions.

## Reflection Questions

1. When you reflect on your past, do you tend to see yourself through shame or through the lens of being a new creation in Christ?
2. What old labels or titles have you carried that God wants to remove from your identity?
3. How does knowing you are a new creation change the way you respond to mistakes, criticism, or failure?
4. Which daily practices could help you consistently remind yourself of your identity in Christ?

## Journaling Prompt

Create two columns in your journal:

- **Column 1: Old Identity / Shame Labels**

List all the ways shame has described you: “Unlovable,” “Failure,” “Broken,” “Rejected.”

- **Column 2: New Identity in Christ**

For each shame label, write the truth from Scripture:

- Shame: “I am a failure.”  
God: “I am God’s masterpiece, created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10).
- Shame: “I am unworthy of love.”  
God: “I am loved with an everlasting love” (Jeremiah 31:3).
- Shame: “I am defined by my past.”  
God: “Forget the former things; the new has come!” (Isaiah 43:18–19).

Read these aloud daily and pray, thanking God for His transformative power.

## **Family / Group Discussion**

1. How can shame impact family dynamics beyond the individual (silence, secrecy, fear of failure, harsh criticism)?
2. How would your family look and feel if shame no longer defined your relationships?
3. Share a personal testimony of how God has replaced shame with His grace.
4. As a family, what practical steps can you take this week to remind one another of your new identities in Christ? Examples: daily affirmations, Scripture memorization, speaking words of encouragement, praying together.

## **Togetherness**

Families that walk in their new identity in Christ become safe havens. Mistakes are no longer final verdicts, but opportunities for grace, forgiveness, and growth. Children and adults alike learn that their worth is anchored in God's love, not past failures or the opinions of others.

## **Closing Prayer**

Father, thank You that in Christ I am a new creation. The old has gone, and the new has come. Teach me to walk daily in this truth, to reject every lie of shame, and to embrace my new identity fully. Help me to live as You see me—loved, accepted, and empowered. May my family and relationships reflect this freedom, grace, and restoration. Let my words, actions, and heart honor the new creation You have made me to be. In Jesus' name, amen.

---

## Chapter 10 – Receiving Healthy Approval from Others

**Scripture Focus:** “Accept the one whose faith is weak, without quarreling over disputable matters.” (Romans 14:1)

### Teaching / Truth

God designed us for community. From the beginning, He said, “It is not good for man to be alone.” We are created to encourage, affirm, and strengthen one another. Yet for many of us, receiving approval from others is complicated.

Some of us dismiss affirmation because we secretly feel unworthy. When someone compliments us, we deflect—“Oh, it’s nothing,” or “Anyone could have done it.” This false humility robs us of joy and keeps us from experiencing God’s encouragement through others.

Others cling too tightly to approval, making it the foundation of our identity. We thrive when people notice us but spiral when they don’t. We chase compliments like oxygen, and when they stop, we suffocate. This dependence creates insecurity, comparison, and even resentment when affirmation doesn’t come.

Both extremes are unhealthy. Scripture calls us to a middle ground—**to accept encouragement without inflating our ego or anchoring our worth in it**. Healthy approval is not a substitute for God’s acceptance but a reflection of it. It points us back to the truth that our Father delights in us.

Receiving healthy approval requires humility and discernment. We must recognize that people’s words are limited; they see the outward, while God sees the heart. Some praise is genuine, and some may be manipulative or shallow. Discernment helps us receive what is true and release what is not.

### Practically, receiving healthy approval looks like:

1. **Gratitude:** Responding with a simple, sincere “thank you” instead of deflecting or overanalyzing. Gratitude honors the giver and acknowledges God as the source of all good.

2. **Boundaries:** Appreciating affirmation without tying your identity to it. Learn to let compliments encourage you without becoming dependent on them.
3. **Integration:** Filtering all encouragement through God's truth. When someone affirms you, pause and say inwardly, "Thank You, Lord. My worth is in You."

When we master this balance, relationships flourish. Affirmation becomes a gift we can enjoy, not a lifeline we depend on. We stop rejecting encouragement out of false humility and stop idolizing it out of insecurity. Instead, we receive it with grace, gratitude, and freedom.

### Reflection Questions

1. How do you usually respond to affirmation—do you dismiss it, cling to it, or receive it with gratitude?
2. When was the last time you rejected encouragement because you felt unworthy?
3. How might receiving healthy approval strengthen your confidence in God's calling for your life?
4. What boundaries do you need to set so that approval from others never becomes your source of identity?

### Journaling Prompt

Think of one recent time someone encouraged or affirmed you. Write out your honest reaction—did you deflect, dismiss, or overvalue it? Now, rewrite the scenario as if you had received the encouragement with gratitude and security in God's love.

Example:

- Real Response: "My coworker praised my work, but I brushed it off and felt unworthy."
- Redeemed Response: "Next time, I'll say, 'Thank you, that means a lot.' Then I'll silently thank God for giving me the ability and remind myself my worth is already

secure in Him.”

### **Family / Group Discussion**

- How can we model healthy acceptance of affirmation in our homes?
- Share a moment when someone’s encouragement gave you strength to keep going.
- How can we as a family or group celebrate each other’s strengths without creating pressure to perform?
- What rhythms of encouragement (words, notes, prayers) could we practice to reflect God’s love in our relationships?

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, thank You for placing me in relationships where I can give and receive encouragement. Forgive me for the times I have either rejected affirmation out of insecurity or idolized it out of neediness. Teach me to receive approval with humility, gratitude, and discernment—always anchored in Your unconditional love. May my words bring life to others, and may I reflect Your grace in how I receive theirs. In Jesus’ name, amen.



---

## Chapter 11 – Handling Criticism, Judgments, or Resentments of Others

**Scripture Focus:** “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (*Romans 12:17–18*)

### Teaching / Truth

As Christians, one of the inescapable realities of life is that we will face the opinions, judgments, and resentments of others. Sometimes it comes in the form of *criticism*—words meant to evaluate or correct. Sometimes it comes as *judgment*—harsh or unfair assumptions made about us. And sometimes it shows up as *resentment*—a simmering attitude others may carry toward us, even without words.

No matter what form it takes, these things cut deep because they brush against some of the most tender places in our hearts. If we’ve lived under rejection, shame, or performance-driven approval, then criticism and judgment can feel unbearable. Instead of hearing feedback about what we *did*, we hear condemnation of *who we are*. Instead of dealing with someone else’s resentment, we feel as though their coldness or disapproval confirms our worst fear: *“I’m unworthy. I’ll never be enough. I’m a failure.”*

This is why how we handle criticism, judgment, and resentment matters so deeply. Left unchecked, they can grow roots of bitterness, resentment, or fear in our own hearts. But with God, even the sting of others’ words or attitudes can be used as a refining tool for growth, healing, and freedom.

### The Reality of Criticism, Judgments, and Resentments

1. **Criticism** – Not all criticism is equal. Some is constructive, meant to sharpen us. Other criticism is careless or cruel, born of someone else’s insecurity or brokenness. Discerning the difference is crucial.
2. **Judgments** – People will sometimes misunderstand us, make assumptions, or measure us by worldly standards. Jesus Himself endured unfair judgment, yet entrusted Himself to the Father (1 Peter 2:23).

3. **Resentments** – Sometimes people carry unspoken anger or envy toward us. Their distance, coldness, or hostility can leave us confused and hurt. But Scripture calls us not to carry their resentment in return, but to guard our hearts against bitterness and live at peace as far as it depends on us.

These are realities of life in a fallen world. The key question is: *What will we do with them?*

## How God Uses Even Wrong Motives

When we experience criticism, judgment, or resentment, it often *pushes buttons* that reveal deeper wounds within us.

- If criticism triggers defensiveness, it may be touching a fear of rejection.
- If someone's judgment feels crushing, it may expose how much of our worth we've tied to performance.
- If resentment leaves us spiraling into insecurity, it may uncover a shame-rooted lie that says we are unworthy of love.

Here's the good news: **what the enemy intends for harm, God uses for good.** Even when motives are wrong, God can use these moments as mirrors to reveal what He wants to heal in us.

- **Criticism:** If we feel crushed, God is showing us that our identity has been built too heavily on approval or performance. He invites us to anchor our worth in His unchanging love.
- **Judgment:** If unfair words wound us, God is reminding us that only His verdict matters. Others may misunderstand, but *He knows us fully and loves us completely.*
- **Resentment:** If someone's hostility stirs fear or anger, God may be calling us to release them to Him, rather than carrying bitterness ourselves. Their resentment is not our identity; His grace defines us.

## Tying It to Rejection, Shame, and Performance

- **Rejection** – Criticism and judgment often awaken the old fear of being unwanted. But God whispers: *“You are chosen, adopted, and dearly loved”* (Ephesians 1:4–5).
- **Shame** – Harsh words confirm shame’s lie: *“You are defective.”* Yet God says: *“There is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus”* (Romans 8:1).
- **Performance** – Criticism feels devastating when worth is tied to achievement. But God reminds us that our value rests not in what we do, but in Christ’s finished work.

If we are truly walking in the light of Christ, it is almost certain that people will come against us in some way—and that’s all right. Instead of seeing this as a threat, we must learn to see it as the very tool God uses to grow us. Criticism, opposition, and misunderstanding can either drive us into defensiveness and retaliation, or they can become opportunities for grace and transformation. When we allow God to reframe these moments, they cease to be weapons that wound our worth and instead become chisels in His hands, shaping us into Christlikeness. The key is not to use them as a stage to affirm our insecurities, fears of rejection, or performance-driven striving, but to recognize them as invitations to lean deeper into God’s truth and unshakable approval.

Thus, each painful encounter becomes a holy invitation: to reject lies, receive truth, and step more deeply into the freedom of grace.

## Practical Questions to Ask When Wounded

- “Lord, why did this hurt so much? What is this exposing in me?”
- “Is there truth here that I can learn from, even if it was spoken harshly?”
- “What lie do I need to reject, and what truth from Your Word do I need to embrace?”

- “How do You want to grow me through this?”

When we ask these questions, we turn criticism, judgment, and resentment into opportunities for transformation.

### **Reflection Questions**

- How do you usually respond to criticism or judgment—defensiveness, discouragement, bitterness, or humility?
- Can you recall a time when unfair criticism or resentment revealed a deeper wound God wanted to heal?
- How might viewing yourself through God’s eyes change the way you process the opinions of others?

### **Journaling Prompt**

Think of a recent situation when someone criticized you, judged you unfairly, or showed resentment toward you. Write down:

- Your honest first reaction.
- The lie that moment whispered about you.
- The truth God says about you from His Word.

Then write a prayer, releasing the person into God’s hands and asking Him to use the moment for your growth.

### **Family / Group Discussion**

- How does criticism or judgment often play out in families? How can this create unhealthy cycles of silence, defensiveness, or resentment?
- What would a family or group atmosphere look like if criticism were offered in love and received with grace?
- Share an example of how God used painful words or attitudes of others to help you grow spiritually.

## **Closing Truth**

Criticism, judgments, and resentments will never fully disappear in this life. But they do not have to rule us. When our hearts are rooted in God's truth, these moments lose their power to define or destroy us.

Instead, they become opportunities:

- To reject the lies of rejection, shame, and performance.
- To rest in God's secure love and unshakable approval.
- To extend grace, set healthy boundaries, and walk in peace.

The very words or attitudes meant to wound us can actually become tools of God's refinement. The enemy's weapon becomes God's chisel, shaping us into Christ's likeness.

## **Closing Prayer**

Father, I thank You that my worth is not defined by the opinions, judgments, or resentments of others but by Your unwavering love and approval. Teach me to receive correction with humility, release unfair judgment into Your hands, and forgive resentments without letting bitterness grow. Guard my heart against shame, rejection, and the lie of performance. Anchor me in Your truth so that no word or attitude can shake my identity in You. May my relationships reflect grace, patience, and the freedom that comes from living in Your love. In Jesus' name, amen

---

## Chapter 12 – Walking in the Truth

### *Believing God's Truth vs. the Lies of the Enemy*

**Scripture Focus:** “Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” (John 8:32)

“Sanctify them by the truth; Your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

### Teaching / Truth

All throughout this journey, we’ve talked about identity, freedom, forgiveness, and being made right with God. Yet one of the greatest battles we face is not simply knowing these truths in our heads—it is **believing them in our hearts** and walking them out daily in the middle of real struggles.

Every day we are bombarded with voices: the voice of the enemy whispering lies, the voice of our old habits and flesh pulling us backward, the voice of a broken world telling us who we should be. These lies are subtle and persistent:

- *“You’ll never change.”*
- *“God is disappointed in you.”*
- *“Your past defines you.”*
- *“You’ll always be a failure.”*
- *“God helps others, but not you.”*

These lies sound convincing because they are tied to shame, fear, or past wounds. But God gives us a weapon that is stronger than any lie: **His Word of truth.**

Jesus said, *“The truth will set you free.”* Notice—He didn’t say *hard work* will set you free, or *trying harder* will set you free. Freedom comes when lies are broken and

replaced with God's truth. The Word of God is living and active (Hebrews 4:12). It has the power to expose lies, cut through confusion, and re-shape our minds.

This is why Paul urged believers: *"Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind"* (Romans 12:2). Transformation doesn't happen by accident—it comes when we learn to replace the enemy's lies with God's promises.

Think of your mind like a field. If weeds of lies have been growing for years, you don't remove them just by ignoring them. You have to pull them up by the roots and plant seeds of truth. Over time, as those truths grow, the lies lose their grip.

### **Illustration: The Broken Mirror**

Imagine standing in front of a cracked mirror. No matter how hard you try, the reflection looking back at you will always be distorted. Many of us live like this—seeing ourselves through the broken mirror of shame, failure, and lies.

But God has given us a *new mirror*. His Word. James 1:23-25 says that the Word of God is like a mirror that shows us who we truly are in Christ. When you look into His Word, you don't see "broken, unworthy, hopeless"—you see "beloved, forgiven, chosen, and redeemed."

The question is: *Which mirror will you believe?*

### **Scripture Replacements (Lies vs. Truth)**

Here are some common lies we believe—and the truth of God's Word to replace them. Read these slowly. Let the truth of Scripture wash over the lies.

- **Lie:** "I am worthless."  
**Truth:** "You are precious in My sight... and I love you." (Isaiah 43:4)
- **Lie:** "God will never forgive me."  
**Truth:** "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us." (1 John 1:9)
- **Lie:** "I will always be a failure."  
**Truth:** "In all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us." (Romans 8:37)

- **Lie:** “My past defines me.”  
**Truth:** “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come.” (2 Corinthians 5:17)
- **Lie:** “God has abandoned me.”  
**Truth:** “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:5)
- **Lie:** “I can’t change.”  
**Truth:** “Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.” (Philippians 1:6)

Walking in truth means learning to *catch the lie, confront it with Scripture, and confess the truth out loud.*

### Reflection Questions

1. What are the most common lies you find yourself believing about God, yourself, or others?
2. How have those lies shaped your choices, emotions, or relationships?
3. When was the last time God’s Word gave you freedom in an area where you once felt trapped?
4. Which of the Scripture “truths” above do you most need to cling to right now?

### Journaling Prompt

Take a sheet of paper again, and make two columns. On the left side, write down the top lies you have believed about yourself or about God. On the right side, write down the Scripture truths that defeat each lie. Pray through them, asking God to seal His truth in your heart. End by writing a declaration of truth over your life—for example:

“I declare today that I am not worthless, but chosen and dearly loved by God. I am not a failure, but more than a conqueror through Christ. My past does not define me; Christ does.”



**Note: This is a spiritual exercise that is productive to do for several years until the truth of who you are in Christ rules your life and thoughts.**

### **Family / Group Discussion**

- How do lies from the enemy sometimes show up in family life? (e.g., “I’ll never be good enough,” “No one here really loves me,” “We’ll never change”)
- What would happen if, as a family, you replaced those lies with God’s truth together?
- Create a family “truth wall.” Each person writes down one lie they struggle with and then posts a Scripture verse that defeats it. Place it somewhere visible in the home as a reminder.

### **Closing Prayer**

Father, thank You that You are a God of truth, and that Your Word is unshakable. Forgive me for the times I have believed the lies of the enemy instead of Your promises. Lord, help me to walk daily in Your truth and to renew my mind by Your Word. Replace every lie with Your light. Teach me to speak truth over my life, over my family, and over my circumstances. I declare that Your truth is greater than my past, stronger than my fears, and more powerful than any lie. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

---

## Chapter 13 – A Lifetime in the Word

### *Renewing Your Mind and Walking in God's Truth Daily*

**Scripture Focus:** “Do not conform 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)

“Your word I have hidden in my heart, that I might not sin against You.” (Psalm 119:11)

“Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom.” (Colossians 3:16)

“Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.” (Philippians 4:8)

### **Teaching / Truth**

Living in God’s truth is **not a destination**, but a lifelong journey. Each day brings new challenges, new pressures, and new cultural influences that attempt to erode our identity and worth. The world around us constantly whispers lies: “You’re not enough,” “You must earn love,” “You have to prove yourself,” or “Others’ opinions define your value.” These messages can feel subtle but powerful, quietly shaping our thoughts, decisions, and relationships.

The good news is that God has given us a solution: **the renewing of our minds through His Word**. Romans 12:2 calls us to a continual transformation—not a one-time change. The process is daily, intentional, and dependent on God’s Spirit. As we saturate our hearts with Scripture, our minds begin to align with His truth. Lies lose their power, fear diminishes, and peace becomes our foundation.

Renewal is more than reading verses—it is **internalizing truth and living it out**. We actively choose to measure ourselves, our value, and our decisions by God’s perspective instead of the world’s standards. Every encounter, challenge, or setback becomes an opportunity to practice walking in truth, applying God’s Word, and trusting His approval.

This is a **lifetime process** because life itself is dynamic. Jobs change, relationships shift, health fluctuates, and culture continues to bombard us with messages that contradict God's truth. Without daily intentionality, it is easy to revert to old patterns of seeking human approval, succumbing to shame, or relying on performance for worth.

### **Illustration: The Gardener of the Soul**

Imagine your mind as a vast garden. Left untended, weeds of fear, lies, and anxiety grow freely, choking the life and beauty God desires to cultivate. But when you intentionally plant seeds of Scripture, water your spirit with prayer, and prune negative thoughts, your garden flourishes. Over time, the soil of your mind becomes fertile ground for faith, joy, and freedom.

Daily spiritual practices are like sunlight and water: not optional, but essential. Neglecting them allows weeds of doubt, shame, and false beliefs to resurface. Consistent care ensures growth, transformation, and a flourishing life that reflects God's glory.

### **Practical Daily Steps for Lifelong Renewal**

1. **Scripture Immersion** – Read, meditate on, and memorize passages that reinforce your identity in Christ. Rotate themes: grace, forgiveness, love, courage, and purpose.
2. **Reflective Journaling** – Take 15–30 minutes daily to reflect on your thoughts, actions, and reactions. Measure them against God's Word. Write down lies you encounter and replace them with God's truth.
3. **Intentional Prayer** – Speak honestly to God about struggles, fears, and insecurities. Ask Him to renew your mind and help you respond in alignment with His truth.
4. **Community Accountability** – Engage in small groups, mentorship, or trusted partnerships to discuss challenges, share victories, and receive encouragement.
5. **Application and Obedience** – Practice God's Word in your decisions, relationships, and conflicts. Each act of obedience strengthens the truth in your

heart and life.

6. **Celebration of Growth** – Recognize daily victories, however small. Each moment you respond according to God’s truth is a step toward transformation.

### Expanded Reflection Questions

1. How has the culture, media, or people around you shaped the way you see your value?
2. Which lies do you most commonly believe about yourself, and how can God’s Word replace them?
3. When you face failure, criticism, or rejection, how can you intentionally remind yourself of God’s truth?
4. What daily routines can you implement to keep your mind and heart aligned with Scripture?
5. How can you help others around you embrace a lifetime of walking in God’s truth?

### Journaling Prompt

Create a **“Truth Inventory”**:

1. List the lies you frequently believe (e.g., “I’m not enough,” “I must perform to be loved”).
2. Next to each lie, write the corresponding Scripture that refutes it.
3. Reflect on practical ways to **live out these truths** this week.
4. Close with a prayer committing to ongoing renewal.

## Family / Group Discussion

1. How can your family or group create a culture of Scripture-based thinking?
2. Share examples when walking in God's truth changed a decision, reaction, or relationship.
3. Brainstorm simple routines for encouraging each other daily to measure worth and decisions by God's Word rather than culture or opinion.
4. Discuss challenges you face in maintaining truth daily and how the group can provide encouragement and accountability.
5. How can you celebrate each other's growth in living according to God's truth?

## Practical Lifetime Application

- **Morning Anchoring:** Begin each day with a Scripture affirmation about identity, purpose, and worth.
- **Midday Check-In:** Pause and assess if your thoughts or actions are aligned with God's truth; reset if necessary.
- **Evening Reflection:** Journal victories, struggles, and lessons learned, asking God to continue shaping your heart.
- **Weekly Group Encouragement:** Meet with family or accountability partners to share challenges, victories, and Scriptures that encouraged you.

## Closing Prayer

Father, I thank You for the gift of Your Word, which guides, strengthens, and renews me every day. Help me to walk in Your truth consistently, to reject lies, and to anchor my identity in You alone. Teach me to be vigilant, discerning, and intentional in renewing my mind daily. Guard me against the pressures of culture, performance, and false approval. Strengthen my heart, mind, and spirit to embrace this lifelong journey of transformation. May my family, relationships, and community reflect the peace, freedom, and confidence that come from living fully in Your Word. Let Your truth dwell richly in my heart, shaping every thought, choice, and action. In Jesus' name, amen.

## Conclusion: Anchored in Our True Identity

As we come to the close of this manual, we must pause and remember the heart of this journey. We began by facing the heavy weight of rejection, shame, fear of failure, and the many lies that shaped how we saw ourselves. Each of these struggles, though deeply painful, pointed us to the greater reality of our need for Christ. Left on our own, we are often defined by wounds, weaknesses, and the opinions of others. But in Christ, everything changes.

Our identity is no longer rooted in what was broken, but in the One who makes all things new. Where shame once whispered “*unworthy*”, grace now proclaims “*redeemed*.” Where rejection once said “*you are unwanted*,” the Father’s love now declares “*you are chosen*.” And where fear of failure once chained us, Christ’s victory reminds us that His strength is made perfect in our weakness.

The truth is, identity in Christ is not a concept to simply study—it is a reality to walk in daily. It requires choosing to silence the lies of the enemy and to continually renew our minds with God’s Word. It means learning to see ourselves not through the distorted lens of our past, but through the finished work of Jesus. This is not a one-time revelation, but a lifelong transformation, where we keep growing into the fullness of who God created us to be.

As you move forward, remember: the battle for your identity will continue, but you are not left powerless. You are equipped with the Spirit of God, the truth of His Word, and the assurance of His love. You are not defined by yesterday—you are defined by Christ who lives in you today and forever.

So stand firm. Walk in freedom. Live as one deeply loved, fully accepted, and eternally secure in Jesus Christ. For this is the heart of the matter: your true self is found only in Him.

Standing in our true identity together,

Scott

**© Jesus Holds the Copyright**

This material belongs to Jesus.

He is the Author and Owner of every inspired word written here.

You are welcome to copy, share, print, and reproduce this content freely to bless, build up, and bring healing to the broken—especially those struggling with addiction, trauma, loss, or spiritual need.

It may not be sold or used for personal or commercial profit.

The heart of this resource is the Kingdom, not commerce.

If you share it, do so in love, in faithfulness to the original message, and for the glory of God. Jesus gave it freely; so we give it freely.