

The Official E-Zine of The Institute of Soteric Counseling

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Welcome to Counsel the Word E-Zine! As of this writing, Brother and Sister Ensey are out of the country. Do let's keep them in our prayers until they return the end of this month.

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The Cross as Spiritual Warfare

by Lynda Allison Doty

These days the enemy is working harder than ever. He is coming against God's people from all sides, and we can't just sit here and let him destroy us—our families—our ministries. But what is a person to do?

Jesus' death defeated Satan. "Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, [he] took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; And having spoiled principalities and powers, he made a shew of them openly, triumphing over them in it." (Colossians 2:14-15).

We need to take another look at our spiritual warfare tactics and avail ourselves of our top weapon: the Cross. It was the Cross on which Christ destroyed the devil and set mankind free. It was the Cross upon which the Lord became our Healer. As He Himself was wounded, so could He now heal us of all the wounds caused by dreadful sin—physical wounds and emotional wounds. It is at the Cross that death becomes life and decay becomes immortality.

It is at the Cross that shame becomes glory! Far be it from me to glory except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world! James 4:7 instructs us to "resist" the devil, but it also gives us other vital information: he tells us to first submit ourselves unto God. Godly submission is always an act of worship. We resist the devil in godly submission. I Peter 5:9 also says to resist him steadfast in the faith. The Bible does not teach us to go around rebuking and talking to the devil all the time. I like to speak my faith out loud, though, so he will know what I'm thinking, because he cannot read our minds. I resist the devil by speaking out faith and truth. I resist him by obedience to the Word of God. I resist him by submitting myself to God. I resist him by loving and worshipping at the foot of the Cross. The devil cannot remain in the presence of the Lord. I resist him with the Word of God.

At the foot of the Cross our focus is on Him. I can't imagine that any of the women with Him that day were concerned with grocery lists or personal pain. We can get so caught up in our problems—be it health, money, or relationships—that our focus is on ourselves and those problems, instead of on God. If we focus on self long enough, our hearts will become darkened and carnal—the perfect breeding ground for the enemy to construct a stronghold.

During worship, when our attention and focus are on Him and off the self, God can come right on in with the balm of healing!

It is at the Cross that we put on Christ and cast aside our former self. It can be a painful thing, this dying to self, because it is rooting out deeply ingrained patterns that we have held dear for a very long time. This is not something that is done once and for all time. It is something that we must do daily. Paul said, “I die daily” (I Corinthians 15:31). It means repenting every day and keeping alert to what is going on in our thoughts. It means that as soon as we discern something going amiss, we are to repent and go the opposite direction. Often the deep attitudes of our heart hide out for years before manifesting themselves. For example, in Hebrews 12:15, Paul talked about the “root of bitterness” springing up and defiling many.

When we entertain dark thoughts about others, when we refuse to forgive those who have hurt us, then bitterness can hibernate in our souls. One day it will spring forth full grown and reap devastation in our lives and the lives of others. Oh, dear one, watch your thoughts carefully! If you find yourself criticizing a person, immediately cut it off and bless that person instead.

Turn the ugliness into beauty! Defeat the enemy at his own game!

(Excerpt from *The Seven Secrets of Mental Health*)

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## **The Chains of Unforgiveness**

by  
Anne Richardson

Picture with me, a long unyielding chain that keeps you hopelessly bound to the thing you most want to escape. I'm not talking about a physical chain; something you can purchase at your local hardware store—but one that is often found securely anchored to the human heart.

It is called unforgiveness.

Unforgiveness is the elixir of the wounded heart; a bewitching balm that only appears to soothe our pain. But in truth-it is a deadly poison that corrodes the vessel containing it from the inside out.

Some wounds can be so deep and so profound that the heart rises up in defense of itself and screams “I have a RIGHT to hate my offender— I will NEVER forgive what he did to me!” When, in fact, it is this perceived right to withhold forgiveness that fastens us so securely to the memory we most want to be free of. Nevertheless, the heart continues in its role as defense lawyer, giving itself reason after reason why unforgiveness is justifiable. The offense was too great, the person does not deserve to be forgiven, they aren’t sorry for what they did— and on and on it goes. The list can be as creative and diverse as the person making it. But as long as the unforgiveness chain exists, there will always be something or someone to give it a tug that will pull you back to revisit once again every horrible thing that has happened to you; to help you reclaim over and over your victim status and be swallowed up in anger or bitterness or self-pity. This is the power of unforgiveness.

Unforgiveness deals with offences in its own way—not God’s way.

Below are just some of the alternatives to forgiving. It is these kinds of responses that keep the chain of unforgiveness strong and unrelenting.

**WE BLAME:** Cemented deeply in human nature is the tendency to shift the blame for wrongs committed. Just a few pages into the first book of the Bible, we see the blame game in action. After Adam eats the forbidden fruit, God confronts him. Listen to his response: “The woman who thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.” [vs.12] When God’s attention then turns to Eve, her instinct is also to shift the blame: “The serpent beguiled me and I did eat.” [vs.13] The sinful nature we inherited in the Fall makes it easy for us to blame our offender for our resentment and bitterness rather than forgive. Blaming relieves us of the difficult, self—sacrificing act of mercy that God demands of His children. But when blame is transferred to someone else, sin prevails in our lives, and the chain remains in tact.

**WE BURY OUR FEELINGS:** Things that are buried are forgotten. And things that are forgotten are never dealt with. People will go to great lengths to suppress their hurt or cover it up. It is sometimes easier to deny feelings than to face or deal with the pain. The thought of confrontation may be terrifying because it usually means experiencing more conflict, more rejection, and more disappointment. Keeping silent, and withholding forgiveness can be an agonizing experiencing. King David expressed it this way, “When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long. For day and night your hand was heavy upon me; my strength was sapped as in the heat of summer.” (Psalm 32:3-4)

**WE ACT ON OUR BAD FEELINGS:** Instead of submitting to God and trusting Him to work things out, we take matters into our own hands by seeking revenge against our offender. Only God is able to judge fairly the offences of men; nevertheless, the instinct for revenge can be so powerful that we make the wrong choice to return evil for evil. This only serves to circumvent the more perfect recompense of God. The Scripture clearly instructs us to “Recompense to no man evil for evil.” Rom 12:17

**WE BUILD WALLS:** Unforgiveness causes us to withdraw from others in an effort to protect ourselves from further hurt and disappointment. Walls of hardness go up to prevent anyone from getting close enough to see our vulnerability. These walls can become so thick there is no opening in our heart to allow us to give or receive love. Forgiveness and love are like Siamese twins. They can never be separated. Loving someone you have forgiven may be difficult, but true forgiveness will make such a sacrifice. Jesus did not forgive us and then refuse to love us. He forgives us and then treats us as though we had never sinned against Him. True forgiveness breaks down walls and ushers love into our hearts; it builds bridges, not walls. Jesus commands us, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you. Eph 4:32

**WE IDENTIFY OURSELVES AS VICTIMS:** Although we may be genuine victims of a serious offence, developing a victim mentality effectively prevents the renewing of our mind which leads to forgiveness. Seeing ourselves as a victim spawns feelings of fragility and an inability to cope. Our emotions become like an “eggshell” so that the very least offence will crush us and cause us to retreat into ourselves, or to react explosively.

**WE REVISIT THE OFFENCE:** When offences are buried or hidden in the closet of our heart, it is much easier to revisit that hurtful event; to go back and rehearse over and over again what happened to you. Rehearsing an offence feeds and strengthens bitterness and self-pity and perpetuates the “victim” mentality. The Apostle Paul shared words of eternal wisdom when he wrote, “But this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.” Philippians 3:13

**WE BECOME OFFENSIVE OURSELVES:** Have you heard the old saying, “misery loves company.”? Unforgiveness keeps our pain alive to the point that we may find ourselves wanting to inflict that same hurt on others. It requires a great deal more energy to manipulate pain in someone else than to actually forgive the original offence.

If any of these behaviors describe the way you have been feeling or acting, I invite you to revisit another event in the past. No offence before or since could possibly match the pain and agony suffered on this day— by this Person. Like you, He was innocent. Like you, He didn't deserve what they did to Him. But here's the difference. He didn't have to experience the pain. With one Word He could have spared Himself the agony and

escaped the horrific suffering that loomed ahead. But He didn't. This God-Man, Jesus Christ knew that His rejection and His suffering would free humanity from the power of every sin known to mankind; those we have committed as well as those committed against us. More specifically, when Jesus, the spotless lamb of God, hung on that cross He did it to break the power of every abuse whether physical, emotional or sexual—of every unkind word that ripped away at your self worth—of every rejection and every cruelty in every shape and every form. It doesn't matter. Calvary broke the chain!  
(To view the remainder of this article, please go to [A Woman's Place](#) )

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